

Opportunities for farmers

- Get advice from the South West Peak grassland officer on best practice management of grassland habitats & how to access financial support.
- Get paid to manage unimproved grasslands and hay meadows through:
 - An agri-environment scheme agreement.**
 - The South West Peak Landscape Partnership Fund.**
- Access help to restore hay meadows and other grasslands through the introduction of suitable wildflower seed.
- Contribute to protecting the distinctive landscape of the South West Peak.
- Learn more about the environmental & farming benefits of flower-rich grasslands.
- Share your knowledge and experiences of managing grassland habitats.
- Act as a donor site for wildflower seed & contribute to grassland restoration.

For more information:

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Glorious Grasslands



**Helping farmers protect & enhance
flower-rich habitats in the South West Peak**

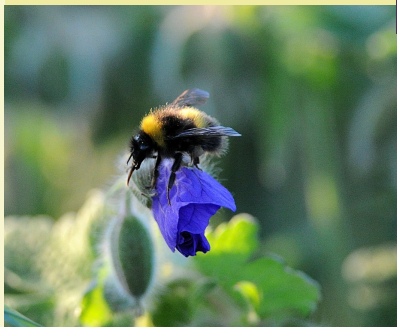
THE IMPORTANCE OF GRASSLANDS

Grasslands are distinctive features of the British landscape and make up a large part of our countryside. They are historically and culturally important, having been created and maintained through centuries of management to provide fodder for livestock. They are used throughout the year as pasture and for winter food, but their benefits extend beyond farming. Grasslands are homes to a wealth of wildlife, from plants, fungi and insects to birds, reptiles & mammals. They also capture carbon in their soils and help to soak up water, preventing flooding.



GRASSLAND HABITATS

There are 3 main types of grassland - acidic, neutral and calcareous; the extent of these depends on the underlying geology. In the South West Peak (SWP), neutral hay meadows/pastures, & acid grassland are the main types. They tend to exist as mosaics with other habitats, but climatic conditions in the area also create wet grasslands that support specialist plant communities and wading birds on rush pastures. There are also “waxcap grasslands” that support populations of rare waxcap fungi; some sites in the SWP are internationally important for these specialist fungi due to careful management.



THREATS TO GRASSLANDS

Nationally, species-rich and unimproved grasslands are rare as a result of the post-war push to produce food. Large areas were ploughed leading to the loss of more than 97 %. Surviving areas remain at risk either through improvement, changes to management, or abandonment. Applying fertilisers, slurry or large amounts of farmyard manure can damage these fragile habitats quite rapidly. Changes to grazing regimes (increases, or reductions in number, or type of animal), can also change the habitats. Plant communities may alter, or plants be lost entirely from sites and damage to soils may occur, such as poaching and compaction. They are often isolated and fragmented too, typically existing as small islands surrounded by more intensive farmland, meaning that many species using them struggle to move to new areas and wider environmental functions such as for flooding can begin to fail.



BENEFITS OF CONSERVING GRASSLANDS

Species-rich grasslands are vital natural assets that we'd like to protect and restore. There are many benefits to looking after and increasing the amount of these grasslands: they are cheaper to manage as they do not require expensive fertilisers to grow the crop; many plant species are more drought resistant than agricultural varieties, so during hot, dry weather fodder is still available; there are health benefits to livestock, too, from feeding on herb-rich grass, such as intake of micro-nutrients and reductions in gut parasites. **You could help to protect existing unimproved grassland & contribute to restoring additional areas.**