

Species and Habitat Action Plan Assessment Form

Field 1: Action Plan details

Species/Habitat Action Plan	LINNET <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Lead Partner/Agency	RSPB
Steering Group/Other organisations	Covered by the umbrella Lowland Farmland Bird Species Action Plan Steering Group which is responsible for 10 BAP species. Current membership: BTO, CCW, DANI, DETR, DoE(NI), EHS, EN, FRCA, GCT, JNCC, MAFF, PSD, RSPB, SNH, SOAEFD, WOAD.
Work programme in existence?	Planned for February 2000

Field 2: Objectives and targets overview

	UK	E	NI	S	W	Comments
4.1 <i>In the short term , halt or reverse the decline in numbers of the linnet by the year 2003 so that the Breeding Bird Survey index is at least 1996 levels</i>	Y					Country targets to be considered by February 2000.
4.2 <i>In the long term see a sustained recovery in numbers so that the BBS index is at least 50% higher than 1996 levels and the range has recovered to 1968/72 levels by 2008.</i>	Y					

Field 3: Proposed actions overview

Number and text	UK	E	NI	S	W	Action significant?	Action complete or ongoing?
5.1 .1 <i>Take account of the need to recover linnet and other farmland bird populations when developing agricultural policy and CAP reform; consider how to extend the Arable Stewardship Scheme if the pilot is successful and how to substitute for the benefits of set-aside if this is further reduced or abolished. Retention of coastal and other scrub habitats should be encouraged.</i>	Y					Y	ongoing
5.1.2 <i>Where appropriate, incorporate new management prescriptions when reviewing agri-environment schemes especially ESAs, Countryside Stewardship, Tir Cymen and Countryside Premium Scheme in order to reverse some of the recent changes in farm management...</i>		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing
5.1.3 <i>Seek a more cautious and targeted use of herbicides and fertilisers on farmland to reduce the impacts on potential food sources for the linnet. This could include encouraging integrated crop management, organic farming and the more widespread adoption of initiatives such as the recently begun Scottish 'TIBRE' project.</i>		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing

5.4.1 Promote further advice to land managers on management for linnets as one of a suite of farmland birds and update that advice in the light of new policies and research findings		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing
5.4.2 Promote effective management of set-aside for breeding and wintering birds including linnet.		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing
5.4.3 Promote the effective management of hedgerows and farmland scrub for the benefit of linnet and other farmland birds.		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing
5.5.1. Ensure appropriate monitoring of numbers through continuation of the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey and consider the setting up of an equivalent survey to monitor winter populations.	Y					Y	ongoing
5.5.2 Study the diet of the linnet in different breeding habitats and relate this to nesting success. Information is required on the diet of adults at different stages of the year, particularly during the summer and on the food supplied by the adults to chicks and fledglings.	Y					Y	ongoing
5.5.3 Investigate the winter survival of the linnet in relation to habitat and food availability and hence improve knowledge of the winter habitat requirements of the species.	Y					Y	ongoing
5.6.1 As appropriate use linnet as an example when highlighting the issue of declining farmland birds.		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing
5.6.2 Promote changes in the perception of wild plants on farmland as essential sources for seed-eating farmland birds, rather than as 'weeds'.		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing

Field 4: Assessment of status

	Not appropriate	Recovered	Signs of recovery	No change	Declining	Lost	Insufficient information
UK					Y		
England							Y
Northern Ireland							Y
Scotland							Y
Wales							Y
<p>Common Birds Census (CBC) trend shows a decline from mid 1970s to mid 1980s. Slight recovery and stabilisation since then.</p> <p>UK Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) 1994-1998 shows statistically significant¹ decline of 10%. BBS samples too small to determine reliable country trends.</p> <p>1. 'statistically significant' means that the observed decline is unlikely to be an artefact (of say, sampling strategy) and exceeds pre-defined criteria for it to be accepted as a real change by the scientific community</p>							

Field 5: Summary statement

Produced by JNCC's Biodiversity Information Service, 31/07/03

There has been some progress in understanding the ecology of the linnet through research. There has also been progress in that there are now agri-environment schemes which contain prescriptions which could benefit linnet in all four countries. Unfortunately the financial resources backing these schemes remain limited and they are unlikely to deliver habitat on a sufficient scale to meet the objectives of this plan.

Field 6: Signing off

Contact details	Lead Partner	Contact Point
Name	Dr A D Evans	
Organisation	RSPB	
Assessment date (dd/mm/yy)	22/10/99	

Completed forms should be submitted to JNCC

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Table A: Action Plan objectives and targets (Copiable table)

Objective/target	4.1 <i>In the short term , halt or reverse the decline in numbers of the linnet by the year 2003 so that the Breeding Bird Survey index is at least 1996 levels</i>				
Country	Not appropriate	Target achieved	Some progress	No progress	Insufficient information
<i>UK</i>				Y	
<i>England</i>					Y
<i>Northern Ireland</i>					Y
<i>Scotland</i>					Y
<i>Wales</i>					Y
<p>Country targets yet to be defined. BBS trends not available for England or Northern Ireland and based on small sample for Scotland & Wales; Country trends are therefore not presented.</p> <p>Although CBC data for UK indicate population appears stable, BBS data (a more robust scheme at UK level) show a statistically significant ¹decline of 10% in numbers between 1994 & 1998.</p> <p>1. 'statistically significant' means that the observed decline is unlikely to be an artefact (of say, sampling strategy) and exceeds pre-defined criteria for it to be accepted as a real change by the scientific community</p>					

Objective/target	4.2 <i>In the long term see a sustained recovery in numbers so that the BBS index is at least 50% higher than 1996 levels and the range has recovered to 1968/72 levels by 2008.</i>				
Country	Not appropriate	Target achieved	Some progress	No progress	Insufficient information
<i>UK</i>				Y	
<i>England</i>					Y
<i>Northern Ireland</i>					Y
<i>Scotland</i>					Y
<i>Wales</i>					Y
Text description of target progress (separate for each country/region):					
Too early to assess progress but see comments for 4.1					

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.1 .1. <i>Take account of the need to recover linnet and other farmland bird populations when developing agricultural policy and CAP reform; consider how to extend the Arable Stewardship Scheme if the pilot is successful, and how to substitute for the benefits of set-aside, if this is further reduced or abolished. Retention of coastal and other scrub habitats should be encouraged.</i> DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	<p>DANI needs of the linnet along with other farmland birds taken into account when developing Countryside Management Scheme.</p> <p>MAFF The needs of the linnet along with other farmland birds were taken into account when developing the pilot Arable Stewardship Scheme . The requirements of BAP priority species were taken into account in recent (1996–98) quinquennial ESA scheme reviews and some tier options were modified accordingly. These are summarised in the BAP tables published in individual ESA Consultation Documents. One output of these reviews was the introduction of new arable and grassland prescriptions that will provide conditions beneficial for linnets. Some ESAs offer arable reversion prescriptions which may conflict with the interests of arable species. CS scheme consultation is carried out at regular intervals to define regional targets which in many cases address regional BAP priorities. The scheme contains options for the management of field margins.'</p> <p>Set-aside has been set at 10% under Agenda 2000 reforms. MAFF will continue to press for further CAP reform. The Governments long-term objective remains to phase out production subsidies and to use some of the savings for targeted agri-environment and rural development measures.</p> <p>SOAEFD needs of the linnet along with other farmland birds taken into account when developing Countryside Premium Scheme</p> <p>WOAD Providing funding to CCW to establish and run new all-Wales agri-environment scheme, Tir Gofal which includes measures designed to benefit linnet.</p> <p>EN and SNH have recently commissioned a comprehensive review of the biodiversity interest of scrub habitats and the priorities for their conservation.</p>	
Output and timescale	<p>CMS First agreements spring 2000</p> <p>Pilot AS First agreements in 1998 due to run until 2002</p> <p>CPS First agreements 1997</p> <p>Tir Gofal: first agreements late 1999, early 2000</p>	<i>Action by</i> DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD WOAD, EN, SNH
Constraints to action	All these schemes are currently limited in terms of financial resources. The scale of enhancement of linnet habitat achievable given the current resources will not be sufficient to permit the objectives of this plan to be met. CAP reform hampered by relative inflexibility in EU.	
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	To be determined	
Output and timescale	To be determined	<i>Action by</i>

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.1.2. <i>Where appropriate, incorporate new management prescriptions when reviewing agri-environment schemes, especially ESAs, Countryside Stewardship, Tir Cymen and Countryside Premium Scheme, in order to reverse some of the recent changes in farm management outlined in Section 2.</i> CCW, DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	See also 5.1.1 CCW: Management prescriptions under Tir Gofal include sympathetic management of a range of farmland habitats for birds. DANI CMS includes prescriptions for sympathetic management of arable fields and their margins and boundaries. MAFF Arable prescriptions have recently become available in some ESAs (South Downs, Breckland) and field margin prescriptions (in both arable and grass fields) are now available through mainstream Countryside Stewardship. SOAEFD CPS includes prescriptions for sympathetic management of arable fields and their margins and boundaries. WOAD Providing funding to CCW to establish and run Tir Gofal.	
Output and timescale	CMS first agreements due spring 2000 Pilot AS introduced in 1998 due to run until 2002 CPS First agreements 1997 Tir Gofal: first agreements late 1999, early 2000	<i>Action by</i> CCW DANI MAFF SOAEFD WOAD
Constraints to action	The scale of protection or enhancement of linnet habitat achievable given the current resources allocated to these schemes will not be sufficient to permit the objectives of this plan to be met. Agri-environment schemes have to balance wildlife objectives with others concerning landscape, historic features and access; and spending is currently limited by budgetary constraints. As voluntary schemes they cannot guarantee full coverage of all eligible sites .	
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	To secure substantial increase in funding for these schemes.	
Output and timescale	To be determined	<i>Action by</i>

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.1.3 <i>Seek a more cautious and targeted use of herbicides and fertilisers on farmland to reduce the impacts on potential food sources for the linnet. This could include encouraging integrated crop management, organic farming and the more widespread adoption of initiatives such as the recently begun Scottish 'TIBRE' project.</i> DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	<p>MAFF (PSD): The Statutory Code of Practice for the safe use of pesticides on farms and holdings was revised and reissued in 1999. The revision included strengthened guidance on environmental protection generally. The Pesticides Forum aims to promote the adoption of Integrated Crop Management (although whether pesticide reduction goes far enough under ICM to deliver biodiversity benefits needs to be fully investigated) and other initiatives directed at reducing the impact of pesticides. A variety of activities by Forum members, including research and development, training, advice, demonstration and crop assurance support these objectives. Increased Government support and stronger market demand for organics is leading to increased conversion of farms.</p> <p>MAFF have recently commissioned further research into the role of the indirect effects of pesticides in the declines of farmland birds, and an assessment of whether the current regulatory procedure is adequate to protect against these effects. We must ensure that the recommendations from this work are adopted as quickly as possible. In addition, DETR have established a sub-group of ACRE to consider the wider biodiversity issues related to the release of GMOs, and their work has clear implications for the future assessment of pesticides in relation to their use on GM crops.</p> <p>Agri-environment schemes encourage the reduced use of pesticides and fertilisers.</p> <p>DANI, SOAEFD , WOAD No action reported other than prescriptions for pesticide reduction within agri-environment schemes covered in 5.1.1 & 5.1.2.</p>	
Output and timescale		<i>Action by</i>
Constraints to action		
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	Whilst progress has been made the Forum needs to give full consideration to the targets and proposed actions contained in the SAPs for farmland species.	
Output and timescale	To be determined	<i>Action by</i>

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.4.1 Promote further advice to land managers on management for linnets as one of a suite of farmland birds and update that advice in the light of new policies and research findings. DANI, FA, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	<p>MAFF: Sponsored the RSPB publication <i>A Management Guide to Birds of Lowland Farmland</i> by GW Dodds, MJ Appleby and AD Evans, produced in association with the BTO, FWAG and GCT. The publication has been disseminated to advisers to inform them about farmland bird conservation and to improve the quality of advice that they give. This species is given detailed coverage. An associated A4 sheet giving detailed advice about this species has been produced for the adviser to pass on to farmers and land managers. This sheet was distributed by MAFF to all farmers with more than 100ha of arable.</p> <p>SOAEFD: Sponsored, along with SAC, the RSPB publication <i>A Management Guide to Birds of Scottish Farmland</i> by R Badger, D McCracken and S Sankey. It has the same aim and associated A4 sheets as the MAFF sponsored publication above.</p> <p>RSPB: Published the above, also <i>Farming and Birds in Wales: A Management Guide</i> by N R Thomas & N W Lewis. Has run a programme of seminars and workshops, often in association with other conservation bodies, to train dedicated farm advisers (eg CCW, FWAG, FRCA, SAC) which focus on the farmland bird BAP species. See also 5.4.2.</p> <p>BAA: <i>Published Arable Wildlife: Protecting non-target species</i>. Supported by RSPB, LEAF, GCT & FWAG.</p>	
Output and timescale	See above.	Action by RSPB MAFF SOAEFD SAC GCT FWAG FRCA BAA BTO
Constraints to action		
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	New research results will be used to update the information given by RSPB to farmers and advisors	
Output and timescale		Action by

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.4.2 Promote effective management of set-aside for breeding and wintering birds, including linnet. DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?		
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	RSPB have undertaken self-funded research project looking at the effects of different management of set-aside on farmland birds. RSPB have also produced a guide to promote the sympathetic management of set-aside with the support of the NFU. This has been distributed to farmers and advisors, including through the NFU to its members. MAFF have funded a BTO study looking in more detail at the breeding season. MAFF have also proposed to the EU a series of changes to the set-aside rules that could benefit this species. MAFF funds FWAG and ADAS to provide free initial conservation advice, focusing on set-aside and field boundaries	
Output and timescale	Evans, A.D 1997. Proceedings of the 1997 BCPC Weeds conference 907-915.,. Buckingham <i>et al</i> 1999 <i>Bird Study</i> 46 157-169. Henderson, I & Evans A D in prep. Proceedings of the 1999 BOU conference on Farmland Birds	<i>Action by</i> RSPB NFU MAFF BTO
Constraints to action		
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	To be determined by Steering Group	
Output and timescale	To be determined by Steering Group	<i>Action by</i>

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.4.3. 'Promote effective management of hedgerows and farmland scrub for the benefit of linnet and other farmland birds.' DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	DANI MAFF Since June 1997 important hedgerows (as defined in the Hedgerow Regulations) have been protected from removal in England and Wales, The Government is currently considering how these regulations can be strengthened. Agri-environment schemes in all parts of the UK encourage the planting and restoration of hedgerows. ESAs and the CS scheme contain measures for the maintenance and enhancement of hedgerows. EN and SNH have recently commissioned a comprehensive review of the biodiversity interest of scrub habitats and the priorities for their conservation. SOAEFD WOAD	
Output and timescale		<i>Action by</i> MAFF, EN, SNH
Constraints to action		
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	To be determined by Steering Group	
Output and timescale	To be determined by Steering Group	<i>Action by</i>

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.5.1. Ensure appropriate monitoring of numbers through continuation of the BTO/ JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey and consider the setting up of an equivalent survey to monitor winter populations. CCW, EHS, EN, JNCC, SNH	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	JNCC: have continued to part fund BTO/ JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (which covers linnets) on behalf of the country agencies. RSPB: have also continued to part fund BBS	
Output and timescale	Noble <i>et al</i> (1999) The Breeding Bird Survey 1998. BTO/JNCC/RSPB - Annual report	Action by JNCC BTO RSPB
Constraints to action		
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	Maintain current programme. JNCC are funding the BTO to undertake a three year survey of wintering farmland birds commencing 1999/2000. DETR: have commissioned BTO to survey birds in a subsample of the 1km squares covered as part of Countryside Survey 2000. Results will be related to detailed habitat information collected in CS2000 and also Land Cover Map 2000.	
Output and timescale	Annual Report as above. DETR/BTO CS2000 survey to be conducted in 2000 and report in 2001.	Action by JNCC, BTO RSPB DETR

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.5.2 Study the diet of the linnet in different breeding habitats and relate this to nesting success. Information is required on the diet of adults at different stages of the year, particularly during in the summer, and on the food supplied by the adults to chicks and fledglings. CCW, EHS, EN, FA, JNCC, SNH	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	RSPB & BBSRC have co-funded an autecological study of linnets as a PhD at Oxford University. This has included detailed investigation of the diet of both adults and young.	
Output and timescale	Moorcroft <i>et al</i> (1997) The diet of nestling linnets before & after agricultural intensification. Brighton Crop Protection Conference Proceedings 1997: 923-931. Further scientific papers and Thesis due in 2000	Action by RSPB, BBSRC Oxford University
Constraints to action		
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	Complete current study and publish results	
Output and timescale	2000/2001	Action by RSPB Oxford University,

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.5.3. Investigate the winter survival of linnet in relation to habitat and food availability and hence improve knowledge of the winter habitat requirements of the species. CCW, EHS, EN, FA, JNCC, SNH	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	RSPB/BBSRC/Oxford University study (see 5.5.2) will provide much data on winter habitat requirements. RSPB set-aside study highlighted the importance of naturally regen. stubbles MAFF have funded BTO/Oxford University to analyse BTOs historical ring-recovery archive although this did not allow analyses in relation to food and habitat. BTO , with MAFF & JNCC funding will be undertaking three major projects on winter habitat use of farmland birds over the next three winters.	
Output and timescale	Buckingham <i>et al.</i> (1999) <i>Bird Study</i> 46: 157-169. Siriwardena <i>et al.</i> (1998) <i>Bird Study</i> 45: 276 & <i>Ibis</i> (in press)	Action by RSPB BBSRC Oxford U. BTO MAFF JNCC
Constraints to action		
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	To be determined by Steering Group	
Output and timescale	To be determined by Steering Group	Action by

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.6.1 As appropriate, use the linnet as an example when highlighting the issue of declining farmland birds. CCW, EHS, EN, SNH	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	CCW Reference to farmland birds made in the 'State of the Welsh Environment Report', submitted by CCW to the Welsh Assembly EHS Mentioned in the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy proposals. However, the yellowhammer and corncrake and BAP species which have become extinct in NI such as grey partridge and corn bunting have been more directly appropriate to the NI situation EN EN continues the use the linnet as an example of a species whose population decline has been caused by changes in agriculture, and whose future recovery is dependent on the provision of more sympathetic management of farmland habitats with special reference to the availability of seeds (crops and wild flower) throughout the year. SNH no action reported	
Output and timescale		Action by CCW, EN, EHS
Constraints to action		
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	To be determined	

Output and timescale	To be determined	<i>Action by</i>
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Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.6.2. Promote changes in the perception of wild plants on farmland as essential sources for seed-eating farmland birds rather than as 'weeds' DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	MAFF (PSD): Changing farming practice is likely to require a better understanding of the type and number of weeds that can be left untreated without significant financial loss. This needs to be matched by knowledge of the needs of particular bird species. These issues were considered in discussions involving the RSPB and the British Crop Protection Council (BCPC) at the latter's Weed Review meeting.	
Output and timescale		<i>Action by</i>
Constraints to action		
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	To be determined by Steering Group	
Output and timescale	To be determined by Steering Group	<i>Action by</i>