

# Species and Habitat Action Plan Assessment Form

## Field 1: Action Plan details

<b>Species/Habitat Action Plan</b>	CORN BUNTING <i>Miliaria calandra</i>
<b>Lead Partner/Agency</b>	RSPB/EN
<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 corn 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 corn 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 corn 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.</i>		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing

5.4.1 Promote further advice to land managers on management for corn bunting as one of a suite of farmland birds and update that advice in the light of new policies and research findings		Y	Y	n/a	Y	Y	ongoing
5.4.2 Promote effective management of set-aside for breeding and wintering birds including corn bunting.		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing
5.5.1 Carry out further studies to gain an adequate understanding of the ecological requirements of the corn bunting , including the role of different factors in the decline of the species in different parts of the UK	Y					Y	ongoing
5.5.2. 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
5.5.3 Consider including corn bunting in any future work which assesses the effects of set-aside, ESAs, the pilot Arable Stewardship Scheme and other mechanisms which may encourage farmland birds.	Y			n/a		Y	ongoing
5.6.1 As appropriate use corn bunting as an example when highlighting the issue of declining farmland birds.		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing
5.6.2 Promote the importance of traditional crofting with cattle and mixed cultivation for the conservation of corn buntings in western Scotland and of traditional ley farming elsewhere.		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing
5.6.3 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

Common Birds Census (CBC) shows continuous decline since 1970s; sample sizes of CBC plots now very small.

UK Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) 1994-1998 shows statistically significant<sup>1</sup> decline of 42%. BBS samples too small to determine reliable country trends.

**\* Species became extinct in NI prior to the BAP**

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

**Field 5: Summary statement**

**Much progress has been made in terms of understanding the decline of the corn bunting as a result of research. Progress has also been made in terms of including prescriptions for management practices sympathetic to corn buntings in agri-environment schemes. These schemes are limited in terms of funding and unlikely to deliver suitable habitat on a large enough scale to allow the plan targets to be met. The population is still in severe decline. Consideration should be given to emergency intervention measures to prevent further losses.**

**Field 6: Signing off**

Contact details	Lead Partner	Contact Point
<b>Name</b>	Dr A D Evans	
<b>Organisation</b>	RSPB	
<b>Assessment date (dd/mm/yy)</b>	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 corn 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
Text description of target progress (separate for each country/region):					
<b>Country targets to be determined.</b>					
<b>* Species became extinct in NI prior to the BAP</b>					
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					

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
<b>Too early to assess but the signs are not good; UK BBS 1994-1998 shows a statistically significant decline of -42%.</b>					

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

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.1 .1. <i>Take account of the need to recover corn 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 farmland birds taken into account when developing Countryside Management Scheme.</p> <p>MAFF The needs of the corn 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 corn 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 corn 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 corn 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>	<p>Action by</p> <p>DANI</p> <p>MAFF,</p> <p>SOAEFD</p> <p>WOAD,</p>
<b>Constraints to action</b>	All these schemes are currently limited in terms of financial resources. The scale of enhancement of corn 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	Action by

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	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	
<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. Given the increasingly fragmented nature of the corn bunting population, especially in the west of the country, there is a growing case for targeted conservation measures in some areas, perhaps involving CS special projects along similar lines to the curl bunting. 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	<i>Action by</i> CCW DANI MAFF SOAEFD WOAD
<b>Constraints to action</b>	The scale of protection or enhancement of corn 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 secure increase in funding for these schemes. EN and RSPB are considering commencing a project that will opportunistically provide funds for emergency measures to help farmland birds which could be targeted on remnant corn bunting populations.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	To be determined	<i>Action by</i>

<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 corn 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): Following the EN/RSPB/GCT research project, the corn bunting is one of only two species where good evidence exists for a link between a declining farmland bird and the indirect effects of pesticides on its food supply. 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 corn bunting as one of a suite of farmland birds and update that advice in the light of new policies and research findings</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>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>	RSPB advisory material will be updated in 2000.	
<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 corn 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	
<b>Output and timescale</b>		<i>Action by</i>

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.5.1 <i>Carry out further studies to gain an adequate understanding of the ecological requirements of the corn bunting , including the role of different factors in the decline of the species in different parts of the UK</i> 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>	EHS not relevant to NI- the species is extinct EN EN/RSPB/GCT three-year study on the South Downs successfully completed. No plans for further studies as yet. MAFF Funded two projects involving analyses of large-scale, long-term BTO data sets on demography and changes in population and distribution. Distribution and breeding success have been related to agricultural land use in these studies but there are too few ringing data for survival analyses	
<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>	Any targeted SRP-type work should include an appropriate research/monitoring programme to ensure effectiveness of the measures undertaken (cf Cirl Bunting).	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	To be determined by Steering Group	<i>Action by</i>

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.5.2. 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 corn bunting) on behalf of the country agencies. RSPB: have also continued to part fund BBS.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Noble <i>et al</i> (1999 ) The Breeding Bird Survey 1998. BTO/JNCC/RSPB - Annual report	<i>Action by</i> JNCC BTO RSPB
<b>Constraints to action</b>		
<b>Action complete or ongoing?</b>	ongoing	
<b>Next steps</b>	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.	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	Annual Report as above. DETR/BTO CS2000 survey to be conducted in 2000 and report in 2001.	<i>Action by</i> JNCC, BTO RSPB DETR

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.5.3 Consider including corn bunting in any future work which assess the effects of set-aside, ESAs, the pilot Arable Stewardship Scheme and other mechanisms which may encourage farmland birds. 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>	DANI Species extinct in NI MAFF The Corn Bunting is one of a suite of farmland species covered by the Arable Stewardship monitoring programme. SOAEFD WOAD establishment of Tir Gofal, run by CCW, includes provision for species and habitat monitoring	
<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 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>	5.6.1 As appropriate, use the corn 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>	<p>CCW Reference to farmland birds made in the 'State of the Welsh Environment Report', submitted by CCW to the Welsh Assembly</p> <p>EHS Used as an example in the NI biodiversity Strategy proposals</p> <p>EN The Corn Bunting has been widely used by EN as an example of a declining farmland bird.</p> <p>SNH no action reported</p>	
<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>

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.6.2 'Promote the importance of traditional crofting with cattle and mixed cultivation for the conservation of corn buntings in western Scotland and of traditional ley farming elsewhere in the UK. CCW, EHS, EN, JNCC, MAFF, SNH, SOAEFD, WOAD	
<b>Work plan/organisation(s) responsible</b>		
<b>Action/workplan undertaken?</b>		
<b>Description of work taken and organisation responsible</b>	<p>CCW Management prescriptions under Tir Gofal include sympathetic management of a range of farmland habitats for birds</p> <p>EHS not relevant, extinct in NI</p> <p>EN As highlighted by a recent RSPB/EN review, the Corn Bunting provides one of the few examples of a species which been proven to benefit from the juxtaposition of habitats provided by low intensity mixed farming systems, and this has and will be highlighted by EN as appropriate.</p> <p>JNCC</p> <p>MAFF</p> <p>SNH</p> <p>SOAEFD</p> <p>WOAD Providing funding to CCW to establish and run new all-Wales agri-environment scheme, Tir Gofal</p>	
<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>

<b>Published action/organisation(s) responsible</b>	5.6.3. 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 by Steering Group	
<b>Output and timescale</b>	To be determined by Steering Group	<i>Action by</i>