

Species and Habitat Action Plan Assessment Form

Please refer to the accompanying guidance for information about how to complete this form and an explanation of terms used

Field 1: Action Plan details

Species/Habitat Action Plan	Corncrake (<i>Crex Crex</i>)
Lead Partner/Agency	<p>Joint Lead Partners: The Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department (SERAD) [formally the Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department, SOAEFD] The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). SERAD act as Chair for the Steering Group RSPB act as Secretariat.</p>
Steering Group/Other organisations	<p><i>Steering group in existence? Please state yes or no. Please list the organisations represented.</i> Yes. The Steering Group is comprised as follows: Core Group: SERAD, RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Scottish Crofters Union (SCU). Consultative Group: Above plus Scottish Agricultural College (SAC), Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), National Farmers Union Scotland (NFUS), Scottish Landowner's Federation (SLF), National Trust for Scotland (NTS), Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), John Muir Trust (JMT), English Nature (EN), Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), Dept of the Environment Northern Ireland (DOE(NI))-Environment & Heritage Service, Dept of Environment, Transport and Regions (DETR), Highlands & Islands Airports Ltd (HIAL), Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), The National Trust (NT), Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group (GBAG), National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Scottish Link, PlantLife, Birdwatch Ireland and Shanks.</p> <p>New members to be invited 1999: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food (MAFF) in England and in Welsh Assembly, Department of Agriculture Northern Ireland (DANI), Relevant Isle of Man agriculture & environment authorities.</p>
Work programme in existence?	<p><i>Please state yes or no. If in existence, please use the agreed work programme to update Field 3 and Table B.</i> Yes</p>

Field 2: Objectives and targets overview

Please list the targets for the action plan, indicating in which country/region the target is applicable, and additional comments including the rationale for new targets. For each new target please add new sequential paragraph numbers and target text. Please provide information about progress and country disaggregation in Table A for all targets.

Number and text	UK	E	NI	S	W	Comments
4.2 Halt the decline in UK corncrake population and range. Note: For the avoidance of doubt this plan and the figures or revised figures contained within it refer to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland [excluding the Isle of Man]. The majority of work effort has been concentrated in Scotland where over 90% of the UK corncrake population still occurs.	X	X	X	X	X	Achieved. By a combination of continued sensitive farming techniques in the core area, corncrake-friendly agri-environment schemes, the Corncrake Initiative and nature reserve management, the decline in the UK corncrake population and range has been successfully halted.
4.3 Maintain the numbers of corncrakes in the UK at or above the 1993 level (478 singing males). Revised figure for 1993 level is 488 singing males	X	X	X	X	X	Achieved. Numbers were maintained above the 1993 level. Between 1993 and 1998 the population actually increased from 488 to 591 males (21%)
4.4 Maintain the range of corncrakes in the UK at or above the 1993 level (82 occupied 10km squares). Revised figure for 1993 is 87 occupied 10km squares	X	X	X	X	X	Achieved. The range was actually increased above the 1993 level of 87 10-km squares to 95 occupied 10-km squares.
4.5 By 1998, increase the range of the corncrake in Britain to at least the same number of 10km squares occupied in 1988 (90 squares). Note: 'Britain' rather than 'UK' used here in original Action Plan wording so Northern Ireland excluded.	X	X		X	X	Achieved. During a census of corncrakes in Britain carried out in 1998, a total of 589 singing males was counted in 93 10-km squares.
4.6 In the longer term, re-establish corncrakes in parts of its former range in the UK.	X	X	X	X	X	Ongoing. In addition to the 589 males, several records were obtained from England (13) and Wales (2). The Hebridean islands continue to hold 90% of the UK population. Populations were showing encouraging signs of expansion on the Scottish mainland at Durness and Ardnamurchan.

Field 3: Proposed actions overview

Please list the proposed actions for the action plan, indicating in which country/region the action is applicable. For each new action please add new sequential paragraph numbers and action text. If the action is regarded as significant (please see guidance) indicate this in the box and provide further details in Table B. For actions not regarded as significant simply state if the action is ongoing or complete. Remember any action which is being dropped from the workplan will be regarded as significant for the first round of reporting.

Number and text	UK	E	NI	S	W	Action significant?	Action complete or ongoing? (Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)
5.5.1 Support and promote the uptake of corncrake grant schemes for this species in Scotland and Northern Ireland. (ACTION: DoE(NI), SERAD, RSPB, SAC, SNH, EN, CCW)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Ongoing. As population targets have also now been set for all UK countries, this action is applicable to all.
5.1.2 Support and promote the uptake of ESA agreements and review the effectiveness of existing ESAs for this species in Scotland, ie the Outer Hebrides machair, Argyll Islands and Shetland. Seek to improve where necessary. (ACTION: SNH, SERAD)	X			X		X	Ongoing. Issues connected with effectiveness of schemes for corncrakes, monitoring and compliance being examined.
5.1.3 If existing ESAs are effective as conservation measures, consider designating remaining core corncrake areas in the Western Isles, Inner Hebrides and Orkney as ESAs, to encourage continued hay production and sympathetic management. (ACTION: SERAD, SNH)	X			X		X	Complete. Where ESA's are absent, the Countryside Premium Scheme (CPS) operates and includes corncrake prescriptions. ESA/CPS schemes due to merge in 2000.
5.1.4 Develop and promote measures for traditional crofting land management in areas supporting this species. (ACTION: SERAD, SNH, RSPB)	X			X		X	Ongoing
5.2.1 Seek to secure favourable management on all suitable land within designated sites, and in all non-designated areas supporting populations of corncrake. (ACTION: DANI, DoE(NI), SNH, SERAD, RSPB, EN, CCW)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Ongoing
5.2.2 Consider designating sites of particular importance as SSSI (ACTION: SNH)	X			X		X	Ongoing. Some core areas proposed as SPA designation (without the requirement of SSSI designation first)
5.3.1 Seek to reduce damage to nests and mortality of adults and young from mowing operations by wardening and promoting corncrake-friendly techniques. (ACTION: DANI, DoE(NI), SNH, SERAD, RSPB, EN)	X	X	X	X		X	Ongoing
5.3.2 Ensure crofters and small farmers are advised of risks to species from predation by domestic cats, and support local mink and ferret control, preventing their spread to new areas. (ACTION: DANI, DoE(NI), SNH, SERAD, RSPB)	X		X	X		X	Ongoing
5.4.1 Promote advice to agricultural advisors, and to all those managing corncrake areas on corncrake-friendly cutting methods and other beneficial management practices. (ACTION: DANI, SERAD)	X		X	X		X	Ongoing

5.4.2 Provide advice on corncrake-friendly management techniques to agricultural colleges to aid their inclusion in land management courses. (ACTION: DoE(NI), SERAD, SNH, RSPB, EN)	X		X	X		X	Ongoing
5.5.1 Conduct a full survey of the breeding population of corncrake in Britain and Northern Ireland every three years. (ACTION: DoE(NI), SNH, RSPB)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Complete. Also annual monitoring in core areas which contain >90% of population. Revised Action (proposed): Conduct a full survey of the breeding population of corncrake in the UK every five (5) years (ACTION: SNH, RSPB, DOE(NI), EN, CCW)
5.5.2 Study economic, technical and agronomic aspects of modifying grassland management in key corncrake areas to benefit the species. (ACTION: DANI, DoE(NI), SNH, RSPB)	X		X	X		X	Ongoing
5.5.3 Investigate the responses of corncrakes to approaching mowing machinery and conduct “after mowing” surveys to assess the density of nests and broods, and the mortality rate. Seek to identify the least damaging time for mowing. (ACTION: DoE(NI), SNH, RSPB)	X		X	X		X	Complete.
5.5.4 Investigate levels of mortality due to cat, mink and feral predation and assess the possibility of reducing mortality. (ACTION: DoE(NI), SNH, RSPB)	X		X	X		X	Ongoing.
5.5.5 Encourage annual monitoring of breeding numbers and periodic surveys of habitat at key sites. (ACTION: DoE(NI), SNH, RSPB)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Ongoing
5.5.6 Review the factors affecting corncrake migration and wintering grounds. (ACTION: DoE(NI), JNCC, SNH, RSPB)	X		X	X		X	Ongoing
5.5.7 Pass information gathered during survey and monitoring of this species to JNCC or BRC so that it can be incorporated in national databases. (ACTION: DoE(NI), SNH)	X		X	X		X	Ongoing
5.5.8 Provide information annually to BirdLife International on the UK status of the species to contribute to maintenance of an up to date global red lists. (ACTION: JNCC)	X					X	Ongoing
5.6.1 Consider projects to develop controlled “green tourism” based on the species. (ACTION: SNH, Tourist Authorities, RSPB)	X			X		X	Ongoing
5.6.2 Consider publishing a Code of Practice for birdwatching, to reduce the pressure on this species from birdwatchers in sensitive areas. (ACTION: DoE(NI), SNH, RSPB)	X		X	X		X	Complete. Code of conduct built into nature reserve leaflets and general visitor information.

Field 4: Assessment of status

Please tick the appropriate category to indicate the assessment of status of the species or habitat, for each country/region where appropriate, and provide a statement supporting the category selected.

	Not appropriate	Recovered	Signs of recovery	No change	Declining	Lost	Insufficient information
<i>UK</i>			X				
<i>England</i>				X			
<i>Northern Ireland</i>				X			
<i>Scotland</i>			X				
<i>Wales</i>				X			
Brief text description justifying assessment of status: (~ no more than 100 words for each country/region)							
<p>England: The cluster of ca 6 birds in Yorkshire remains regular whilst occasional birds crop up annually at sporadic sites.</p> <p>Scotland: Numbers of singing males and geographical range have both increased within the reporting period as a result of a combination of factors discussed later in this report.</p> <p>Northern Ireland and Wales: 1 or 2 birds occur annually. Breeding may occur but has not been proven recently.</p>							

Field 5: Summary statement Please provide an overview of plan implementation, including new factors affecting the species or habitat which will accelerate or constrain progress towards meeting of the targets. Where a factor results in new action(s) please cross-reference back to the relevant numbers under Field 3 and Table B.

All sections in the plan have been implemented during the reporting period. Whilst there is no room for complacency, there have been significant successes achieved with the targets for corncrake population and range as well as most other actions within the plan. The population increases have been confirmed by a complete census in 1998 and annual monitoring within the core areas of the Scottish Hebridean islands. Scientific research and population trends are regularly published (see Green, R.E. & Gibbons, D.W. (1998) *The Status of the Corncrake *Crex crex* in Britain in 1998*. In review). Work programmes are produced and implemented annually and an annual Seminar is held for all people involved in corncrake management. The Core Group (see Table B) meets at least quarterly to review progress of the plan against targets and the wider Steering Group meets annually usually in a key corncrake site (1997-Islay, 1998-Benbecula, 1999-Tiree). The combination of a number of factors explain the corncrake population increases outlined above. Among these are: Improved prescriptions under agri-environment schemes which benefit corncrakes and other biodiversity although concerns over effectiveness, monitoring and compliance with these schemes needs to be addressed; improved advice to and uptake by farmers in the core areas of agri-environment schemes; improved training of the advisors and contractors in corncrake ecology and corncrake-friendly techniques which again requires constant effort; greater public and media awareness of the plight of the corncrake and a willingness of key audiences (farmers/crofters/advisors) to assist in the corncrake recovery; additional corncrake management schemes to supplement agri-environment measures such as the Skye Grassland Scheme, the Balranald Hay Scheme and the long-running Corncrake Initiative (supported by RSPB, SNH and the SCU) and nature reserve management agreements in key sites; large scale nature reserve management by NGO's for corncrakes (eg RSPB on Coll, Oronsay, the Uists, Orkney and Islay, NTS on Iona and recently SWT on Eigg); research on breeding biology and the response to mowing completed; continued research into habitat selection and adult corncrake mortality; proposed designation by SNH as Special Protection Areas of core corncrake areas in the Hebrides; inter-agency cooperation and flexibility to enable actions to be implemented; communities in core areas promoting green tourism with corncrakes as a key component of their natural heritage; publication of a corncrake book on their behaviour, ecology, migration and how to manage for them on farmland in the SNH 'Naturally Scottish' series; working with local biodiversity action plan staff to ensure corncrake prescriptions are incorporated and that efforts are not duplicated. Finally, the continued financial commitment of partner agencies in the Corncrake Steering Group and in particular the support from the company *Shanks* identified as the corncrake 'Champion' in 1998. Their generous sponsorship has enabled vital reserve habitat management work to be undertaken within the core area. In addition, it has allowed for new work to start attracting corncrakes back into parts of their former range such as the Isle of Eigg in Scotland, the Derwent Valley in Northern England and a feasibility study to consider a re-establishment project for the corncrake in Eastern England. To expand the corncrake's geographic range is a key component of this Action Plan and a priority for future work programmes.

Field 6: Signing off Please 'sign off' the form below to confirm that steering group members or key contacts have been consulted and agreed the information provided.

Contact details	Joint Lead Partners	Contact Points
Name/Signature	Andrew Dickson, SERAD [Chairman of Steering Group] Stuart Housden, RSPB Scotland [Director of RSPB Scotland]	-
Organisation	The Scottish Executive (SERAD) RSPB	Jane Dalgleish [Chair of Core Group] David Sexton [Secretariat]
Assessment date (dd/mm/yy)	28 September 1999	-

Completed forms should be submitted to: JNCC Biodiversity Information Service
Joint Nature Conservation Committee
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