

# Species and Habitat Action Plan Assessment Form

## Field 1: Action Plan details

<b>Species/Habitat Action Plan</b>	REED BUNTING <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
<b>Lead Partner/Agency</b>	RSPB
<b>Steering Group/Other organisations</b>	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.
<b>Work programme in existence?</b>	Planned for February 2000

## Field 2: Objectives and targets overview

Number and text	UK	E	NI	S	W	Comments
4.1 <i>In the short term , halt or reverse the decline in numbers of the reed bunting 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 reed 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.</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 pesticides and fertilisers on farmland to reduce the impacts on potential food sources for the reed bunting. This could include encouraging integrated crop management, organic farming and the more widespread adoption of initiatives such as s the recently begun Scottish 'TIBRE' project.</i>		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing
5.1.4 <i>Promote sympathetic management of water courses for reed bunting</i>		Y	Y	Y	Y	N	

5.4.1 Promote further advice to land managers on management for reed bunting 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 reed bunting.		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing
5.4.3 Promote advice on the sympathetic management of freshwater wetlands and farmland water courses to land owners and managers.		Y	Y	Y	Y	N	not started
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 Analyse information on breeding habitats on farmland which was gathered during the BTO corn bunting survey.	Y					Y	ongoing
5.5.3 Consider the need for a detailed study into the ecology of the reed bunting.	Y					Y	not yet started
5.6.1 As appropriate use reed bunting 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) shows decline from mid 1970s to mid 1980s. Slight subsequent recovery but further decline in recent years.</p> <p>The UK Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) trend from 1994 to 1998 was -11% although this wasn't statistically significant. This means that the measured decline could be an artefact (of say sampling strategy). Taken in conjunction with the CBC trend, however, it would appear that the best assessment of current status is declining.</p>							

#### Field 5: Summary statement

**Progress has been made in terms of developing agri-environment schemes which can deliver prescriptions with the potential to benefit reed bunting. These schemes are, however, unlikely to deliver habitat on sufficient scale to meet the objectives of this plan. Specific prescriptions for reed buntings may be needed to be introduced when the results of the research project due to start in 2000 are known**

**Field 6: Signing off**

<b>Contact details</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>	<b>Contact Point</b>
<b>Name</b>	Dr A D Evans	P Grice
<b>Organisation</b>	RSPB	English Nature
<b>Assessment date (dd/mm/yy)</b>	27/09/99	27/09/99

*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 reed bunting 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 determined. Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) trends have not yet been produced by the British Trust for Ornithology for England or Northern Ireland (although trends for England may be available by the end of 1999). Although country trends are available between 1994 &amp; 1998 for Scotland and Wales the Welsh figure is based on a small sample size. It has therefore been decided not to present any country trends in this report.</p> <p>The UK BBS trend from 1994 to 1998 was -11% although this wasn't statistically significant. This means that the measured decline could be an artefact (of say sampling strategy). Taken in conjunction with the CBC trend , however, it would appear that the best assessment of current status is declining.</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
<p>Text description of target progress (separate for each country/region):</p> <p>Too early to assess progress but see comments under 4.1</p>					

**Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)**

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.1 .1. <i>Take account of the need to recover reed 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.</i> DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b>	yes	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	<p>DANI needs of the reed bunting along with other farmland birds taken into account when developing Countryside Management Scheme.</p> <p>MAFF The needs of the reed bunting 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 reed buntings. Some ESAs offer arable reversion prescriptions which may conflict with the interests of arable species.</p> <p>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 reed bunting 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 reed bunting.</p>	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	<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,
<b>Constraints to action</b>	All these schemes are currently limited in terms of financial resources. The scale of enhancement of reed bunting 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.	
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b>	ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	To be determined	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	To be determined	<i>Action by</i>

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.1.2. 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. CCW, DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b>	yes	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	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 & Cotswolds) 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.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	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	Action by CCW DANI MAFF SOAEFD WOAD
<b>Constraints to action</b>	The scale of protection or enhancement of reed bunting 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 .	
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b>	ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	To seek to ensure needs of reed bunting are met by these schemes when results of research are known. To seek to secure substantial increase in funding for these schemes.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	To be determined	Action by

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.1.3 Seek a more cautious and targeted use of pesticides and fertilisers on farmland to reduce the impacts on potential food sources for the reed bunting. This could include encouraging integrated crop management, organic farming and the more widespread adoption of initiatives such as the recently begun Scottish 'TIBRE' project. DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b>	Yes	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	<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 seek to adopt the recommendations from this work 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. 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 &amp; 5.1.2.</p>	
<b>Output and timescale</b>		<i>Action by</i> MAFF
<b>Constraints to action</b>		
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b>	ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	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.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	To be determined	<i>Action by</i>

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.4.1 <i>Promote further advice to land managers on management for reed buntings as one of a suite of farmland birds and update that advice in the light of new policies and research findings.</i> DANI, FA, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b>	yes	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	<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 &amp; 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 &amp; FWAG.</p>	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	See above.	Action by RSPB MAFF SOAEFD SAC GCT FWAG FRCA BAA BTO
<b>Constraints to action</b>		
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b>	ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	New research results will be used to update the information given by RSPB to farmers and advisors	
<b>Output and timescale</b>		Action by

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.4.2 Promote effective management of set-aside for breeding and wintering birds, including reed bunting. DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b>	yes	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	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.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	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
<b>Constraints to action</b>		
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b>	ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	To be determined by Steering Group	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	To be determined by Steering Group	<i>Action by</i>

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.4.3 Promote effective management of freshwater wetlands and farmland water courses to landowners and managers. DANI, EA, MAFF, SEPA, SOAEFD, WOAD	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b>	yes	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	In 1997 EN published its <i>freshwater agenda</i> which proposed a framework for maintaining and enhancing the characteristic biodiversity of England's rivers, lakes and other wetland habitats, focusing attention on designated sites. Key delivery mechanisms for EN include providing the conservation input into MAFF's water level management plans, and designating river SSSIs (and preparing conservation strategies for them jointly with the EA). The Codes of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Water and Soil were revised and relaunched in 1998.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>		<i>Action by</i> EN, EA
<b>Constraints to action</b>		
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b>	ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	To be determined by Steering Group	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	To be determined by Steering Group	<i>Action by</i>

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	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	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b>	yes	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	JNCC: have continued to part fund BTO/ JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (which covers reed bunting) on behalf of the country agencies. RSPB: have also continued to part fund BBS JNCC are funding the BTO to undertake a three year survey of wintering farmland birds commencing 1999/2000.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Noble <i>et al</i> (1999 ) The Breeding Bird Survey 1998. BTO/JNCC/RSPB - Annual report	Action by JNCC, BTO, RSPB
<b>Constraints to action</b>		
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b>	ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	Maintain current programme. 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.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Annual Report as above. DETR/BTO CS2000 survey to be conducted in 2000 and report in 2001.	Action by JNCC, BTO RSPB DETR

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.5.2 Analyse information on breeding habitats on farmland which was gathered during the BTO corn bunting survey. CCW, EHS, EN, JNCC, SNH	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b>	yes	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	These data have now received a preliminary analysis as part of a student research project (Cambridge/BTO)	
<b>Output and timescale</b>		Action by
<b>Constraints to action</b>		
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b>		
<b>Next steps</b>	To be determined	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	To be determined	Action by

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.5.3 Consider the need for a detailed study into the ecology of the reed bunting. CCW, EHS, EN, JNCC, SNH	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b>	no	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	RSPB/EN proposal for a three-year autecological study to commence in 2000 has been approved. This includes a re-analysis of breeding season data collected in and around a Trent Valley gravel pit complex in the 1960s, and the collection of new demographic data to allow comparison with the 1960s. BTO have conducted an Integrated Population Monitoring study of reed bunting demography using historical 'Mark-recapture' CBC, and nest records data	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Peach <i>et al</i> (in press) Journal of Applied Ecology	Action by RSPB EN BTO
<b>Constraints to action</b>		
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b>	About to start	
<b>Next steps</b>	Pending results of research	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	2002	Action by RSPB, EN

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.6.1 As appropriate, use the reed bunting as an example when highlighting the issue of declining farmland birds. CCW, DANI, EHS, EN, JNCC, MAFF, SNH, SOAEFD, WOAD	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b>	yes	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	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 reed bunting 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	
<b>Output and timescale</b>		Action by CCW, EN, EHS
<b>Constraints to action</b>		
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b>	ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	To be determined	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	To be determined	Action by

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	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' CCW, DANI, EHS, EN, JNCC, MAFF, SNH, SOAEFD, WOAD	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b>	yes	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	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.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>		<i>Action by</i>
<b>Constraints to action</b>		
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b>	ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	To be determined	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	To be determined	<i>Action by</i>