

BIRDS OF CONSERVATION CONCERN IN IRELAND (BoCCI4)



The 'Common' Kestrel – now Red-listed

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What is BoCCI4 ?

- Fourth assessment of the status of Ireland's birds (1999, 2007, 2013, 2020)



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Why is this important...?

BIRDS ARE INDICATORS OF OUR ENVIRONMENT

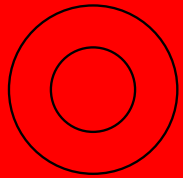
- Birds are one of the best studied groups of organisms and therefore an excellent barometer of wider biodiversity.
- A healthy ecosystem has variety and abundance, providing vital ecosystem services - pollination, water purification and carbon storage.
- These provide the building blocks for life - food, water and clean air.
- Declines in bird populations are barometers that we should pay attention to, as they represent wider changes occurring in our ecosystems.



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- Joint study of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Northern Ireland (RSPB NI) and Birdwatch Ireland.
- Based on data from a variety of different bird studies/monitoring schemes across the island of Ireland.
- Uses standard quantitative criteria at global, European and national level.
- Within Ireland, historical decline, trends in population size and population range and other criteria were assessed.

TRAFFIC LIGHT APPROACH



Red – severe declines (e.g. declines >50% over 25 years)



Amber – moderate declines (e.g. declines of 25-49% over 25 years)



Green – species not of concern at present.



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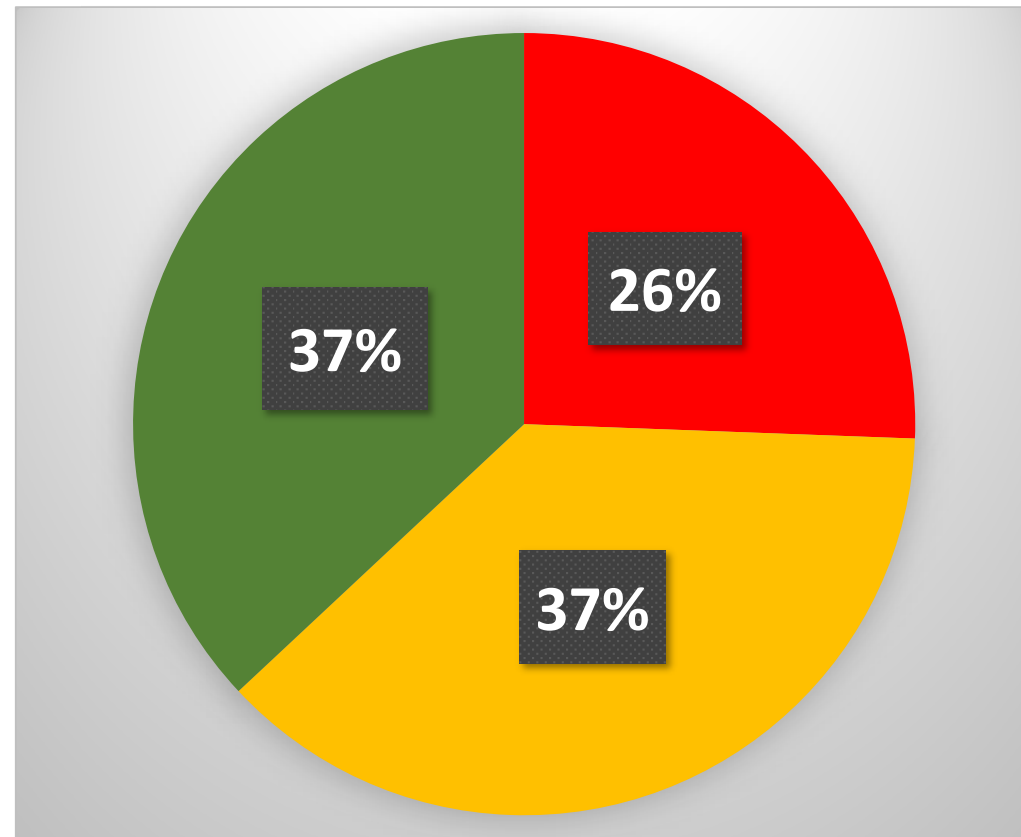
211 bird species assessed

54 – Red-listed

79 – Amber-listed

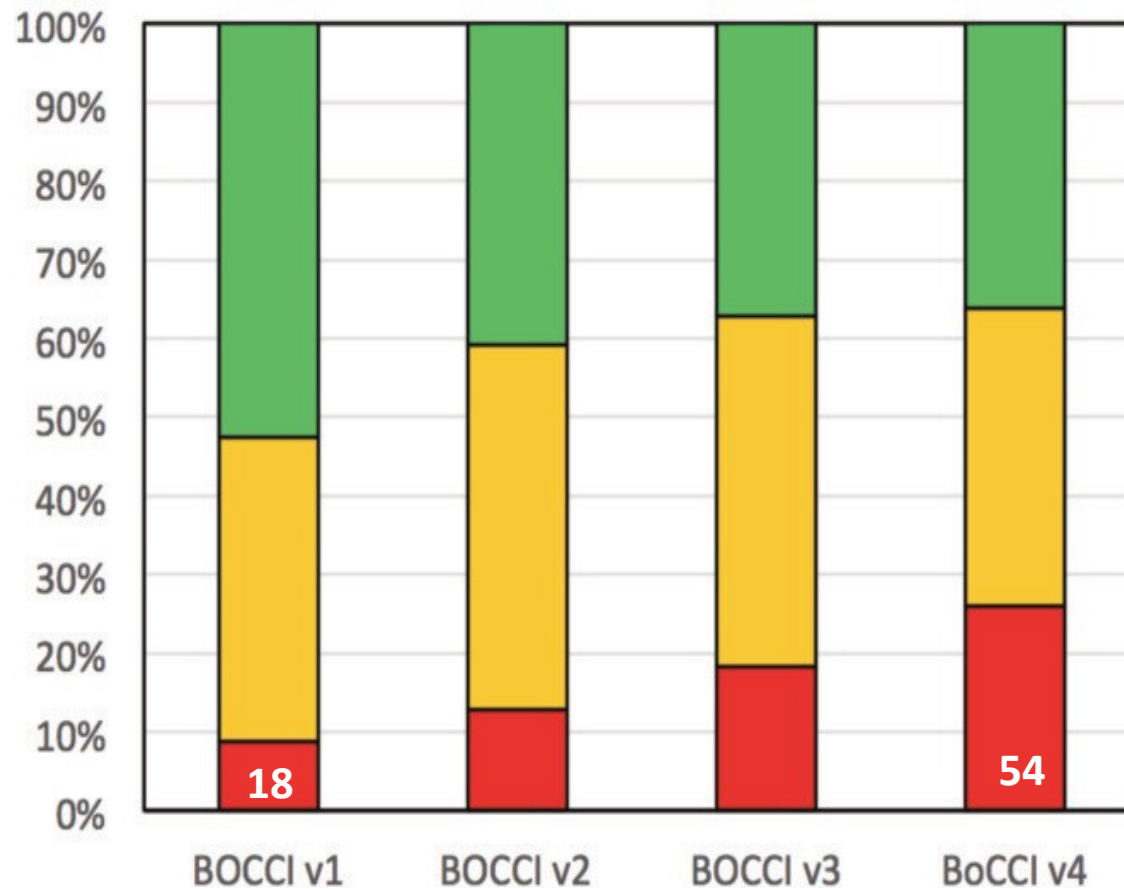
Collectively 63% in trouble.

Put simply – the worst status report of all four BOCCI assessments.

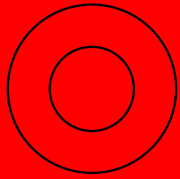


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KEY RESULTS: RED LIST: 54 SPP



Increase of 17 species since 2013 (BOCCI 3).
3 species moved directly from Green-list.

Redwing



Curlew Sandpiper



Purple Sandpiper



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KEY RESULTS: Seabirds, waterbirds and farmland spp new to red

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KEY RESULTS: AMBER LIST: 79 SPP



Amber-Listed – 7 species moved from Green-list to Amber-list; some, eg Kingfisher, moving ever closer to RED

Willow warbler



Mallard

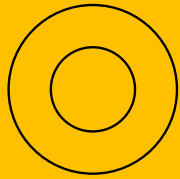


Kingfisher: 45% decline



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KEY RESULTS: All seasons affected



Amber-Listed – includes 42 breeding species, 11 wintering species, 18 breeding & wintering species, 8 passage species.



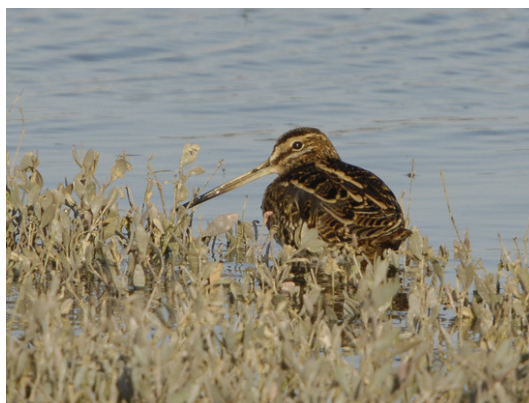
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WINTERING WATERBIRDS

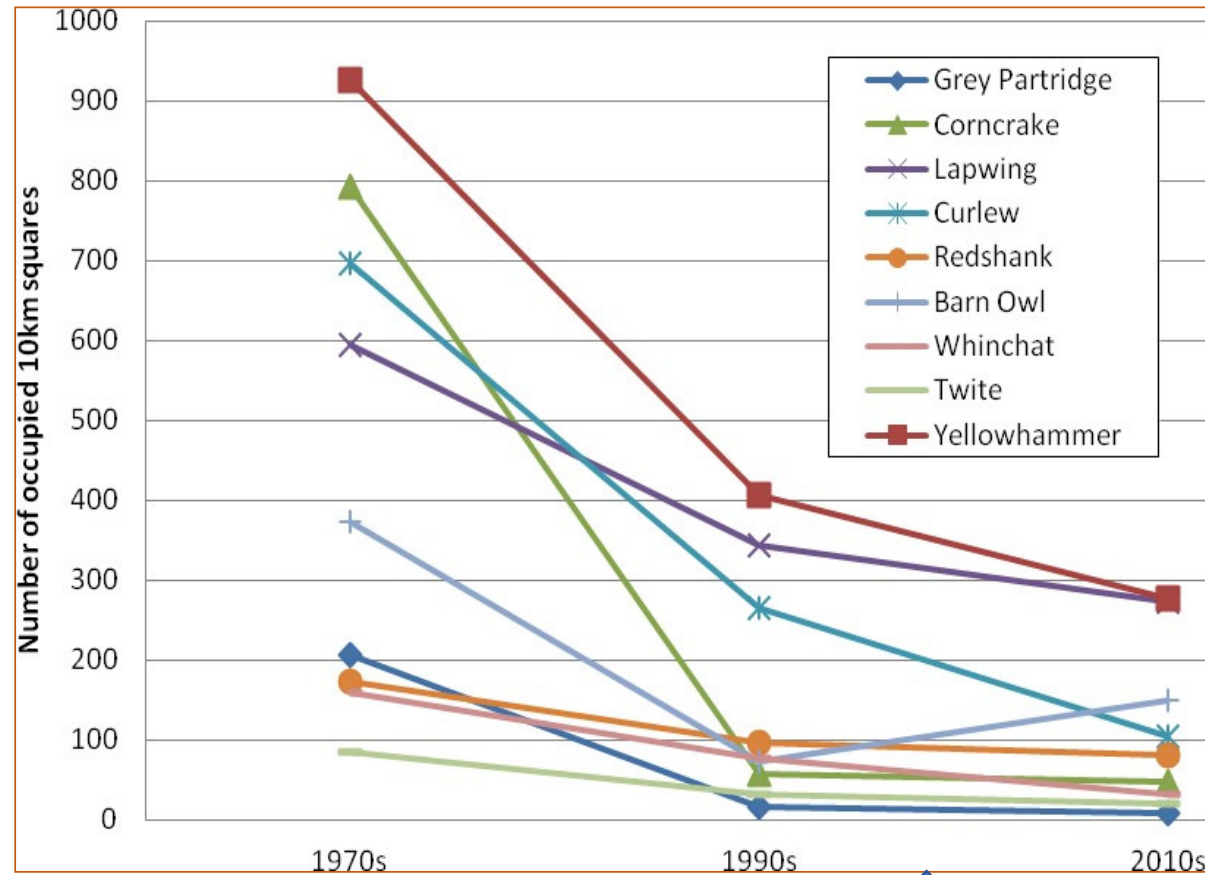
- Importance of Ireland for wintering waterbirds.
- Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS) – some >600 wetland sites across ROI.
- **A decline of 40% in c. 20 years!**

PRESSURES & THREATS ON WATERBIRDS

- Habitat loss, modification, damage,
- Pollution, eutrophication,
- Aquaculture, fisheries,
- Human disturbance (recreation),
- Climate change,...many more..
- Cumulative impacts!



FARMLAND BIRDS



BOCCI



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BOCCI 1: 1998. Farmland spp on Red List: n =11

Meadows	Arable/mixed farmland	Damp pastures	Upland/Coastal
Corncrake	Grey Partridge	Curlew	Red grouse
	Barn Owl	Lapwing	Twite
	Yellowhammer		Chough
	Corn bunting		Hen Harrier



= Annex 1: Highest Level of protection

BOCCI 4: 2021: $n = 16$:

Meadows	Arable/mixed farmland	Damp pastures	Upland/Coastal
Corncrake	Grey Partridge	Curlew	Red grouse
Meadow Pipit	Barn Owl	Lapwing	Twite
Whinchat	Yellowhammer	Redshank	Golden plover
	Stock dove	Snipe	Dunlin
	Kestrel		

- 8 spp new to Red and 1 extinct (Corn Bunting): 45% increase in no of farmland spp on red list.
- All farmland habitats affected

Most of these species were once common and widespread

Red Grouse



Kestrel



Snipe



What happened.....?

*Not enough was done to protect them -
widespread loss and fragmentation of their
habitats occurred*

The Birds Case, 2007

- *4th Complaint – Ireland had not taken sufficient appropriate steps to avoid pollution or deterioration of habitats **outside SPAs**.*

“The measures taken by Ireland are partial, isolated measures, only some of which promote conservation of the bird populations concerned, but which do not constitute a coherent whole”.



Ireland relied on AE measures to help address 4th complaint

- Successive iterations of AE schemes have become more targeted, but have not halted or reversed the declines of many farmland birds, particularly those of the wider countryside.
- Other aspects of CAP measures – land eligibility rules, failure to enforce SMRs and GAECs (cross compliance), production supports, TAMS are all driving further biodiversity loss and offsetting gains from AEC measures.

PoM report 2017 re 4th complaint:

“Ireland has introduced new measures, and built upon existing activity”.

- Targeted actions within GLAS for **Corncrake, Grey partridge, Curlew, Lapwing and Twite...**
- Hedgerow measures will benefit ... **owls and Kestrel.**
- Wild bird cover will... benefit **Yellowhammer.**
- LIPP/THM will benefit **Snipe & Whinchat.”**

Despite these AE measures, since 2007, trends are still going in the wrong direction for many spp...



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Not just failure of AE measures ...

- Non Annex 1 red listed farmland spp (eg Curlew, Lapwing, Snipe) have little protection.
 - No sites designated/not qualifying features of SPAs/SACs.*
 - Nests/chicks are not protected from farming activity by Wildlife Act.*
 - EIA (Agriculture) Regulations thresholds are so high that loss of biodiversity habitats is widespread.*



Afforestation: could cause further declines, despite protocols...

- “Land Types for Afforestation” targets some habitats which may be important for some red and amber listed spp.
- “NIS for Forestry Projects” focused on designated sites.
- “Environmental Requirements for Afforestation” sets out the legislative protections, but apart from Curlew, non Annex 1 red listed farmland species fall through the net.

Predation of ground nesting birds also serious and growing threat

Grey Partridge
Common Scoter
Corncrake
Lapwing
Curlew
Dunlin
Snipe
Redshank

(Grant *et al.* 1999): Curlew study

- Up to 80% of nests and 60% of chicks predated



Land Use threats

- Afforestation and intensification will together lead to greater abundance of generalist predators.
- Nesting areas become more accessible as a result of fragmentation of habitats.
- This will drive further declines of ground nesting birds.



Solutions....?



- Significant ramping up of predator control and nest protection measures needed by Government.
- Predator fences to help protect nests from mammalian predators.
- More professionally trained conservation keepers to control avian predators of chicks.

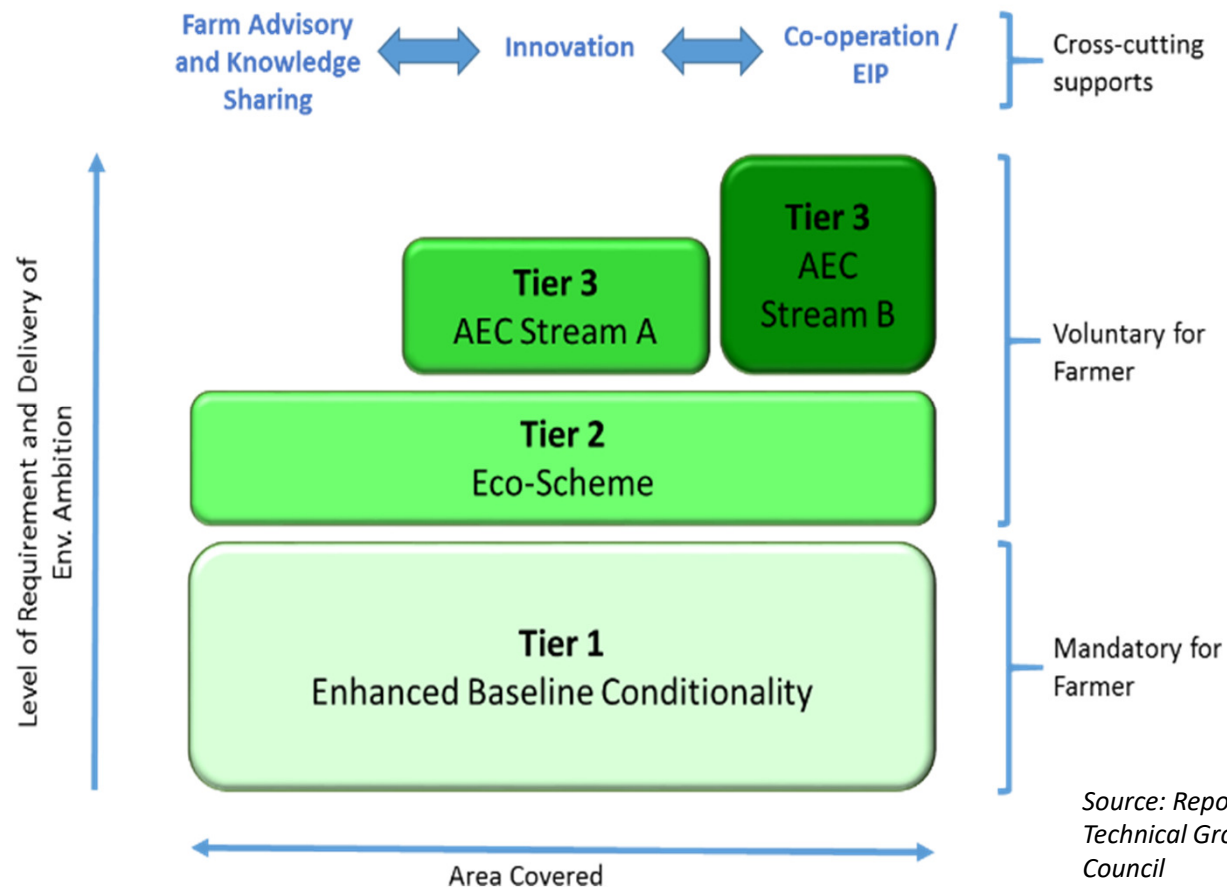




- *Pay farmers to control predators.*
- Curlew EIP training farmers in predator control, could help with background levels.

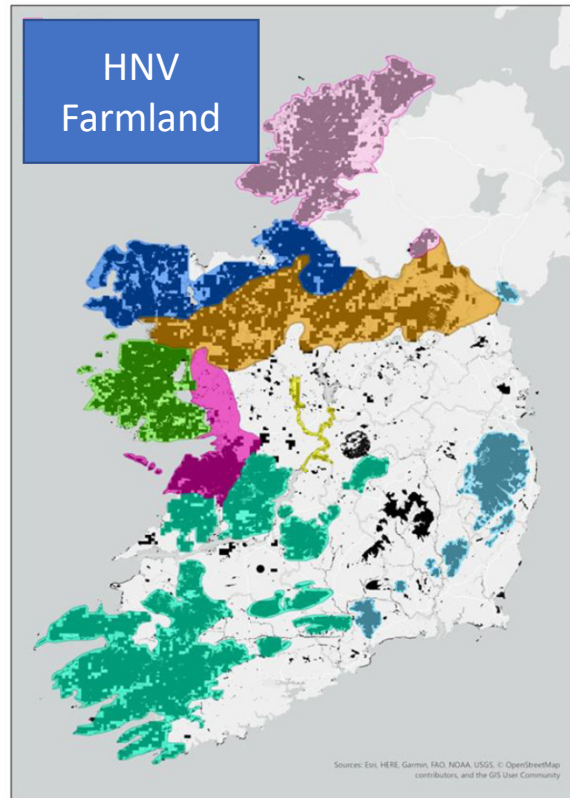


Other solutions: CAP Green Architecture



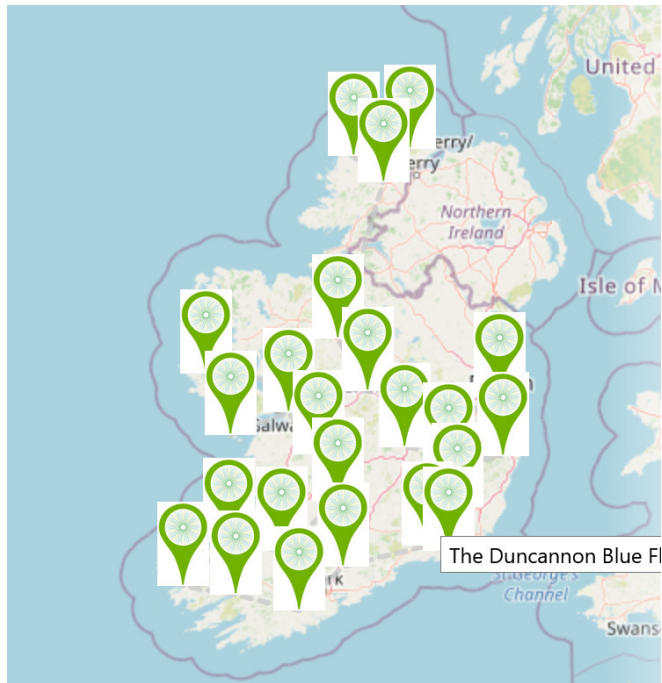
Source: Report by the Farming for Nature Technical Group, funded by Heritage Council

Other solutions: CAP Green Architecture



- Much work has been done to identify HNV farmland.
- These are the areas where CAP supports need to be focused to deliver for threatened biodiversity.
- These species require LANDSCAPE SCALE restoration.

Other solutions: Includes EIPs



EIPs co-funded by the DAFM & EU, focus on a range of biodiversity, climate and water issues.

By adopting a local collaborative approach, the EIPs have developed a suite of mostly small-scale, locally-targeted solutions to some of our most pressing environmental challenges.

Next CAP Environmental Measures:

Will the delivery mechanisms:-

- be of sufficient spatial scale,*
- allow for nuanced management,*
- provide for capital works and advisory supports...*

AND

- be financially attractive enough for sufficient numbers of farmers to join and implement landscape scale restoration...?*



Huge challenge, especially as drive for intensification continues...

Draft Agri-Food Strategy to 2030:

MISSION 1: GOAL 2: Restore and Enhance Biodiversity (10% for biodiversity across all farms).

10% for biodiversity across all farms will not restore Curlew, especially not if the other 90% is intensively managed!

MISSION 2: Goal 1: Improve Competitiveness and Productivity of Primary Producers.

Business as usual...?

2021–2030: UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

The scientific consensus is clear: if we do nothing, our planet's natural cycles will be affected forever.

Something has to change....



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

Photo credits: Mike Brown, Brian Burke, Column Clarke, Dick Coombes, John Fox, Stephen Newton, Michael O'Clery.



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