

LIFE Project Number
LIFE+08/INF/UK/214

Mid-term Report
Covering the project activities from 01/01/2010 to 30/06/2011

Reporting Date
30/09/2011

LIFE+ PROJECT NAME or Acronym
**Promoting the importance of the EU Birds Directive in
conservation management on farmland**

Data Project

Project location	UK
Project start date:	01/01/2010
Project end date:	31/12/2012
Total budget	€ 1,692,547
EC contribution:	€ 846,273
(%) of eligible costs	50%

Data Beneficiary

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2. List of abbreviations

AES	Agri-environment scheme
Farmer(s)	Refers to farmer(s) and crofter(s)
GIS	Geographical Information System
ha	Hectare
NoFA	Nature of Farming Award
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
V&FA	Volunteer & Farmer Alliance
OFC	Oxford Farming Conference

3. Executive summary

3.1. General progress

The project objectives are:

- To engage directly with at least 3,540 farmers through on-farm bird surveys, a network of demonstration farms and a Biodiversity Award scheme, in order to raise awareness of the EU Birds Directive and promote positive land management.
- To engage at least 7,040 members of the general public directly in project delivery, through the delivery of the surveys and engagement in the award scheme.
- To create a positive profile for the EU Birds Directive among participating farmers and members of their local communities, as well as more widely among farmers and the public, through promotional activities. Specifically: (1) to engage with more than 120,000 farmers annually through promotional and media activities and media; and (2) to engage with more than 3 million members of the general public annually through targeted media work highlighting the importance of protecting both rare and widespread farmland birds in accordance with the Birds Directive.

In 2011, we engaged with 738 farmers through bird surveys, 317 farmers through the Biodiversity Award scheme and 725 farmers at project events held on demonstration farms. A total of 430 farmers received advice over the 12 month period since the Inception Report, bringing the total for the project to 547.

Although these include follow-up visits to farmers who had free surveys, many were farmers wanting advice with known target bird species conservation needs, too. In total, an estimate of 2,757 farmers received direct contact with this project since the start, removing replication as far as we can. In addition, we have corresponded with over 2,000 farmers through the farming e-newsletter and about 6,000 farmers through the project newsletter, so now have regular communication with over 8,000 farmers.

The increased public interest in the Biodiversity Award scheme resulted in 22,069 votes for the four finalists, a massive 350% increase on 2010. This year, 885 volunteers took part in surveys, of which 351 attended volunteer workshops.

Media coverage was much greater this year, with 35 articles in newspapers and 93 on-line stories. Due to The Telegraph becoming the media partner for the NoFA, the project benefitted from four articles in the national paper with a readership of 1.68 million. The lower figure quoted in the Inception Report was incorrect. The project also featured on the BBC Radio 2 Breakfast Show (8.6 million listeners), BBC Radio 4 Farming Today (1 million listeners), in the RSPB magazine (2.1 million readers) and Farmers Weekly (240,000 readers).

The key actions planned for the 12 month period since the Inception Report were:

- identify farmers and trained volunteers for the 2011 bird surveys and carry out these surveys (Actions B1, C1 and C5)
- promote entry into the 2011 Biodiversity Award scheme, select the finalists and promote the public vote to select the national winner (Action C8)
- improve the project website (Action F1)
- disseminate information boards (Action F2)
- media promotion of the project (Action F5)
- attend technical events to promote the project and RSPB advice (Action F7).

These actions were all completed and although the uptake of information boards is still slow, the establishment of demonstration farms is on schedule. There is a backlog of case studies to be added to the website: the target number of 11 per annum has been met and these will be on the website before the end of 2011.

In addition, the outputs of the 2011 bird surveys have been worked up and will be sent to the farmers before Christmas (Action C2) and follow-up visits to farms will happen on the back of this (Action C3). Farmland Bird Advisers have already exceeded the target number of farm visits for 2011 by giving advice to farmers on the basis of known bird records. The number of farms visited in Wales has been very large due to demand for advice following the development of a new agri-environment scheme. In some regions/countries, the Project Officers support the Farmland Bird Advisers in the delivery of on-farm advice and run farmer workshops. All regions/countries have set up at least 1 demonstration farm, with a total of 26 across the UK. All regions/countries except Wales have run farmer workshops, and Wales will hold an event before the end of 2011.

3.2. Assessment as to whether the project objectives and work plan are still viable

The only targets not met from the set objectives have been the number of attendees at volunteer workshops, which, as explained in the Inception Report is a consequence of many volunteers being experienced and not needing training. The number of farmers attending workshops is also low in some regions, but the total number of farmers attending workshops exceeds the national target, with large numbers in some regions making up for low attendance in others.

3.3. Problems encountered

Some of the demonstration farmers are reluctant to use the information boards, as they work with other partners who are not recognised on the boards, but we hope to recruit sufficient demonstration farms over the remainder of this project to make full use of the boards produced.

Although we lost our demonstration plots at Cereals this year, this did not reduce our presence at the show, as the level of interest in the RSPB stand was greater than ever, with the focus on signing up to the project newsletter and gaining farmers feedback on ways to help them deliver wildlife conservation. We will not have demonstration plots either next year, but have learnt a lot about how to attract farmers to the stand and do not see this inhibiting the promotion of the project's activities.

4. Administrative part

4.1. Description of project management

Monthly one to one meetings take place between the EU LIFE+ Project Manager and Senior Agricultural Adviser to review project progress. A detailed annual appraisal also takes place.

Every 6 weeks, an Agricultural Communications Group meets. This retains a strategic overview of agricultural communications and public relations.

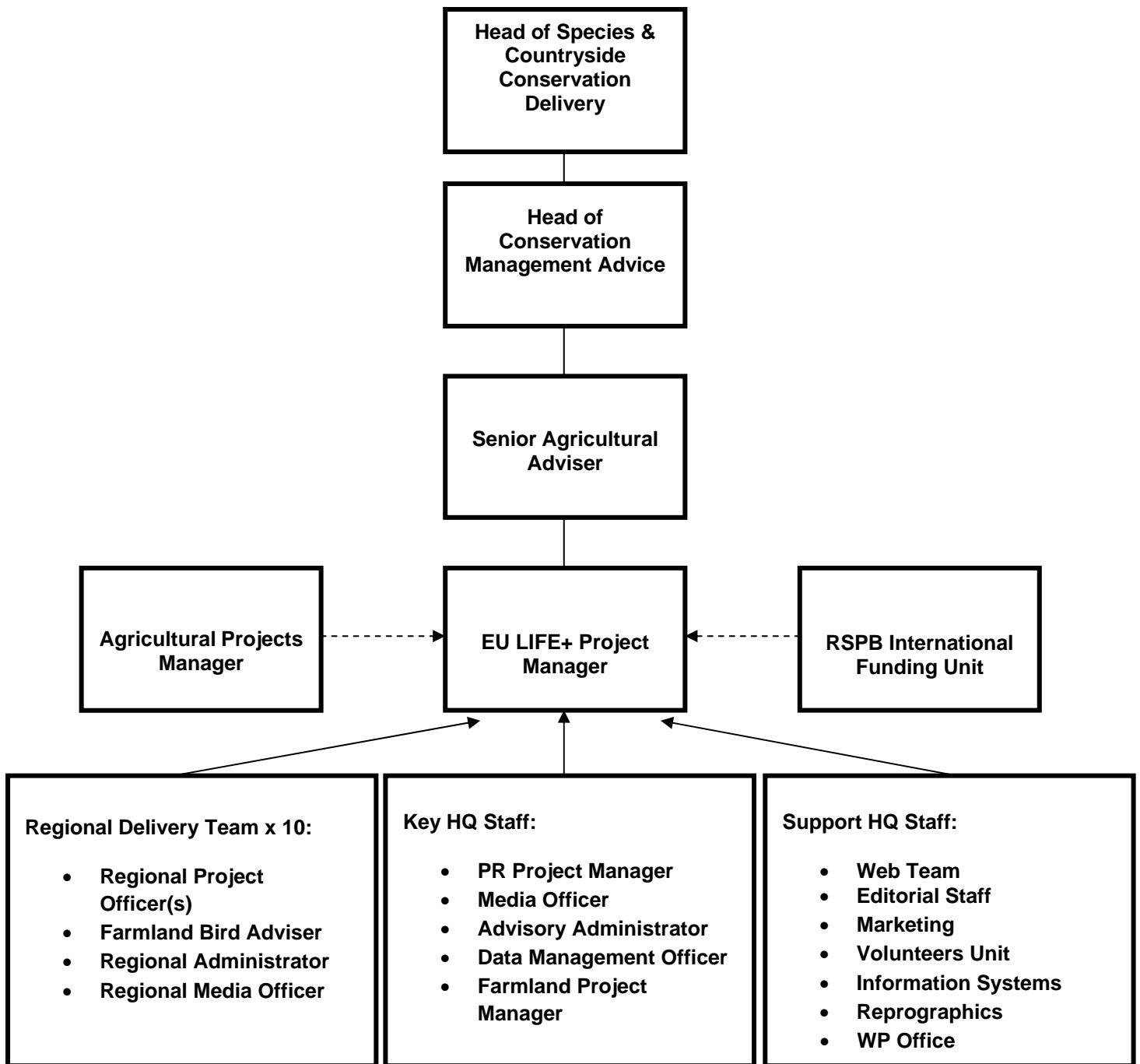
A LIFE+ Project Steering Group meets bi-annually, to review the project budget and progress.

The UK Steering Group also meets every 6 months and involves all the project staff and those from elsewhere within the RSPB, who contribute to project delivery.

The Regional Delivery Teams regularly liaise with and report to the EU LIFE+ Project Manager and staff from the LIFE+ Project Steering Group, who meet with Regional Delivery Teams as required.

In addition to all these meetings which have been standard since 01/01/2010, fortnightly meetings have taken place since 29/09/2010 between the EU LIFE+ Project Manager, Agricultural Projects Manager, PR Project Manager and Media Officer. These took responsibility for planning and implementing Cereals initially, then focussed on the NoFA and more recently the OFC.

4.2. Organogram showing the key components of the project management structure



4.3. Partnership agreements status (incl. date of signature) and key content

These are not relevant.

5. Technical part

5.1 Project Actions

Action A1: Manage project

The robust management framework previously established has been strengthened further since the Inception Report. The Head of Conservation Management Advice was promoted to Head of Species & Countryside Conservation Delivery. Despite this, both members of staff have an active role in project management, ensuring continuity.

The organogram on page 7 reflects the improvements to the management structure of the project.

The EU LIFE+ Project Manager is based at the RSPB's Headquarters and is responsible for the delivery of the project. As before, she reports to the Senior Agricultural Adviser routinely, with monthly one to one meetings and a detailed annual appraisal formally scheduled.

The LIFE+ Project Steering Group still meets every 6 months with minutes and action points drawn up. This group includes the Head of Species & Countryside Conservation Delivery, Head of Conservation Management Advice, Senior Agricultural Adviser, EU LIFE+ Project Manager, Agricultural Projects Manager and staff from the International Funding Unit. This group meets every 6 months. See Annex 1.

The UK Steering Group continues to meet twice a year and includes the above, plus key representatives from Regional Delivery Teams and staff from other HQ departments, including Volunteer and Media Units. The minutes are made available. See Annex 2 and 3.

An Agricultural Communications Group meets every 6 weeks. With the exception of staff from the International Funding Unit, this group includes those from the LIFE+ Project Steering Group and additionally, the Farmland Project Manager, Agricultural Policy Officer, PR Project Manager and Media Officer. Action points are distributed after each meeting. See Annex 4 and 5.

This framework has been strengthened further by fortnightly meetings since 29/09/2010 which have ensured suitable plans were established in advance of the OFC, where a ceremony to celebrate the NoFA was held. The staff at these meetings consist of the EU LIFE+ Project Manager, Agricultural Projects Manager, PR Project Manager and Media Officer with others contributing when necessary. After the OFC, the HQ Delivery Team concentrated on our attendance at Cereals - the technical event for arable farmers in the UK and latterly ensured a successful delivery of the NoFA. See Annex 6.

A recruitment process was required in North Scotland during December 2010, in South-east England in May 2011 and more recently in North-east England during September 2011 to replace Project Officers.

In line with improvements to our project newsletter, we have employed a Data Management Officer for 10 weeks, to ensure a stream-lined delivery of bespoke newsletters to project participants and meet our commitment to reduce our carbon footprint. See Annex 7.

She is based at the RSPB's Headquarters and routinely liaises with the EU LIFE+ Project Manager, Agricultural Projects Manager, Head of Volunteer Unit and Project Manager in Information Systems.

As before there are 11 established Regional Delivery Teams, which comprise of Project Officers, Farmland Bird Advisers, Media Officers and Administrators. These teams regularly liaise with and report to the EU LIFE+ Project Manager. In addition, staff from the LIFE+ Project Steering Group, meet with Regional Delivery Teams as required.

Action A2: Monitor project progress

The progress of the project is assessed using the timetable and milestones set out in the project guidelines, on a fortnightly basis by the recently established HQ Delivery Team, a monthly basis through meetings between the EU LIFE+ Project Manager and Senior Agricultural Adviser, six monthly through the steering groups and annually through staff appraisals.

The EU LIFE+ Project Manager maintains an overview of project actions through frequent and detailed communications with each Regional Delivery Team. Equally, the EU LIFE+ Project Manager has routine contact with her line manager, which (as noted above) is in addition to formally scheduled meetings.

Action A3: External audit

This is planned for 2013.

Action A4: After-LIFE plan

This is planned for 2013.

Action B1: Identify farmers and volunteers

A range of materials, including country specific versions of leaflets continued to be used and have been re-printed where necessary – most notably to account for a change of address in Scotland when our head-quarters re-located. See Annex 8. These leaflets are used to promote the project to both farmers and volunteers.

Numerous banners were produced to promote our work, to both farmers and volunteers. These were used at various events including the OFC, Cereals, the Royal Welsh Show and the International Sheepdog Trials. The design process for most of the banners was by RSPB staff and the printing was always out-sourced. See Annex 9, 10 and 11.

Where there was an additional requirement to recruit more farmers and/or volunteers, a press release was sent out to publicise the project. See Annex 12. Either group would have been targeted, depending on the need for participants. For example, more farmers were needed in South-east England. See Annex 13.

A wide range of media outlets, including local and regional newspapers and specialist agricultural media were successful in publicising the project to farmers. In addition we made use of the RSPB's extensive internal mechanisms including the network of local RSPB groups and our website.

An article in BIRDS magazine which promoted the worth of voluntary work per se singularly encouraged scores of individuals to contact us, with a view to undertaking farmland bird surveys. See Annex 14.

A mailing was generated from our supporters database and sent to contacts on the Outer Hebrides by the Project Officer in North Scotland to recruit volunteers. This proved very successful, in that 160 letters were sent out explaining the project and from this, nine members replied, of which five proceeded to undertake farmland bird surveys on the Outer Hebrides. See Annex 15.

Having expressed an interest in having a survey undertaken, the farmers are sent a registration form and asked to return it with a map of the farm, specifically identifying which 80ha they would like surveyed. This is a maximum area that a volunteer can effectively survey in a morning.

This map allows the appropriate GIS software to be prepared and a suitably placed volunteer to be tentatively matched to the farm to undertake the survey. The supporters database is used to record the details of the farmers involved.

These computer programmes and the data entry are set up to ensure compliance with data protection legislation and efficient administration.

Alongside this process, volunteers were identified and sent a registration form. When this is returned, the information is committed to a different RSPB database designed to assist volunteer management and comply with data protection legislation.

Action C1: Carry out farm surveys

The Project Officers and Regional Delivery Teams attracted interest from 879 farmers, requesting surveys in advance of the breeding season this year.

See the table opposite.

Region/country	No. requests for surveys 2010	No. surveys delivered 2010	No. requests for surveys 2011	No. surveys delivered 2011
South-west England	100	94	97	91
South-east England	78	54	76	55
East of England	165	92	87	114
England Midlands	143	77	127	83
North-west England	76	51	61	58
North-east England	132	80	95	90
East Scotland	47	47	53	49
South and West Scotland	65	57	58	54
North Scotland	60	28	45	42
Northern Ireland	84	67	65	60
Wales	58	36	76	42
Total	1,008	683	879	738

The number of requests for surveys was much higher last year. This accounts for the greater number of surveys delivered this year, because in an attempt to manage expectations, we ensured that any surveys we were unable to undertake last year, were undertaken this year.

Project Officers liaised with farmers to ensure we could deliver timely surveys. Because communication with farmers can prove frustrating within office hours, we continue to do this by post unless the farmer initiates communication by another means.

Having secured the necessary commitment and received the associated paperwork from the farmer, it is agreed with the farmer that the survey will be undertaken providing a local volunteer can be found.

In parallel with the recruitment and registration process for farmers, 885 volunteers committed to undertaking surveys this year.

See the table overleaf.

Region/country	No. of survey volunteers 2010	No. of admin. volunteers 2010	No. of survey volunteers 2011	No. of admin. volunteers 2011
South-west England	108	2	98	2
South-east England	64	1	62	1
East of England	117	6	130	5
England Midlands	103	-	109	1
North-west England	66	1	72	1
North-east England	130	-	118	-
East Scotland	52	-	50	-
South and West Scotland	60	-	64	-
North Scotland	23	-	33	1
Northern Ireland	71	2	70	2
Wales	42	-	79	-
Total	836	12	885	13

Predictably, this is higher than last year, accounting for the correspondingly high number of surveys undertaken.

After Project Officers have received the necessary paperwork from each volunteer, all the volunteers are invited to workshops (Action C5) to determine if they are happy to undertake the surveys, have the requisite skills to do the work, and are physically capable and conversant with the procedures involved. We are fortunate to have many volunteers with the requisite bird identification skills, resulting in the workshops often having to concentrate on just the procedural aspects of the surveys and raising awareness of their role in the wider project.

Having established all this and their availability, there is the need to match the volunteers with the farms, ensuring a close proximity between the volunteer's home and the farm. The farmer is advised of who might undertake the survey and unless the Project Officer hears anything to the contrary, the farmer's personal details are given to each volunteer, who is asked to contact the farmer and arrange an initial visit. See Annex 16.

It is within this letter that a component of the workshops for volunteers (Action C5) is otherwise met. If the promotion of the EU Birds Directive in conservation management on farmland was restricted to the workshops, it would only reach a small proportion of volunteers. By sending details in a letter that every volunteer undertaking a survey receives (regardless of their attendance at a workshop) we ensure a more effective promotion.

With this established, a participation pack is also disseminated to each volunteer, which informs them of their ambassadorial role and gives detailed information on matters such as health and safety, survey methodology and feedback mechanisms. This pack is available both electronically and in hard copy and distributed according to the volunteer's preference. However, maps and recording sheets still have to be printed and posted to the volunteer.

If a volunteer participates annually, they do not receive the entire participation pack again, just the sheets that are pertinent to participation annually and new maps. See Annex 17.

If Project Officers are unable to provide some farmers with surveys or utilise some volunteers, each party is dutifully informed, with a view to involving them the following year.

During 2011, a total of 738 surveys were undertaken across the UK which exceeds the target of 680 surveys. The preceding tables illustrate the distribution of surveys across regions and countries and also the number of volunteers involved in both survey and administrative work.

Each survey consists of an initial visit to meet the farmer and then 3 or 4 survey visits. A little way into the breeding season the Project Officers contact the volunteers involved to ensure good progress is being made with the surveys, check the quality of the surveys and that the volunteers are happy in their work.

Action C2: Deliver survey outputs to farmers

As anticipated, the package of results and materials from last year were successfully produced and received by farmers by the end of the calendar year.

As before, the surveys results from this year have been arriving with Project Officers since June and have been analysed and amalgamated into detailed territory maps for species of high conservation concern. Because the participation packs explain how this analysis is done, volunteers often start it themselves. Some Project Officers also have the assistance of administrative volunteers during this and other peak periods. See the preceding table.

The number of administrative volunteers was higher than last year, in part due to the presence of Nuffield Foundation Science Bursaries. These offer up to 1,000 bursaries a year, for students to work alongside practising scientists, technologists, engineers and mathematicians. The bursaries take place during the summer holidays, giving students an insight into the world of scientific research and development. Students in the first year of a post-16 science, technology, engineering and maths course are eligible.

The two students undertaking bursaries with Project Officers this year wrote an article for the project newsletter. See Annex 18 and 19.

The detailed analysis of maps is always completed by the Project Officer in advance of data entry, using GIS software.

With the analysis of the results from each farm survey undertaken, the data entry complete and the layout of the map finalised, several copies of the A3 map are required.

The Project Officers tend to store a copy of each map electronically. A copy is printed for the EU LIFE+ Project Manager and a copy for the farmer which is laminated. If the volunteer involved has the capacity to receive an electronic version, this is preferable to printing an additional copy, and it would not be laminated anyway.

The species of birds found during the survey that are not of conservation concern, are not included in the data entry or represented on the map that is sent to the farmer.

However, their presence is noted on a table that lists all the species of birds found on the farm and it is this list that forms part of the report that is sent to the farmer with the laminated map. This report includes supporting material that puts the results of the survey into context.

As before, this package of results and materials will be produced and received by farmers by the end of this calendar year.

Action C3: Carry out follow-up advisory visits

The demand for on-farm advice from Farmland Bird Advisers has escalated enormously compared to last year with the number of farms advised and the number of hectares covered bolstered by direct advice to farmers who have not had a free bird survey. This has resulted in some extreme figures, such as advice delivered on 122 farms in Wales and on over 20,000ha in South-east England. In some regions, the Project Officer has assisted the Farmland Bird Adviser in the delivery of on-farm advice to help meet demand. All of these advisory visits are made with the intention of creating habitats for priority birds of conservation concern.

Farm size varies geographically with smaller farms in the west, larger farms in the east and very large estates in upland areas. To date, 547 farm visits have been completed and advice has been given over 118,957ha. This is far in excess of the target. The Farmland Bird Advisers produce reports for the farmers they visit, covering the following aspects:

- List of birds and other notable wildlife species recorded on the farm
- The habitats required for these species
- Estimate of how much habitat is required
- Specific details of how options should be located and managed

Progress to date is:

Region/country	Number of farm visits completed 01.01.10-30.09.10	Area (ha) of farmland covered	Number of farm visits completed 01.10.10-30.09.11	Area (ha) of farmland covered
Northern Ireland	10	601	22	1,828
North Scotland	26	10,974	37	2,077
East Scotland	11	3,825	10	2,533
South and West Scotland	8	1,587	19	2,000
Wales	10	286	122	10,700
North-west England	9	2,489	22	3,867
North-east England	8	3,256	49	14,238
England Midlands	13	2,530	46	11,302
East of England	4	1,643	12	4,548
South-east England	8	5,003	40	20,650
South-west England	10	3,997	51	9,023
Total	117	36,191	430	82,766

Action C4: Run workshops for farmers

All regions have now undertaken workshops for farmers, with the exception of Wales, which will be undertaking their first workshop during the next quiet period for farmers which starts in October. There is distinct regional variation in numbers of farmers attending events, with numbers particularly low in unpopulated upland areas of Scotland, northern England and Wales. The majority of the events reported took place between October 2010 and March 2011, as the farming calendar is very busy between April and October, with a much reduced chance of attracting farmers. Another tranche of events will take place between October 2011 and March 2012. We fully expect to reach the target of 1 event and 40 attendees per annum by the end of the year. As explained in the Inception Report, the timing of workshops is slightly adjusted to take account of the farming calendar.

In general, the workshops are held on farms where RSPB advice has been taken up to create good quality habitats to provide the full requirements for farmland birds, namely seed food through the winter, insect food through the summer and safe in-field nesting habitat. The workshops consists of an introductory talk by the Farmland Bird Adviser and the host farmer, a farm tour to look at the habitats and discuss how they are created and managed, the cost-benefits to the farm business and a summing up session to gain feedback from the visiting farmers. Demonstration farms are asked to put the appropriate information boards up on the farm to explain the value of the habitats they have created (Action F2). RSPB advisory materials are displayed for farmers to take away, including the Tractor Cab Guide (Action C10) and the advisory sheets contained within the advisory packs (Action C9).

Progress to date is:

Region/country	Number of farm workshops 01.01.10- 30.09.10	Number of farmers attending	Number of farm workshops 01.10.10- 30.09.11	Number of farmers attending
Northern Ireland	-	-	1	50
North Scotland	-	-	2	26 (+10 agents)
East Scotland	-	-	3	73
South and West Scotland	7	510	1	9
North-west England	1	10	3	56
North-east England	-	-	2	24
England Midlands	8	130	8	306
East of England	2	100	4	71
South-east England	3	75	3	70
South-west England	-	-	1	40
Wales	-	-	-	-
Total	21	825	28	725

Action C5: Run workshops for volunteer surveyors

In advance of the breeding season, 27 volunteer workshops were held across the UK attracting a total of 351 volunteers.

See the table opposite.

Region/country	No. of volunteer workshops 2010	No. at workshops 2010	No. of volunteer workshops 2011	No. at workshops 2011
South-west England	6	40	2	4
South-east England	-	-	-	-
East of England	3	49	4	95
England Midlands	1	17	2	14
North-west England	3	16	1	5
North-east England	3	62	4	64
East Scotland	4	15	2	4
South and West Scotland	6	123	4	79
North Scotland	3	22	1	5
Northern Ireland	4	60	3	50
Wales	4	33	4	31
Total	37	437	27	351

A reasonable level of retention of volunteers means that the number attending workshops will remain low, because there is no real need for any volunteer previously involved to attend another workshop.

So predictably, the number of volunteers in attendance at these events was lower than last year. The number of workshops across the UK exceeded the target with very significant attendance at some events but on average there were fewer attendees per event than anticipated.

In South-east England, there were no events because the Project Officer left prior to the point in time when workshops would have been held. The few new volunteers that were involved this year were trained individually.

As before, the workshops were held indoors with a trip outside incorporated into the event to explain the survey methodology. See Annex 20.

The events remain invaluable because they offer an interactive opportunity to explain exactly how surveys are undertaken; the methodology involved, health and safety procedures and promote the importance of the project.

With the intention being to make reference to; EU environmental policy, the conservation status of farmland birds and the logistics of project participation, the workshops provide the opportunity to cover most of this, but it was felt that EU environmental policy was best covered elsewhere. See Annex 16.

In the East of England, one workshop was held at an agricultural college. See Annex 21.

In the Midlands, the workshops were held on farms. See Annex 22.

In the Outer Hebrides, a volunteer kindly gave permission for the use of her house and croft land as the venue, and also provided catering for the event. Volunteers viewed a short video about the RSPB, followed by a presentation about the V&FA, the importance of the project, methodology and health and safety considerations. Ample time was given for questions and discussion, and pictures were displayed of easily confused species local to the islands. A short quiz on bird ID and activity codes was a valuable exercise, and the group walked over the croft and nearby shoreline before lunch, which gave another opportunity for questions. The group gelled very well, and exchanged telephone numbers and continued to support each other throughout the survey season. See Annex 23.

In Northern Ireland, three separate workshops were held on farms on consecutive week-ends during March in Co. Antrim, Co. Fermanagh and Co. Down. This gave volunteers the chance to pick the date and location that best suited them. The farms used were the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Environmental Focus Farms which had suitable facilities (such as rooms with power and chairs) to accommodate groups of people. Each event had both an indoor and an outdoor element. The content of the indoor element was the same at each event. The project officer gave a presentation on what getting involved with the project would entail: the RSPB's work in agriculture, how the V&FA fits into it, survey methodology, being an ambassador for the RSPB and an overview of the project timetable. The outdoor element was a guided farm walk where volunteers were asked to imagine they were doing a survey and encouraged to get involved in identifying any birds seen along the way. Refreshments were provided. See Annex 24.

The Project Officer in North-east England also used a Powerpoint presentation at workshops. See Annex 25.

A CD was produced in conjunction with Natural England and the South West Farmland Bird Initiative which served as a training aid, to help volunteers identify bird song. See Annex 26. A card was designed to specifically promote the V&FA and inserted in to all 5,000 CD cases produced. See Annex 27. The RSPB had the use of 1,500 CDs and of these 600 remain in stock. (Action F7).

The results of questionnaires (Action E1) sent to volunteers that undertook surveys in 2010 suggest that 95% felt that the training they received was either good or excellent and 94% were satisfied with the level of support they received from project staff. See Annex 28 and 29.

Action C7: Establish demonstration farm network

27 demonstration farms have been established across the UK and used to hold events for farmers (Action C4) and volunteers (Action C5) and to develop case studies which can be posted on the RSPB website and Farm Wildlife website (Action F1). These are farms which have undertaken management to benefit wildlife in accordance with RSPB advice and have the facilities to host farm events to demonstrate techniques to other farmers.

Case studies of 22 farms, including these demonstration farms have been collated for posting on the project website at <http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/farming/spotlight/>. These will be live before the end of the year.

The aim of these case studies is to showcase best practice in both compliance with EU legislation and enhancement of the conservation status of key species through habitat creation and management.

Region/country	Number of demonstration farms set up as of September 2011
English Midlands	2
South-east England	3
East Scotland	1
South and west Scotland	1
Northern Ireland	4
Wales	3
East of England	3
North-west England	3
North-east England	3
South-west England	3
North Scotland	1
Total	27

Action C8: Establish a Biodiversity Award scheme

The rationale behind establishing a Biodiversity Award scheme is that it gives farmers the opportunity to gain widespread recognition and praise for conservation on their farms, raises awareness and provides an excellent vehicle for more general communications. In doing so, we aim to raise the profile of wildlife-friendly farming within the industry, and encourage more farmers to aspire to be Agri-environment heroes by managing their farmland to improve the conservation status of farmland birds and other wildlife, in accordance with the EU Birds Directive.

As mentioned in the Inception Report, a breakfast event was held at the OFC, where we celebrated the NoFA winners from 2010 and launched the 2011 competition (Action F7). See Annex 30. Dacian Ciolos, the EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development spoke at the event and the RSPB Chief Executive announced our new media partnership with The Telegraph. See Annex 31.

A PR plan for the 2011 NoFA was produced at the beginning of this year (Action F5) which ensured we made the most of opportunities to promote the NoFA. See Annex 32.

The sign-up leaflets promoting the NoFA that had previously been produced had to be replaced because of the involvement of The Telegraph. As before, this involved producing a leaflet for each country, with a bi-lingual version for Wales. See Annex 33, 34, 35 and 36.

In conjunction with a press release, these leaflets were distributed through various routes into the farming community. See Annex 37. We benefitted from our involvement with The Telegraph, because they ran an article promoting entry into the competition and also arranged for leaflets to be distributed on our behalf. See Annex 38 and 39.

In addition to banners produced for use at national and technical events (Action F7) polo shirts were also produced and worn by staff at shows.

The design process and the printing were out-sourced. See Annex 40. The polo shirts carried both the RSPB and EU logos. See Annex 41.

All farmers involved in the V&FA were sent a sign-up leaflet and encouraged to enter. This year 317 farms entered the NoFA, compared with 134 last year. As before, their details were entered onto an RSPB database.

Application forms were then sent to those that entered and on their return, considered and shortlisted, using the information provided and a scoring sheet. The best from each region or country were visited and judged by regional or country staff and representatives from partner organisations and assessed using the criteria set out in the judging form.

The winners from each region or country were chosen and in due course, presented with a cheque for £200, a certificate and a plaque. The certificate and plaque differed from last year because of our involvement with The Telegraph, but as before they were designed by RSPB staff. See Annex 42. This offered another opportunity for media coverage at a local and regional level, to cover the winner's achievements and best practice in relation to EU policies and to promote the wider project. See Annex 37.

To acknowledge high quality entrants, this year we also introduced a highly-commended category which recognised and celebrated another 18 farmers across the UK. For the purpose of this category, additional certificates and plaques were designed by RSPB staff, and these were presented to the farmers concerned. See Annex 43 and 44. The certificates were designed and produced by RSPB staff, while the plaques were designed by RSPB staff but the printing was out-sourced.

Each of the regional and country winners were considered by a UK judging panel, which consisted of wildlife experts from the RSPB (Head of Species & Countryside Conservation Delivery), Butterfly Conservation (Chief Executive), Plantlife (Chief Executive) and BBC Wildlife Magazine (Editor). After an assessment of the farmer's submissions and those of the regional judges, a shortlist of four farmers was drawn up.

The four finalists were promoted from 15.07.11 until 31.08.11 through all suitable media channels with the UK award winner voted for and so chosen by the public. This gave the farmers involved widespread recognition and praise for conservation on their farms, in front of a significant audience and helps to encourage other farmers to follow their example of conservation delivery.

The voting was launched by Richard Benyon, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Natural Environment and Fisheries at The Game Fair. See Annex 45. The other mechanisms involved in promoting the opportunity for the public to vote included national and regional newspapers, magazines, radio, television, e-newsletters, websites, agricultural shows, reserves, festivals, fairs, social media, public transport and on-farm events.

Most significantly the RSPB sent out three e-mails to our supporters, promoting the opportunity to vote. See Annex 46. These e-mails proved to be the most effective way of securing votes, in that peak voting activity can be related back to the date the e-mails were sent. See Annex 47.

The ability to vote was made as inclusive as possible with new voting cards printed that featured the four finalists and appropriate logos. As before, they were DL in size, and 50,000 were produced. This design process was by RSPB staff and the printing was out-sourced. See Annex 48.

More information on each farm was available on the project's website, allowing the public to make a well informed vote, on-line. A dedicated phone-line was set up to allow those without access to the voting cards or a computer from which to vote on-line, the opportunity to request voting material and also vote this year. See Annex 49.

A range of posters were also designed by RSPB staff and printed in-house, to publicise the opportunity to vote. See Annex 50 and 51.

In order to maximise public participation, an incentive to vote was factored into the competition because The Telegraph were able to donate a luxury weekend break for two at one of Hallmark's Boutique hotels. This served as a prize draw.

As before, this was publicised in the RSPB's magazine and more significantly by The Telegraph. See Annex 52. It also featured in Farmers Weekly and Country Life. See Annex 53 and 54.

Throughout the summer a staggering total of 22,069 members of the public voted, compared with 6,342 last year. This exceeds the target of 5,000 votes.

After a very tense competition, we are pleased to announce that Somerset and Carolyne Charrington won the 2011 Nature of Farming Award and have been awarded a cheque for £1,000, another certificate and another plaque. See Annex 55, 56 and 57. Their success has been promoted through the conventional channels. See Annex 58. It was also recently lodged as a motion in the Scottish Parliament. See Annex 59.

An Awards Ceremony to celebrate the 2011 winners will be held at the OFC again next year. This ensures the project is promoted to key decision-makers and commentators in the farming community. It will also be used to officially open the 2012 Award.

After recent meetings, we can confirm that The Telegraph view the partnership as a success and further meetings will finalise the details of their continued sponsorship.

Action C9: Produce advisory packs

The A4 folder designed internally was used to send each farmer, in receipt of a V&FA survey, advisory material tailored to their farms. As intended, all 683 packs were sent to farmers in the fourth quarter of last year, because the Project Officers can require up to 3 months to compile the survey results.

These packs ensure maximum relevance, because each farm-specific pack includes just the double-sided, full colour A4 advisory sheets that relate to the birds of conservation concern found on the farm and an order form for additional sheets, including those on habitat management or creation.

These packs, which comprise of the map of the survey results, a report and a certificate, are critical because they provide farmers with tailored advice on how they might improve conservation management on their farms. In addition, farmers with birds of conservation concern are prioritised for follow-up advisory visits (Action C3).

The stock control of these sheets is managed by an administrator and when necessary, the sheets are reviewed by the Senior Agricultural Adviser, and editorial changes made prior to any re-print. This year, an additional sheet is being produced to reflect the latest research findings on solutions that benefit yellow wagtail. See Annex 60.

The packs themselves are still compiled by office volunteers and administrative staff, with 738 due to be compiled this year, which exceeds the target. As before, the packs will be sent to farmers in the fourth quarter of the year.

Action C10: Produce bird guide

In March 2010, we produced 5,000 copies of the Tractor Cab Guide to Farmland Birds. To date 2,752 have been given to farmers who have had farm surveys, advisory visits or attended project events. We have given them out at agricultural shows to farmers who have signed up to the project newsletter or RSPB farming e-newsletter.

Action E1: Send questionnaires to farmers and volunteers

A questionnaire was sent to all the volunteers involved in the project last year, to coincide with the project newsletter which was already being sent.

This was a customer care questionnaire, which aimed to establish their understanding of environmental policy, wildlife gains, gauge their satisfaction and improve their experience. See Annex 28.

The questionnaire was sent to 836 volunteers and from these we received 143 responses. This is a response rate of 17%. A dedicated volunteer undertook the data entry and analysed the results. See Annex 29.

The farmers involved were not sent a questionnaire at the beginning of their involvement (with a view to sending another the following year) because our experience suggests that asking farmers to complete apparently unnecessary paperwork is a thankless task. Therefore asking them to do this twice would be almost pointless.

But to ensure we are able to identify their practices, attitudes and any changes in these as a result of project participation, we intend to send the farmers that benefitted from a survey last year, a questionnaire and a freepost envelope this year. This allows time for any changes in their practices and attitudes. See Annex 61. The same practice will apply next year and the year after.

We also commissioned Reed Business Insight to undertake qualitative market research to determine the attitudes of farmers to wildlife conservation and the types of information that most inspires and informs them to undertake environmental work. This consisted of detailed telephone interviews with 15 farmers: 5 arable farmers in Scotland, 5 arable farmers in England and 5 livestock farmers in England. This design was developed to enable us to evaluate whether there were differences in farmers attitudes between countries and between farming sectors.

The results of this research were presented to project staff in September 2011. The results will be used to inform which of the project activities to focus on in the future. See Annex 62.

Action E2: Assess impact of project on farmland bird populations

The 2010 update on the Farmland Bird Indicator has not been completed yet, but in general 2010 was not a good year for specialist farmland bird species, with 8 of the 10 red-listed species on the indicator having declined since 2009.

The RSPB Senior Agricultural Adviser has calculated the amount of habitat created for farmland birds on arable farmland in England through agri-environment schemes, and it is estimated that we have about 71% of the seed-rich habitat, 60% of the insect-rich habitat and 27% of the nesting habitat required to sustain farmland bird populations. However, this is highly aggregated, with 55% of the habitat resource in 8.9% of the agricultural area. These results will be discussed with our research staff to evaluate the implications of this for farmland bird recovery in the UK, and what steps need to be taken in focusing effort on project activities in the future.

During the course of the final year of the project, we will evaluate what contribution this EU LIFE+ project has made to this overall level of conservation management delivery. It is clear that the contribution will be significant, as Farmland Bird Advisers have targeted areas with the highest proportion of farmland species of conservation concern, and encouraged farmers to put at least 7% (and up to 25%) of their farmland into management to support wildlife.

Action F1: Create and maintain project website

As described in the Inception Report, we have changed the location of the project website to www.rspb.org.uk/farming. By having the project on our home website, we can develop and update it in-house. The RSPB website is also already the site visitors go to for information about the key elements of the project: V&FA (Actions B1, C1, C2 and C5), NoFA (Action C8) and advice on how to help farmland birds, including contact with our Farmland Bird Advisers (Actions C3 and C4).

The EU LIFE+ logo and acknowledgement of the funding to support our work with farmers has been put on the homepage www.rspb.org.uk/farming together with a live link to the EU LIFE+ website and EU web page on the Birds Directive.

Since the Inception Report, we have also created a new project page which looks at the project aims and objectives, and our progress to date. This will be updated annually with new figures for the NoFA and V&FA. We have now brought all the project activities under the title; Advice and Support for Farmers, which includes links to information on the NoFA, V&FA and local adviser contacts. The section entitled Agri-environment heroes has been renamed; Farmers Stepping Up for Nature, to reflect the RSPB's new 10-year campaign, but still consists of case studies of the demonstration farmers we are establishing through the course of this project. We have also populated this area with some amended case studies of farmers we have worked with in the past. Short whole-farm case studies are also being worked on to inspire visitors to improve their farms for wildlife.

There is an existing area on the Farm Wildlife website for more technical case studies to give practical information about how to manage individual habitats for the benefit of wildlife, and there will be a link to these from www.rspb.org.uk/farming as they are developed.

There is a link to the Farm Wildlife website to allow visitors to ask questions, make comments and post ideas on the discussion forum and to find out about events using the events calendar.

We have also established a new farming blog which we are using to promote the project and its actions as well as our wider advisory work. This is continuing to grow in popularity, with regular comments posted and has 43 subscribers.

There were 3,014 visits to the project homepage between 01.01.10 - 31.08.10. We expected to see this figure rise following promotion of the project when the website was revamped, and between 01.09.10 and 22.08.11 there were 8,339 visits to the project homepage. The other sections of the project website have had significant increases in activity, the most significant being the NoFA pages, with a noticeable peak of just under 50,000 views on 22 July 2011 when the public vote was launched. See Annex 63.

Action F2: Information boards

This action is now complete, and a range of information boards have been created. Ten designs are available, illustrating various agri-environment options and their benefits to wildlife. See Annex 64. The most relevant boards to Wales have been translated into Welsh and will be displayed alongside an English version on Welsh farms. See Annex 65. The design process for the boards was by RSPB staff and the printing was out-sourced.

Boards are offered to selected farms, which provide a shining example of high-quality habitat for farmland birds. See Annex 66. Producing a smaller number but broader range of boards will enable us to provide more than one for each farmer to display, and better illustrates the breadth of their work to other farmers and members of the public viewing the boards on farm walks, open days and events. The East of England farms listed below are part of the world’s first ever Farmland Bird Friendly Zone, which will have a minimum of 3,000 visitors on one day per annum with small groups throughout the year reaching 8,000 - 10,000 visitors on farms per annum.

A set of usage guidelines for identifying farms has been created for project staff. See Annex 67. This states that boards should be sited to maximise public awareness of the farmers’ work and the role of the EU.

The farms identified to display boards (to date) are shown below:

Region	Farm	Status
North-east England	Holme Lodge Farm, Yorks	Boards up
North-west England	Claremont Farm, Wirral	Boards up
	Abbots Reading Farm, Cumbria	Boards up
	Holland's Farm, Lancashire	Boards up
	White House Farm, Merseyside	Boards up

East of England	MHS Farms, Cambridgeshire	Awaiting boards
	Essex Farm, Cambridgeshire	Awaiting boards
	MSS Farms, Cambridgeshire	Awaiting boards
	Lodge Farm, Cambridgeshire	Awaiting boards
	SKG, Cambridgeshire	Awaiting boards
	Moor Farm, Cambridgeshire	Awaiting boards
	Halls Farm, Cambridgeshire	Awaiting boards
	Pode Hole Farm, Cambridgeshire	Awaiting boards
	Northolm Farm, Cambridgeshire	Awaiting boards
	Fledgecroft Farm, Cambridgeshire	Awaiting boards
	Oakhurst Farm, Cambridgeshire	Awaiting boards
	Bridge Farm, Cambridgeshire	Awaiting boards
	Manor Farm, Cambridgeshire	Awaiting boards
Wales	Blaen-y-Nant, Gwynedd	Boards up
	Penlan Farm, Carmarthenshire	Awaiting boards
	Fferm Penllyn, Gwynedd	Need agreement from farmer
	Bryn Uchel Farm, Machynlleth	Farm being considered

The production of the boards was slightly delayed as described in the Inception Report. This has not had a significant impact on their distribution as suitable farms will only be identified after surveys have been completed. Boards will continue to be distributed throughout the project, with suitable farms identified through surveys, advisory visits and the NoFA.

Some regions/countries have found it more difficult than anticipated to distribute the boards. This is partly because suitable farms have been involved in project work involving partners other than the RSPB and feel uncomfortable displaying interpretation material that does not reflect the entire partnership. Also, some farmers are uneasy about putting boards up on their farms or the layout/location of their farm would make it difficult to display them in the way we would like.

As a result, we have not distributed as many boards as we had hoped to date, but we will continue to approach suitable farmers throughout the project to ensure that they are distributed accordingly.

Action F3: Layman's report

This is planned for 2012.

Action F4: Conference

This is planned for 2012.

Action F5: Media work

As stated in the Inception Report, the target for 12 regional stories and 1 national story for the NoFA was exceeded in 2010. For the V&FA, the target for one national story was met and the target for 12 regional stories exceeded. Thirteen press releases were sent out for the NoFA and eight for the V&FA. Both the NoFA and V&FA received good electronic coverage. There were 51 stories printed on the NoFA (5 national, 46 regional) and 39 stories printed on the V&FA (1 national and 38 regional) in 2010.

A record of press releases and coverage since the Inception Report has been produced. See Annex 12 and 37. Listening, viewing and circulation figures are given where known.

The target for 12 regional stories and 1 national story for the NoFA has been exceeded in 2011, with 23 stories printed since the Inception Report (7 national, 12 regional and 4 in subscription or membership magazines or newsletters). Electronic coverage was once again popular, with 68 stories being posted online (32 national stories, 31 regional stories and 5 to specific e-mail subscribers). TV and radio coverage was also secured for the NoFA in 2011, including items on BBC local radio, the BBC Radio 2 Breakfast Show (with approximately 8.6 million listeners) and the RSPB's own Nature's Voice podcast. Finalist David White also featured on Talking Naturally - a podcast created by Charlie Moores.

The 2011 NoFA was sponsored by The Telegraph, enabling increased coverage of the award in a national daily newspaper, with a readership of approximately 1.68m. We believe that this sponsorship will continue. A benefit of this media relationship has been the opportunity to include RSPB and project information in give-away bags at events. See Annex 39.

Bespoke inserts have been created where necessary. See Annex 38. But NoFA entry forms and then voting cards have been inserted in most cases. A relationship with The Telegraph as NoFA sponsors in 2011 has ensured significantly greater national exposure for the NoFA throughout the year, with articles during the entry period to attract farmers and a form printed to encourage participation in the vote. An article on the finalists was printed in the paper along with a voting form, with an article on the UK winners included on-line and in the weekend supplement.

Two banner ads were commissioned to appear on the Farmers Guardian website; one to recruit farmers during the entry window and the other to promote the public vote. These were on a rotating basis with other adverts and appeared across the website. During the week-long entry campaign, 37,157 page impressions were created with a click rate of 0.08. For a week-long campaign, this compares well with others. See Annex 68. The voting campaign was delivered on the same basis, but ran for slightly longer.

A PR plan for the 2012 NoFA will be drawn up before the end of 2011 to ensure that we continue to maximise opportunities to promote the project, once our future relationship with The Telegraph as sponsors has been finalised.

For the V&FA, the target for one national story and 12 regional stories in 2011 has been exceeded. Since the Inception Report was compiled, 7 press releases were sent out, with 4 national stories printed and 6 appearing electronically. Regional coverage included 19 electronic stories and 8 printed stories. The V&FA was also mentioned on BBC Radio 4's Farming Today programme, which has approximately 1 million listeners. As was the case last year, regions/countries with high numbers of farmers or volunteers already signed up were unable to promote the project to prevent raising expectations. However there will be further media opportunities for all the regions and countries once the results from the 2011 survey season are available.

Press releases on project activities contain a reference to the EU LIFE+ Programme, although we cannot guarantee that editors include this in their coverage. We will continue to make reference to EU support.

There is no guarantee that the press will run press releases, but we work closely with our media team to ensure they have the best possible chance of featuring in the press we target.

Articles covering the V&FA and NoFA have appeared in BIRDS magazine, with a readership of approximately 2 million. See Annex 69 and 70. These include a foreword by the RSPB Chief Executive Mike Clarke announcing the NoFA winner for 2011 in the November 2011 issue. This is in press. See Annex 71. Specific promotion elsewhere has included e-mails to contacts on our supporters database to encourage voting in the NoFA, and posts on our Community forum and our own farming blog about both the NoFA and V&FA.

Action F6: Produce project newsletter

The project newsletter was distributed to 7,692 individuals last year and this was by post. See Annex 72. In the mailing we asked that anyone who would prefer to receive the newsletter electronically in future to reduce our carbon footprint should contact us. See Annex 7. This resulted in a small number of requests, but alongside developments in the production of the newsletter, the work involved in committing to this (Action A1) has been quite significant.

Instead of one version, this year we are producing four bespoke newsletters and these are on schedule. See Annex 73. Each version will inform our audience about project delivery, promote key messages and describe case studies and although a component of each newsletter will relate back to the UK, at least two thirds of the newsletter will only refer to work in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

These will be distributed to all project participants and the farming community, depending on their country of residence, in a paper format or electronically.

As before, the newsletter will provide an interesting and informative read and contain key information about the outputs of the project at both regional and national levels, within the context of the UK. It will use text and images to describe species protection and conservation management. It will relate this to EU policies and refer to the RSPB website where the project website is located.

Action F7: Project networking - attend national technical events

As stated in the Inception Report, in 2010 the RSPB attended the Balmoral Show, Royal Highland Show and Royal Welsh Show, where the winners of the NoFA 2010 were presented with their prizes. We also attended Cereals 2010, Sheep 2010 and Dairy 2010 events. These are the national technical events for arable, sheep and dairy farmers, respectively. At each event, the RSPB had stands promoting the NoFA, V&FA and RSPB advice.

In 2011, the RSPB again attended the Balmoral Show, Royal Highland Show, Royal Welsh Show, Cereals 2011 and Dairy 2011. Sheep only occurs in alternate years, as does Beef. As we attended Sheep in 2010, this year we attended Beef. The winners and highly commended farmers in the NoFA 2011 were presented with their prizes in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales at the associated show. See Annex 74, 75 and 76.

We also hosted a breakfast event at the OFC in January 2011 to highlight the NoFA winners from 2010 and launch the 2011 competition. Dacian Cioloș, the EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development spoke to the 150 attendees and the RSPB Chief Executive Mike Clarke announced our new media partnership with The Telegraph for the NoFA. See Annex 31. A similar event is currently being planned for the 2012 OFC.

All of the technical events have been a great success, with very positive feedback from farmers, who mainly came to RSPB stands to enquire about bird surveys (Actions C1 and C2), advice (Action C3) and to sign up for the e-newsletter / project newsletter for their free Tractor Cab Guide to Farmland Birds (Action C10). The priority focus of RSPB staff on the stands was to sign farmers up to the newsletters, and the success rate for each show was sign-up by 105 farmers at Cereals 2011, 70 farmers at Beef 2011 and 90 farmers at Dairy 2011.

As an additional incentive to sign up to the newsletter, we developed an A1 farming wall planner for Cereals 2011 and purchased suitable pens. See Annex 77 and 78. The wall planner was designed to have seasonal tips and advice, particularly for arable farmers, on a wipe-clean poster which can be put up in the farm office as a continual point of reference, for use year after year.

The CD produced in conjunction with Natural England and the South West Farmland Bird Initiative also served as an incentive to sign up to the newsletter. See Action C5. This proved to be very popular. See Annex 26 and 27.

Additional display materials were produced to promote the project and the RSPB's work with farmers to support our attendance at events. These include arable and livestock roller banners detailing the project's activities and feather flags with RSPB and LIFE+ logos. See Annex 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84 and 85. The design process for the banners was by RSPB staff and the printing was out-sourced, while both the design process and the printing for the feather flags was out-sourced.

After the success of the 2010 event, our sponsorship of the Arable Conference at Cereals continued, with trilateral and flagpole banners created as part of the sponsorship package. The trilateral banners were recreated as posters after Cereals to promote the RSPB's advisory work at other events in the future. See Annex 86, 87 and 88.

The RSPB's new Conservation Director also attended Cereals 2011 on the first day of the event, and we hosted a reception on the stand which was well attended by farmers and media representatives. See Annex 41.

From follow-up discussions after the 2010 show season, we took the opportunity to carry out market research on some of the show stands in 2011. To create an interactive and interesting stand, we had vases of coloured water as a visual indicator, and asked people to vote on a specific question by pouring water into the relevant vase. See Annex 89.

At Cereals, we asked; what would encourage you to do more for wildlife on your farm. The options we gave for the answers were better payments, advice on how to do it or I don't need to do more. Most people voted for advice, followed by better payments. At Dairy, an alternative question was asked; what do you think is the most practical way of providing birds with winter food resources. Wild bird cover proved twice as popular as growing a cereal-based wholecrop silage or allowing small areas of ryegrass to go to seed. As well as being a useful opener for discussing what farmers are currently doing, this survey attracted interest to the stand and our wider advisory work.

As described in the Inception Report, our previous relationship with the agricultural partner at Cereals and the provision of demonstration plots ended as they changed their policy on working with environmental partners.

As an alternative, we approached the Crop Protection Association about working jointly to provide demonstration plots at Cereals 2011, but unfortunately we were unable to secure commitment to this. As Cereals 2012 will be on the same site as the 2011 event (usually this rotates between two sites), it is unlikely that we will be able to create plots for the 2012 show as there is little opportunity to book an alternative stand. However, we do not feel that not having demonstration plots in 2011 was detrimental to RSPB presence at the show, and were pleased with the number of visitors to the stand.

5.2. Envisaged progress until next report

The Gantt chart below shows progress to date and progress envisaged over the rest of the project. It is based on the timetable shown in Part C of the project proposal. The end of the Mid-term Report period is marked with a thick black line, and progress to date is shown using bold ticks.

The Gantt chart is followed by updated lists of project deliverables, project milestones and activity reports. These are based on the corresponding lists in Part C of the proposal. During the next reporting period (01/10/2011–31/12/2012), we expect to complete:

- identification of farmers and volunteers for 2012 surveys (Action B1)
- surveys for 2012 (Action C1)
- dissemination of survey outputs for 2011 (Action C2)
- follow-up visits for 2011 farmers (Action C3)
- farmer workshops for 2011 (Action C4)
- volunteer workshops for 2012 (Action C5)
- recruitment of demonstration farms for 2011 in each region/country and production of at least 1 case study per region/country (Action C7)
- Biodiversity Award scheme for 2012 with national winner identified (Action C8)
- Advisory packs produced for 2012 (Action C9)
- 2011 questionnaire results collated and analysed (Action E1)
- Layman's report (Action F3) with 500 copies of the Layman's report produced for dissemination
- International Conference (Action F4) with an international conference held and packs produced for 100 delegates
- Production and dissemination of 2011 project newsletter (Action F6)
- Attend at least 5 national farming technical events (Action F7)

In addition, we will have started:

- Production of survey outputs for 2012 (Action C2)
- Selection of demonstration farms, development of case studies and holding farmer workshops for 2012 (Actions C7 and C4)
- Production of 2012 project newsletter (Action F6)

	2010				2011				2012				13
Number/name	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I
A1. Manage project	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Actual progress	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
A2. Monitor progress	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Actual progress	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
A3. External audit													✓
Actual progress	Not applicable												
A4. After-LIFE plan													✓
Actual progress	Not applicable												
B1. Identify farmers/vols	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	
Actual progress	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	
C1. Surveys		✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓		
Actual progress		✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓		
C2. Survey outputs			✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	
Actual progress			✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	
C3. Follow-up visits			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Actual progress			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
C4. Farmer w/shops			✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	
Actual progress			✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	
C5. Volunteer w/shops	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓			
Actual progress	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓			
C7. Demo. farms			✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	
Actual progress			✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	
C8. Biodiversity Award	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Actual progress	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
C9. Advisory packs	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		
Actual progress	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		
C10. Bird guide		✓	✓										
Actual progress		✓	✓										
E1. Questionnaire			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Actual progress			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
E2. Assess impact			✓				✓				✓		
Actual progress			✓				✓				✓		
F1. Website	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Actual progress			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
F2. Info boards				✓	✓	✓							
Actual progress			✓	✓									
F3. Layman's report											✓	✓	
Actual progress	Not applicable												
F4. Conference									✓	✓	✓	✓	
Actual progress	Not applicable												
F5. Media work	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Actual progress	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

F6. Newsletter			✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	
Actual progress			✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	
F7. Technical events		✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓		
Actual progress		✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓		

Shaded areas are where progress differs to the proposed plan, either ahead of schedule (with tick) or behind schedule (without tick).

Updated list of Project deliverables

Name of the Deliverable	Code of the associated action	Deadline	Notes at 30/09/2011
Promotional leaflet for farm surveys	B1	28 Feb 2010	Completed
Promotional leaflet for Biodiversity Award scheme	C8	31 Mar 2010	Completed
Participation packs for volunteer surveyors	C1	31 Mar 2011	Completed
LIFE+ information boards	F2	31 Aug 2010	Completed
Tractor Cab Guide to Farmland Birds	C10	30 Sep 2010	Completed
Project questionnaire	E1	31 Oct 2011	Questionnaire to be sent out with survey outputs
Advisory pack (folder and contents)	C9	Contents updated as required	Packs to be sent out with survey outputs
Report maps – laminated for farmers, non-laminated for surveyors	C2	30 Nov 2011	To be completed Nov 2011
Project newsletter	F6	15 Dec 2011	To be completed and disseminated Dec 2011
Farm management reports	C3	31 Dec 2011	To be completed Dec 2011
Media articles	F5	At least 25 between 1 Jan and 31 Dec 2011	Completed
Layman's report	F3	Draft by 30 Jun 2012 / final by 31 Dec 2012	No change
Audit report	A3	31 Mar 2013	No change
After-LIFE plan	A4	31 Mar 2013	No change
Conference delegate pack	F4	30 Nov 2012	No change

Updated list of Project milestones

Name of the milestone	Code of the associated action	Deadline	Notes at 30/09/2010
Manage project	A1	Throughout (Steering Group mtgs twice yearly)	On schedule
Monitor project	A2	Throughout	On schedule
Liaise with media	F5	Throughout	On schedule
Place project details and materials on website	F1	Amendments requested by EU LIFE+ to be made by September 2011	Completed
Recruit farmers and volunteer surveyors	B1	31 Mar 2011	Completed
Run volunteer workshops	C5	15 Apr 2011	Completed
Carry out farm surveys	C1	15 Jul 2011	Completed
Announce winner of Biodiversity Award scheme	C8	15 Oct 2011	Completed
Identify farms for follow-up advisory visits	C3	31 Oct 2011	On schedule
Run farmer workshops	C4	30 Nov 2011	To be completed Mar 2012 (adjusted to take account of farming calendar)
Deliver report maps and advisory packs to farmers (and maps to volunteers)	C2 (and C9 for advisory pack)	31 Dec 2011	On schedule
Establish demonstration farms	C7	31 Dec 2011	On schedule
Attend farming events	F7	At least 5 by 31 Dec	Completed
Hold international conference	F4	31 Dec 2012	No change

Updated list of Project reports

Type of report	Original deadline	Notes at 30/09/2011
Inception report	30 Sep 2010	Completed
Mid-term report with payment request	30 Sep 2011	Completed
Final report with payment request	31 Mar 2013	31 Mar 2013

5.3. Impact

To date, this project has enabled our Farmland Bird Advisers to give direct advice to 520 farmers over 112,063 ha. We are not able to assess how many of these farmers have taken this advice on board and entered agri-environment schemes at this stage, but the expected proportion is in excess of 60%. Farmland Bird Advisers encourage farmers to commit at least 10% of their farmland to wildlife conservation measures to boost populations of farmland bird species of conservation concern. The RSPB's model farm in Cambridgeshire shows that this scale of habitat delivery is sufficient to reverse farmland bird declines. The scale of habitat delivery by this project will be evaluated in the final report.

In terms of influence of the target audiences, it is clear that the project will easily meet the targets set in the original proposal to engage with farmers, through free bird surveys, follow-up advisory visits and attendance at events, and engage with the public through volunteers who undertake the bird surveys and the public interest in the Biodiversity Award scheme.

5.4 Outside LIFE

The RSPB paid for two adverts to promote the Biodiversity Award scheme on the Farmers Guardian website this year, which boosted interest in entries from farmers (Action F5). The NoFA was also promoted in three articles in Fieldfare – the RSPB agricultural newsletter for policy-makers. See Annex 90 and 91.

The RSPB attended a number of events where the NoFA was promoted, including the Game Fair where the public vote was launched, and the British Birdwatching Fair to promote it to a new (non-agricultural) audience.

The RSPB sponsored the OFC and hosted a breakfast reception to celebrate the 2010 winners of the NoFA, and will be doing the same again in 2011. See Annex 92.

The RSPB launched a farming blog on the website in 2011, which is attracting several posts per week, largely from project staff on matters relating to the project.

At the end of the breeding season, each region/country holds a number of thank-you events for volunteers involved in the V&FA. These are very often combined with events the region/country hold for other volunteers.

The RSPB farming e-newsletter goes out to over 2,000 farmers, four times a year. Every issue features a case study of a project demonstration farm, and the NoFA was covered to promote entries and celebrate the winners.

6. Financial part

6.1 Financial review

As shown in the expenditure summary table, the overall project expenditure from 1st January 2010 to 30th June 2011 is €588,085, or 34.7% of the total predicted expenditure. In GBP terms, the project is 42% spent at this stage. The difference is due to the effect of the low exchange rate, discussed above. As we are half-way through the 36 month project, and without any significant one-off expenditure predicted at any point during the project, we can reasonably expect to be 50% spent at this stage. The project is therefore demonstrably lagging behind expected expenditure rates, both in GBP and (more so) in EUR terms. As the following discussion suggests, the primary reason for that is lower-than expected spend on personnel costs. Although we are expecting personnel costs to pick up for the remaining 18 months of the project, as a result of the analysis this report has initiated we will undertake a review to determine the reasons for the current underspend. In addition, we will endeavour to ensure that all eligible project personnel time is being recorded in every region/country within the UK where the project is being implemented.

Financial Review by Category

Personnel

Total expenditure on Personnel currently stands at 35.5% of the budgeted amount. This is lower than would be expected at this stage. A quick calculation of the current rate of project personnel spend would suggest that personnel costs per month have, since the start of the project, been level at around 70% of the predicted monthly spend. Although most of this variance is due to the difference between the exchange rate used for the project budget and actual rates, there is still an underlying factor suppressing personnel spend. One obvious factor that may be at play is the complexity of the mechanics of recording personnel time. Timesheets are being completed by over 70 staff across all 10 RSPB regions/countries and submitted to the RSPB Head Office on a monthly basis. Although the Project Officers try to ensure that all staff time in their region is captured properly, there is still the possibility that some staff are being missed, or others do not have the motivation or understand the reason for regularly completing a timesheet. Efforts have been made from Head Office to address this problem, most recently by placing template LIFE timesheets on the RSPB Intranet for all staff to access, rather than being reliant on timesheets being sent by e-mail. But the underlying message of personnel underspend that this chance to assess spend to date has highlighted will guide us to review the time recording processes we have put in place and analyse in more depth the variance between regions/countries in Personnel spend to see if there are any obvious areas where reporting deficiencies can be addressed going forward.

Viewing the composition of the personnel time that has been devoted to the project, there are two slight deviations from original expectations that are worth flagging up in this report. Firstly the intervention of the Farmland Bird Advisers has been much more fragmented than our initial predictions. These are the people who undertake the face-to-face advisory visits to discuss conservation-oriented changes in land management systems with the farmers. Our original intention was that one person within each region would undertake all farm visits, giving 10 advisers in total. In practice, however, there have been 33 Farmland Bird Advisers, or an average of 3 per region/country undertaking a few farm visits each. This is because each adviser may have a specific sub-region under their remit, or particular expertise which

makes them more suitable for some visits. Hence this work has been shared out between more people than expected, and the prediction of 10 Farmland Bird Advisers in the original budget was an over-simplification.

The other deviation to highlight involves the PR Project Manager. The application budget envisaged only a small commitment of time from the PR Project Manager. As the project has unfolded, and the high importance of communicating the project message to the right people has become apparent, the involvement of a dedicated PR Project Manager has become essential. Thus, the expected PR-related work of the Project Manager, other RSPB media officers, and regional project officers has to a large extent been taken on by the PR Project Manager. The increase in time commitment for this post has in part been offset by a decrease in the time commitment of the Project Manager during the first year due to the shared workload between these two staff.

Travel & Subsistence

Travel & Subsistence costs incurred to 30 June 2011 are 24.5% of the overall budget. Again, this is half of our original expectation in percentage terms, but in absolute value terms the variance is only around €20,000 compared to the phased budget. The majority of lines on the travel & subsistence form relate to the travel costs of the (to date) 220+ volunteers who have undertaken the on-farm surveys on behalf of the RSPB. Note that this is only the volunteers who have reclaimed their travel expenses from the RSPB – in actuality the number of volunteers working on the project is far higher, but the majority do not seek recompense for their travel expenses (we predicted a 20% uptake in our budget calculations). Aside from the apparent underspend, there are no obvious deviations from budget in terms of the type of travel expenditures being incurred to report. Whilst there are variances when comparing regions - for example North Scotland's travel costs are much higher due to the need to travel to the Scottish Islands – this is offset by budget savings in other regions. The RSPB is committed to reducing its carbon emissions from business travel by 3% year-on-year. One way we are meeting this target is through extended use of tele-conferencing and video-conferencing wherever possible. As one example, most RSPB staff have used video-conferencing to “attend” the annual project Steering Group meetings. This has helped reduce the travel needs (and thus expenditure and carbon emissions) for this project, as well as saving on accommodation and subsistence costs of staff attending meetings.

Car mileage has been charged to the project cost centre at the standard internal RSPB mileage rates. The amount per mile charged varies according to the size of the car engine, and the status of the person claiming the mileage. Thus, mileage rates start from £0.23 per mile for volunteers, up to £0.32 - £0.40 per mile for RSPB staff (occasionally £0.55 per mile is paid for use of off-road vehicles).

With regard to column G of the sheet, because of the extremely high number of individual journeys undertaken by the staff and volunteers, on most occasions to a unique location, instead of recording and verifying the names of the destinations for every journey (which would be very time-consuming), we have ensured as a minimum that the mileage undertaken is provided. This is in line with the explanatory note for column G that states for *travel expenses, the distance travelled from and to* is acceptable.

External Assistance

Expenditure under this category is roughly in line with predictions at 49.8% of budget spent to date. All expenditure under this category relates to the attendance of the RSPB at the annual *Cereals* events in 2010 and 2011. This is one of the largest agricultural events in the

UK, and as such it is of prime importance for the RSPB to attend to promote this project. As per the discussion in the Inception Report regarding the cost of attending these large events, and the approval of these costs in your letter dated 13 December 2010, we have included the sponsorship cost – the cost that exhibitors pay to secure a plot at the event – under this category. For the 2010 event we also paid an agricultural subcontractor to create a demonstration plot to showcase actions farmers can undertake for conservation benefit. This was not repeated in 2011, and will not happen in future years. This was due to a change in the agreement with the subcontractor which made the creation of these plots uneconomic. Note that, although a variety of other events were attended by RSPB staff across the UK to promote the project, it is only the *Cereals* event which, so far, charges substantial fees for attendance due in part to the popularity and importance of the event.

Looking forward, we are still to spend the budget for the independent auditor to undertake the project audit. This will be incurred at the end of the project. The cost for the internet company to host and maintain a project website has remained unspent to date, and may not be needed should the exact actual costs for the project website remain unattributed to this project, since the decision to modify an existing website was made. Conversely, there has recently been a need to employ an external consultant (at a cost of £5,000) to help research and analyse the reach and penetration of our interaction with farmers through this project, in order to guide future direction. This was work that would have been undertaken in-house, but we did not have the expertise to carry it out in the time allowed. Whilst the cost for this consultant is not included in this Mid-term Report as it was not incurred before 30 June 2011, it will be present in the final report; however we use this opportunity to flag up the cost at this stage.

Durable Goods and Land Purchase

No costs have been incurred for either of these cost categories to date, nor do we expect any expenditure under these categories over the course of the project.

Consumables

Consumables spend currently stands at 17.9% of budget (however note that some costs budgeted under consumables have been reported under Other Costs - see below). The main reason for the lower-than-expected spend would appear to be the cost savings found for the production of 5,000 bird guides (about half the budgeted cost, and now reported under Other Costs), as well as the minimal expenditure to date on food and venue hire for the workshops and award ceremony. The farmer / volunteer workshops have not been utilised as regularly as originally predicted as they are only staged when there is enough demand. The biodiversity award ceremony in 2010 was part of another high-profile RSPB event, which brought about savings through shared costs. The savings on printing costs could be due to the recent change in the RSPB print-buying policy, whereby a dedicated staff member obtains best-prices for all RSPB print requirements. This has brought in considerable cost savings across the Society, including this project.

Incidence of unforeseen costs under this category include the following:

- Computers and GIS software (Mapinfo) for new project staff. This was discussed in the Inception Report and allowed as per the EU letter dated 13 December 2010. Note that, as the RSPB does not keep a central inventory of computers, and the cost is not capitalised in our accounts, we have not moved these costs to *Durable Goods (equipment)*.

- Exhibition materials for events. Primarily this has included the production of roller banners to highlight the project, but also hand-outs such as CDs and wall planners and branded clothing. Naturally all materials include the EU LIFE+ logo, and can be used at other workshops and meetings throughout the course of the project. These costs related to events were also discussed in the EU letter dated 13 December 2010.
- A few key staff have attended agricultural training courses, so they can interact better with farmers; therefore the course fees are recorded on the project accounts.
- The finalists of the Biodiversity Award scheme were presented with a small cash prize (the application foresaw the presentation of plaques only).

Both these final two costs were discussed with the external project monitor during their 2011 annual project visit, but we highlight them here to seek assurance that they can remain in the project accounts.

Other Costs

Whilst no costs were originally budgeted under the Other Costs category, discussions with the External Monitor since the beginning of the project have included concerns that the cost of *printing dissemination materials* was incorrectly classified as a consumable cost, and the actual costs should be reported under the correct category. For this reason the following types of costs are hereby reported as Other Costs in this Mid Term Statement of Expenditure and Income –

- 1) Printing project promotional leaflets
- 2) Printing Bird Guides
- 3) Printing Demonstration farm signs and information boards

As the total cost of the items reported under this category is currently under €30,000, we understand that this does not constitute a significant variation between budget lines, and thus does not require a project modification request before the reallocation can happen. If this is not the case, or the LIFE unit would prefer for the costs to be reported under the correct budget category – consumables, please inform us and we will amend the records for the Final Statement of Expenditure and Income.

Overheads

Overheads are an indirect cost and have been calculated as per the Common Provisions at 7% of direct project costs (not including land purchase). Given the high number of staff utilising RSPB resources at a number of different locations across the UK, we are confident that the real overhead cost to the project is far higher than the 7% ceiling, and therefore have no hesitation in applying the full level of overheads to this project.

Overall Expenditure Summary Table

EU LIFE+ Information & Communication

Project Reference: LIFE08/INF/UK/000214

Promoting the importance of the EU Birds Directive in conservation management on farmland

From: 1 January 2010

To: 30 June 2011

Cost category	Total cost according to the Commission's decision	Total costs incurred from the start date to 30 June 2011	%
1. Personnel	€ 1,309,521	€ 464,283	35.5%
2. Travel	€ 104,805	€ 25,705	24.5%
3. External assistance	€ 30,842	€ 15,347	49.8%
4. Durable Goods - Total	€ 0	€ 0	0.0%
<i>Infrastructure</i>	€ 0	€ 0	0.0%
<i>Equipment</i>	€ 0	€ 0	0.0%
5. Land purchase	€ 0	€ 0	0.0%
6. Consumables	€ 136,652	€ 24,437	17.9%
7. Other costs	€ 0	€ 19,840	n/a
8. Overheads	€ 110,727	€ 38,473	34.7%
SUM TOTAL	€1,692,547	€588,085	34.7%

Financial Review by Actions

As requested, we have attempted to allocate actual costs to specific action codes in order to complete the table shown below. The accuracy of allocation is debatable, especially when a cost, or a person's time, could be allocated to a number of equally relevant action codes. Figures for foreseen costs include Overheads (at 7% of direct action cost)

("Spent so far" figures cover period 1 January 2010 to 30 June 2011)

Action number and name	Foreseen costs	Spent so far	Remaining	Projected final cost
A1 – Manage Project	73,657	29,832	40,020	69,852
A2 – Monitor Project Progress	22,028	6,794	7,674	14,468
A3 – External Audit	12,318	0	9,874	9,874
A4 – After LIFE Communication Plan	0	0	0	0
B1 – Identify Farmers and Volunteers	37,081	18,668	25,880	44,548
C1 – Farm Surveys	526,216	185,577	226,268	411,844
C2 – Survey Outputs	325,412	116,866	128,407	245,273
C3 – Advisory Visits	172,254	57,530	68,736	126,266
C4 – Farmer Workshops	64,593	14,744	29,137	43,880
C5 – Volunteer Workshops	61,515	14,436	27,925	42,361
C6 – Thank-You Events (REMOVED)	0	0	0	0
C7 – Demonstration Farm Network	41,234	14,932	17,153	32,085
C8 – Biodiversity Award Scheme	120,143	58,316	69,710	128,026
C9 – Advisory Pack	20,850	4,429	8,043	12,473
C10 – Bird Guide	21,779	12,058	318	12,375
E1 – Attitudes Questionnaire	10,071	2,033	3,367	5,400
F1 – Project Website	23,016	5,471	6,179	11,650
F2 – Information Boards	15,872	6,849	5,561	12,410
F3 – Layman's Report	11,444	0	11,444	11,444
F4 – International Conference	22,378	0	24,604	24,604
F5 – Media Work	14,643	6,735	9,857	16,592
F6 – Project Newsletter	33,008	7,986	17,011	24,997
F7 – Project Networking	63,035	24,830	48,923	73,753
TOTAL	1,692,547	588,085	786,091	1,374,175

You will note that our latest estimations foresees an overall budget utilisation of around 80% of total spend. This is due to two factors, both of which have been discussed in detail above. Firstly, we have seen lower-than-expected personnel spend during the first 18 months of the project which, if continued throughout the remainder, will result in across-the-board reductions in spend per action. Secondly, the low GBP/EUR exchange rate "cheapens" project spend when GBP costs are converted to EURO. We will strive to minimise the effect of the first factor, however the second factor is completely out of the control of the project team.

Due to the above, we predict the majority of actions will see less actual spend compared to budget, however we can foresee overspends on certain actions. An example of this is the project networking (F7), where the cost of producing event publicity materials, and entry charges to the events themselves, were under-budgeted in the original application. Another example of potential excess spend will be on the Biodiversity Award scheme (C8), which has been more time-consuming than our original prediction.

Examples of where cost-savings have been found to reduce project spend include the bird guide (C10) where printing costs were much lower than expected, and the project website (F1) that has not required the level of external input that we originally thought would be required.

Project Income

Whilst match-funding for this project is entirely sourced from RSPB core funds, we have sought contributions from external bodies to help cover our costs, as befits the *modus operandi* of a Charity. To this end, The Daily Telegraph has contributed £6,000 towards the 2011 Biodiversity Awards scheme. Much more important than this small contribution, however, is the publicity to the scheme (and the EU LIFE+ funds) that is gained through this partnership with a leading UK Newspaper.

The RSPB remains in a strong position to provide the requisite amount of match funding for the project duration.

6.2 Auditor data

As the maximum Community contribution to the project exceeds €300 000, an audit will be undertaken to verify the final statement of expenditure and income (cf. Art 31.1 of the Common Provisions). The details of the auditor we intend to use is as follows:

Nick Willis

George Hay Chartered Accountants

Brigham House

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George Hay Chartered Accountants is registered to carry on audit work by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (registration number **5354055**)

7. List of annexes

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