



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	<i>Emberiza cirrus</i> - Cirl bunting
Lead Partner/Agency	RSPB/English Nature (Contact Point - MAFF)
Steering Group/Other organisations	Steering group in existence? Please state yes or no. Please list the organisations represented. Yes. RSPB English Nature MAFF FRCA
Work programme in existence?	Please state yes or no. If in existence, please use the agreed work programme to update Field 3 and Table B. Yes, but only as actions listed in notes of Steering Group meeting. Costed work programme to be prepared.

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
4.1 In the short term, maintain the upward trend in numbers and increase in distribution (within the current range) of the cirl bunting population in the UK.		✓				
4.2 Increase the UK population to 550 territories by the year 2003.		✓				
4.3 In the long term, ensure a wider geographical spread of the cirl bunting by re-establishing populations outside the current (1997) range.		✓				

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.)
5.1.1 Take account of the need to recover cirl bunting 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.		X				Yes	
5.1.2 Where appropriate, incorporate new management prescriptions when reviewing agri-environment schemes, especially ESAs and Countryside Stewardship, in order to reverse some of the recent changes in farm management outlined in Section 2.		X				Yes	
5.1.3 Seek uptake of a more cautious and targeted use of pesticides and fertilisers on farmland to reduce the impacts on potential food sources for the cirl bunting. This could include encouraging integrated crop management and organic farming.		X				No	Ongoing
5.2.1 Secure a minimum of 25 new Countryside Stewardship Scheme agreements per year, for the years 1998-2000, that will deliver cirl bunting management in South Devon. This should include the provision of at least 40 ha of winter stubble per year (120 ha over three years).		X				Yes	
5.2.2 Promote positive management on existing SSSIs that support cirl buntings.		X				Yes	
5.2.3 Incorporate policies to assist cirl bunting conservation in appropriate development plans.		X				No	Ongoing
5.2.4 Protect key cirl bunting breeding and wintering sites from significant adverse changes due to development.		X				Yes	Ongoing
5.3.1 Continue to fund action for cirl buntings through English Nature's Species Recovery Programme.		X				No	
5.3.2 Consider reintroductions as an aid to cirl bunting conservation.		X				Yes	
5.3.3 Provide supplementary food for cirl buntings when hard winter weather prevents access to natural food in fields.		X				No	Ongoing
5.4.1 Promote further advice to land managers on management for cirl buntings as one of a suite of farmland birds and update that advice in the light of new policies and research findings.		X				Yes	Ongoing
5.5.1 Continue the programme of cirl bunting research and monitoring including annual sampling of nesting success and periodic full surveys of the breeding population approximately every 10 years (next survey due in 1998).		X				Yes	
5.6.1 Promote the need for cirl bunting conservation particularly to land managers, birdwatchers and holiday-makers.		X				No	Ongoing

~ **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>			✓				
<i>England</i>			✓				
<i>Northern Ireland</i>							
<i>Scotland</i>							
<i>Wales</i>							
Brief text description justifying assessment of status: (<i>~ no more than 100 words for each country/region</i>)							
450 territories 1998 (up from 118 in 1989). Population still concentrated in south Devon. May be extinct as a breeder in Cornwall. No progress towards Objective 3. Achieving wider geographical spread is very difficult in the current circumstances given only limited support for low intensity mixed farming. The recently agreed reform of the CAP gives Member States the powers to redirect subsidies from production to environmental management. The Government is consulting on whether, and if so how, these powers should be used.							

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.

Excellent progress against recovery of population within the south Devon core range. The targeted use of the Countryside Stewardship scheme, aided by the special project and promoted by the Project Officer, has proved invaluable in this recovery. Continued action along these lines is likely to allow Objective 2 to be met. However, securing a wider geographical spread is unlikely to be achieved without more widespread support for low intensity mixed farming and/or a programme of re-establishment.

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	Lead Partner	Contact Point
Name	Leigh Lock/Phil Grice	
Organisation	RSPB/English Nature	MAFF
Assessment date (dd/mm/yy)		

Completed forms should be submitted to JNCC

*Biodiversity Information Service
Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Monkstone House
City Road
Peterborough PE1 1JY
Tel: 01733 562626
Fax: 01733 555948
E-mail: lpr99@jncc.gov.uk*

“

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

For each target please state how, if applicable, it has been disaggregated to the country level. Please insert the paragraph number, UK target and country-specific disaggregated target(s) into the table. Please tick the appropriate category to indicate progress against published and disaggregated targets. For each target please copy the table and detail the (existing or new [new paragraph numbers should run sequentially, under relevant headings in the published volumes]) paragraph number, target text and an assessment of progress.

Objective/target					
4.1 In the short term maintain the upward trend in numbers and increase in distribution (within the current range) of the cirl bunting population in the UK.					
Country	Not appropriate	Target achieved	Some progress	No progress	Insufficient information
<i>UK</i>					
<i>England</i>		X			
<i>Northern Ireland</i>					
<i>Scotland</i>					
<i>Wales</i>					
Text description of target progress (separate for each country/region):					
Numbers still increasing, but poor breeding success over last few years and reduced rate of increase. Also 'infilling' within current range. Target achieved.					

Objective/target					
4.2 Increase the UK population to 550 territories by the year 2003.					
Country	Not appropriate	Target achieved	Some progress	No progress	Insufficient information
<i>UK</i>					
<i>England</i>			X		
<i>Northern Ireland</i>					
<i>Scotland</i>					
<i>Wales</i>					
Text description of target progress (separate for each country/region):					
Current population 450 territories (1998), increased from 118 territories (1989). Population increase has leveled off in last four years - probably as result of poor breeding success. Target likely to be achieved, if birds are able to benefit from better breeding success.					

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Objective/target					
4.3 In the long term, ensure a wider geographical spread by re-establishing populations outside current (1999) range.					
Country	Not appropriate	Target achieved	Some progress	No progress	Insufficient information
<i>UK</i>					
<i>England</i>				X	
<i>Northern Ireland</i>					
<i>Scotland</i>					
<i>Wales</i>					
Text description of target progress (separate for each country/region):					
<p>No progress. No indications of even occasional breeding birds being located immediately east (east of River Exe, Devon) or west (SE Cornwall) of current range. Also small breeding population in south Cornwall probably declined to extinction.</p> <p>Unlikely to be met without more widespread encouragement of low intensity mixed farming. The recently agreed reform of the CAP gives Member States the powers to redirect subsidies from production to environmental management. The Government is consulting on whether, and if so how, these powers should be used.</p>					

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible		
5.1.1 To take account of the need to recover cirl bunting 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.		
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	The recently agreed reform of the CAP gives Member States the powers to redirect subsidies from production to environmental management. The Government is consulting on whether, and if so how, these powers should be used.	
Action/workplan undertaken? <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>	Yes.	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible.	South Devon has continued to be a Countryside Stewardship target area for the species, with a Special Project (comprising winter stubbles) available here. The target area was extended to East Devon in 1999.	
Output and timescale		<i>Action by</i> MAFF
Constraints to action <i>(Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)</i>	No specific measures for cirl buntings offered outside of CS special project. There is a reluctance among farmers peripheral to current breeding range, who specialise in livestock, to provide cereal stubbles. The major constraints are the inflexibility within the EU to achieving fundamental reform of CAP and the current limitations on financial resources targeted towards agri-environment schemes. Uncertainties over the future of set-aside remain. The primary purpose of set-aside is as a production control tool but, within the UK, MAFF has sought to have management rules for set-aside that enable farmers to maximise potential environmental benefit.	
Action complete or ongoing? <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>	On going	
Next steps	CS scheme action is ongoing. The pilot Arable Stewardship Scheme, which is trialing measures to benefit farmland birds, will be reviewed in 2001.	
Output and timescale	Set-aside options to be discussed at next Steering Group, July 2000.	<i>Action by</i> MAFF

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	
5.1.2 Where appropriate, incorporate new management prescriptions when reviewing agri-environment schemes, especially ESAs and Countryside Stewardship, in order to reverse some of the recent changes in farm management outlined in Section 2.	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	
Action/workplan undertaken? <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>	No.
Description of work taken and organisation responsible.	The Blackdown Hills and Dartmoor ESA schemes were reviewed in 1998, but additional prescriptions likely to benefit the species were not introduced, on the understanding that the CS Special Project could operate in these ESAs. There has been no need to alter the CS Special Project.
Output and timescale	<i>Action by</i>
Constraints to action <i>(Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)</i>	Whilst CS special project may be eligible within the ESAs, CS is a cash limited scheme and applications may not be approved where they do not provide environmental value for money in comparison with applications which provide a wider range of benefits.
Action complete or ongoing? <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>	Ongoing.
Next steps	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>
Output and timescale	<i>Action by</i>

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible		
5.2.1 Secure a minimum of 25 new Countryside Stewardship Scheme agreements per year, for the years 1998-2000, that will deliver cirl bunting management in south Devon. This should include the provision of at least 40 ha of winter stubble per year (120 ha over three years).		
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	Provision of CS with special project option.	
Action/workplan undertaken? <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>	Yes.	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible.	Promoting and preparing agreements with landowners by Project Officer and submission to MAFF.	
Output and timescale	Actions exceeded - about 30 agreements including 150 ha of stubble in 1998. FRCA has recommended a further 251 ha of winter stubbles in Devon and Cornwall within the 1999 CS applications.	<i>Action by</i> MAFF/ RSPB
Constraints to action <i>(Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)</i>	High success rate for this special project compared to other CS applications but overall funding of CS may act as a future constraint. The target area is too small.	
Action complete or ongoing? <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>	Ongoing.	
Next steps	Steering Group to consider the need to expand target area.	
Output and timescale	Further work to encourage CS scheme and target relevant farmers and areas during 2000/2001.	<i>Action by</i> RSPB/ MAFF MAFF

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible		
5.2.2 Promote positive management on SSSIs that support curlew bunting.		
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	RSPB list of priority sites passed to EN (as agreed at Steering Group meeting).	
Action/workplan undertaken? <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>	Limited.	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible.	EN have offered two new coastal grassland WES agreements in 1999 (outcome unknown).	
Output and timescale	Management agreements should have been in place this financial year. Limited action taken.	<i>Action by</i> EN
Constraints to action <i>(Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)</i>	To be effective, agreements must include management of arable land adjacent to SSSI. Proposed agreements do not support arable management.	
Action complete or ongoing? <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>	Ongoing.	
Next steps	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>	
Output and timescale	<i>Work programme/funding package in place to deliver action in all relevant SSSIs for implementation in 2000.</i>	<i>Action by</i> EN

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible		
5.2.4 Protect key cirl bunting breeding and wintering sites from significant adverse changes due to development.		
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	All key sites to be defended against adverse developments. RSPB (and Devon Wildlife Trust where county wildlife sites) becoming increasingly involved in cirl bunting casework.	
Action/workplan undertaken? <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>	Yes.	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible.	RSPB/Devon Wildlife Trust involved in 5-10 developments/year. EN not supporting this work.	
Output and timescale	Re-active.	Action by EN, RSPB, DWT
Constraints to action <i>(Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)</i>		
Action complete or ongoing? <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>	Ongoing.	
Next steps	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>	
Output and timescale		Action by EN

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible		
5.3.2 Consider re-introductions as an aid to cirl bunting conservation.		
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	EN/RSPB to develop proposals for discussion at next Steering Group meeting (July 2000).	
Action/workplan undertaken? <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>	No.	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible.	<i>Please provide details of progress to date, including information about outputs, deadlines, which organisations and where action is being undertaken</i>	
Output and timescale	EN/RSPB options paper in July 2000.	<i>Action by</i> EN/RSPB
Constraints to action <i>(Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)</i>	Re-introduction site will need targeted agri-environment scheme or similar to encourage appropriate habitat management.	
Action complete or ongoing? <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>		
Next steps	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>	
Output and timescale	Further work to identify suitable site(s) and target management initiatives.	<i>Action by</i> RSPB/EN/ MAFF

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible		
5.4.1 Promote further advice to land managers on management for curlew buntings as one of a suite of farmland birds and update that advice in the light of new policies and research findings.		
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	Delivered through RSPB/EN employed Project Officer. Advisory material and events.	
Action/workplan undertaken? <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>	Yes.	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible.	<i>Please provide details of progress to date, including information about outputs, deadlines, which organisations and where action is being undertaken</i>	
Output and timescale	Promotion of favourable management with particular emphasis on CS.	<i>Action by RSPB</i>
Constraints to action <i>(Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)</i>	-	
Action complete or ongoing? <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>	-	
Next steps	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>	
Output and timescale	Ongoing work to be directed by RSPB/EN.	<i>Action by RSPB/EN</i>

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible		
5.5.1 Continue the programme of cirl bunting research and monitoring including annual sampling of nesting success and periodic full surveys of the breeding population approximately every 10 years (next survey due in 1998).		
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	Full survey (1998) complete and to be repeated every 5 years. More detailed annual monitoring of breeding success on CS agreement sites.	
Action/workplan undertaken? <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>		
Description of work taken and organisation responsible.	<i>Please provide details of progress to date, including information about outputs, deadlines, which organisations and where action is being undertaken</i>	
Output and timescale	1999 survey/analysis/report by March 2000.	<i>Action by</i> RSPB
Constraints to action <i>(Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)</i>	There are constraints on access to some individual CS scheme agreement data without agreement holders' permission prior to 1998. Since then all data are available and can be used.	
Action complete or ongoing? <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>	Ongoing.	
Next steps	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>	
Output and timescale		<i>Action by</i>