

Species and Habitat Action Plan Assessment Form

Field 1: Action Plan details

Species/Habitat Action Plan	BULLFINCH <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>
Lead Partner/Agency	RSPB
Steering Group/Other organisations	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.
Work programme in existence?	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 bullfinch 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>Review licensing procedures regularly to ensure that they remain appropriate to the status of the bullfinch</i>		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing

5.4.1 Promote methods other than trapping to fruit growers as a means of reducing the problems of bullfinches in orchards		Y				N	ongoing
5.4.2 Consider producing advisory material for orchard owners on the provision of alternative sources of natural food for bullfinches.		Y	Y	Y	Y	N	not started yet
5.4.3 Promote the sympathetic management of hedgerows and farmland scrub for the benefit of bullfinches and other farmland birds.		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	ongoing
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 Undertake an autecological study of the bullfinch to identify appropriate habitat management.	Y					Y	ongoing
5.5.3 Ensure completion of analyses of long-term data sets on ringing recoveries and nest record cards to help determine the causes of the bullfinch decline.	Y					Y	ongoing
5.6.1. Promote the bullfinch as a species in need of conservation assistance,		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

UK Common Birds Census (CBC) trend indicates a continuous decline since the mid-1970s

UK Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) 1994-1998 shows statistically significant¹ decline of 27%. BBS samples too small to determine reliable country trends.

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

A research project is underway which will help explain the reasons for the continuing decline of the bullfinch and may inform future conservation measures. The agri-environment schemes which have recently been put in place offer prescriptions which may enhance farmland habitats for bullfinches but is unlikely, given the scale of financial resource devoted to these schemes that such prescriptions will be implemented on a sufficient scale to allow the plan objectives to be met.

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	Dr A D Evans	
Organisation	RSPB	
Assessment date (dd/mm/yy)	22/10/99	

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)

Objective/target	4.1 <i>In the short term , halt or reverse the decline in numbers of the bullfinch 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):					
Country targets not yet determined. BBS samples too small to provide reliable country trends.					
UK Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) 1994-1998 shows statistically significant ¹ decline of 27%.					
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
Text description of target progress (separate for each country/region):					
Too early to assess progress but the signs are poor (see comments under 4.1)					

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.1 .1. <i>Take account of the need to recover bullfinch 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. Retention of hedgerows, thickets and other scrub / wooded habitats on farmland should be encouraged.</i> DANI, FA, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	<p>DANI needs of the bullfinch along with other farmland birds taken into account when developing Countryside Management Scheme.</p> <p>MAFF The needs of the bullfinch 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 bullfinches. 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. Since June 1997 important hedgerows (as defined in the Hedgerow Regulations) have been protected from removal in England and Wales, The Government is currently considering how these regulations can be strengthened . Agri-environment schemes in all parts of the UK encourage the planting and restoration of hedgerows. ESAs and the CS scheme contain measures for the maintenance and enhancement of hedgerows</p> <p>SOAEFD needs of the bullfinch 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 bullfinch</p> <p>EN and SNH have recently commissioned a comprehensive review of the biodiversity interest of scrub habitats and the priorities for their conservation.</p>	
Output and timescale	<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,
Constraints to action	All these schemes are currently limited in terms of financial resources. The scale of enhancement of bullfinch 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.	
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	To be determined	
Output and timescale	To be determined	<i>Action by</i>

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	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	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	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.	
Output and timescale	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
Constraints to action	The scale of protection or enhancement of bullfinch 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 .	
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	To ensure needs of bullfinch are met by these schemes when results of research are known. To secure substantial increase in funding for these schemes.	
Output and timescale	To be determined	<i>Action by</i>

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	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 bullfinch. 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	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?		
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	<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>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.</p> <p>DANI, SOAEFD , WOAD No action reported other than prescriptions for pesticide reduction within agri-environment schemes covered in 5.1.1 & 5.1.2.</p>	
Output and timescale		<i>Action by</i> MAFF
Constraints to action	Limited understanding of the impacts of the indirect effects of pesticides on bullfinches.	
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	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. MAFF long term R&D project now underway to develop framework for the assessment of the indirect effects of pesticides on farmland birds, including, specifically the bullfinch. Project will assess the adequacy of current framework in protecting against such effects. Pesticides Forum to consider further ways of promoting integrated crop management techniques.	
Output and timescale	To be determined	<i>Action by</i>

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.1.4 Review licensing procedures regularly to ensure that they remain appropriate to the status of the bullfinch. DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	DANI MAFF Following advice from EN, a general licence is no longer issued to allow the control of Bullfinches to prevent serious damage to orchards. Individual licences must therefore now be applied for by orchard managers wishing to control bullfinches. SOAEFD WOAD	
Output and timescale		Action by EN, MAFF
Constraints to action		
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	To be determined	
Output and timescale	To be determined	Action by

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.4.3 Promote the sympathetic management of hedgerows and farmland scrub for the benefit of bullfinch and other farmland birds. DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	DANI MAFF Since June 1997 important hedgerows (as defined in the Hedgerow Regulations) have been protected from removal in England and Wales, The Government is currently considering how these regulations can be strengthened. Agri-environment schemes in all parts of the UK encourage the planting and restoration of hedgerows. ESAs and the CS scheme contain measures for the maintenance and enhancement of hedgerows EN and SNH have recently commissioned a comprehensive review of the biodiversity interest of scrub habitats and the priorities for their conservation. SOAEFD WOAD	
Output and timescale		Action by
Constraints to action		
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	To be determined by Steering Group	
Output and timescale	To be determined by Steering Group	Action by

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

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.5.2. Undertake an autecological study of the bullfinch to identify appropriate habitat management. CCW, EHS, EN, FC, JNCC, SNH	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	Yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible		
Output and timescale	Project to run from three years from October 1998 Output in form of Thesis, scientific papers and input to revision of advisory material	Action by RSPB, NERC Oxford University
Constraints to action	none	
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	Ensure the needs of the bullfinch as determined by the research are adequately met by agri-environment schemes , woodland management policies and advisory materials	
Output and timescale	2001/2002	Action by

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.5.3 Ensure completion of analyses of long-term data sets on ringing recoveries and nest record cards to help determine the causes of the bullfinch decline JNCC	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	JNCC have commissioned BTO to conduct these analyses. BTO have undertaken other demographic analyses under contract to MAFF.	
Output and timescale	To be completed FY 2000/01	<i>Action by</i> BTO, JNCC, MAFF
Constraints to action		
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	To be determined	
Output and timescale	To be determined	<i>Action by</i>

Published action/organisation(s) responsible	5.6.1 Promote the bullfinch as a species in need of conservation assistance CCW, EHS, EN, JNCC, SNH	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible		
Action/workplan undertaken?	yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	EN This species continues to be used by EN as an example of a formerly common bird of the countryside that is in trouble as a result of changes in land management.	
Output and timescale		<i>Action by</i> EN
Constraints to action		
Action complete or ongoing?	ongoing	
Next steps	To be determined by Steering Group	
Output and timescale	To be determined by Steering Group	<i>Action by</i>