



## 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

<b>Species/Habitat Action Plan</b>	Brown hare
<b>Lead Partner/Agency</b>	The Game Conservancy Trust & The Mammal Society
<b>Steering Group/Other organisations</b>	<i>Steering group in existence? Please state yes or no. Please list the organisations represented.</i> Yes The Game Conservancy Trust The Mammal Society Countryside Council for Wales English Nature Scottish Natural Heritage The Wildlife Trusts FRCA representing MAFF The Countryside Alliance Dr Vaughan – MAFF funded research
<b>Work programme in existence?</b>	<i>Please state yes or no. If in existence, please use the agreed work programme to update Field 3 and Table B.</i> First draft available.

### 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 Maintain and expand the existing populations, doubling spring numbers in Britain by 2010		X		X	X	Brown hares are a recent introduction into Ireland and should not be encouraged there.  The steering group considers that it would like to see a proportionally larger increase in numbers in western districts compared to eastern Britain

### 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.)
<b>5.1.1</b> Take account of the requirements of the brown hare when reviewing or developing agri-environmental schemes.	X					X	Ongoing
<b>5.1.2</b> Consider the requirements of this species in any negotiations on changes to, or reform of, agricultural support, seeking to enhance the integration of livestock with arable farming.	X						Ongoing
<b>5.1.3</b> Encourage the uptake of the new flexible set aside scheme instead of rotational set aside, thereby allowing it to be left in place for two years and providing greater benefit to this species.	X				X		Ongoing. Not relevant in Wales. See comments in Table B.
<b>5.1.4</b> Review the use of legislation pertaining to the shooting and selling of hares in the light of research findings on the seasonality of reproduction.	X						Not started
<b>5.3.1</b> Seek to develop of a strategy for the conservation and monitoring of the brown hare (possibly as part of a wider mammals strategy)	X						Ongoing
<b>5.3.2</b> As <b>5.1.4</b>							
<b>5.4.1</b> Prepare and distribute a management advisory booklet for hares.	X					X	Ongoing
<b>5.5.1</b> Promote further research to assess the effects of different agricultural practices (eg crops planted, cutting dates and cutting methods) on brown hare populations.	X					X	Ongoing
<b>5.5.2</b> Investigate the relative economic importance of hares as either a game species or a pest, to assist farmers make informed choices on hare management.	X						Ongoing
<b>5.5.3</b> Repeat the National Hare Survey at appropriate intervals.	X					X	Ongoing
<b>5.5.4</b> Pass information gathered during survey and monitoring of this species to JNCC in order that it can be incorporated in a national database of and contribute to the maintenance of an up-to-date Red List	X						Not started. No longer considered relevant.
<b>5.6.1</b> Use the popularity of brown hares to highlight the impact on biodiversity of modern agricultural practices and loss of mixed farms.	X						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
UK							
England				X			
Northern Ireland	X						
Scotland				X			
Wales							X
Brief text description justifying assessment of status: (~ no more than 100 words for each country/region)							
<p>Annual bag returns from shoots (England &amp; Scotland) and hare hunts (England) indicate no large changes over the last decade – some increases seem to be balanced by some declines. National Hare Survey 1997-9 not yet fully analysed but broadly very similar to the survey conducted in 1991-3 which showed that the present population numbered some 800,000 animals in mid winter. They were most numerous in arable areas especially on gamekeepered estates and in habitat rich landscapes. Populations of hares were most sparse in pastoral districts.</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.

<p>To a large extent brown hare populations have been and will continue to be influenced by farming practices. Changes in the CAP that encourage less intensive agricultural systems and more diverse cropping would probably benefit hares. A continuation of set-aside would also be beneficial but this is primarily a market support mechanism and its stability is dependent on market conditions. MAFF agri-environment schemes will continue to be a major factor in helping this species.</p> <p>Hare numbers are affected by fox predation as shown by GCT research and evidenced by dramatic changes in numbers on the continent following changes in fox abundance brought about by rabies or sarcoptic mange. The BAP for this species takes no account of this.</p> <p>Research studies of hares living on farmland have mostly be confined to arable or mixed arable landscapes. These studies have identified the main ecological constraints for hares in these areas and management prescriptions can therefore be offered. However, in pastoral areas where hare numbers are very low, we do not yet know enough to be able to offer adequate advice to farmers and landowners. The MAFF funded Bristol University project is tackling this.</p>
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**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
The Game Conservancy Trust	X	Stephen Tapper
Countryside Council for Wales		Ruth Warren
English Nature		Tony Robinson
The Wildlife Trusts		Nigel Ajax-Lewis
FRCA		Simon Baker
The Countryside Alliance		Desmond Hobson
MAFF funded research		Nancy Vaughan

<b>Assessment date (21/02/00)</b>		

*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](mailto: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.

<b>Objective/target</b> (For new or revised targets please provide the new paragraph number and target text.)	Maintain and expand existing populations, doubling spring numbers in Britain by 2010.				
<b>Country</b>	<b>Not appropriate</b>	<b>Target achieved</b>	<b>Some progress</b>	<b>No progress</b>	<b>Insufficient information</b>
UK					
England			X		
Northern Ireland	X				
Scotland					X
Wales					X
Text description of target progress (separate for each country/region):					
Shifts in agricultural policy may be helping in some arable regions. Not yet much evidence of improvements in non-arable areas.					

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

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

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b> (For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)	<b>5.1.1</b> Take account of the requirements of the brown hare when reviewing or developing agri-environmental schemes.	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b> (Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)	MAFF has started the pilot Arable Stewardship Scheme in two English Regions. Brown hares are one of a number of species targeted to benefit.  Brown hare has been considered in developing Tir Gofal in Wales although there are no species specific prescriptions.  Impetus has been independent of steering group.	
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b> (Please state yes or no.)	MAFF contracted a consortium headed by ADAS to monitor environmental benefits of the Arable Stewardship Scheme. This work includes counts of hares.	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	Night counts of hares being undertaken on farms which have and have not taken up Arable Stewardship options. Hare counting sub-contracted to The Game Conservancy.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Due for completion end of 2000	Action by
<b>Constraints to action</b> (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.)	Usefulness of Arable Stewardship likely to be dependent on future of government funding of agri-environment schemes.  It is not clear yet if there will be hare monitoring under the Tir Gofal scheme.	

<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b> (Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)	Ongoing
<b>Next steps</b>	Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Action by

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b> (For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)	<b>5.1.1</b> Take account of the requirements of the brown hare when reviewing or developing agri-environmental schemes.
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b> (Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)	
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b> (Please state yes or no.)	Yes
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	The requirements of BAP species were taken into account by MAFF in recent quinquennial ESA scheme reviews. These are summarised in the BAP tables published in individual ESA Consultation Documents. One output of these reviews was the introduction of the Management plan concept to the majority of ESAs which will enable finer tuning of management to bring about conservation objectives. Countryside Stewardship scheme consultation is carried out at regular intervals to define regional targets which can address regional BAP priorities. The MAFF 3 year Pilot Arable Stewardship Scheme, Conservation tiers in ESAs and arable Field Margins option in Countryside Stewardship agreements may assist brown hare populations  To support this objective MAFF are also funding research which is detailed at Table B 5.5.1
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Ongoing Action by
<b>Constraints to action</b> (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.)	Agri-environment schemes have to balance wildlife objectives with others concerning landscape, historic features and access; and spending is inevitably limited by budgetary constraints. As voluntary schemes they cannot guarantee uptake
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b> (Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)	Ongoing
<b>Next steps</b>	MAFF will take BAP priority species and habitats into consideration in future scheme reviews and regional consultations when these take place.
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Ongoing Action by

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b> <i>(For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)</i>	<b>5.1.2</b> Consider the requirements of this species in any negotiations on changes to, or reform of, agricultural support, seeking to enhance the integration of livestock with arable farming.	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b> <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b> <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>	Yes	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	Individual species conservation concerns are generally too detailed to be considered at the level of Member State negotiations on the CAP. However, the UK government has been a major advocate of increasing the proportion of the CAP budget linked to environmental benefits	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Ongoing	<i>Action by</i>
<b>Constraints to action</b> <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>	Changes to the CAP can only be secured through successful negotiation between member States subject to the rules and procedures of the European Union.	
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b> <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>	Ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Ongoing	<i>Action by</i>

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b> <i>(For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)</i>	<b>5.1.3</b> Encourage the uptake of the new flexible set-aside scheme instead of rotational set aside, thereby allowing it to be left in place for two years and providing greater benefit for this species.	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b> <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b> <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>	Yes	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	MAFF continues to provide funding for FWAG and ADAS to carry out free initial conservation advice visits to farms in England. Particular emphasis is placed on BAP habitats / species.	

<b>Output and timescale</b>	Ongoing	<i>Action by</i>
<b>Constraints to action</b> <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>	Set-aside is a market support mechanism which is an integral part of the EU Arable Area Payments Scheme. Its primary purpose is as a production control tool, but within the UK MAFF has sought to have management rules for set-aside that enables farmers to maximise potential environmental benefits. Care needs to be taken when including set-aside within mechanisms for achieving BAP targets because it is not an environmental mechanism and its stability is dependent on market conditions.	
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b> <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>	Ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Ongoing	<i>Action by</i>

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b> <i>(For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)</i>	<b>5.5.1</b> Promote further research to assess the effects of different agricultural practices (eg crops planted, cutting dates and cutting methods) on brown hare populations.	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b> <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	MAFF has funded a 5 year research project (1997-2002) which is underway at Bristol and York Universities. The title is 'Integrating farm management practices with brown hare conservation in pastoral landscapes'. Work is being carried out by Nancy Vaughan at Bristol University.	
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b> <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>	Work consists of carcass dissection, transect counts, radio tracking, questionnaire analysis, and habitat assessment	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	<i>Please provide details of progress to date, including information about outputs, deadlines, which organisations and where action is being undertaken.</i>	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	The research is on schedule and will be complete by 2002	<i>Action by</i>
<b>Constraints to action</b> <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>	The main difficulties are 1) obtaining enough carcasses from pastoral areas in which hares are rare, and 2) obtaining enough live animals for radio tracking from those areas. In early 1999 a press release from Bristol University resulted in good publicity and about 100 road killed hares have been sent in. More are needed and members of the steering group should continue to provide publicity within the groups which they represent. Not much more can be done: densities of hares are low in pastoral areas.	
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b> <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>	Ongoing.	
<b>Next steps</b>	Radio tracking work and carcass collection continues.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	2002	<i>Action by</i>

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b> <i>(For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)</i>	<b>5.5.3</b> Repeat the National Brown Hare Survey at appropriate intervals	
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<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b> <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	The Peoples' Trust for Endangered Species has funded a 2 year project which is being carried out by Ruth Temple at Bristol University.	
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b> <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>	Ruth Temple and c350 volunteers have conducted transect counts in 1km squares in England, Scotland and Wales	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	<i>Please provide details of progress to date, including information about outputs, deadlines, which organisations and where action is being undertaken.</i>	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	The research is on schedule and will be complete by Autumn 1999	Action by
<b>Constraints to action</b> <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>	Difficulty with recruiting volunteers and inclement weather conditions during survey periods limited the number of 1km squares covered but enough surveys have been conducted to ensure a robust estimate of population density.	
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b> <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>	Ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	Writing-up continues	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Autumn 1999	Action by

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b> <i>(For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)</i>	<b>5.4.1</b> Prepare and distribute a management advisory booklet for hares.	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b> <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	The Countryside Alliance agreed to undertake production of this. EN has provided some financial support.	
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b> <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>	The booklet has been drafted and submitted to the steering group for comment and revision.	
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	<i>Please provide details of progress to date, including information about outputs, deadlines, which organisations and where action is being undertaken.</i>	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Completion expected this year.	Action by
<b>Constraints to action</b> <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>		
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b> <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>	Ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	Revision, artwork, publish, distribute.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	1999	Action by

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b> <i>(For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)</i>	5.1 etc	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b> <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b> <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i>		
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	<i>Please provide details of progress to date, including information about outputs, deadlines, which organisations and where action is being undertaken.</i>	
<b>Output and timescale</b>		<i>Action by</i>
<b>Constraints to action</b> <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>		
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b> <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i>		
<b>Next steps</b>	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>	
<b>Output and timescale</b>		<i>Action by</i>