



Species and Habitat Action Plan Assessment Form

Please refer to the accompanying guidance for information about how to complete this form and an explanation of terms used

Field 1: Action Plan details

Species/Habitat Action Plan	Lowland calcareous grassland
Lead Partner/Agency	EN
Steering Group/Other organisations	Pending UKBG approval and Terms of Reference for Overarching UK Lowland Grassland Steering Group
Work programme in existence?	No

Field 2: Objectives and targets overview

Please list the targets for the action plan, indicating in which country/region the target is applicable, and additional comments including the rationale for new targets. For each new target please add new sequential paragraph numbers and target text. Please provide information about progress and country disaggregation in Table A for all targets.

Number and text	UK	E	NI	S	W	Comments								
4.1.1 Arrest the depletion of unimproved lowland calcareous grassland throughout the UK.		✓			✓									
<p><i>CCW: Of an estimated 1000 ha of lowland calcareous grassland habitat in Wales, 420 ha is notified as SSSI, and 31 ha is under Tir Cymen agreement. Additional areas of lowland calcareous grassland entering the new Tir Gofal scheme have yet to be assessed.</i></p> <p>MAFF/FRCA: The area of lowland calcareous grassland under agri-environment scheme agreement continues to increase with new applications each year. Agri-environment scheme agreements include a number of measures that seek to ensure appropriate management of agricultural land containing calcareous grassland. Three ESAs have specific tiers aimed at restoring beneficial management on calcareous downland and for converting arable land into species-rich calcareous grassland (Cotswold Hills, South Downs & South Wessex Downs). This habitat is also included within the Chalk and Limestone grassland (P4) option of the Countryside Stewardship (CS) scheme. The CS scheme also has extensive grassland management and arable reversion options that can be applied to calcareous grassland. It is not possible to segregate accurately calcareous grassland BAP habitat from the wide range of other grassland types that are also under agreement using scheme data alone, but there are key ESA tiers aimed at this habitat and provisional estimates have been derived by relating agreement data to underlying geology and altitude. These estimates assume that land under agreement for appropriate measures will maintain or restore the habitat to favourable condition.</p> <p><i>Total area of land under agri-environment scheme agreement measures aimed at lowland calcareous grassland:</i></p> <table> <thead> <tr> <th>Scheme</th> <th>Area (ha)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>ESA</td> <td>17201¹ (of which 3,724 is within SSSIs)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CS P4</td> <td>12494²</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>29695</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>It should be noted that these estimates will include calcareous grassland communities of lower conservation value that do not meet the definition of the BAP habitat. Therefore, area estimates cannot be directly compared with national resource estimates of this BAP habitat.</p> <p>Another available measure of the extent of this habitat that has been addressed by agri-environment schemes is that 431³ calcareous Lowland Grassland Inventory sites fall partly or wholly within ESA agreements, of which the large majority lie in the three ESAs listed above.</p>							Scheme	Area (ha)	ESA	17201 ¹ (of which 3,724 is within SSSIs)	CS P4	12494 ²		29695
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CS P4	12494 ²													
	29695													

In order to quantify more accurately the contribution that agri-environment schemes make to this target, digital national data on the location of this habitat would be needed which are presently not available. MAFF is reliant upon other organisations making such information available and FRCA's Geographical Information Unit is working with EN to digitise the Lowland Grassland Inventory.

¹ estimate based on MAFF 1997 GSMS agreement data of key tiers in 3 ESAs only (see Target 2.). This habitat may also be present in other ESAs/tiers.

² estimate based on FRCA 1998 digitised agreement data filtered by dominant chalk and limestone geology below 250m OD.

³ estimate based on FRCA 1998 digitised agreement data (c.97% complete at time of this analysis).

4.1.2 Within SSSIs, initiate rehabilitation management for all significant stands of unimproved lowland calcareous grassland in unfavourable condition by 2005, with the aim of achieving favourable status wherever feasible by 2010.		✓			✓	
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CCW: Areas of this habitat within designated sites are probably under restoration management funded by WCA section 15 agreements and Tir Cymen agreements. Additional areas of lowland calcareous grassland entering the new Tir Gofal scheme have yet to be assessed. The South Gower Coast NNR includes lowland calcareous grassland as a qualifying feature. Data on the condition of these sites are not yet available, but will be provided by CCW's Common Standards Monitoring programme, which reports on a six yearly cycle.

MAFF/FRCA: *Total area of land under agreement in key ESA tiers aimed at lowland calcareous grassland that is also within SSSIs:*

ESA	Tier	Area ¹ (ha)
Cotswold Hills	1C	706 (provisional figure)
South Downs	1	1879
South Wessex Downs	1 pt.3	<u>1139</u>
		3724

¹ estimate based on 1997 MAFF GSMS agreement data. This habitat may also be present in other ESAs/tiers.

4.1.3 For stands at other localities, secure favourable condition over 30% of the resource by 2005, and as near to 100% as is practicable by 2015.		✓			✓	
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CAs: It is proposed that data on the condition of calcareous grassland will be sought by the conservation agencies as part of a UK-wide surveillance exercise.

CCW: Information on the condition of calcareous grassland entered into Tir Gofal will become available once the performance indicators are being recorded.

MAFF/FRCA: *Total area of land under agreement in key ESA tiers aimed at lowland calcareous grassland that is not within SSSIs:*

ESA	Tier	Area ¹ (ha)
Cotswold Hills	1C	8269 (provisional figure)
South Downs	1	3264
South Wessex Downs	1 pt.3	<u>1944</u>
		13477

¹ estimate based on 1997 MAFF GSMS agreement data. This habitat may also be present in other ESAs/tiers.

4.1.4 Attempt to re-establish 500 ha of lowland calcareous grassland of wildlife value at carefully targeted sites by 2010.		✓			✓	
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CCW: There appear to have been no or very few attempts at re-establishing lowland calcareous grassland in Wales.

MAFF/FRCA: Both ESA and CS schemes contain arable reversion measures which in some cases aim to re-establish lowland calcareous grassland.

Estimated area of arable reversion to extensive calcareous permanent grassland:

ESA	Tier	Area (ha)
Cotswold Hills	2	2179 ¹ (provisional figure)
South Downs	3A	832 ¹
South Wessex Downs	2 opt.1	698 ¹
CS (R1)		<u>4861</u> ²

- ^{1.} estimate based on MAFF 1997 GSMS agreement data. This habitat may also be present in other ESAs/tiers.
- ^{2.} estimate based on FRCA 1998 digitised agreement data filtered by dominant chalk and limestone geology below 250m OD.

Field 3: Proposed actions overview

Please list the proposed actions for the action plan, indicating in which country/region the action is applicable. For each new action please add new sequential paragraph numbers and action text. If the action is regarded as significant (please see guidance) indicate this in the box and provide further details in Table B. For actions not regarded as significant simply state if the action is ongoing or complete. Remember any action which is being dropped from the workplan will be regarded as significant for the first round of reporting.

Number and text	UK	E	NI	S	W	Action significant?	Action complete or ongoing? (Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)
5.1.1 Take account of the conservation requirements of calcareous grassland when developing and adjusting agri-environment schemes. Design measures to suit local needs and in particular target local concentrations of semi-natural calcareous grassland.		✓			✓	Yes	Ongoing.
<p>CCW: Since 1997, CCW has played a major role in the development of a new all-Wales whole-farm agri-environment scheme for Wales, Tir Gofal, which it is now operating on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales in collaboration with FRCA and Snowdonia National Park. Lowland calcareous grassland is explicitly recognised in the Tir Gofal habitat classification to ensure appropriate management, and to facilitate reporting against BAP targets. All lowland calcareous grassland habitat entering Tir Gofal is managed to maintain its interest, and there are voluntary options for creating additional areas of calcareous grassland from improved grassland precursors, and for converting semi-improved to unimproved calcareous grassland. Applicants to Tir Gofal are ranked according to criteria based on environmental gains that will be accrued from their entering the scheme. The presence of lowland calcareous grassland habitat on the farm contributes a positive score, and adoption of various voluntary enhancement options increases this score. The scheme is currently resource-limited, and CCW are recommending that the budget for the Tir Gofal programme should be increased.</p> <p>EN: Input into MAFF reviews of ESAs/ Countryside Stewardship.</p> <p>MAFF/FRCA: The requirements of BAP priority habitats were taken into account in recent (1996–98) quinquennial ESA scheme reviews and some tier options were modified accordingly. These are summarised in the BAP tables published in individual ESA Consultation Documents. One output of these reviews was the introduction of the Management Plan concept to the majority of ESAs which enables finer tuning of management to bring about conservation objectives. Following a consultation exercise carried out in early 1999, revised ESA environmental objectives and performance indicators have been developed which now incorporate key BAP habitats. CS scheme consultation is carried out at regular intervals to define regional targets which in many cases address regional BAP priorities.</p> <p>Soil Association (SA): Developing conservation standards with the Organic Production Standards. New recommendations are being developed for lowland and upland grasslands to be launched in Spring 2000.</p>							
5.1.2 Develop and implement strategies to restore and expand the cover of unimproved calcareous grassland, taking into account the need to ameliorate the negative effects of isolation, fragmentation, small patch size and scrub encroachment.		✓			✓	Yes	Ongoing.
<p>CCW/JNCC: Project to review methodologies for restoration/re-creation of semi-natural grassland commencing in 1999.</p> <p>EN: A consortium of partners led by EN has submitted a bid to HLF (<i>Magnificent Meadows: Treasures for the future</i>) covering five BAP priority habitats; objectives include support for grassland restoration and recreation projects. EN financial input (1999-2002) into 3 Local Authority-led projects aiming to ensure calcareous grasslands are brought into favourable condition in Pubeck (Dorset), South Downs (Sussex) and Torbay (Devon).</p> <p>MAFF/FRCA: Three ESAs have specific tiers for converting arable land into species-rich calcareous grassland (Cotswold Hills, South Downs & South Wessex Downs). Factors such as connectivity to existing habitat is taken into account in drawing up agreements. FRCA produced guidelines on arable reversion for ESA and CS Project Officers in 1999. These ESAs also have tiers aimed at restoring beneficial management on calcareous downland. The CS scheme also has extensive grassland management and arable reversion options that can be applied to calcareous grassland.</p>							
5.1.3 Support initiatives to conserve unimproved calcareous grassland within local government development plans and related policy, in forest management and	✓	✓			✓	Yes	Ongoing.

planting schemes and by special projects.							
<p>CCW: Area staff are active participants in a number of Local Biodiversity Action Plan Groups in Wales. Advice continues to be given to such groups and appropriate Unitary Authorities/NGOs over the location and management of lowland calcareous grassland. Advice on the extent and distribution of the resource is based on CCW's comprehensive Phase I habitat survey, supplemented by its more detailed Phase II survey information on the most important sites.</p> <p>EA: No cases since inception of plan, but EA would support on a case by case basis.</p> <p>EN: Continue to influence statutory planning policies to secure positive policies for safeguard/management of calcareous grassland.</p> <p>DETR: Consultation document on revised regional planning guidance contains proposals for reflecting biodiversity at the regional level.</p> <p>SA: Contribute to local and regional BAP planning, by identifying how organic farming can deliver against BAP objectives for lowland grassland.</p>							
5.1.4 Consider mechanisms by which lowland calcareous grassland within areas designated as common land can be brought under sympathetic management.		✓			✓	Yes	<i>Ongoing.</i>
<p>DETR: Common land issues will be given consideration in the light of the research which led to the publication of the Good Practice Guide on Managing the Use of Common Land.</p> <p>EN: Support for DETR/Countryside Agency common land initiatives. Popular leaflet on Common Land and its nature conservation value to be published by EN in 1999. This should help to support efforts to bring sites into favourable condition and raise profile of common land of biodiversity value.</p> <p>MAFF/FRCA: A small number of lowland calcareous grassland commons have been successfully brought into ESA and CS scheme agreement.</p>							
5.2.1 Keep the extent of SSSI coverage under review and notify further sites as necessary to fill significant gaps in coverage.		✓			✓	Yes	<i>Ongoing.</i>
<p>CCW: Continuing with a major programme of Phase II survey and comparative assessment of all types of lowland grassland in Wales. This survey and assessment feed directly into an active programme of SSSI designation. Since the plan was published in December 1998, one new SSSI with lowland calcareous grassland as an independently qualifying feature has been notified in the Gower peninsula.</p> <p>EN: SSSI Equilibrium project identified calcareous grassland sites which will be notified in due course. Between 1/1/99 & 24/8/99 5 new SSSIs containing lowland calcareous grassland have been notified.</p>							
5.2.2 Complete the designation of lowland calcareous grassland SPAs and SACs and prepare and implement management plans by 2004.		✓				Yes	<i>Ongoing.</i>
<p>EN: Aim to ensure all Natura 2000 sites managed appropriately by 2002.</p> <p>DETR: Full national list of Candidate SAC's submitted to the European Commission pending moderation of Atlantic region.</p>							
5.2.3 Secure the uptake of positive management with owners and occupiers of SSSIs where necessary to achieve favourable conservation conditions, and promote the uptake of such agreements on other wildlife sites.		✓			✓	Yes	<i>Ongoing.</i>
<p>CCW: Continues to enter into new WCA section 15 agreements with owners of lowland calcareous grassland SSSIs to prevent potentially damaging operations and wherever possible to enhance or restore their conservation interest.</p> <p>EN: Part of overall ongoing EN programme to conclude WES/positive agreements to support SSSI management. Reserves Enhancement Scheme (RES) provides grants to assist NGOs manage SSSI nature reserves. Ongoing EN programme to complete Site Management Statements/Plans for all SSSIs.</p>							
5.2.4 Secure the positive management of lowland calcareous grassland sites within the ownership or management of the Ministry of Defence and voluntary conservation bodies, and draw up site management plans with clear targets for this habitat and associated priority species for these sites by 2004.		✓			✓	Yes	<i>Ongoing.</i>
<p>CCW: Engaged in producing minimum format site management plans for all SSSIs by 2004.</p> <p>EN: Forms part of an overall ongoing EN programme to complete Site Management Statements/Plans for all SSSIs.</p> <p>EN/RSPB: Input into ILMPs for MOD training areas, notably Salisbury Plain but no specific targets yet agreed</p>							

for this habitat and associated priority species.							
5.2.5 Consider the need to manage further key sites as National Nature Reserves and, where appropriate, support acquisition and management by conservation organisations.		✓			✓	Yes	<i>Ongoing.</i>
CCW: Identification of a series of key calcareous grassland sites in Wales will follow completion of the Phase II lowland grassland survey. EN: Active programme to increase the area of NNRs managed by approved bodies and EN.							
5.2.6 Encourage the development of new management techniques where required, eg for weed control, and the setting up of local farm networks, eg for livestock provision, that help to ensure sympathetic management.		✓			✓	Yes	<i>Ongoing.</i>
EN: ENPACT project continues to develop solutions to practical land management problems (eg weed control). One of the aims of the HLF application (see 5.1.2) is to develop local farm networks. Hampshire County Council with EN's support have obtained funding for the first pilot regional grazing project. EN/SA and others: Grazing Animals Project (GAP). This is a consortium project aimed at facilitating the implementation of sustainable grazing management on key wildlife sites. Also development of Regional Grazing Schemes. MAFF: The Conservation Management Division (CMD) conducts a programme of grassland research under two Assessment Units (AU). The "Species-rich grasslands" AU (BD14) has the principle scientific objective of developing practical, cost-effective guidelines on the restoration, conservation and enhancement of grassland biodiversity which can be broadly applied to improve the effectiveness of the ESA and CS schemes. R&D Project "The control of injurious weeds in herb-rich grassland in ESAs" - Silsoe Research Institute, completed 6/97. R&D Project "The effect of grazing management on creeping thistle and other injurious weeds, and the integration of grazing with weed control measures" - out to tender 8/99. It is likely that other MAFF research will also be relevant to this action.							
5.2.7 Contribute to the implementation of relevant species action plans for rare and declining species associated with lowland calcareous grassland in conjunction with the relevant species steering group.		✓			✓	No	<i>Ongoing</i>
5.3.1 Encourage, develop and disseminate best practice for unimproved calcareous grassland management, in particular the integration of conservation management into agricultural practice.		✓			✓	Yes	<i>Ongoing.</i>
EN/WT: 2nd edition of Lowland Grassland Management Handbook published in May 1999; has involved advisory inputs from CAs and others. EN: Funds allocated for 2000/2001 to produce a colour leaflet outlining nature conservation significance of calcareous grassland etc aimed at policy makers, land managers and general public. EN-led Downland Practitioner's Network continues to provide an information source/contact directory to help inform best practice management of chalk grassland sites. MAFF: Continues to provide funding for FWAG and ADAS to carry out free initial conservation advice visits to farmers in England. FRCA: Operates a substantive in-house training programme for agri-environment scheme Project Officers and their FRCA Specialist Advisers, who advise landowners and managers in the course of their work.							
5.3.2 Produce and disseminate guidelines for appropriate methods and approaches to establish new stands of lowland calcareous grassland of wildlife value.		✓			✓	Yes	<i>Ongoing</i>
CCW/JNCC: Project to review methodologies for restoration/re-creation of semi-natural grassland commencing in 1999. EN: 2nd edition of Lowland Grassland Management Handbook published in May 1999. This contains a chapter on grassland creation.							
5.3.3 Encourage the use and establishment of private and public demonstration sites, with special linkage to agri-environment schemes.		✓			✓	No	<i>Ongoing.</i>
EN: Corporate objective to increase use of NNRs to raise awareness of nature conservation issues, for research and to demonstrate best practice. MAFF: Co-operates with initiatives led by other organisations to disseminate information on environmentally sensitive farming in agri-environment schemes. Farm visits are also held for current or prospective agreement holders in both ESA							

and CS schemes. SA: Developing a demonstration farm network, including chalk downland site in Wilts.							
5.4.1 Promote conservation and management of Special Areas of Conservation as part of a European network.		✓			✓	No	<i>Ongoing</i>
See 5.2.2 CCW: CCW has developed monitoring protocols for Great Orme's Head cSAC as part of a LIFE-funded demonstration project.							
5.4.2 Recommend favourable measures for unimproved calcareous grassland conservation during future negotiations in Europe to revise the Common Agricultural Policy.		✓			✓	Yes	<i>Ongoing.</i>
MAFF: Individual habitat conservation concerns are generally too detailed to be considered at the level of Member State negotiations on the CAP. However, the UK Government has been a major advocate of increasing the proportion of the CAP budget linked to environmental benefits, and English agri-environment schemes will continue to take account of BAP habitats under the new Rural Development Regulation. EN/CCW: Forms part of continuing agricultural policy advocacy.							
5.4.3 Review representation of lowland calcareous grasslands in other European countries, to determine their international extent and status so that the international status of the UK resource can be determined.		✓			✓	No	<i>Not started.</i>
5.4.4 Participate in initiatives to develop and strengthen measures for conservation of the habitat in Europe and elsewhere.		✓			✓	No	<i>Ongoing.</i>
5.4.5 Disseminate information about the UK's experience in conservation of the resource in international literature and at conferences and take opportunities to learn from organisations in Europe and elsewhere.		✓			✓	No	<i>Ongoing.</i>
FRCA: Paper on "Agri-environment schemes and their contribution to biodiversity in England" published in Journal of Applied Ecology, 1998. Senior FRCA staff attend relevant international conferences. JNCC/CAs: Grassland survey review paper in <i>Grass and Forage Science</i> 1999.							
5.5.1 Contribute information to a World Wide Web based catalogue of survey information as a means of improving access to information on lowland calcareous grasslands.		✓			✓	No	<i>Not started.</i>
5.5.2 Undertake vegetation survey and assessment of lowland calcareous grasslands in parts of UK with poor survey coverage, using standardised and repeatable methodology.		✓			✓	Yes	<i>Complete.</i>
CCW: Currently nearing completion of a Wales-wide programme of Phase II lowland grassland survey. This follows completion of a comprehensive Phase I habitat survey of lowland Wales. Some 73 sites with lowland calcareous grassland have been surveyed at Phase II level. EN: Survey coverage is very good. No further <u>major</u> field survey is planned in the near future. JNCC/CAs: Project to combine English and Scottish with Welsh grassland survey data to form UK grassland data-base (1999).							
5.5.3 Formulate quantified and spatially referenced targets to expand the total cover of lowland calcareous grassland of wildlife value across the UK, with particular emphasis on amelioration of habitat fragmentation, by 2005.		✓			✓	Yes	<i>Ongoing.</i>
JNCC: Overall HAP targets for creation broken down to Country level. CCW: Currently commencing an exercise to aid disaggregation of Welsh targets to local BAP areas.							

EN: Broken down targets to Natural Area level.							
5.5.4 Review research needs into the conservation and restoration management of the habitat and the integration of this with agriculture, to identify gaps in knowledge. Commission and undertake new research as appropriate.		✓			✓	Yes	<i>Ongoing.</i>
<p>EN: Research needs identified for lowland grassland as a whole up until 2000 in a strategy published in 1996 - this is kept under constant review.</p> <p>Review of the use of organic manures on lowland grassland pastures (includes calcareous grassland) in the UK commissioned in 1999. Report due March 2000.</p> <p>Analysis of translocation data for Magnesian limestone grassland at Thrislington, Co. Durham completed and report will be published in 1999/2000</p> <p>Funds earmarked for input into 3 year MAFF- led project on utilization of unimproved grasslands in sustainable livestock systems commencing 1999 or 2000.</p> <p>MAFF: R&D Project: "Chalk grassland: enhancement of plant and invertebrate diversity through Environmental Land management Schemes" - CABI, due to end on 31/08/02. MAFF CMD's programme of research now incorporates a previously separate programme on "Issues arising from the UK biodiversity steering group report" which was last reviewed in 1997. This does not currently include any projects directly relevant to calcareous grassland. Other MAFF research projects may also be relevant to this action.</p> <p>SA: Ongoing research on biodiversity and organic farming.</p>							
5.5.5 Commission and support research on establishment and expansion of species-rich calcareous grassland, covering methodology and landscape ecological components.		✓			✓	Yes	<i>Ongoing.</i>
<p>CCW/JNCC: Commissioning review of grassland restoration and re-creation methodologies.</p> <p>MAFF: R&D Project: "Methods of accelerating development of chalk grassland on ex-arable land" - CABI, due to end 31/3/00.</p>							
5.5.6 Encourage and support conservation studies on scarce animal and plant taxa associated with unimproved calcareous grasslands with particular relevance to amelioration of damaging impacts from habitat depletion and fragmentation.		✓			✓	No	<i>Ongoing.</i>
5.5.7 Evaluate the need for impact assessment of the effect of atmospheric nutrient deposition and climate change on community composition, and commission research as appropriate.	✓	✓			✓	No	<i>Ongoing.</i>
<p>CAs: 2 year inter-agency project (commenced 1999) investigating the impact of climate change on the nature conservation resources of Britain & Ireland.</p> <p>EA: Ongoing work with critical loads and modelling to determine nutrient loading.</p> <p>DETR: The effects of atmospheric pollution were considered in Chapter 6 of <i>Current status and prospects for key habitats in England, Part 2 Calcareous grassland landscapes.</i></p>							
5.5.8 Develop and implement appropriate surveillance and monitoring programmes to assess progress towards achieving action plan targets.		✓		✓	✓	Yes	<i>Ongoing.</i>
<p>CCW: Trialling of grassland condition assessment under way (see EN below). Information on the condition of calcareous grassland entered into Tir Gofal will become available once the performance indicators are being recorded.</p> <p>EN: 1) 2 year project led by EN commenced in 1999 to design and implement a sample survey to enable reporting on HAP lowland grassland targets (4.1 & 4.3) for the UK. 2) EN's programme to produce conservation objectives (condition assessment protocols) for SSSI interest features including all lowland grasslands is due for completion by 3/2000. A validation research project comparing visual assessments of attributes with quantitative measurements is currently being completed and will be published shortly. The English Nature Site Information System (ENSIS) is able to produce data for BAP reporting for SSSI targets and actions eg on amount of sites in favourable/unfavourable condition. ENSIS is continuing to be developed and populated with data.</p> <p>MAFF/FRCA: Agri-environment scheme agreements have been subject of monitoring on a sample basis since their inception. The agri-environment scheme monitoring strategy is currently being reviewed.</p>							
5.5.9 Commission marketing studies into ways to promote agricultural products		✓		✓	✓	No	<i>Not started.</i>

<p>from lowland calcareous grassland.</p> <p>5.6.1 Seek opportunities to present lowland calcareous grassland conservation in the scientific press and popular media.</p>		✓		✓	✓	No	Ongoing.
<p>FRCA: Paper on "Agri-environment schemes and their contribution to biodiversity in England" published in <i>Journal of Applied Ecology</i>, 1998.</p> <p>JNCC/CAs: Grassland survey review paper in <i>Grass and Forage Science</i> 1999, with estimated figures on extent for each of the major plant communities.</p>							
<p>5.6.2 Encourage appropriate public access for observation and enjoyment of lowland calcareous grassland.</p>		✓		✓	✓	No	Ongoing.
<p>CCW: Tir Gofal includes measures to encourage new public access, where appropriate on agreement land.</p> <p>MAFF/FRCA: Both CS and ESA schemes include measures to encourage new public access on agreement land.</p>							

Field 4: Assessment of status

Please tick the appropriate category to indicate the assessment of status of the species or habitat, for each country/region where appropriate, and provide a statement supporting the category selected.

	Not appropriate	Recovered	Signs of recovery	No change	Declining	Lost	Insufficient information
UK							
England							✓
Northern Ireland	✓						
Scotland	✓						
Wales							✓

Brief text description justifying assessment of status: (*~ no more than 100 words for each country/region*)

UK: The country agencies are currently reviewing their requirements for surveillance data on loss and degradation of semi-natural grassland vegetation.

England: EN is able to report on the condition of SSSIs, including losses/damage, but at present this is not available for the wider countryside, hence the inter agency sample survey project described in 5.5.8. Lowland meadow sites continue to be entered into agri-environment schemes, although it is not possible to quantify the area of habitat in positive management at this time beyond the figures given under the targets in 4.1.1.

Wales: A variety of statutory and non-statutory mechanisms undoubtedly continue to contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of calcareous grassland in Wales, including land acquisition, reserve management, SSSI designation, WCA section 15 agreements, and a range of agri-environment schemes. There is continuing loss and degradation, especially from agricultural improvement, neglect and quarrying.

Field 5: Summary statement

Please provide an overview of plan implementation, including new factors affecting the species or habitat which will accelerate or constrain progress towards meeting of the targets. Where a factor results in new action(s) please cross-reference back to the relevant numbers under Field 3 and Table B.

The HAP was published in December 1998 so that significant new progress towards achieving the plan targets, which include conservation, restoration and expansion objectives, can hardly be expected at this stage. Of the different forms of lowland grassland, most attention in recent years has probably been focused upon calcareous pastures, but loss and degradation has continued, especially from agricultural improvement, abandonment and quarrying. The established protected site and agri-environment programmes have undoubtedly made good progress in stemming such losses. This HAP has already had the welcome benefit of concentrating still more attention on calcareous grasslands, and conservation and reporting procedures are being adapted to take the habitat more fully into account.

In conjunction with other grassland plans, this HAP has stimulated various research initiatives to enhance understanding and application of appropriate management, restoration and re-creation techniques. In addition, a bid to HLF to secure more favourable management of semi-natural lowland grasslands is under consideration. Further resources will be required to move more confidently towards plan objectives, and future changes in agricultural policy need to assimilate HAP objectives.

There is a need for appropriate monitoring protocols (adopting relevant habitat classifications) to be put in place, and EN is leading a project to develop time-series data gathering on the cover and condition of calcareous and other lowland grasslands. A clear commitment for funding will be required in order to report progress towards HAP targets, and substantial development of survey databases, including spatial

components, is badly needed.

The organisations that have contributed to this report include the Statutory Conservation Agencies (CCW, EN, JNCC), Government Departments and their Agencies (DETR, MAFF/FRCA (England)), other Statutory Agencies (EA) and some NGOs (RSPB, Soil Association). Improved reporting participation needs to be considered through a proposed new UK Overarching Lowland Grassland HAP Steering Group. Approval for establishing this group and provision of appropriate Terms of Reference from UKBG is seen as a high priority.

Field 6: Signing off

Please 'sign off' the form below to confirm that steering group members or key contacts have been consulted and agreed the information provided.

Contact details	Lead Partner	Contact Point
Name	Richard Jefferson	
Organisation	English Nature	
Assessment date (dd/mm/yy)	08/10/99	

Completed forms should be submitted to JNCC

*Biodiversity Information Service
 Joint Nature Conservation Committee
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