Semi-natural Grassland Scorecard

Co-funded by the European Union

Farmer ID:	Surveyor:	**Total Score** *(A+B+C)* **/100**
Plot number:	Survey date:	

Dominant grassland type: Wet grassland ☐ Dry grassland ☐

Soil type: Mineral soil ☐ Peat soil ☐

Is this plot adjacent to an EPA mapped river/stream? Y/N

If yes, describe river flow: Low ☐ Normal ☐ Above normal ☐

A Ecological integrity

Total Score A *(sum of A1 to A4)*: **/60**

A1 What is the number of **positive indicators** in the plot? Tick all positive indicators below.
Note all positive indicators present as you walk a 'W' through the plot.
** Refers to wetland indicator species (see B1 overleaf)*

Low: 0–4	0	High: 9–12	10
Moderate: 5–8	5	Very high: 13+	15

Positive indicators:
(tick those present)

- ☐ Bedstraws & Stitchworts
- ☐ Bird's-foot-trefoil
- ☐ Carline thistle
- ☐ Cowslips & Primrose
- ☐ Eyebrights
- ☐ Forget-me-nots
- ☐ Heathers
- ☐ Kidney vetch
- ☐ Knapweeds
- ☐ Lady's mantle
- ☐ Lady's smock *(Cuckooflower)*
- ☐ Lesser spearwort
- ☐ Louseworts (*Common & Marsh*)
- ☐ Marsh cinquefoil
- ☐ Marsh marigold
- ☐ Marsh pennywort
- ☐ Marsh thistle
- ☐ Meadowsweet
- ☐ Meadow thistle
- ☐ Mints (*all species*)
- ☐ Orchids
- ☐ Ox-eye daisy
- ☐ Purple loosestrife
- ☐ Ragged robin
- ☐ Scabious (*Devil's-bit & field*)
- ☐ *Sedges
- ☐ Self-heal & Bugle
- ☐ Sorrel (*Common & Sheep's*)
- ☐ Small rushes (*Spike, Woodrushes, Heath*)
- ☐ Sphagnum & branched mosses
- ☐ Tormentil (*Common & English*)
- ☐ Umbels large (*and/or Common Valerian, Common hogweed*)
- ☐ Umbels small (*Pignut, Yarrow, Wild carrot*)
- ☐ Vetches & vetchlings
- ☐ Violets (*all species*); Harebell
- ☐ Wild Thyme
- ☐ Yellow Composites (*Cat's ear, Hawkweeds, Hawkbits & Goat's beard - not Dandelion*)
- ☐ Yellow flag iris
- ☐ Yellow rattle (*Hay rattle*)

A2 What is the cover of **all positive indicators** (*listed above*) throughout the entire plot?
Cover is the proportion of the plot taken up by all positive indicators present.

Low: None present or you can take several steps without encountering any positive indicators at all.	0
Moderate: You encounter a positive indicator with every few steps taken.	5
High: You encounter positive indicators with every step taken.	10
Very high: You encounter multiple different positive indicators with every step taken (and in between steps).	15

A3 What is the combined cover of **negative indicator/weeds** throughout the plot? *(tick if present)*

High >25%: Occurring in dense patches or abundant throughout the field. Very visible in the sward.	-20
Moderate: 5–25%: Occurring in medium to large patches in the field. Readily visible in the sward.	-10
Low <5%: None or scattered or small clumps of negative indicators. Where present, cover should be less than 5%.	5

- ☐ **Docks** (*NOT small sorrels*)
- ☐ **Thistles** (*Creeping & spear*)
- ☐ **Perennial ryegrass**
- ☐ **Ragwort**
- ☐ **Nettles**

A4 Vegetation Structure. Note: If grassland is primarily grazed use A4(a); OR, if grassland is cut for hay or silage, use A4(b). *Refer to the guidance for sward quality details.*

A4(a) What is the **vegetation structure in grasslands** that are **PRIMARILY GRAZED**?

Over-grazed: Sward short throughout with little variation in height of vegetation. Few plants in flower	-10
Moderate (over-grazed): Mostly short vegetation. >50% offield has short sward with occasional to frequent patches of tallvegetation.	10
Good: Field sward medium height throughout with positive indicators flowering. Areas of taller and /or shorter sward also occur	25
Moderate (under-grazed): Mostly tall vegetation. 50–75%of field has tall sward. Litter and dead vegetation occurring.	15
Under-grazed: Rank vegetation present throughout the field	-10

OR

A4(b) What is the **vegetation structure in grasslands** that are **PRIMARILY CUT FOR HAY or SILAGE**

Poor structure: No field margins present. Field topped right up to the field boundary line. No grazing of after-grass. Little or no variation in sward height.	-10
Moderate structure: Narrow field margins present (~1m). Low number of flowering plants and vegetation structure within the field margin poor to moderate. Some grazing of after-grass providing some structural variation.	15
Good structure: Wide field margins present (2m+) and or good headlands. Grazing of after-grass takes place providing variations in height of sward; sward does not look uniform in appearance.	25

B Hydrological integrity

Total Score B *(sum of B1 to B3)*: **/40**

B1 To what extent are there any **surface artificial drainage** features within the plot? *Assess the WORST 30 m of drain in the plot.*

Functional: Drains predominantly free flowing (though may be dry at the time of survey), largely unvegetated and unblocked.	-20
Part functional: Drains present but flow is partially impeded (by vegetation etc.).	10
Non-functional: Drains absent or present but non-functioning. No flow, highly vegetated and/or dammed.	40

B2 To what extent are there any **subsurface drainage** features within the plot?

Present and functional	-30
Absent or present but non-functioning	0

C Threats & pressures (*C5–C8 only applicable where plot adjoins stream/river)

Total Score C *(sum of C1 to C7*)*:

C1 Is there any **evidence of damaging activities** to habitat or vegetation throughout the plot?

High: Damage occurring across a large area (≥21%) or of a serious nature if confined	-30
Moderate: Damage occurring across a moderate area (≥6-20%) or of a moderate nature if confined.	-20
Low: Damage occurring. across a small area (≤5%) or of a minor nature if confined.	-10
None: No damaging activities.	0

Damaging activities: *(tick relevant and describe in comments)*

- ☐ Damage from supplementary feeding
- ☐ Inappropriate herbicide use
- ☐ Quarrying
- ☐ Burning
- ☐ Dumping/rubbish
- ☐ Removal of mature scrub/trees
- ☐ Other *(please specify)*

C2 What is the extent of **bare soil & erosion** throughout the plot?

High: Excessive areas of bare soil within the body of the field. Bare soil may also be extending out significantly from the main feed sites and/or water troughs and/or livestock access points, where poaching evident. Significant rutting and soil disturbance caused by vehicle/tractor access.	-30
Moderate: Bare soil mainly along regularly used stock routes or congregation areas, with minor soil loss occurring at a few points. Bare soil may extend a short distance beyond the main feed site and/or water points and/or livestock access points. Minor rutting and soil disturbance caused by occasional vehicle/tractor access may be present.	-10
Low: Bare soil more or less restricted to regular stock paths, 'pinch' points & small congregation areas. No soil loss.	0

C3 What is the cover of **non-native invasive species** throughout the plot?

High: Abundant. Some forming dense clumps, many seedlings.	-20
Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present.	-10
Low: Scattered. Plants mostly small and not flowering.	-5
None: No non-native invasive species present.	0

Non-native invasive species: *(tick if present)*
- ☐ Giant hogweed
- ☐ Giant rhubarb
- ☐ Himalayan balsam
- ☐ Himalayan honeysuckle
- ☐ Himalayan knotweed
- ☐ Japanese knotweed
- ☐ Montbretia
- ☐ Rhododendron
- ☐ Self-sown conifers
- ☐ Other (*please specify*):

C4 What is the cover of **bracken** throughout the plot?

High: Very dense stands of bracken covering over half or more of the field, forming closed canopy.	-10
Moderate: Bracken forming dense stands covering parts of the field, mostly forming closed canopy.	-5
Low: Bracken absent or some scattered fronds and none forming closed canopy. Can include some isolated small patches or some larger patches on steep slopes.	0

C5 How **stable** is the riverbank?
Assess bank face (see guidance).

Poor: Bank unstable of loose soil, which is easily disturbed. Significant areas of banks cut away, undercut or showing erosion scars.	-10
Moderate: Bank moderately stable (not easily disturbed). Infrequent small areas of erosion mostly healed over.	-5
Good: Bank largely stable, held firmly by grasses, shrubs and tree roots.	0

C6 What is the cover of **non-native invasive species** along the riverside habitat?
(tick if present)Assess the 20 m from top of riverbank or water's edge (see guidance).

High: Abundant. Some forming dense clumps, many seedlings	-30
Moderate: Frequent. Some flowering, many seedlings present	-20
Low: Scattered. Plants mostly small and not flowering	-10
None: No non-native invasive species present	0

Non-native invasive species: *(tick if present)*
- ☐ Giant hogweed
- ☐ Giant rhubarb
- ☐ Himalayan balsam
- ☐ Himalayan honeysuckle
- ☐ Himalayan knotweed
- ☐ Japanese knotweed
- ☐ Montbretia
- ☐ Rhododendron
- ☐ Self-sown conifers
- ☐ Other (*please specify*):

C7 Is there any evidence of **damaging activities/bare soil** along the riverside habitat?
Assess the 20 m from top of riverbank or water's edge (see guidance).

High: Damage/bare soil occurring across a large area (≥21%) or of a serious nature if confined.	-30
Moderate: Damage/bare soil occurring across a moderate area (≥6-20%) or of a moderate nature if confined.	-20
Low: Damage/bare soil occurring. across a small area (≤5%) or of a minor nature if confined.	-10
None: No damaging activities.	0

Damaging activities:
(tick relevant and describe in comments)
- ☐ Livestock poaching/dung
- ☐ Rutting/soil disturbance due to machinery
- ☐ Inappropriate herbicide/pesticide use
- ☐ Dumping/rubbish
- ☐ Flailing/cutting/removal of riverside vegetation
- ☐ Burning
- ☐ Other (*describe in comments*)

C8 What is the extent of **gorse** along the riverside habitat? *(refer to Project team if 'high')*
Assess the 20 m from top of riverbank or water's edge (see guidance).

High: Gorse dominating throughout the plot (>75% cover).	☐
Moderate: Gorse occurs frequently throughout the plot (25–50% cover).	☐
Low: Scattered presence or no gorse present (<25% cover).	☐

Common management recommendations:
- ☐Continue current management of this high-quality grassland.
- ☐Control the occurrence and spread of invasive species.
- ☐Control the occurrence and spread of encroaching scrub/bracken.
- ☐Control reducing fertiliser inputs.
- ☐Consider using supporting actions of slow or impede the flow of drains.
- ☐Use stock to graze field more evenly.
- ☐Improve stock management. e.g. fencing/drinking facilities
- ☐Move feeders/troughs regularly, and keep away from drains and rivers.
- ☐No management advice
- ☐Other (see comments box)

Management recommendation(s):