David Smith

RSPB

YSBYTY ESTATE CURLEW TRIAL MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Curlew Recovery Programme

Aim: improve conservation prospects of Curlew in the UK

1. Fundraising
2. Trial Management Project
3. Communications
4. Building partnerships across landscapes

Trial Management Project

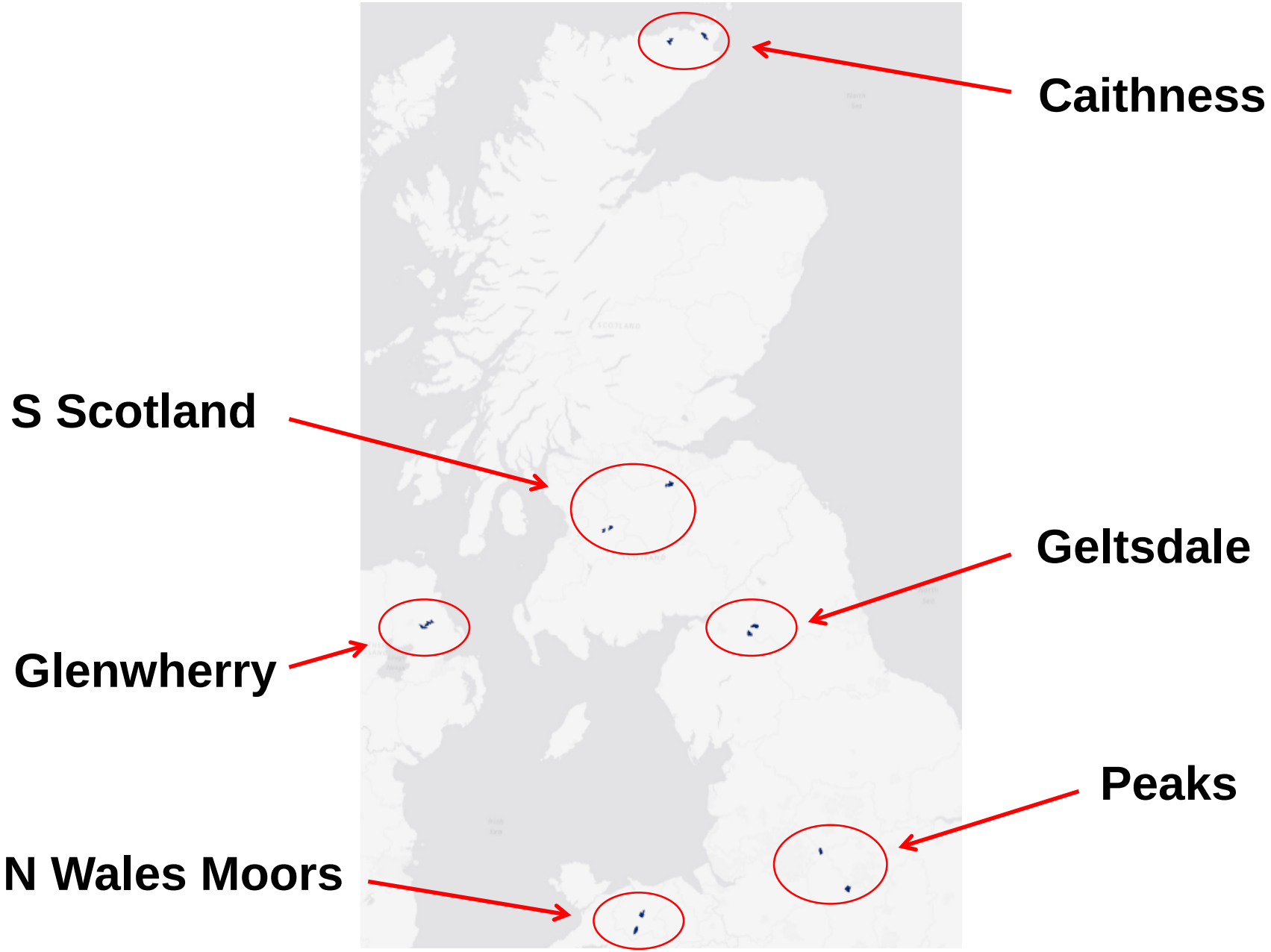
- Five years, six sites

- Management at trial sites:
  - Predator control
    - Foxes, carrion and hooded crows
  - Habitat management
    - Methods: rush cutting, vegetation thinning, grazing

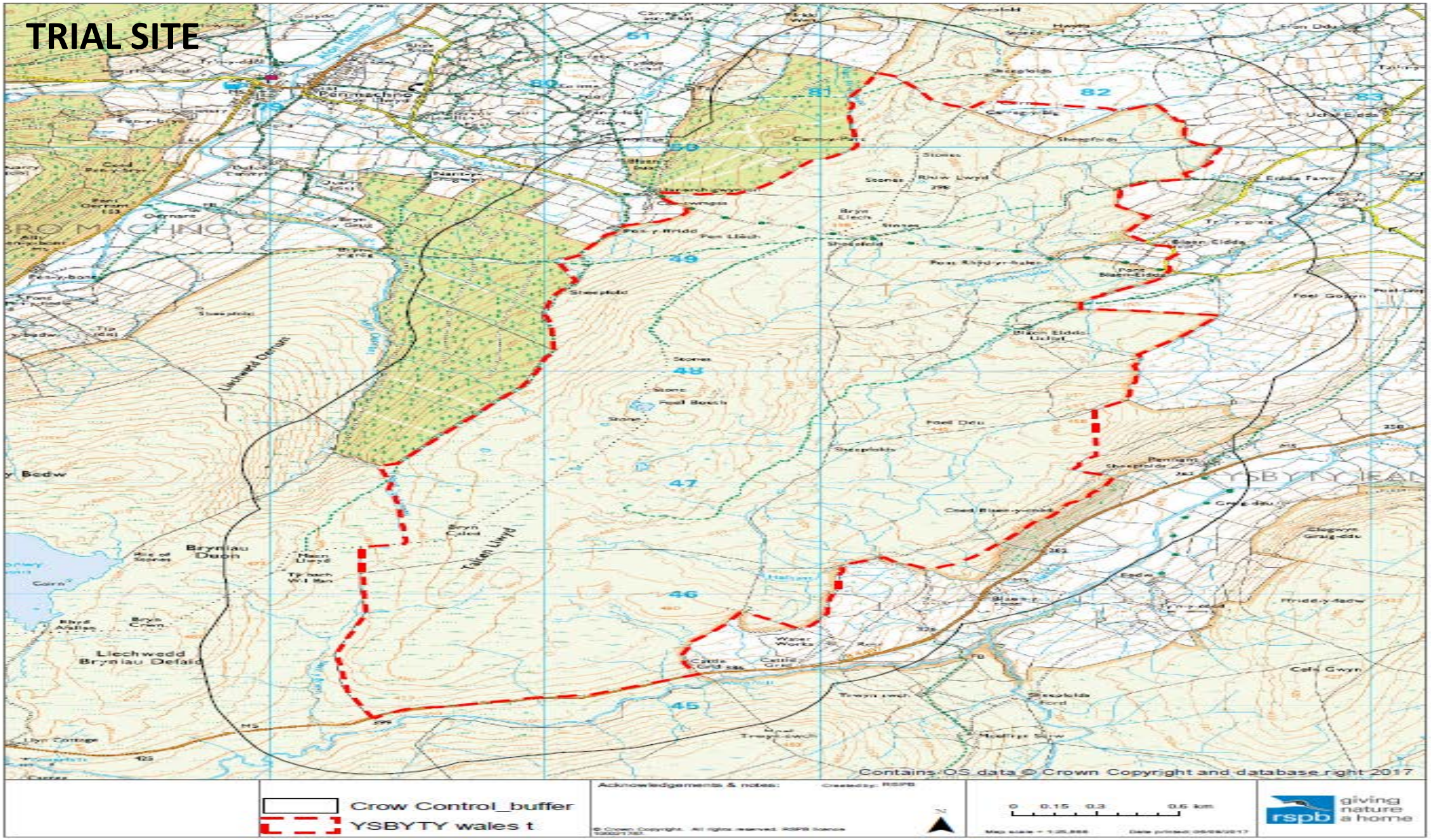
Trial Management Project

- Five years, six sites

- Monitoring:
  - Curlew abundance & productivity
  - Predator abundance
  - Habitat structure & composition


Caithness
S Scotland
Geltsdale
Glenwherry
Peaks
N Wales Moors

TRIAL SITE


Crow Control_buffer
YSBYTY wales t
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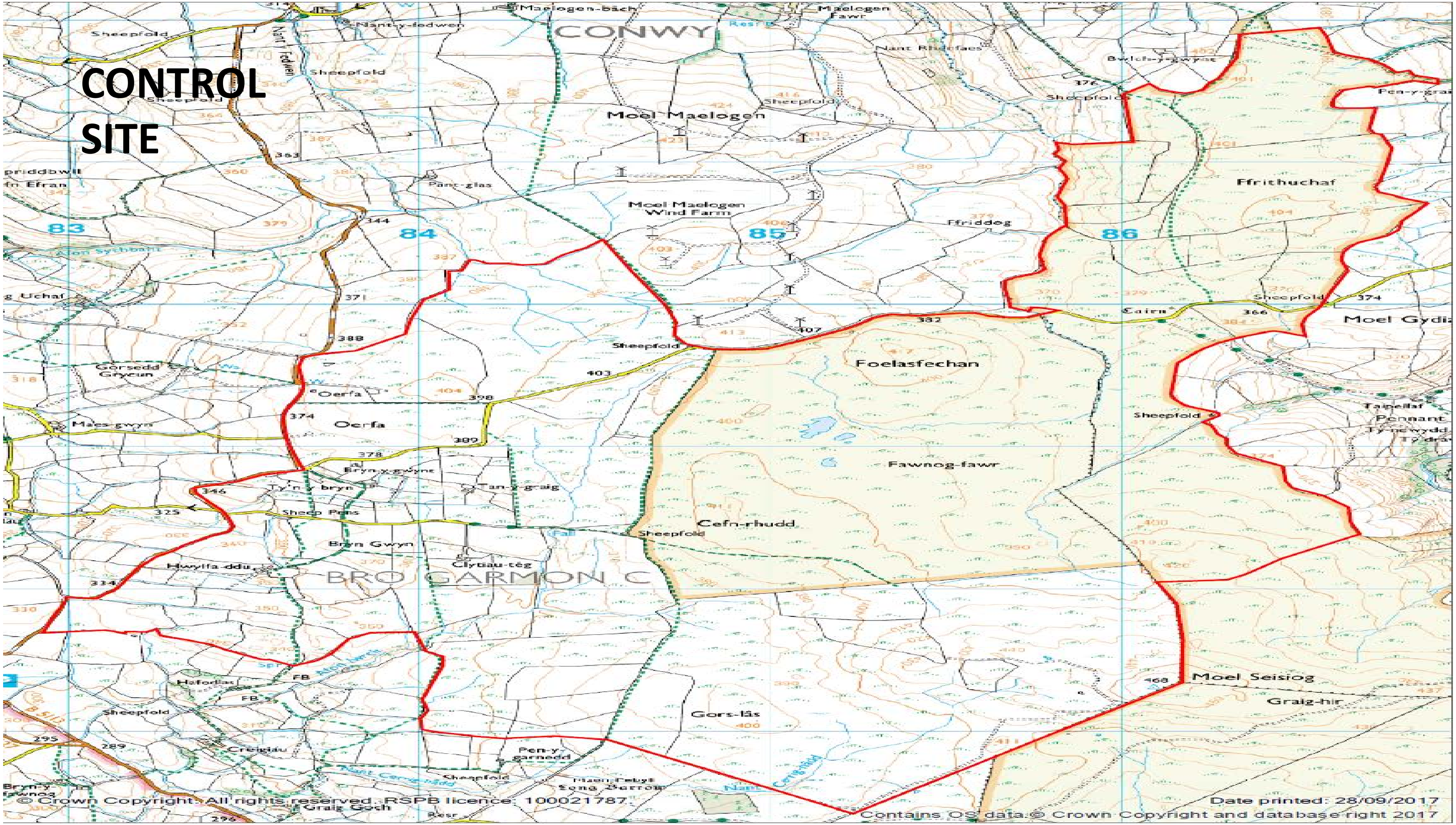
rspb giving nature a home


CONTROL SITE
CONWY
Moel Maelogen
Moel Maelogen Wind Farm
Maelogen-bach
Maelogen Fawr
Nant-y-fedwen
Nant Rhedfaes
Bwlch-y-gwynt
Pen-y-graig
Ffrithuchaf
Ffriddog
Pant-glas
Foelasfechan
Fawnog-fawr
Cefn-rhudd
Moel Gydia
Taipellaf
Pennant
Oerfa
Bryn-y-gwynt
Ty'n-y-bryn
Tan-y-graig
Sheep Pens
Bryn Gwyn
Clytiau-têg
Hwylfa-ddu
BRO GARMON C
Gorsedd Grycun
Maes-gwyn
Hafodlas
Creigiau
Gors-lâs
Pen-y-garnedd
Moel Seisiog
Graig-hir
Sheepfold
83
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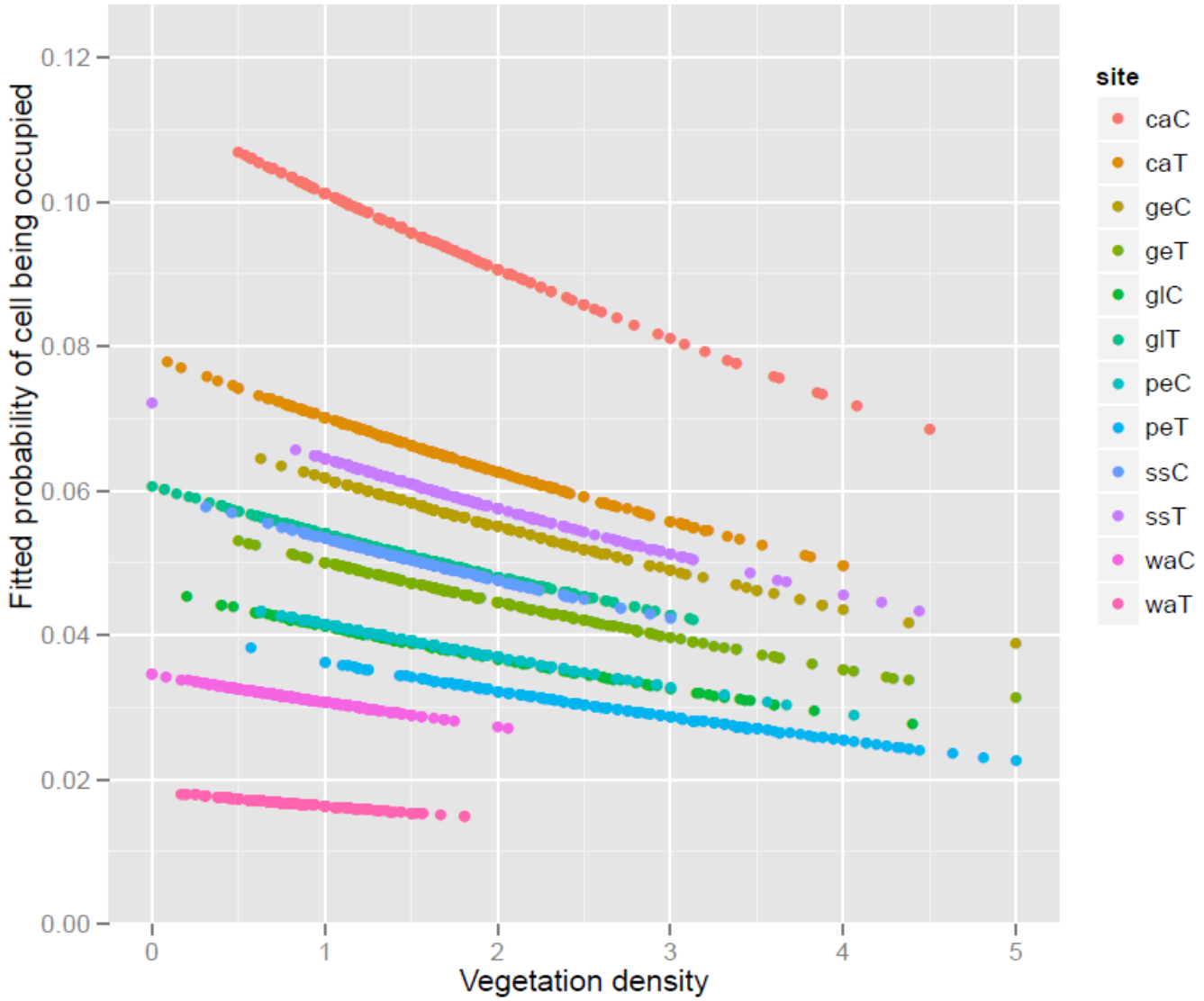
Site	km^2	baseline
caithness	10.4	16
caithness	8.4	18
geltsdale	9.6	13
geltsdale	9.1	15
glenwherry	10.5	14
glenwherry	6.2	10
peaks	11.0	11
peaks	8.0	11
s scot	9.6	15
s scot	10.9	15
wales	10.2	4
wales	10.0	11

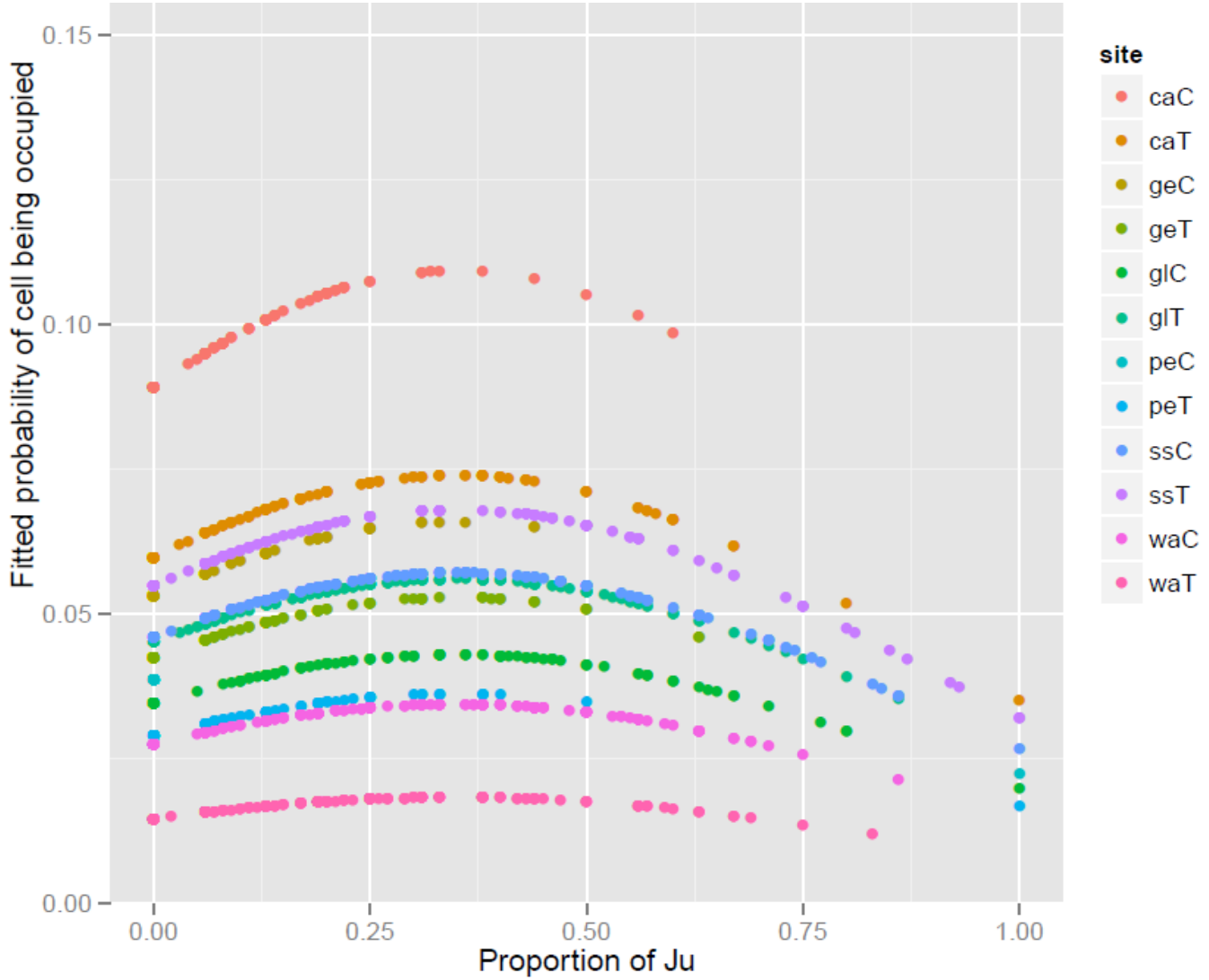
Why undertake habitat management for curlew?

- Improve breeding success
- Ensure birds have the right habitat for nesting and chick rearing
- **i) Concealment for nests ii) Shelter for chicks iii) Access to soil invertebrates**
- Vegetation structure height (density) and rush cover key measures (Pearce-Higgins and Grant 2006)
- Also relatively straightforward to manage

Curlew prefer lower vegetation density



Curlew prefer moderate rush cover



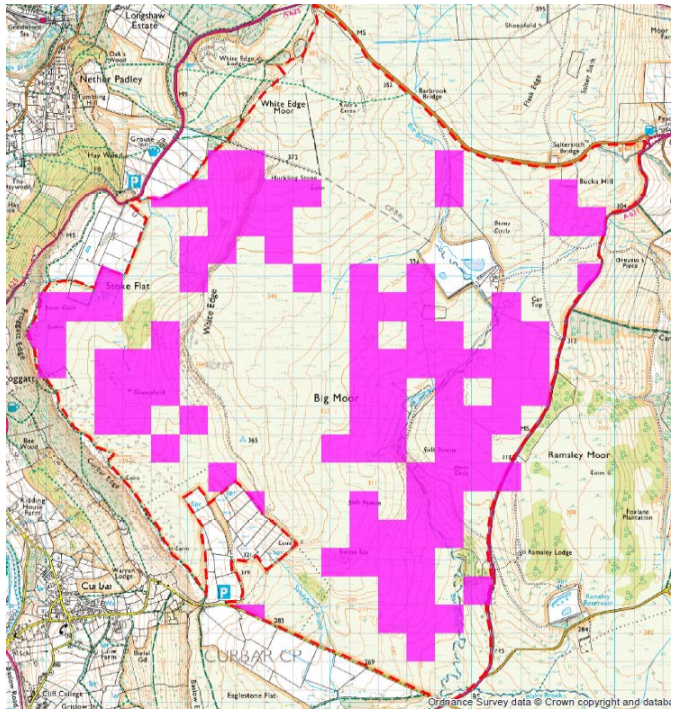
Process for habitat management in the TMP

1. Measure existing habitat on sites – 2015 baseline

2. Analysis - Identify what measures curlew associate with on sites

3. Map where this habitat does and doesn't occur on sites

4**. Where it doesn’t occur – maps of priority for management to create the right habitat**



Rush > 50%

Density > 3

Management specs

- **Vegetation thinning:** cut in strips or patches, to cover c.50% of priority area; increase grazing

  Cuts 30 x 50m up to 80 x 180m

  Determined by terrain etc

- **Rush-cutting:** reduce to 10-30% scattered rush within the priority area

- **Forest edges:** no area should be managed within 200m of forestry

- **Hen Harrier & Merlin nest sites:** 3ha should be left unmanaged around known nest sites

10% TARGET

- Manage a **minimum 10%** of the area at each trial site during the TMP (exceed where possible)

- Achieve by March 2018 if possible

- Large sites (c10km^2) and 10% minimum is critical to have chance of detecting:

  i) measureable impact on habitat

  ii) curlew response - breeding success and numbers

Methods used

- Standard techniques that are in widespread use and which could be easily replicated by farmers/land managers.

- Rush cutting –mower towed by tractor/quad, Softrak in wetter areas

- Veg thinning – mower towed by tractor/quad. Aftermath grazing good but not always possible.

- No burning for heather on Ysbyty Trial. Used for Molinia control on other sites - not over deep peat

MANAGE DENSE RUSH COVER

BLANKET BOG

VEGETATION THINNING

SIGNIFICANT SCALE

ENHANCE HABITAT QUALITY FOR NESTING/FORAGING

CHALLENGING SITE CONDITIONS.
VERY WET, REMOTE MOORLAND.

Predator Control

- Third year of predator control.
- Aim = to work out the predator control effort required to improve curlew productivity
- Aim = to reduce fox and crow numbers across all the Trial Management Sites
- Consistent approach
- Compliant with legislation & RSPB vertebrate Code Of Practice
- Large sites – focus on ‘hotspots’. Buffer zone – 500m.
- Shooting foxes, 4 times/week (4hrs), 30/10 – 31/03; 2 times week (4hrs), 01/04 – 30/06.
- Trapping crows, check 2 times/day, 01/04 – 30/06.

IS IT WORKING…..?