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Integrating Habitat and Species Monitoring with Conservation Management on Natura Sites in Wales

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Integrated?

- Coherent
- Prioritised
- Rationalised
- Based on good science/good evidence
- I am going to use a site in South Wales as an example

Glaswelltiroedd Cefn Cribwr SAC

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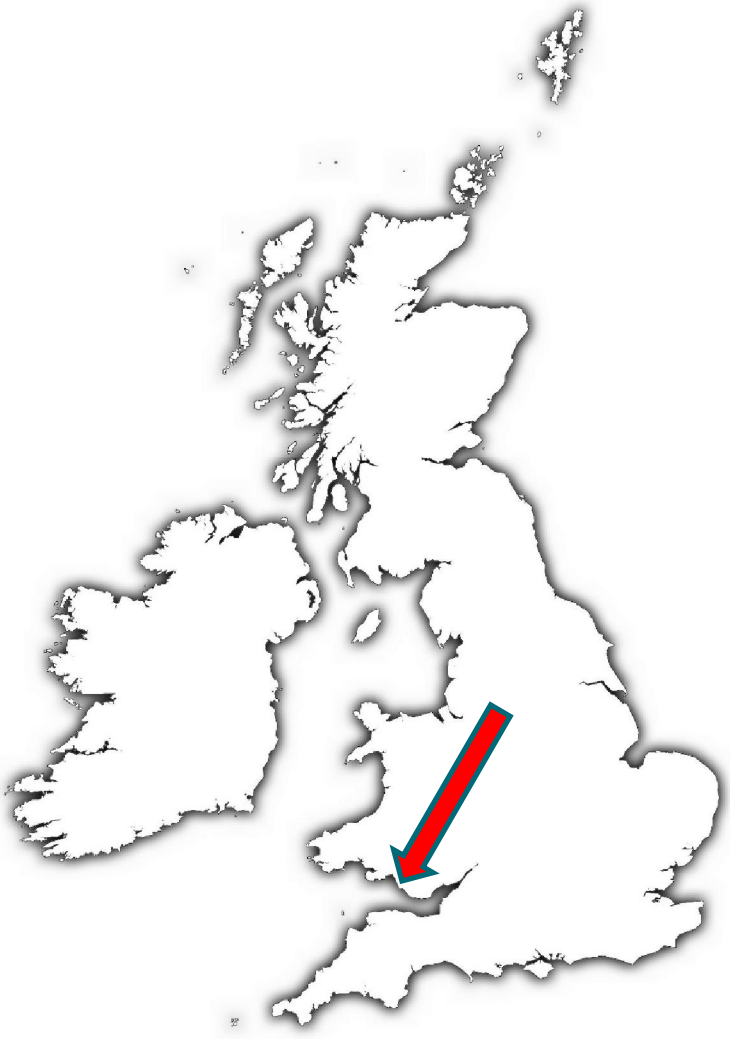

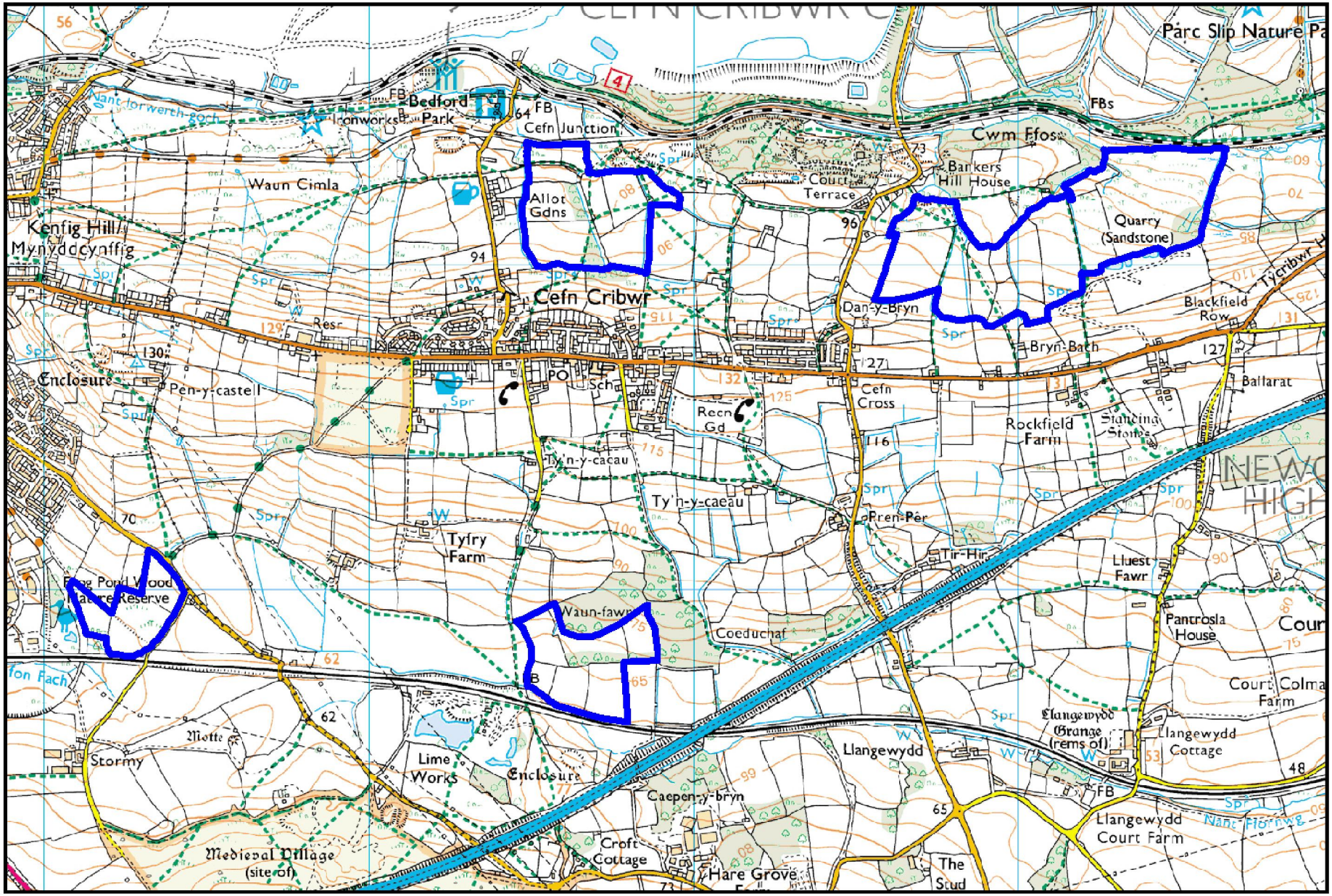

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UK 722055
100325

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European habitats & species

- *Molinia* meadows
- Marsh Fritillary

UK habitats & species

- Marshy grassland
- Dry neutral grassland
- Marsh Fritillary
- *Scorzonera humilis*
- *Carex montana*
- *Thelypteris palustris*
- *Myrica gale*

Developing a conservation strategy for Caeau Cefn Cribwr

- We need to decide what we want
- And where we want it
- Once we have decided what our management is trying to achieve we then monitor to see if our management is having the desired affects.

How have we done this for Caeau Cefn Cribwr?

Developing a conservation strategy

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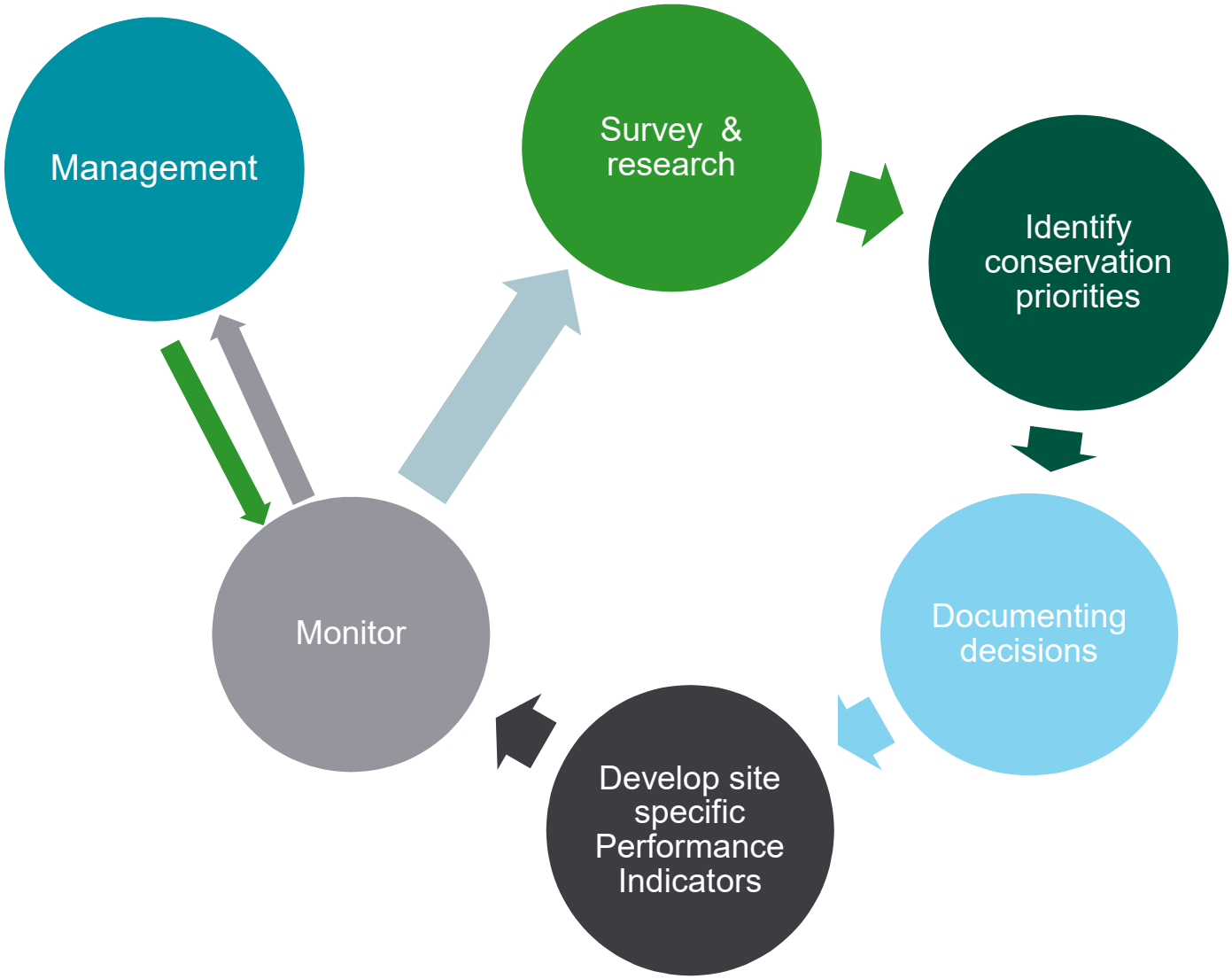
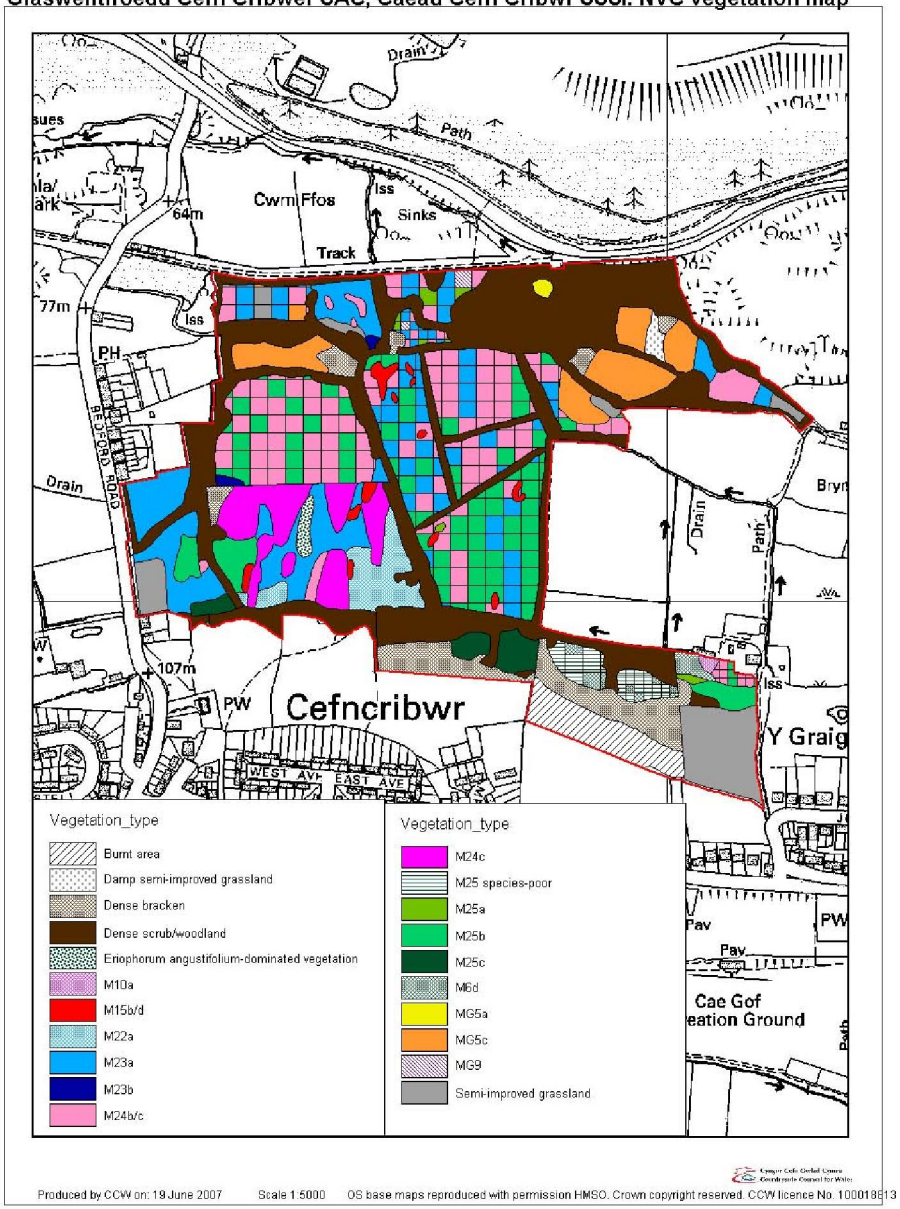


1. Survey

What information do we have available for Caeau Cefn Cribwr?

Glaswelltiroedd Cefn Cribwer SAC, Caeau Cefn Cribwr SSSI: NVC vegetation map



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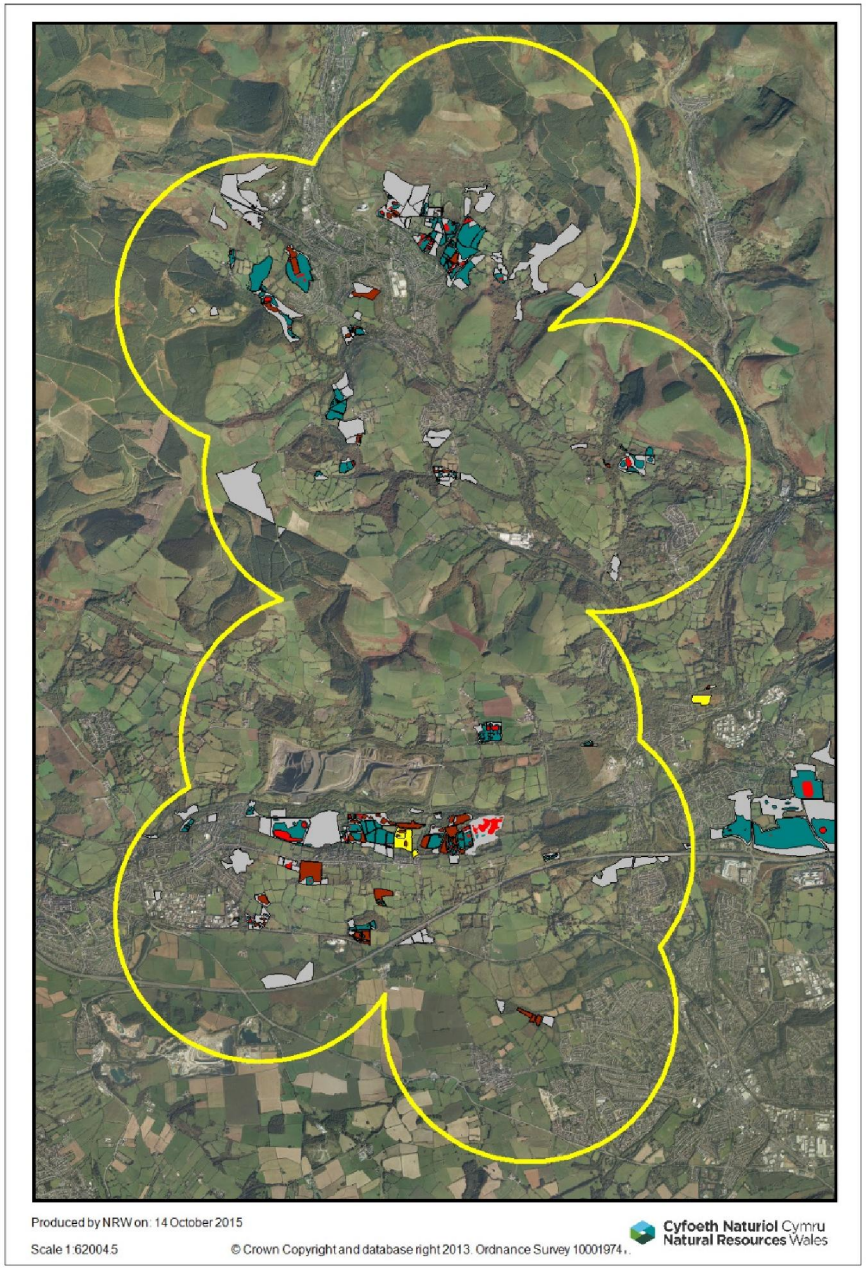
What does this provide?

An understanding of the distribution of *Molinia* meadows, marshy grassland and dry neutral grassland.

Records for rare plant species.



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What does this provide?

An understanding of the amount of Marsh Fritillary habitat in the landscape and the implications of this for the SAC.

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Other survey information

- Marsh fritillary larval web surveys
- Incidental records from site visits
- BioBlitz records
- Aerial images

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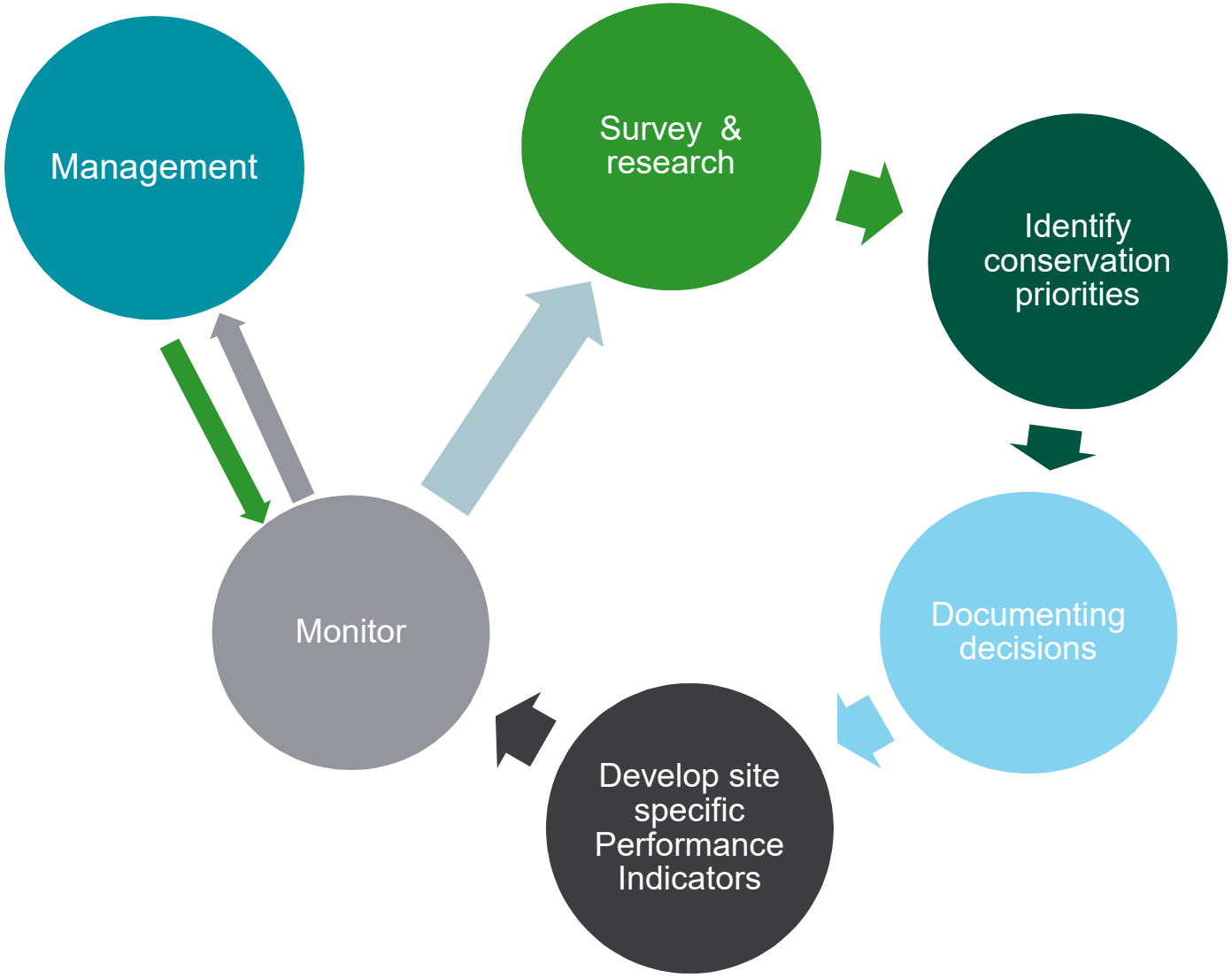
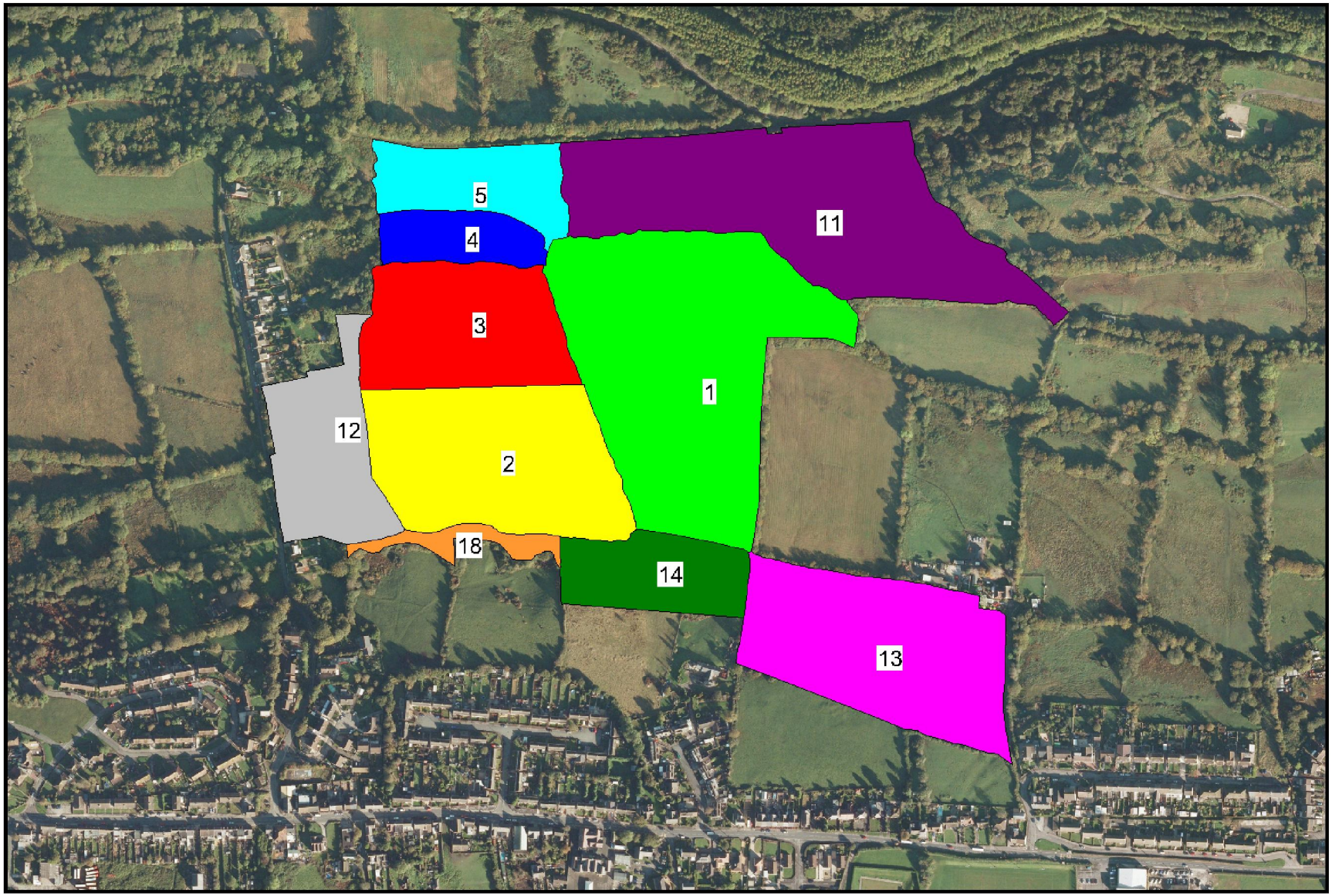


Unitization (and prioritization)

Our next step is to divide the site up into management (or manageable) units.

This is largely based on:

- Ownership
- Practicalities of management
- Distribution of features



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Category	Definition
Key habitat (KH)	The principle management driver within the unit and the focus of monitoring effort
Key Species (KS)	The principle management driver within the unit and the focus of monitoring effort
Geology (Geo)	Geological feature of primary importance in the management unit
Sympathetic (Sym)	Habitat or species of secondary importance to the key habitat or species in the management unit- but likely to benefit from sympathetic management
Nm	Habitat or species under negative management
Mn	Management units with no special feature present but with non-qualifying habitat of importance for management of features elsewhere on a site e.g. livestock over-wintering area included within designation boundaries
X	Habitat or species not present (or planned to be present in management unit).

Examples of ‘Sympathetic’ habitats or species

- Present in a unit but may be of less conservation importance
- Present in a unit but in small areas/numbers with the bulk in other units of the site
- Their requirements are compatible with the management requirements of KH/KS

Caeau Cefn Cribwr	Management unit									
	1	2	3	4	5	11	12	13	14	18
SAC										
***Molinia* meadows**	KH	KH	KH	X	Sym	Sym	X	Sym	X	Mn
Marsh Fritillary	Sym	KS	KS	Sym	KS	KS	KS	KS	Sym	X
SSSI										
Marshy grassland	Sym	KH	Sym	X	Sym	Sym	KH	Sym	KH	X
Neutral grassland	Sym	X	X	KH	X	KH	X	X	X	X
Scorzonera humilis	KS	X	Sym	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
Thelypteris	X	KS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Myrica gale	X	Sym	X	X	X	X	X	Sym	X	X
Carex montana	X	Sym	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Key considerations:

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- SAC features are key drivers*
- *Molinia* meadows habitat is often good for Marsh Fritillaries *
- This is 1 of only 3 locations in the UK for *Scorzonera humilis*
- Other marshy grassland communities are likely to benefit from the management of the *Molinia* meadows
- The *Thelypteris palustris* & *Carex montana* are likely to benefit from the management of the *Molinia* meadows
- *Myrica gale* is more likely to be a problem species

Caeau Cefn Cribwr	Management unit									
	1	2	3	4	5	11	12	13	14	18
SAC										
***Molinia* meadows**	KH	KH	KH	X	Sym	Sym	X	Sym	X	Mn
Marsh Fritillary	Sym	KS	KS	Sym	KS	KS	KS	KS	Sym	X
SSSI										
Marshy grassland	Sym	KH	Sym	X	Sym	Sym	KH	Sym	KH	X
Neutral grassland	Sym	X	X	KH	X	KH	X	X	X	X
Scorzonera humilis	KS	X	Sym	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
Thelypteris	X	KS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Myrica gale	X	Sym	X	X	X	X	X	Sym	X	X
Carex montana	X	Sym	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Challenges

- Unit 2 has it has a bit of everything! Here was difficult to make decision; some units/sites are going to be more difficult.
- Relies on good survey information and site knowledge to make these decisions.

Benefits

- Prioritizes and rationalises the management decisions.
- Provides the site manager with a clear understanding of what is required, where it is required and why.
- Decisions are documented in SAC plan for future reference.
- Provides and outline for monitoring projects – thus integrating management and monitoring

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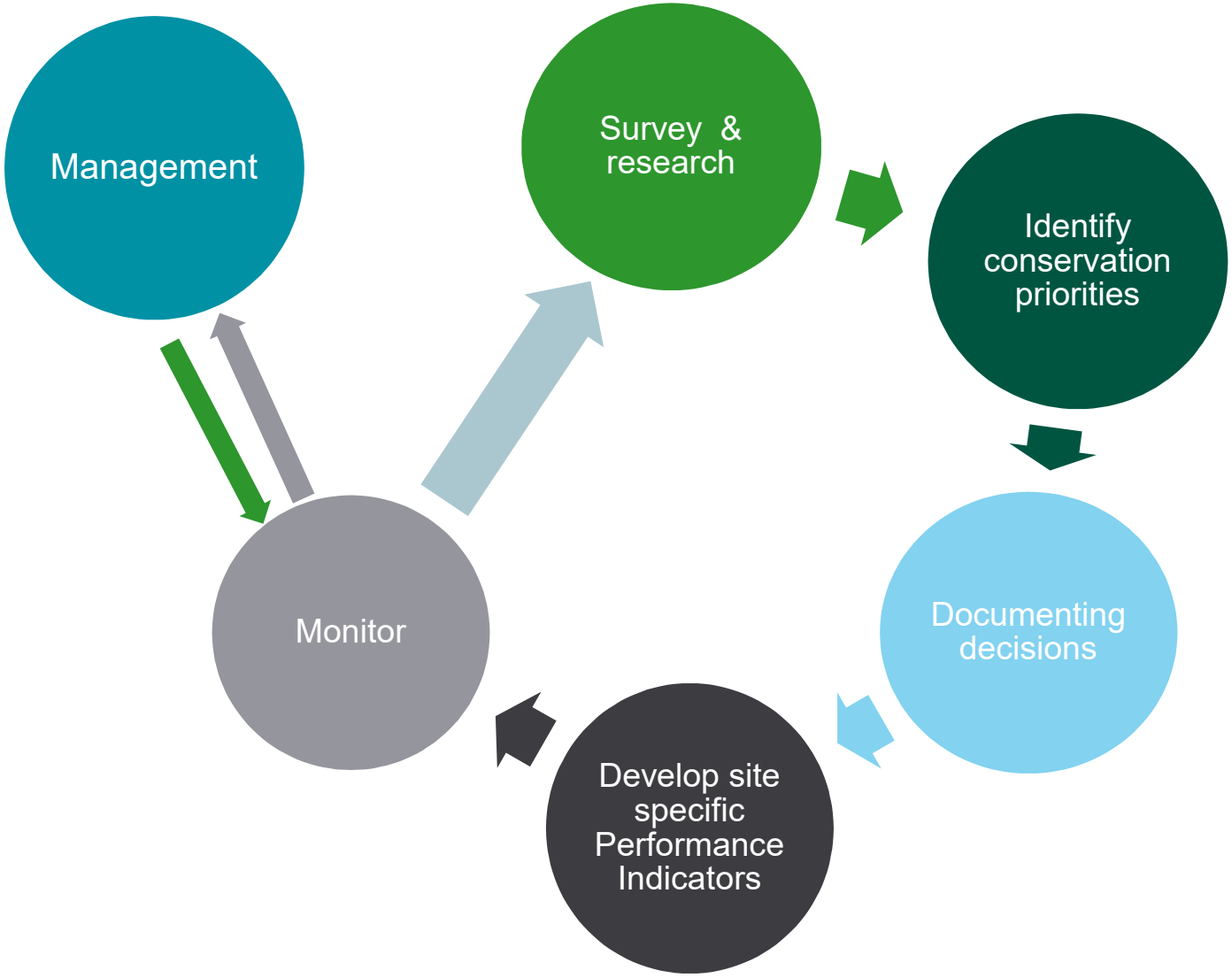

Performance indicators		To maintain the *Molinia* meadows in favourable condition where:
Extent	**Upper limit**	Not set
	Lower limit	As mapped 1994
Quality	**Lower limit**	In unit 1 70% of the *Molinia* meadows is in good condition And In units 2 & 3 60% of the *Molinia* meadows is in good condition
Definitions		
Molinia meadows		Grassland with *Molinia caerulea* and one of the following indicators, *Cirsium dissectum, Carex hostiana* or *Carex pulicaris* is present within a 50cm radius.
Good condition *Molinia* meadows		Where within a 50cm: • At least one *Molinia* meadows indicator is present with at least 3 of the following species: *Succisa pratensis*, *Carex panicea*, *Potentilla erecta*, Salix repens, Serratula tinctoria, Valeriana dioica, *Erica tetralix*, *Sphagna* spp., *Carex hostiana*, *Carex pulicaris* or *Cirsium dissectum* • The cover of *Molinia* is between 10 and 60% • The cover of *Juncii* is less than 50% • Scrub, tree species below 20cm and bracken are absent
Scrub and tree species		This excludes *Salix repens* and scrub and tree species below 20cm tall

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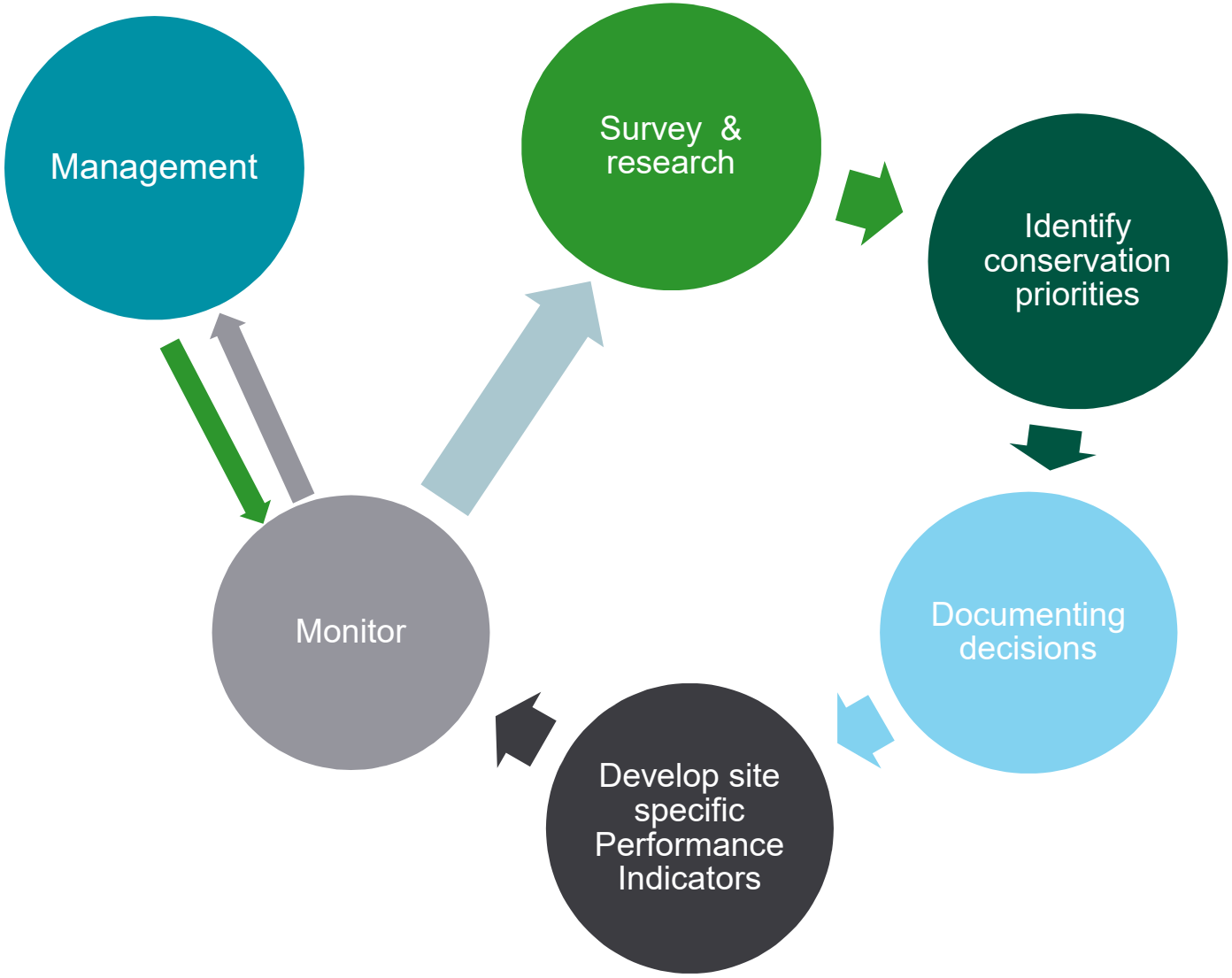

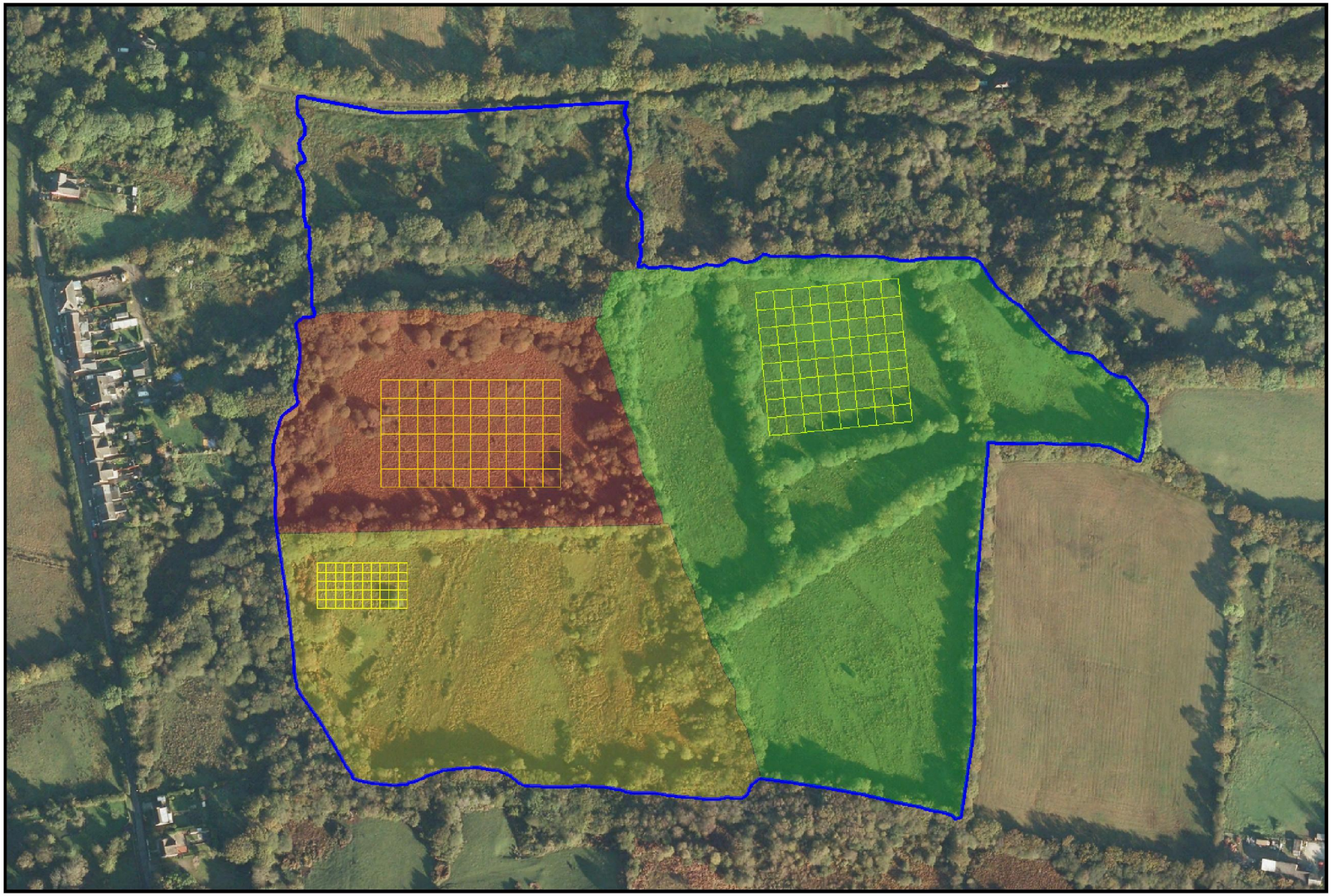

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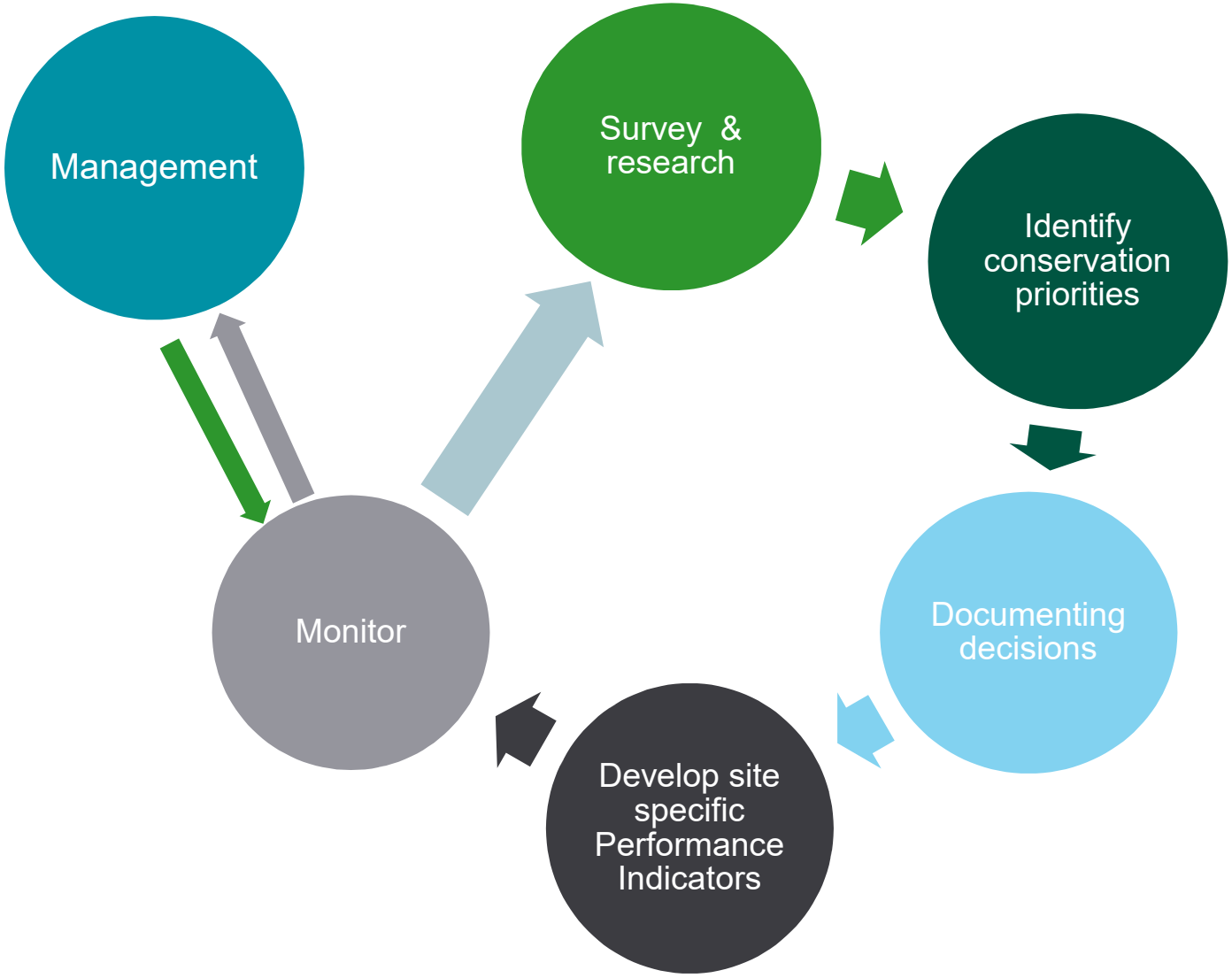

Key Points

- Identifies a need for good survey information
- Important to understand what is important on your site (in the wider context)
- The confidence to make decisions
- Document decisions
- Results in an integrated project linking monitoring and site management

And so the process starts again…

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Acknowledgements:

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