



Floodplain Grassland. Communities and Monitoring

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Summary

- Floodplain Grassland Communities associated with SSSIs
- Monitoring of SSSI site condition



Selection of Grassland For Biological SSSIs



- All lowland grasslands of high botanical nature conservation value are considered “priority habitat” and can be considered for selection as SSSI
- They are broadly defined by NVC type



Communities of High Botanical Nature Conservation Value



- MG4 *Alopecurus pratensis* – *Sanguisorba officinalis* grassland
- MG8 *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Caltha palustris* grassland
- (MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland)
- MG7c Species rich *Lolium perenne* ley
- MG14 *Carex nigra* – *Agrostis stolonifera* – *Senecio aquaticus* grassland
- MG15 *Alopecurus pratensis* – *Poa trivialis* – *Cardamine pratensis* grassland



Communities of Lower Botanical Nature Conservation Interest



- MG6 *Lolium perenne*-*Cynosurus cristatus* grassland
- MG9 *Holcus lanatus*-*Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland
- MG10 *Holcus lanatus*-*Juncus effusus* rush-pasture
- MG11 *Festuca rubra*-*Agrostis stolonifera*-*Potentilla anserina* grassland
- MG13 *Agrostis stolonifera*-*Alopecurus geniculatus* grassland
- MG16 *Agrostis stolonifera*-*Eleocharis palustris* inundation grassland



Protection

- How much of this habitat is protected?
 - 69% of known resource of MG4 is SSSI
 - 84% of known resource of MG8 is SSSI
- 1,420ha of Floodplain meadow fall within Special Areas of Conservation



Condition Assessment

- Why do we assess our SSSIs?
- What are we monitoring?
- How often do we assess a site?



Condition Assessment

Grassland Attributes:

- Extent: loss, damage and natural change
- grass/herb ratio
- positive indicator species/taxa
- negative indicator species/taxa
- Sward structure: height, litter and bare ground



Condition Assessment

Condition Categories

- Favourable
- Unfavourable Recovering
- Unfavourable No Change
- Unfavourable Declining
- Partially Destroyed and Destroyed



Changes to Condition Assessment

- Whole Feature Assessment approach
- Data collection
- Use of technology
- Use of third party data
- Changes implemented from 1st April 2023





Feature



MG4 grassland



Narrow-leaved
Water-dropwort



Mousetail

Data Collection

Three types of assessment:

- Structured walk with pre-assigned stops
- Rapid assessment
- Random Sampling Approach



Ambition



- Environmental Improvement Plan sets out interim targets for our assessment on SSSIs.
- Updating the evidence on site condition and required action to maintain or improve the condition of all 4,128 sites over the next five years
- All SSSIs will have an up-to-date condition assessment by 31 January 2028



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