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
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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
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.....?