

LNCS review procedure

A data search has been undertaken of the GIS habitat data system to identify all sites which include areas identified as either improved grassland or semi-improved grassland. In the Phase 1 habitat maps semi-improved grassland may be classed as:

Semi-improved neutral grassland
Semi-improved acid grassland
Poor semi-improved grassland

1. All sites containing semi-improved grassland will be reviewed.
2. Where semi-improved grassland occurs as patches within a site and forms part of a mosaic of habitats it will not be considered for removal. Sites which come into this category will not be reviewed further.
3. Where semi-improved grassland occurs across larger areas, for example as fields along the site boundary, a site visit will be arranged and the landowner will be contacted by a member of the Council's Development & Marine Planning team. The landowner will be invited to accompany us on a walkover of the area that is under review. The local NFUS president will also be invited to take part.
4. The background to the LNCS designation will be explained to the landowner, along with its purpose in the Local Development Plan. The landowner will be invited to ask questions relating to the LNCS designation.
5. Plant species identified during the walkover will be recorded and listed in the site report. Areas which support a relatively high diversity of plant species (excluding docks, nettles, creeping thistle, ragwort and hogweed) will be recommended for retention within the relevant LNCS. Where an area is found to display low plant species diversity, the relevant phase 1 habitat report will be consulted to identify any target notes which may highlight the presence of particular species or plant assemblages.
6. Where an area is recommended for removal on account of low plant species diversity, the relevant breeding bird survey report will be reviewed, along with the field notes and maps where these are available. If the report and/or field notes indicate that the area has high value for breeding birds it will be recommended for retention.
7. The value of the area in terms of connectivity will also be taken into account at this stage; however in most instances this issue will be addressed at stage 2.
8. Areas exhibiting low plant species diversity, low bird activity and low value in terms of connectivity will be recommended for removal from the LNCS.
9. Where any area is recommended for removal checks will be undertaken to ensure that its removal will not result in any downgrading of the site in terms

of how it scores, according to the criteria that were used to identify the suite of Local Nature Conservation Sites.

10. Areas described as improved grassland or arable land will no longer be included within LNCS and will be removed from the habitat maps.