

## 10.1 Retention of Winter Stubble

**Definition:** stubbles of cereals or oilseed rape are eligible where straw is removed as soon as practicable after harvest and the stubble retained until 15<sup>th</sup> February the following year.

**Aims:** to increase the diversity of habitats and species within farming systems. The option is designed to benefit farmland birds that feed on grain, left behind after harvest, and weed seeds. Weeds of arable land, many of which have declined over recent decades, should also benefit.

**Biodiversity objectives:** this option contributes to the NI Biodiversity Action Plan targets for the Irish hare, Chough and Yellowhammer. The proposed NI Biodiversity Action Plans for Cereal field margins and the NI priority species - Skylark, Linnet, Twite, and Bullfinch - will also benefit.

### Management requirements

- Must not be sited on land used to fulfil set aside requirements.
- Stubble must be retained until 15<sup>th</sup> February after harvesting.
- The crop must not be undersown with a grass or grass legume mixture.
- Straw must be removed after harvest.
- The application of pre- and post-harvest application of non-selective herbicides such as glyphosate is prohibited.
- Pesticides, fertiliser, slurry, farmyard manure, sewage sludge, lime or other materials must not be applied to stubble from harvest to the following 15<sup>th</sup> February.
- Straw or stubble must not be burnt.
- The area entered for retention of winter stubble must be present each year.

### Further advice

Provided the minimum area is maintained each year this option can move from field to field within the normal crop rotation. The straw may be baled before removal. The stubble may be lightly grazed and supplementary feeding sites established, provided there is no poaching. Retention of winter stubbles option may be carried out on whole crop silage.

Management plans are provided for participants in the Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Countryside Management Schemes

