
Condition Assessment – Modified Grassland (Clay Soil)

Site Name: land adjacent to gates Lock House
Date of Survey: 2.3.26
Surveyor: Nicholas Sutton
Habitat Type (UKHab): Modified Grassland (g4)
Soil Type: Clay (slow-draining, seasonally waterlogged in winter)

1. Overview

The surveyed area comprises approximately **0.1 hectares** of modified grassland situated on heavy clay soils. The sward is dominated by competitive grasses with a low diversity of forbs, reflecting a history of agricultural improvement and periodic grazing/mowing.

2. Structural Indicators

- **Sward Height & Structure:** Uniform height (10–20 cm) due to recent grazing/mowing; limited tussock formation.
 - **Bare Ground:** <5% cover, mostly along livestock paths.
 - **Litter Layer:** Thin (<1 cm), indicating regular disturbance.
 - **Scrub/Tree Encroachment:** Minimal (<2% cover).
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3. Botanical Composition

- **Dominant Species:** Perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*).
 - **Other Frequent Species:** White clover (*Trifolium repens*), meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*).
 - **Indicator Species (Lowland Meadow / Neutral Grassland):** Present at low frequency — e.g., common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*).
 - **Invasive/Negative Indicator Species:** Creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) occasional; docks (*Rumex spp.*) rare.
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4. Condition Assessment (BNG Criteria)

Criterion	Observation	Pass/Fail
1. Positive Indicator Species (≥ 6 spp. per 4 m ²)	Average 3–4 spp.	Fail

Criterion	Observation	Pass/Fail
2. Sward Structure Variation	Limited variation	Fail
3. Evidence of Damage (poaching, nutrient enrichment)	Localised poaching near gateways; nutrient enrichment indicated by ryegrass dominance	Fail
4. Invasive Species Cover (<5%)	Pass	Pass
5. Bare Ground (<10%)	Pass	Pass
6. Scrub Cover (<5%)	Pass	Pass

5. Overall Condition

Condition Score: *Poor*

The habitat fails to meet the minimum thresholds for *Moderate* condition due to low botanical diversity, uniform sward structure, and signs of nutrient enrichment.

6. Management Recommendations

- Reduce nutrient inputs (fertiliser/manure) to encourage species diversity.
 - Introduce varied cutting/grazing regime to create structural heterogeneity.
 - Consider overseeding with native wildflower mix suited to clay soils.
 - Monitor annually for changes in species composition and structure.
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