

# Landscapes of Worcestershire

## Landscape Type Advice Sheet—Land Management

# Wet Pasture Meadows

### Landscape Type Description

A flat, low-lying, largely uninhabited landscape associated with irregularly shaped, poorly draining basins fringed by low hills or scarps. This is a secluded pastoral landscape characterised by a regular pattern of hedged fields and ditches fringed by lines of willow and alder.



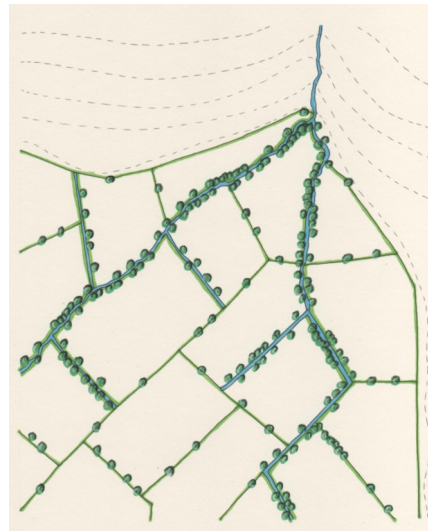
### Key Characteristics

#### Primary

- Flat low-lying topography
- Pastoral land use with patches of wet grassland
- Tree cover character of individual trees as opposed to woodland
- Tree cover pattern of linear tree belts along ditches and water-courses—particularly lines of alder and willow

#### Secondary

- Regular pattern of hedged fields with ditches
- Rushes, reeds and other marginal/aquatic vegetation
- Unsettled with few roads



### Current Concerns

These have historically been buffered from change due to the difficulties of cultivating soils with such poor drainage. They have consequently been avoided as sites for settlement and roads, and have often remained of low key agricultural status, often in an 'unimproved condition', thus retaining a certain wilderness quality.

Today, these landscapes are vulnerable to changing agricultural practices; from improvement to the sward and to the drainage regime; from the change from hay-making to silage production; from lowering of the water table; from cultivation, bringing the land into arable land use. The traditional management of pollarding willows is often neglected and the selection of these areas as sites for the creation of new ponds or water features of commercial use, can invariably destroy habitats of greater ecological value. The sustainable land use for these areas would appear to be pastoral, which in turn is compatible with the great ecological potential these landscapes possess and the exciting opportunities they offer for wetland creation or restoration. They should be regarded primarily as areas of conservation and the unsettled, undeveloped character perpetuated.

## Landscape Type Advice Sheet - *Land Management*

# Wet Pasture Meadows Guidelines for Land Management

### How to use this sheet

The aim of this information sheet is to provide *general guidelines* about the priorities for land management activities - focusing on relevant landscape features - within this Landscape Type. However, Landscape Types are generic descriptions of landscape character and any advice **must** be interpreted within the context of the site in question. Please also visit the Landscapes of Worcestershire mapping pages <http://gis.worcestershire.gov.uk/home/wcc-lca-maps> to click on your area and read the more specific ecological and landscape descriptions.

In the case of any habitat work, specialist advice should be sought from the County Ecologists and/or the appropriate agency (Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Defra) to ensure that the work is appropriate, is carried out at the right time of year, in the correct manner and in the best possible location. Surveys may need to be carried out to assess the sites for presence of protected species or existing habitat. With this in mind, please read on for opportunities for land/habitat management activities appropriate to this Landscape Type...

The general guideline for trees in Wet Pasture Meadows is to:

- **conserve** and **restore** linear tree cover along watercourses, ditches and hedge lines

### Trees

The population of individual trees (watercourse, hedgerow and field trees) should be safeguarded and augmented as required with additional planting. In many locations, the populations of such trees exhibit the reverse of the age structure that is required to ensure their perpetuation as a characteristic of these landscapes – new populations of young trees (of appropriate species) need to be established as a matter of priority. Where woodland is present, the existing population of individual trees may require a particular boost to prevent the woodland becoming the dominant tree cover characteristic. It should be pointed out that *wet woodland* is a BAP priority habitat and, whilst this is not a characteristic feature of this Landscape Type, there may be specific locations where the creation of this habitat may be appropriate – but specialist ecological/landscape advice should be sought where this is a consideration.

New tree planting can strengthen and reinforce the characteristically strong linear tree cover pattern associated with ditches, streams and hedgerows. Appropriate management such as coppicing of alder and pollarding of willow can be reintroduced where trees have become neglected, in order to help perpetuate such patterns. Many old pollards are eligible for classification as veteran trees – such trees require particular attention and should be safeguarded as a matter of priority.

### Wetland Habitats

The general guidelines for wetland habitats in Wet Pasture Meadows are to:

- **conserve** and **restore** existing wetland habitats through appropriate management
- encourage the **creation** of new wetland habitats

Seek appropriate advice to establish the status and exact nature, composition, and future potential of any wetland communities. Avoid any damage or disturbance to existing wetland vegetation communities during regular management activity. Encourage appropriate management of existing areas of wetland plant communities. Seek to unite fragmented areas of wetland habitat, aiming to develop continuous linking patterns and to expand areas of wetland communities through habitat creation, particularly where these can be linked to existing habitat. Discourage activities likely to increase the drainage, or lower the water table of these areas whilst respecting (and **restoring** where necessary) the function and pattern of the historic ditch/sluice network (which served to maintain a viable water table and *not* to encourage excessive drainage for agricultural purposes)

### Grassland

The general guidelines for grassland in Wet Pasture Meadows are to:

- **conserve** all remaining areas of permanent pasture
- consider opportunities for converting arable land back to pasture

Wherever possible, the retention of permanent pasture should be encouraged, along with exploring opportunities for converting arable land back to pastoral use.

For more information visit our website [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/lca](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/lca) or contact the Worcestershire County Council Environmental Policy Team on 01905 766038