

## 1. Introduction

The East Dorset Forest Design Plan covers a group of woodlands, 2695 hectares in area, which lie to the west of the River Avon Valley. The woodlands have their origins in the extensive post war planting and afforestation carried out to boost Britain's timber supplies. Most of the woodlands were established on former heathland sites but other smaller woodlands such as Queens Copse were established from former ancient woodland sites.

The majority of the woodlands lie within East Dorset with the exception of Ringwood Forest, which straddles the Dorset Hampshire county boundary. As well as lying close to the Bournemouth and Poole conurbation, the woodlands are bounded by villages and towns. As a result they are heavily used for informal recreation by local communities and provide a valuable, local green space resource. Moors Valley Country Park is partly located within the East Dorset Woodlands at Ashley Heath. The park is jointly managed by the Forestry Commission and East Dorset District Council and has become an important regional recreational resource, attracting an estimated 1 million visitors per year.

The majority of the woodlands are found predominantly on former heathland sites on geology known as the Barton, Bracklesham and Bagshot Beds. Soils are generally acidic, freely draining and nutrient poor giving rise to varying degrees of yield class and productivity generally only suited to conifer production. However Queen's Copse which is a PAWS site is located on London Clay.

The Plan has been divided up into 6 FDP units:

- ◆ Ringwood North and Somerley (NEW 201)
- ◆ Ashley Heath (Moors Valley) NEW 202
- ◆ West Moors NEW 203
- ◆ Hurn & Ramsdown NEW 204 & NEW 206
- ◆ Cannon Hill, Uddens and Whitesheet NEW 207 & NEW 208
- ◆ Horton Wood (Queens Copse) NEW 209

These plans represent the first mid-term review of the East Dorset Forest Design Plans that were originally consulted upon and approved during 2002. The revised FDPs have been prepared following a review of the original plans by FC staff and stakeholders and have incorporated any relevant changes in policy or local issues that have occurred in the intervening years.

## 2. Forest Design Plans

### Forest Design Plan Objectives

Forest Design Plans set out the short, medium and long-term aims for forest management based upon a set of Forest Design Plan Objectives. These objectives take into account

requirements from the policy framework (described below) and are further influenced by outcomes from stakeholder consultation and local issues.

### **Forest Design Plan Objectives for the East Dorset Woodlands**

1. To develop woodlands that provide opportunities for informal and formal public recreation, especially in areas on the urban fringe. Aim to divert pressure away from more sensitive habitats.
2. To develop woodlands that are more attractive and are sympathetic to their landscape context by:
  - ◆ Increasing the diversity of age structure through phased felling and replanting shaped in a way that is consistent with the scale and topography of the landform.
  - ◆ Encouraging natural regeneration of existing conifer species or broadleaves native to the site type.
  - ◆ Encouraging the transformation of some conifer plantations to mixed conifer and broadleaf woodlands by accepting natural regeneration of native broadleaves.
  - ◆ Retaining some areas beyond their usual felling age to become large, old trees.
  - ◆ Introducing a network of permanent and temporary open space that enhances the visual diversity of the woodlands.
  - ◆ Maintaining a continuous cover of woodlands where it is a prominent and sympathetic part of the landscape and especially where it screens urban areas.
3. To sustain and protect existing habitats of nature conservation interest by:
  - ◆ Maintaining designated habitats in improving or favourable condition.
  - ◆ Restoring native broadleaf woodland on sites of ancient woodland.
  - ◆ Developing a network of habitat links to reduce the vulnerability of fragmented sites.
  - ◆ Increasing the length of edge habitat by ride edge and streamside enhancement and by developing a mosaic of woodland types and open space.
  - ◆ Providing a succession of temporary open spaces suitable for key heathland bird species.
  - ◆ Providing buffers of non-plantation woodland adjacent to important non-plantation habitats.
  - ◆ Protecting any veteran tree and retaining standing or fallen deadwood where not a hazard to the public.
4. To provide a regular supply of quality timber to support local employment and local timber processing industries.
5. To protect archaeological sites and cultural heritage features by:
  - ◆ Preparing and implementing agreed management plans for all Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs).
  - ◆ Maintaining a record of known unscheduled sites and seeking advice regarding their protection and enhancement where appropriate.
6. To achieve an appropriate balance of objectives through consultation with local communities and representatives of organisations involved with the nature conservation, public recreation and timber industry

Three maps are presented for each of the six FDP units:

### **Design Concept Map**

The Design Concept Map sets out the long-term structure of the woodlands and other habitats consistent with the objectives above. It also depicts other issues relevant to the plan such as the location of Sites of Special Scientific interest, archaeological sites, County boundaries and Rights of Ways. It sets no fixed time scales on how quickly the habitat transformations depicted in the plan may be achieved. The maps are fully annotated to describe issues on the site.

### **Felling and Habitat Management Map**

The Felling and Habitat Management Map sets out the timing and shape of individual felling areas (coupes) that will either be replanted or restored to important non-woodland habitats. It also identifies areas not to be clear felled, but managed using natural regeneration or open habitat management techniques. Under this FDP, approval is sought for the first two phases of felling (Green areas 2007-2011, Brown areas 2012-16).

Tolerance thresholds for adjustments to felling coupe boundaries, timing of restocking, change of species, windblow clearance and changes to road lines will be as per those recorded in Forestry Commission Countryside Services Memorandum 6. (See Appendix 3)

### **Restocking Plan/Future habitat Map**

The Restocking Plan Map shows the proposed replanting pattern and woodland structure resulting from the operations associated with the Felling and habitat management that would lead to the progression of the Design Concept. At this map scale (1:10000), it is difficult to show detail of small-scale unplanted areas or retentions. A detailed restocking plan will be produced as part of an operational site assessment for each area nearer to the time of implementation. Some small groups or individual character trees may be retained at the time of felling, especially if they add to the amenity of the woodland or contribute to nature conservation value. Any veteran trees or standing dead trees will be retained and protected (except when a potential safety risk to the public).

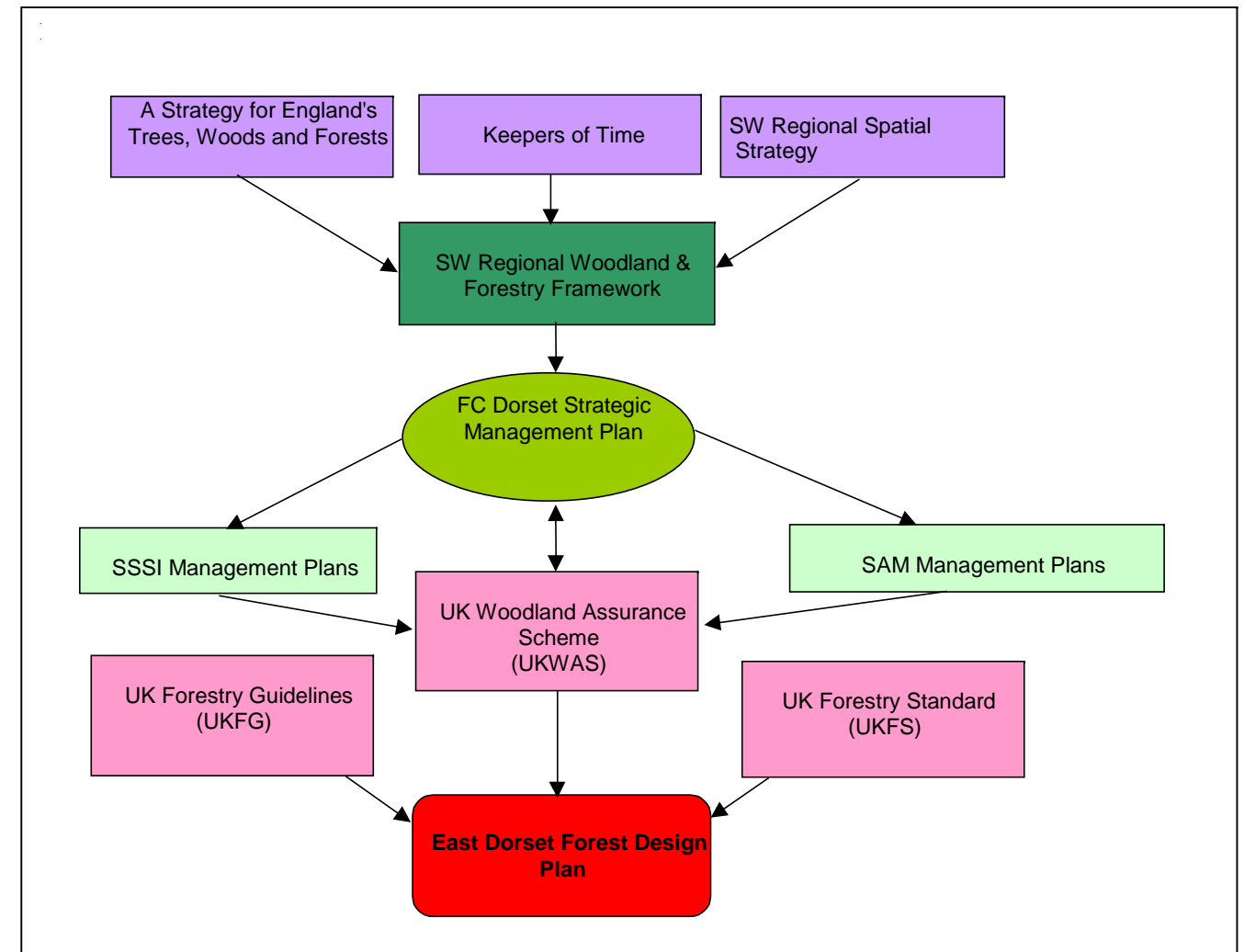
Rides will become wider as a result of heathland ride treatments (depicted on Design Concept, Habitat Restoration and Restocking maps) and on all rides as tree margins are cleared back to varying degrees.

### **Habitat Structure and Age Structure Charts**

Each plan is supported by charts showing how management proposals contained within the Forest Design Plans may affect the habitat structure and age structure of the woodlands over time.

## **3. FDP Policy Framework**

The East Dorset Forest Design Plan has been influenced by various levels of key policy guidance including National, Regional and Local Policy as illustrated below.



### **'A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests'**

'A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forest', was launched in 2007 and provides the framework to build upon the achievements of 'The England Forest Strategy - A New Focus for England's Woodlands', launched in 1999. The new strategy identifies national priorities and builds on Government policies about the quality of people's lives, the quality of the places, in which people live and work, and the sustainable use of resources to be addressed over the

next 10-15 years. It also provides a policy direction for the Regional Forest Frameworks to be incorporated alongside regional priorities. The Strategy sets out four key principles:

- ◆ long-term sustainable management of trees, woods and forests
- ◆ the right tree in the right place
- ◆ effective use of public investment
- ◆ synergy with other Government Policies.

The principles translate into three key themes and related actions, notably:

- ◆ *Community and Places* - cohesive and engaged community, green infrastructure, sense of place.
- ◆ *Land & Natural Environment* - biodiversity, natural resources, resilience to the changing climate, cultural heritage
- ◆ *Working Woodlands* - competitiveness, skills and innovation, providing public goods, woodfuel and timber products reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

### Keepers of Time

'Keepers of Time' provides a statement of policy for England's ancient and native woodland and outlines the Governments commitment and 2020 vision for Ancient Woodland, notably that:

*“ Ancient woodlands, veteran trees and other native woodlands are adequately protected, sustainably managed in a wider landscape context, and are providing a wide range of social, environmental and economic benefits to society.”*

The document provides a number of key policies relating to the protection and management of Ancient Woodland, which apply to the East Dorset woodlands.

### South West Regional Spatial Strategy

The Regional Spatial Strategy or RSS, is a new kind of plan for up to the year 2026. It will set a regional framework about 'where things go', what the scale of development should be, and the links between broad issues like healthcare, education and crime, as well as basic infrastructure such as transport.

It will aim to protect what is highly valued about the region, at the same time making provision for sufficient new homes and jobs and retail and leisure facilities to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly affluent population.

The final RSS will set the regional context for planning in the South West until 2026. It will:

- guide the planning process at a local level – in District Local Development Frameworks
- help deliver the region's Integrated Regional Strategy

- include a Regional Transport Strategy to guide investment in transport facilities
- provide policy guidance on issues ranging from minerals extraction and waste treatment to
- economic development and housing, health, culture, environment
- include District level housing numbers

### SW Regional Forestry & Woodland Framework (2005)



To help deliver the Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests, the SW Regional Woodland and Forestry Framework together with an implementation plan has been developed with regional partners to help shape our woods and forests for the future. The Framework is helping set priorities and beginning to target public investment in the SouthWest. The Framework has a number of themes and objectives highlighted in the accompanying diagram.

### Dorset Strategic Management Plan

The Dorset Strategic Management Plan is a District level document that informs local Forestry Commission staff on our management direction and the associated policies and actions that need to be implemented over a five year period to take account of national, regional policy and local issues. The Forest Design Plans are a key mechanism for delivering policies on the ground.

### United Kingdom Forestry Standard

The purpose of the UK Forestry Standard is to set out standards for the sustainable management of all forests and woodlands in the UK. It is the centrepiece of a system to guide

and monitor forestry. The Standard is linked to the developing international protocols for sustainable forestry. It is used in the UK as a basis for the development of forest monitoring and is the basis from which the UK Woodland Assurance Standard was developed. It can also be used for assessing compliance with management certification standards such as ISO 14000 and EMAS. Forest Design Plans need to uphold the standards set for sustainable forestry.

### **UK Forest Guidelines**

The UK Forest Guidelines help to link forest and woodland management with the UK Forestry Standard, and to improve the consistency of approach. The guidelines cover key areas relating to sustainable forest management including:

- ◆ Forests and Landscape
- ◆ Forests and Historic Environment
- ◆ Forests and Biodiversity
- ◆ Forests and Soil
- ◆ Forests and Climate Change
- ◆ Forests and People
- ◆ Forests and Water

### **UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS)**

The international timber products market is increasingly demanding assurance about the quality and environmental impact of woodland management. The UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) is a certification standard which sets out the necessary requirements which woodland owners and managers and certification authorities can use to ensure that woodland management in the United Kingdom is being carried out responsibly. The Forestry Commission nationally has gained UKWAS certification and it a requirement of every Forest district to uphold UKWAS standards in order to maintain the accreditation. UKWAS addresses specific aspects of woodland management and types of operation, notably:

- ◆ Compliance with the law and conformance with the requirements of the certification standard
- ◆ Management planning
- ◆ Woodland design – creation, felling and replanting
- ◆ Operations
- ◆ Protection and maintenance
- ◆ Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity
- ◆ The community
- ◆ Forestry Workforce

It is necessary to take particular account of UKWAS standards when managing woodland within the Inclosures and be able to demonstrate that the above aspects of woodland management are being adequately addressed.

### **Site of Special Scientific Interest and Scheduled Ancient Monument Management Plans**

Parts of six SSSIs lie within the East Dorset Forest Design Plan area. To ensure appropriate liaison with English Nature over management of land within the SSSI boundary FC produce five-year SSSI management plans. The plans set out objectives for management to protect and enhance the interest for which the SSSI is designated. At the end of each plan period the existing plan will be reviewed and a new plan prepared for the following five years. To help local management, the review dates of SSSI plans and Forest Design Plans will be synchronised.

There are twenty-four Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the East Dorset Forest Design Plan area. To ensure appropriate liaison with English Heritage over management of scheduled archaeology FE produce five year SAM management plans.

### **4. Dorset Recreation Plan**

A key FDP objective for the East Dorset Woodlands is to develop woodlands that provide opportunities for informal and formal public recreation, especially in areas on the urban fringe or doorstep woodlands. An additional aim is to try and divert pressure away from more sensitive habitats in other parts of the Estate. In order to progress this objective a Recreation Plan has been drawn up for Dorset which identifies the woodlands in terms of their importance for recreation and notes the key priorities for informal and formal recreational development (see Recreation Plan map) . This plan will be closely integrated with the relevant FDP for individual woodlands.