

# TIP SHEET **ACRES** Low Input Grassland on Peat SCORECARD

**TIPS** Start the 'W' walk a few steps out from unrepresentative areas such as field margins or pinch-points.

Ensure that the field boundaries are assessed at relevant points along the 'W'.

Note any comments or management actions which may be useful to the CP team in the section provided in the app.

Positive indicators have been selected as they indicate semi-natural grasslands which have received little or no fertiliser, herbicide or other agricultural improvement.

Plant leaves tend to overlap; look beneath other plants when recording cover of positive indicators.

Not all positive indicators will be in flower at the same time, look for leaves as well as flowers.

Positive indicators may occur throughout, in clumps or sparsely (e.g. orchids)

Do not spend excessive amounts of time in one area or nice hummocks/corners as this isn't representative and is not the protocol that will be followed during an inspection.

## A2 Species cover thresholds

### Low: <5% of Sward.

Encountered rarely or every 5-10 steps at best. Occurring in small patches/very scattered across field. Not highly visible when looking down on the sward (you must search to find) and missing from most of the field. Majority of the sward appears grassy.

### Medium: 6-20% of sward.

Encountered occasionally (every 3-5 steps). Occurrence is scattered/in patches across field. Occasional occurrence when looking down or across the sward. Much of the sward appears grassy.

### High: 20-30% of sward.

Encountered regularly or with almost every step. Good cover of positive indicators (several) when looking down on or across the sward. Parts of the sward may still appear grassy.

## B1 Cover of Wetland Species Thresholds

(I.e. Cover of the wetland indicator species highlighted in **\*bold**)

**Low: 0-9% cover.** These species occur in small isolated wet patches or are scattered throughout field. Not highly visible in the sward (i.e you must look to find them). The overall appearance of the sward can be described as generally grassy.

**Moderate: 10-19% cover.** The wetland indicator species that are present are found scattered in patches over the entire field. The majority of the sward appears grassy.

**High: >20% cover.** Good cover of wetland indicator species when looking down on or across the sward. May still be missing from large patches of the field. Only parts of the sward appear grassy with a good diversity of flowering species / broadleaved herbs and leaf shapes present throughout the rest of the sward.

## B2 Presence of artificial drainage thresholds

Both perimeter or internal drains should be scored. Faster, freely flowing drains will score worse than blocked or slow to non-flowing drains. Channelised or highly modified natural streams should not be included in this assessments.

**Functional:** Deep drains that are present around/within the field. These will be free-flowing, largely unvegetated and unblocked. The water table within the drain is >1m lower than the drain surface.

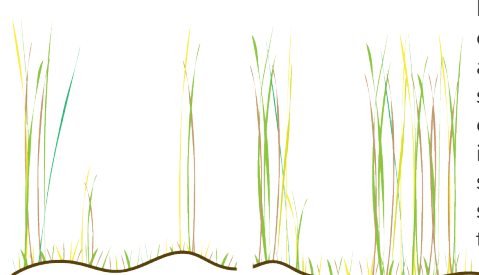
**Predominantly functional:** Drains are present within/around the field. However, the flow within these drains is predominantly impeded by vegetation or dams. The water table is typically <1m and >30cm below the drain surface.

**Non-functional:** Drains are absent or non-functioning with no flow, high vegetation cover and a water level <30cm below the drain surface.

## A4(a) Vegetation structure - grazed field only



**Poor structure:** Short or rank throughout with limited variation.



**Moderate structure:** 25-50% sward is short with tall patches OR 25-50% is tall sward with litter present.

Between 25-50% of the field: tall and/or short sward with occasional intermediate sward height spread patchily through the field.

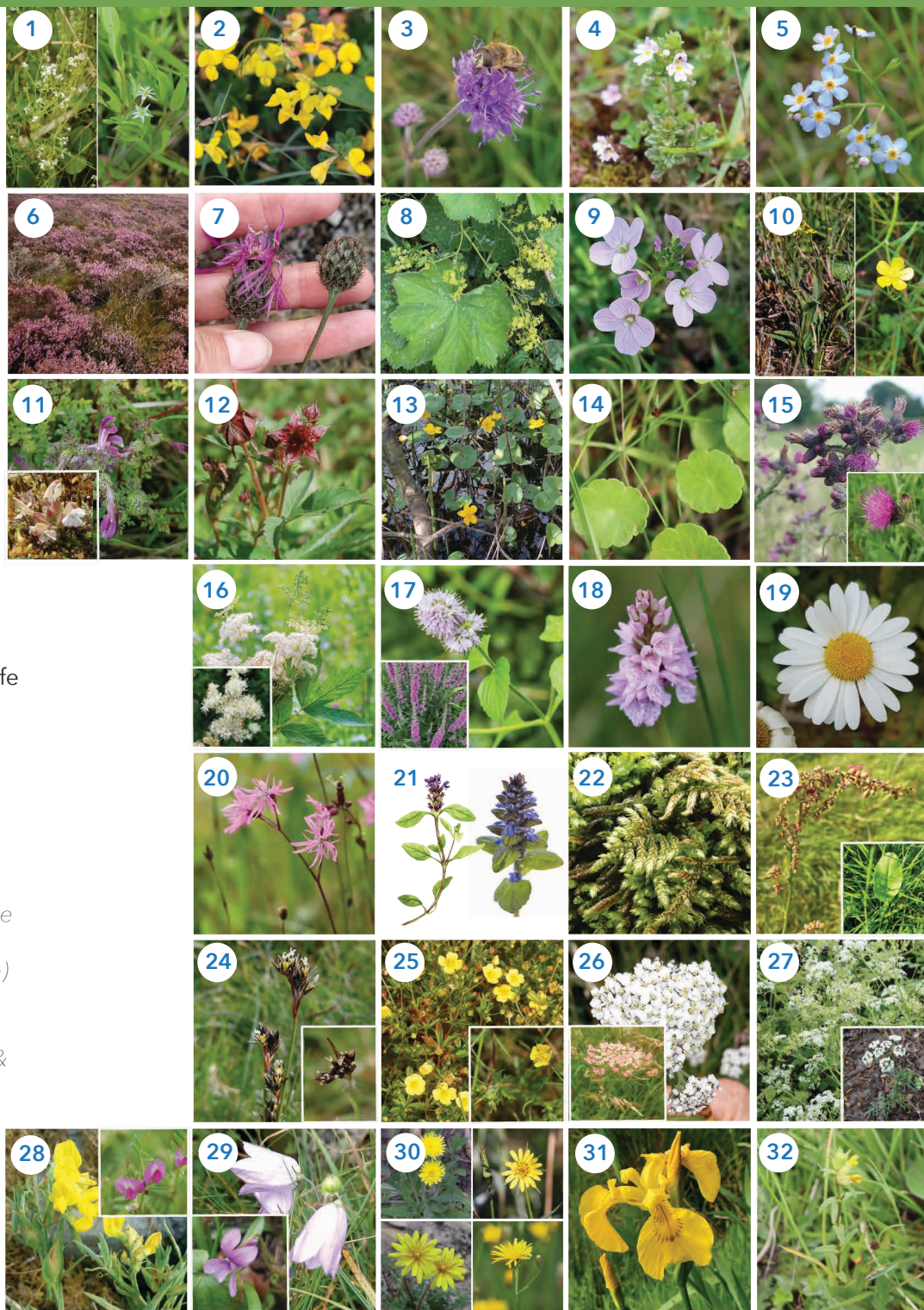


**Good structure:** >50% of sward is intermediate height. Variety of tall/shorter areas is present. Some areas are dominated by grasses or sedges.



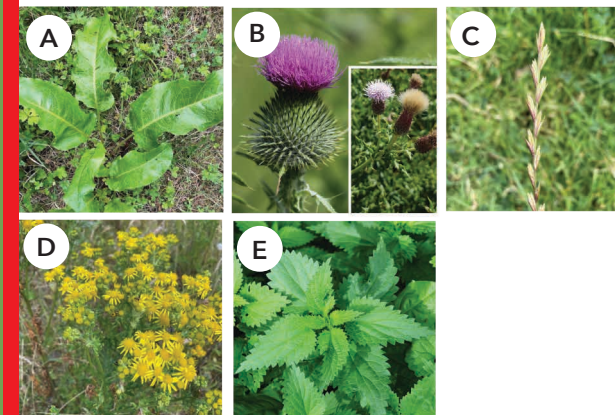
## Positive Indicator species

1. Bedstraws & stitchworts
2. Bird's-foot-trefoil
3. **\*Devils bit scabious**
4. Eyebrights
5. **\*Forget-me-nots**
6. Heathers/Ling
7. Knapweeds (*Common & Greater*)
8. Lady's mantle
9. **\*Lady's Smock**
10. **\*Lesser spearwort**
11. **\*Louseworts** (*Common & Greater*)
12. **\*Marsh cinquefoil**
13. **\*Marsh marigold**
14. **\*Marsh pennywort**
15. **\*Marsh thistle or Meadow thistle**
16. **\*Meadowsweet**
17. **\*Mints** (*all*) or Purple loosestrife
18. Orchids (*all*)
19. Oxeye daisy
20. **\*Ragged robin**
21. Selfheal or Bugle
22. **\*Sphagnum & Branched mosses**
23. Sorrel (*Sheep & Common*)
24. Small Rushes (*Woodrush, Spike rush, Heath rush*)
25. Tormentil (*Common & English*)
26. **\*Umbels large** (*Angelica, Valerian, Hogweed*)
27. Umbels small (*Pignut, Yarrow & Wild carrot*)
28. Vetches/vetchlings
29. Violets (*all*), Harebell
30. Yellow composites (*Cats ears, Hawkweeds, Hawkbits & Goats-beard*) - *not* dandelion
31. **\*Yellow flag iris**
32. Yellow rattle (*Hay rattle*)



## Negative species

- A. Docks (*NOT small sorrels*)
- B. Thistles (*creeping & spear*)
- C. Perennial Rye-grass
- D. Ragwort
- E. Nettles



These pictures display the flowering forms of different plant species which are positive indicators of well managed semi-natural grasslands which receive limited fertilizer, herbicide, or other agricultural improvements

During the "W" walk, of the field, identify and tick off each positive indicator species/group present, excluding the field margins. Higher cover of positive indicator species/group is associated with better quality semi-natural grasslands, unless one or a few species dominate, which can indicate sub-optimal quality.

Cover of a plant is based on the visible above ground parts, i.e. leaves, flowers, and stems.