



Contents

Forward

Endorsements

Summary

| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 1.0 | Introduction | 5 |
| 2.0 | Mission, aims and objectives | 6 |
| 3.0 | Repositioning the estate to maximise public benefit | 7 |
| 4.0 | The Forest Planning Process | 8 |
| 5.0 | Staff, resources, expertise and funding | 9 |
| 6.0 | District contribution to the England Forestry Strategy and Regional Forestry Framework | |
| 6.1 | Rural development | 10 |
| 6.2 | Economic regeneration | 12 |
| 6.3 | Recreation, access and tourism | 14 |
| 6.4 | Environment and conservation | 17 |
| 7.0 | Delivery against other Regional and Government agendas | 20 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Northwest Development Agency/Government Office NW● English Nature● Environment Agency● Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs● Lake District National Park● Red Rose and Mersey Forests● Health● Education | |
| 8.0 | Key policies for management zones | 21 |
| 8.1 | Eden Valley | 22 |
| 8.2 | Cumbria High Fells | 24 |
| 8.3 | West Cumbria | 27 |
| 8.4 | South Cumbria Low Fells | 28 |
| 8.5 | Morecambe Bay Limestone | 30 |
| 8.6 | North Lancashire | 32 |
| 8.7 | Forest of Bowland | 34 |
| 8.8 | South Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire | 36 |
| 9.0 | Review of District wide policies and other plans | 38 |



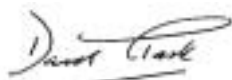
FORWARD

The North West is a region of contrasts from the wild and dramatic Lake District which attracts over 14 million tourists each year to the former industrial power houses of Liverpool and Manchester which are going through a period of major regeneration, with the planting of trees helping to improve the environment.

Woodlands managed by the Forestry Commission make a major contribution to this region of contrasts from the Whinlatter Forest Park near Keswick which attracts over 100, 000 people each year to marvel at the Ospreys and inject over £2 million into the local economy; to the 52 km of new foot paths constructed in new community woodlands in the Mersey belt, long enough to connect Liverpool and Manchester!

In recent years the Forestry Commission has responded very positively to the changing needs and wishes of society and nowhere more so than in the North West. The FC was established in 1919 to create a strategic supply of timber for the next war. Today timber is still an important product of woodland management, helping support the local economy, however it has now become a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Provision of outdoor recreation opportunities, nature conservation and regeneration of urban areas are increasingly important. The FC are now working more in partnership with other government bodies, voluntary groups, local communities and private businesses.

This Strategy sets out our current position in the North West and targets for the next 5 years. I am confident that the dedicated and highly skilled team in the North West will continue to deliver and respond to changing needs.



Lord David Clark of Windermere
Chairman of the Forestry Commission



ENDORSEMENTS

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Rural Development Service (RDS) part of Defra
English Nature
Environment Agency
Lake District National Park Authority
Lakes Environment Panel (FC)
Cumbria County Council
Lancashire County Council
Cheshire County Council
Greater Manchester local authorities
Merseyside local authorities
Rural Regeneration Cumbria
English Partnerships



SUMMARY

The public forest estate makes a considerable contribution to the delivery of the England Forestry Strategy (EFS) and also the wider Government agendas of health, education, economic development (urban and rural) and social inclusion. There is considerable further potential both through managing and developing the existing forest estate and also the development of new woodlands by a highly motivated team who have a unique combination of skills and experience. The estate is managed to the highest standards and is independently certified against the international Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) standard. This is the essential foundation for the delivery of the public benefits whether they be nature conservation or the forest as a venue for recreation. The North West England Forest District (NWEFD) has an excellent track record for delivery on time and on budget, increasingly in partnership with other public, voluntary and private sector organisations. Recent examples include the Community Forest Capital Modernisation Fund project creating 1000 ha of new community woodland and 52 km of new footpaths in 3 years and the Lake District Osprey Project, with the first breeding Ospreys in the Lakes for over 150 years generating over £2 million pa for the local economy.

Landscape and local Economy



Recreation and Community involvement



Conservation



Education



1.0 INTRODUCTION

North West England Forest District is responsible for the management of Forestry Commission woodlands (approx 17000 ha) in Cumbria (south of Carlisle), Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire. It works closely alongside the North West England Conservancy in delivery of the England Forestry Strategy in the North West. The Conservancy are responsible for policy and the direction of woodland development for public benefit, and for advising and supporting private landowners through various grant schemes and programmes.

This Plan replaces the Lakes Forest District Strategic Plan (2000 - 2005). There has been a need to update and revise the Strategic Plan before it expired for the following reasons:

- The addition of Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire to the Forest District to form the new North West England Forest District in June 2001. This resulted in the District taking on responsibility for delivery of the community forest Capital Modernisation Fund project in the north west and in taking on the new role of creating new community woodlands in urban areas.
- Regionalisation and the development of a Regional Forestry Framework (RFF) which expresses the EFS in a NW context. There are now closer links with the FC Conservancy, Government Office North West (GONW) and Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) as the Forest District boundary virtually matches the North West Region.
- Changing agenda and increasing importance of partnerships.
- Increasing focus by FC on delivery of public benefit and recognition of this key strength by other agencies in the North West such as the NWDA. That is delivering other peoples agendas in a cost effective way through woodlands.
- Change in role of timber production so that it is now a means to an end rather than an end in itself. At the same time well managed woodlands are crucially important as a foundation for delivering wider public benefits and this needs adequate resourcing.
- The development of a landscape scale approach to integrated land management with the FC being a partner in major pilot projects such as The Grizedale Project, Wild Ennerdale and Bassenthwaite Lake Restoration Project.
- The increasing importance of other sources of revenue with the decline in timber income. This is usually based on using the forest as a venue for recreational activity eg Concerts, car parking, catering concessions, rally car testing and alternative uses of land such as telecommunications masts.

NWEFD has the following prime assets which mean that it is in a uniquely strong position to deliver effectively:

- A diverse, skilled and committed group of staff, the largest public sector direct land management team in the North West.
- The forest estate which is the largest area of publicly owned land in the North West.
- Offices strategically located across the North West.

The diagram on page 8 shows how the Strategic Plan links to other FC plans.

There has been a consultation exercise both internally with staff in the Forest District and with stakeholders.

The Plan period (2005 - 2009) is the maximum before revision and it will be updated as required to reflect changes in higher level policies when they occur, for example the Regional Forestry Framework which is still in the early stages of development.



2.0 MISSION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Mission

To sustainably manage the North West England Forest District estate to maximise public benefit through social, environmental, and economic objectives.

Aims

- To contribute to the delivery of the Regional Forestry Framework and England Forestry Strategy.
- To help deliver other key government priorities and agendas in the North West through existing and new woodlands and associated habitats.
- To maintain the highest standards of woodland and land management with independent certification against the UK Woodland Assurance Standard and to apply the principles of sustainable development in all future developments and projects.
- To act as a catalyst to stimulate the regeneration of the local economy.

Objectives

Overall the aim is to achieve a balance between objectives, working in partnership where appropriate.

- Biodiversity – Managing and restoring important conservation sites together with enhancement of the general conservation value of estate.
- Recreation and access – High quality visitor experience, wide ranging opportunities for the public to enjoy healthy outdoor pursuits in an attractive, sustainable and safe environment.
- Education – High quality environmental education programme for all ages with training and life long learning opportunities.
- Regeneration of derelict land – Through creation of new community woodlands
- Local economy and jobs – Through tourism, timber and other forest operations and other uses of the land.
- Community – Involve local communities, businesses and farmers.
- Landscape – Design forests in ways which respond to the individual character of each woodland and its setting and seek opportunities to work with neighbours and other agencies at a landscape scale.
- Heritage – Safeguard and increase access to archeological and heritage interest and the historic environment.
- To fulfil the general duty under the 1985 Environment Act to have regard for the purposes of the National Park and through management of the forest estate contribute to the proposed World Heritage Site inscription.
- Promote FC woodlands and their management as an exemplar of best practice.



3.0 REPOSITIONING THE ESTATE TO MAXIMISE PUBLIC BENEFIT

There are a small number of woods or significant parts of woods in the District which have potential but this is not being fully realised for one or a number of reasons:

- There is little public use and non-native conifers predominate.
- Their impact on the landscape is negative and even with re-design within our existing ownership this negative impact is only marginally reduced.
- The ground is steep and/or rocky making timber harvesting difficult and expensive.
- They are remote from timber markets and access is difficult which combined with the costs of harvesting mean that timber values are low.
- Restocking costs are high due to the terrain and the requirement for walking excavator mounding.
- Restocking costs can exceed the timber revenue.
- They are often no-thin due to the risk of windthrow and/or the high net cost of thinning.

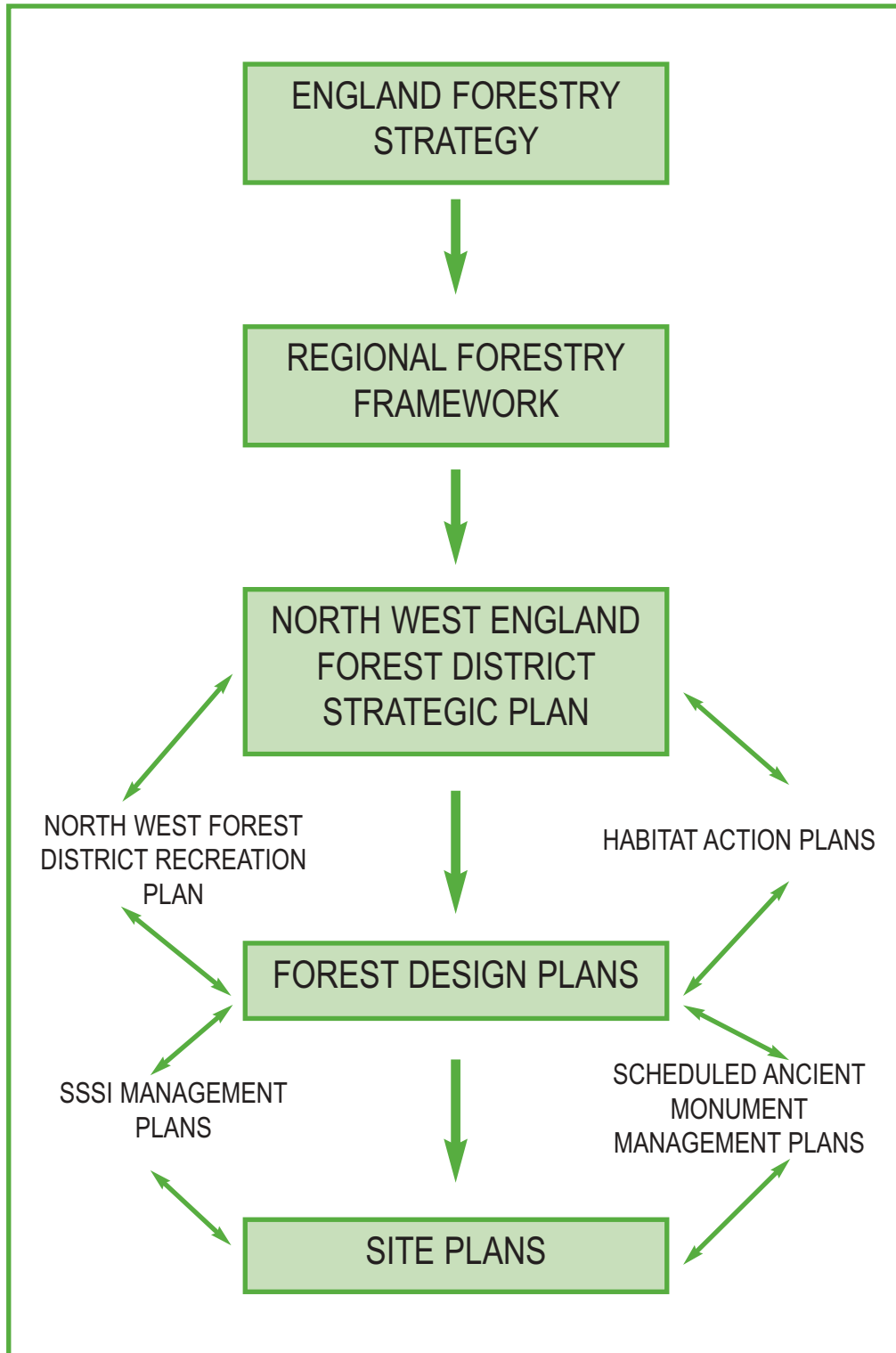
Overall these woods are managed at a net revenue cost to the FC and their contribution to the EFS is minimal. Therefore continuing a regime of clearfelling and restocking with conifers is highly questionable. It is recommended that one of (or a combination of) of the following options is selected for each of these areas:

- Conversion to mainly native woodland and/or open habitats.
- Acquisition of additional adjacent land or management of this land in partnership so that the costs of management are reduced and it makes a significant contribution to the EFS.
- Disposal and with the proceeds used to acquire or invest in other areas which meets EFS objectives in the North West.



4.0 THE FOREST PLANNING PROCESS

The diagram below details the planning process from the Governments strategy for forestry (EFS) down to detailed plans for an individual site in the forest (site plan). Plans at all levels are produced in the context of wider strategies and plans e.g. Regional Economic Strategy and Lake District National Park Management Plan. There is also considerable consultation at all levels with a wide range of stakeholders.



5.0 STAFF, RESOURCES, EXPERTISE AND FUNDING

The Forest District Office is located at Grizedale in the Lake District and there are outstations at Peil Wyke (near Keswick), Whinlatter Visitor Centre (near Keswick), Dunsop Bridge (Forest of Bowland, Lancashire) and Delamere (Cheshire).

The District is headed by a Forest District Manager and there are approximately 80 permanent staff (although this number is likely to increase through partnership projects). The team has a very broad range of skills and expertise:

- Forest and land management planning.
- Contract management
- Wildlife management
- Large scale capital projects eg. Visitor Centres development.
- Recreation facility development and management eg. Mountain bike trails.
- Timber harvesting and marketing
- Events management eg outdoor concerts, guided walks.
- Retail
- Practical forestry and estate skills eg fencing, footpath construction, tree planting.
- Administrative services.
- Land agency and property management.
- Forest management
- Nature conservation
- Fundraising
- Information technology including Geographic Information Systems.
- Education services

In particular we are considered to be a leader in:

- Long term management planning - the Forest Design Plan Process which has been developed by the FC has been copied throughout the world including North America.
- Deer management – FC wildlife rangers set the standard for professional deer management in the UK.
- Outdoor recreation provision – the largest provider in the UK and the recognised leader in the field.
- Sustainable large scale multi-objective land management – the FC was the first state forest service in the world to have all its woodlands independently certificated as sustainably managed (FSC) and in recognition received the prestigious World Wildlife Fund Gift the Earth Award.
- Woodland creation on derelict land
- Management of woodland and associated habitats for nature conservation – for example the habitat restoration work at Whitbarrow is widely recognised as the most significant conservation project in Cumbria for many years.

An income of approximately £3.5 million p.a., mainly from timber and tourism related activities, helps offset the costs of managing the existing estate of approximately £5.5 million giving a net cost to the taxpayer of £2 million which helps lever in considerable external funding (£1 million in 2003/2004). This equates to a net revenue cost of approximately £120 per hectare p.a. To deliver additional public benefit we seek, with partners, external funding for projects and development. We are benefiting from our track record of delivery and have received funding from for example the Northwest Development Agency, Rural Regeneration Cumbria, EU (LIFE and ERDF), Friends of the Lake District, M-Sport (Ford World Rally Team), Shell and English Nature.



6.0 DISTRICT CONTRIBUTION TO THE DELIVERY OF THE ENGLAND FORESTRY STRATEGY AND REGIONAL FORESTRY FRAMEWORK

6.1 RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The forest estate is able to contribute to rural development and the rural economy through its traditional operational activities mainly linked to the production of timber and of increasing importance tourism. FC are well placed to assist with the economic regeneration of rural areas.

Tourism

Tourism generates about £1.2 million of income pa for the District and this is increasing year on year. Most of this income is generated by the Forest Parks and includes forest shops, café and bike hire concessions, and pay and display car parks. The recreational use of the forest has created a significant number of jobs directly, for example at Grizedale over 20 people are employed by the bike hire, café, Go-Ape high ropes course, education service, shop and as rangers. Other significant sources of income include outdoor concerts and Christmas tree sales at Delamere and rally car testing and PR work and these activities also create jobs directly and indirectly. For example the Ford World Rally car team, who use the forest for testing and PR work, employ over 200 staff at their base near Cockermouth. The impact of the forest estate on the local economy is considerable. For example it is estimated that the Lake District Osprey Project generates over £2 million for the local economy each year through Bed and Breakfast etc. This Project alone employs 10 dedicated staff. Further studies are planned to gauge the impact of the Forest Parks and Visitor Centres on the local economy. It is almost certain that the recreational use of the forest generates more jobs and makes a bigger direct contribution to the local economy than traditional forest management activities and the production of timber. However, without a well managed forest there would not be the venue available for these recreational activities.

Timber and woodland management

Timber production is still an important source of income generating over £1 million a year from an annual production of around 90,000 m³. The fall in timber prices in the UK has had a major impact on the Districts income. In many cases now the income from timber does not cover the cost of replanting and there is no sign of this situation changing for the foreseeable future. A number of major timber processors are located in North West England such as BSW Sawmills at Carlisle and Iggesunds paperboard at Workington. The District supplies these mills but most of their supplies come from outwith the North West, mainly Kielder, the Borders and west Scotland. A strong partnership relationship has developed with Iggesund who use Grizedale Forest to sell the sustainable forestry message to their customers. Peter Irving, a medium sized family run sawmill, near Kendal, relies mainly on supplies of log material from the District either directly or through standing sales and is a key customer for the FC and other woodland owners as he takes non-spruce and lower grade logs for which there are no other markets. The District supplies a number of other customers who are based outside the North West, some smaller local mills, eg fencing, and timber merchants. Jobs associated with timber and woodland management include tree planting, fencing, walling, timber harvesting and haulage and wood processing and wherever possible local contractors are chosen to help support the local economy. Increasing mechanisation has reduced the number of jobs in this sector but as highlighted below there is a need for smaller scale contractors with lower tech equipment in the Lake District.



| CURRENT POSITION | FUTURE PRIORITIES |
|---|--|
| Provide certified timber to our customers by meeting the requirements of the UK Woodland Assurance Standard. | Maintain UK Woodland Assurance Standard certification and work with customers to promote. |
| Market timber according to production forecast and work in partnership with our customers. | Support local customers through longer term contracts and broaden customer base working with other landowners. |
| Lack of contractors or direct labour to harvest on steep slopes or on a small scale in Cumbria with implications for thinning and continuous cover management. | Expand contractor (and/or direct labour) base with skills and equipment to work on steep slopes so that FC and other woodland can be well managed to generate public benefit. |
| Major tourist and visitor provider, particularly through Grizedale, Whinlatter and Delamere generating substantial income for the local economy and employment. | Improve quality of provision and visitor experience through re-development and upgrading of Visitor Centres and Forest Park facilities thereby increasing turnover at Centres, contribution to local economy and employment opportunities. Assess contribution of Grizedale, Whinlatter and Delamere to local economy through studies. The Grizedale Project will serve as a national pilot for exploring how the public forest estate can be used to catalyse an intergrated approach with other land uses and other land owners. Develop visitor travel plans for Grizedale and Whinlatter |
| Core housing stock retained in the Lake District providing affordable accommodation so as to attract and retain good quality rangers and forest craftsmen in an expensive part of the country. Some surplus housing usually with sitting tenants. | Retain existing FC housing stock. |



6.2 ECONOMIC REGENERATION

There is a large legacy of derelict, under-utilised and neglected (DUN) land in the North West (25% of England's derelict land - 26 000ha) with concentrations in the Mersey Belt, East Lancashire and West Cumbria. There is a broad consensus that restoration of these areas to community woodland is a beneficial and cost effective option improving the image and environment of the North West and thereby encouraging economic re-investment. Through the Treasury's Capital Modernisation Fund (CMF) the Forest District has developed nearly 1000 ha of new community woodland on both greenfield and DUN land in the Mersey Belt. This was supported and augmented by NWDA funding.

Following the success of the CMF project the District has been invited to become the main partner responsible for delivery and long term management of major NWDA funded schemes for the restoration and management of DUN land:

1. Derwent Forest (formerly Broughton Moor)

An ex MOD site in West Cumbria extending to 434 ha which has been identified as being of strategic national importance.

2. Newlands

This is an NWDA funded programme for the restoration of DUN land to community woodland across the North West. The Forestry Commission have been employed as managing agent and are responsible for quality control. Newlands 1, a £23 million programme over 5 years from April 2003, for the development of 434 ha of new community woodland in the Mersey Belt has been approved. A sub-regional partnership of the Red Rose and Mersey Forests, Groundwork Trusts and the District has been established to deliver the programme. Newlands 2 will cover the rest of the region with further sub-regional partnerships being established.

3. Other potential schemes funded by for example through local authorities or the Northwest Development Agency which may be brownfield or greenfield.

The FC will take a positive and pro-active view to involvement as a site developer and long term manager subject to the following principles:

- The FC will only take on the development and long term management if it is fully funded.
- There will be a strong preference to be involved in new sites where they fit in with the existing clusters of land which it manages and are accessible to local management teams bringing efficiencies in terms of scale and management. The exception will be South Lancashire (Blackburn, Burnley etc) where the concentration of Newlands 2 sites should provide the critical mass required. This will help promote the development of Regional Park resources.
- The FC will target larger sites (10 ha plus) unless a site fits closely with an existing holding for reasons of scale.
- Woodland management and/or creation forms a significant component of the site.

Restoration is undertaken following best practice principles reducing, as far as reasonably practical, long term environmental and revenue liabilities.



| CURRENT POSITION | FUTURE PRIORITIES |
|--|--|
| <p>1000ha (19 sites) has been developed as new community woodlands in the Mersey Belt through the Treasury Capital Modernisation Fund with additional support from the Northwest Development Agency.</p> | <p>Manage and further develop these new woodlands for the benefit of the local community and encourage investment and enhance their conservation value. Encourage appropriate use of these woodlands. Seek additional funds and work in partnership with others to help achieve the above.</p> |
| <p>Partnership with Allerdale BC, Cumbria County Council, Capita DBS and West Lakes Renaissance for restoration and development of Broughton Moor to community woodland.</p> | <p>Maintain role as main developer of green space and long term manager under lease arrangement or freehold purchase from Allerdale. Contribute fully to the partnership.</p> |
| <p>Main delivery partner and long term manager for Newlands across the North West.</p> | <p>Develop working partnership with Community Forests, Groundwork Trusts and others to deliver Newlands on the ground. Obtain adequate additional staff resource and skills to deliver, augmenting existing teams rather than developing new teams.</p> |



6.3 RECREATION, ACCESS AND TOURISM

The Forestry Commission is the biggest provider of outdoor recreation in the UK. Forest recreation provision has as its central feature the principle of open access on foot to FC woodlands and other land. The only limitations are on agricultural holdings, some leasehold land and a number of sites with sensitive conservation interest.

Whinlatter, Grizedale and Delamere Forest Parks act as the "honeypots" providing comprehensive recreational facilities and each attracts over 200K visitors each year (with Delamere probably over 500 K) . Both Whinlatter and Grizedale are within the Lake District National Park which attracts about 14 million visitors each year. Delamere is within easy travelling distance of the major cities of Liverpool and Manchester. Six million people live within 25 miles of Delamere. Future recreational development will be focussed on the Forest Parks with the exception of new footpaths etc in the new community woodlands. Gisburn Forest also has a formal network of walks and cycle routes providing an important resource for outdoor recreation in central Lancashire. Elsewhere the provision is more informal and low key aimed primarily at local people. Involvement by local people is actively encouraged and is an area which we wish to see develop further in future.

North West England Forest District has a long standing policy of applying for planning permission for any new developments even though it is crown exempt. Also interested stakeholders are invited to comment on and contribute from an early stage on development proposals.

The estate is becoming an increasingly important venue for a very wide range of specialist recreational events and activities which are encouraged as long as they remain in balance with other interests and users. These include orienteering, car rallies, outdoor concerts and even husky dog racing. They can provide significant additional income for the District to re-invest. The District works closely with neighbours and other authorities e.g LDNPA, in the management of large events e.g. orienteering and car rallies. The network of public rights of way (PROW) is maintained and protected during forest operations. The District is a member of the Lake District Trail Management Advisory Group which attempts to manage the use of green lanes by recreational vehicle and motorbike users in the National Park on a voluntary basis. This is a particular issue at Grizedale where there is conflict with others users of the forest.

Grizedale Arts is a charity which runs a contemporary arts programme based at Grizedale. It has inherited the internationally famous sculpture programme and the theatre (now closed) from the Grizedale Society. A fundamental organisational review is currently being undertaken by consultants on behalf of the Arts Council and the FC are reviewing their relationship with GA.

The District runs an environmental education programme based at each of the Forest Centres for a total of around 15,000 children each year.

The District works closely with local communities and other organisations to promote use of the forest and links with other access provision. For example the Upper Hodder Partnership in the Forest of Bowland.

An events programme for the public is run across the District with various guided walks and workshops (around 100 pa). Staff give talks on request to local groups such as RSPB members groups and WI's about the work of the Forestry Commission and wildlife. A press agency is used to issue press releases to promote events, inform the public about what we do and encourage use of the forest.



| CURRENT POSITION | FUTURE PRIORITIES |
|--|--|
| Existing Visitor Centres and recreational infrastructure at Whinlatter, Grizedale and Delamere Forest Parks. Whinlatter recently re-developed. | Improve external landscape, parking etc at Whinlatter, re-develop Grizedale VC and construct new Centre at Delamere. Develop visitor travel plans for Whinlatter and Grizedale. Develop sustainable and safe single track mountain bike routes at Grizedale and Whinlatter to fill a gap in the Lake District provision and take pressure off more sensitive areas of the National Park. |
| Existing recreation infrastructure, walks etc, outside the Forest Parks providing mainly for local users. | Maintain existing facilities to a high standard and keep under review their need. |
| Information provision and advice to public, particularly through Visitor Centres at Whinlatter, Grizedale and Delamere. | Continue to improve knowledge and awareness of the District and its activities by all staff and concessions so that they can assist and answer queries by the public. |
| Revenue from pay and display car parks, concessions etc helps recover proportion of costs of providing and managing facilities. | Continually review charges and increase revenue to allow improvement of sites for the benefit of visitors without reducing opportunities for local people. |
| Programme of events and guided walks. | Continue and review annually. |
| Education service at Delamere, Grizedale and Whinlatter providing for about 15,000 children each year. | Maintain and also develop opportunities for life long learning and special needs. |
| Unrestricted public access over freehold land and restricted access over leasehold land. | Acquisition of freehold to provide new public access at Dalton Craggs and Knots Wood. Implementation of Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act subject to funding. |
| Marketing of recreation provision through website, tourist information centres and media coverage | Continue and keep developing website. |
| Some good examples of temporary on-site interpretation of woodland management and other activities. | Consistent use of appropriate on site interpretation. |
| Most freehold sites are marked with threshold signs which signifies free access on foot | Install threshold signs at all freehold sites and on leasehold land with "Sporting rights reserved – no public access" or "Conservation area – No public Access". |
| Provision for wide ranging outdoor pursuits in an attractive and safe environment which promotes good health. | Promote opportunities which are available particularly at Grizedale, Whinlatter, Delamere and Gisburn. |



| CURRENT POSITION | FUTURE PRIORITIES |
|---|--|
| <p>Use of forest as a venue for specialist events .</p> | <p>Encourage use of forests for events under permit system, charging market rates, while minimising disruption to general visitors, local communities and wildlife. Develop and promote Delamere as a venue for large events such as concerts.</p> |
| <p>Major Christmas trees sales centre at Delamere generating considerable revenue, bringing a large audience to the forest and raising the profile of the FC. Smaller sale operations at Whinlatter and Grizedale which bring visitors to the Centres and forest.</p> | <p>Improve net position at Delamere so as to be able to invest back in the forest. Maintain Whinlatter and Grizedale operations as they are.</p> |
| <p>Grizedale Arts have passed on responsibility for the forest sculptures to the FC and will continue to develop their contemporary and experimental arts programme.</p> | <p>Re-invigorate the sculpture programme at Grizedale.</p> |
| <p>Lake District Osprey Project comprising Dodd viewpoint and Whinlatter video link providing a huge level of public interest with over 100,000 visitors pa, considerable media attention, and thousands on hits on the project website. The ospreys have helped promote Cumbria and the north west as a destination for sustainable tourism.</p> | <p>Continue to develop LDOP with the LDNPA and RSPB without compromising the conservation interest. Broaden interpretation provision so that there is year round interest, eg Red squirrel cameras in partnership with Red Alert.</p> |



6.4 ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

Nature Conservation

Key Sites

North West England Forest District has a particularly diverse conservation interest ranging from lowland meres and mosses in Cheshire through to montane heath in the Lakeland fells. The importance of many of these areas is recognised through their designation as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs) In addition significant areas of these habitats are also recognised as being of international importance through the European candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) designation.

There are a total of 24 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the District (about ? % of the total District area) all covered by management plans agreed with English Nature.

In addition to the designated sites there are also considerable areas of priority habitats that fall under the UK BAP such as Upland Oakwoods, Limestone Pavement, Upland Mixed Ashwoods, Upland Heath and Lowland Meres.

Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) have been agreed with English Nature for the management of Upland Oak woods and the combined limestone habitats which include the majority of the FD's Upland Mixed Ashwoods.

At a habitat level successes to date include the restoration of the woodlands found within the Morecambe bay limestone pavements where Limestone pavement and its associated habitats are being returned to their semi natural state through the removal of non indigenous species and the reintroduction of traditional management such as coppicing and grazing.

The removal of exotic species and protection of areas from browsing have been important aspects in the improvement of Upland Oakwood habitat in south and west Cumbria. In addition to this restoration new Upland Oakwood has been created in the Duddon valley. It is anticipated that the areas of both Upland Oakwood and Upland Mixed Ashwood will increase as the implementation of the Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) report progresses.

The FD is actively involved with Species Action Plans with a number of species of national importance occurring in the District:

1. Important populations of scarce butterflies at northern edge of their range including High Brown, Pearl Bordered and Small Pearl Bordered fritillary.
2. The Meres and Mosses of Delamere support a number of nationally important plant and animal species.
3. Dormice which are at the northern limit of their range are found with in the FD estate with scope for further discoveries.
4. Schedule one raptors and owls nest regularly including Osprey, Peregrine, Goshawk and barn Owl.
5. Good populations of Red squirrel, although Grey squirrels are spreading rapidly through the District.
6. Great crested Newts are present on a number of sites throughout the FD.



The District is a partner in the Lake District Osprey Project along with the Lake District National Park and RSPB. A pair of ospreys is now breeding regularly (2001, 2002, 2003 -) in the FC Wythop Woods using an artificial nesting platform overlooking Bassenthwaite Lake. This is the first pair to nest in the Lake District for at least 150 years and has generated huge public and media interest. There is a Project website www.ospreywatch.co.uk. Further nesting platforms have been constructed across Cumbria by the Project with the aim of encouraging the expansion of breeding ospreys.

The whole estate is managed to improve its conservation value through, for example, additional open space and native broadleaves, restructuring and watercourse management.

Landscape

Landscape is particularly important in North West England Forest District as much of the estate is situated in prominent areas of the Lake District National Park and two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Lake District is also a candidate World Heritage Site in recognition of its cultural landscape. An estimated 14 million visitors come to the Lake District each year with the outstanding scenery of lakes and fells being the main attraction. Early FC plantings were often unsympathetic to the landscape. These are continually improved by the implementation of Forest Design Plans (FDP's). Many FC woodlands make a significant contribution to the quality of the landscape. Most FDP's in the District are now at the review stage so there will be opportunities to re-assess landscape changes following felling and continue to make further landscape improvements and to explore with neighbours ways to manage the wider landscape across ownership boundaries.

Wildlife Management

Roe deer are present throughout the District. There is a population of Sika Deer at Gisburn and Red Deer at Grizedale and the Furness area. This is thought to be the only woodland native herd of Red Deer in England. Deer are managed by a team of five wildlife rangers and fencing is used at Grizedale to protect non Sitka spruce crops. The general policy is to minimise the amount of internal deer fencing and manage the deer population so that it is in balance with the habitat.

Deer management Groups are actively supported with several members of staff acting as office bearers.

Grey squirrels, in addition to their negative impact on Red squirrels, cause considerable damage to beech and pine in north Lancashire. Control measures have proven ineffective and very costly and species choice will be reviewed when Forest Design Plans are reviewed in this context.

Archaeology

FC woodlands in the Lakes contain many important archeological sites from the prehistoric period to the recent past. Fourteen sites have been designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) most of which have management plans agreed with English Heritage. The broadleaved woodland in the Lake District is particularly important for the survival of the remains of woodland and related industries. These include medieval bloomery (iron smelting) sites, charcoal pitsheads, potash kilns, woodsmen huts, trackways and boundary features. The concentration and survival of these woodland industrial remains in the Lake District is of national significance and it is likely that further SAMs will be designated.

An ongoing programme of archaeological survey arranged in conjunction with the LDNPA began in 1994 and woodlands at Ennerdale and Whitbarrow have so far been examined. Priorities for mapping are agreed with the LDNPA archaeologist.



| CURRENT POSITION | FUTURE PRIORITIES |
|--|--|
| Habitat Action Plans agreed with English Nature for Limestone Pavements and Upland Oakwoods. | Implement Plans and review before expiry. |
| All SSSI's have management plans agreed with English Nature. | Implement SSSI's management plan as agreed by English Nature so all 24 SSSI's are in favourable condition by 2010, subject to the availability of adequate funding. |
| Complete coverage of approved Forest Design Plans. | At FDP review explore opportunities to work at a landscape scale with neighbours, bring additional areas into continuous cover management, expand native woodland and resolve outstanding landscape issues. |
| Plantations on ancient woodland sites identified through survey. | Incorporate survey results in Forest Design Plan revisions with presumption in favour of conversion back to native woodland. Implementation where there is a net cost will be dependant on additional funding. |
| Surveys underway for Meres, Mosses and Lowland Heath at Delamere. | incorporate survey findings into the Forest Design Plan and implement restoration using external funding. |
| All SAM have plans agreed with English Heritage. | All SAM have plans agreed with English Heritage. |
| Programme of Archaeological surveys working in partnership with LDNPA archaeologist. | Continue programme and agree priorities with LDNPA archaeologist subject to budget availability. Work together with the LDNPA to protect and where appropriate, make available for visitors the rich archeological heritage of the forest estate in the Lake District. |
| Whinlatter identified as potential Red Squirrel refuges with Red Alert. | If it is decided that Whinlatter is to become a refuge manage according to a management plan agreed with Red Alert and taking account of other objectives. Implementation will be dependant on the availability of external funding. |
| Act as a delivery partner in the Cumbria BAP partnership for Species Action Plans. | Continue to monitor butterfly populations through transects. In areas with important butterfly populations, eg Morecambe Bay, manage woodlands to improve habitat, eg ride management. |
| One pair of Ospreys nesting in the Lake District at Wythop Woods. | Encourage the expansion of Ospreys in Cumbria through the erection of more artificial nesting platforms working with the other partners in the Lake District Osprey Project. |
| Incomplete knowledge of the location of schedule 1 breeding raptors in the District. Several staff are species co-ordinators for the Cumbria Raptor Study Group. | Start an annual programme of raptor surveys and develop a confidential database of nest sites with regular updating. Dormice present at Rainsbarrow Wood. A member of the North West Dormouse Group. Start a programme of using hair tubes in suitable habitat to assess if there are dormice populations in other FC woods in south Cumbria. Manage woods accordingly to improve habitat if Dormice are found to be present in balance with other objectives. |
| There is a significant area of tenanted farmland and fell in the District (approx 4 000ha). | Work with tenants and the Rural Development Service to improve the conservation value of these areas. |



7.0 DELIVERY AGAINST OTHER REGIONAL AND GOVERNMENT AGENDAS

Northwest Development Agency (NWDA)

Through the Newlands programme, Derwent Forest and other direct opportunities the District will be contributing to *improving the image and environment* of the Northwest, a key theme for the NWDA. Through the Lake District Osprey Project and the development of the three Forest Parks and Visitor Centres the District will be supporting the *tourism* target sector and the *diversification of the rural economy*.

English Nature

EN have been set a target by government as part of the Public Service Agreement of bringing all SSSI's into favourable condition by 2010. FC will commit to achieving this target for its SSSI landholding, some 24 SSSI's in the North West subject to the availability of adequate funding.

Environment Agency

FC land forms a significant part of the catchments for Ennerdale Water, Bassenthwaite Lake and Stocks Reservoir. We will work in partnership with EA and UU to protect water quality. The District is a partner in the Bassenthwaite Catchment Restoration Project led by EA. The District will work with EA when developing new community woodlands on brownfield land. In all activities the District is committed to adhering to the "Forests and water guidelines".

Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

There are considerable opportunities to work closely with Defra, particularly the Rural Development Service, to help diversify the rural economy and manage at a landscape scale. There are tenanted farms at Grizedale, Miterdale and Gisburn and grazing tenancies at Ennerdale (SSSI and cSAC), Whinlatter and Whitbarrow. The Grizedale farmers and the Whitbarrow tenant have Lake District ESA agreements. The District fully supports the improvement of the conservation value of the tenanted farms and will work closely with tenants and improve the integration with the forest.

Lake District National Park

The District is committed to helping implement the Lake District National Park Management Plan and supporting the NPA in seeking World Heritage Site status. At all levels there is close working between NPA and FD staff including rights of way, recreation provision, forest design planning and through the Lake District Osprey Project.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB'S)

The District is committed to supporting the Forest of Bowland and Arnside and Silverdale AONB'S and will follow the general duty under section 85 of the 1985 Environment Act.

Red Rose and Mersey Forests

Through the creation of new community woodlands the District is contributing to the delivery of the Red Rose and Mersey Forest Plans

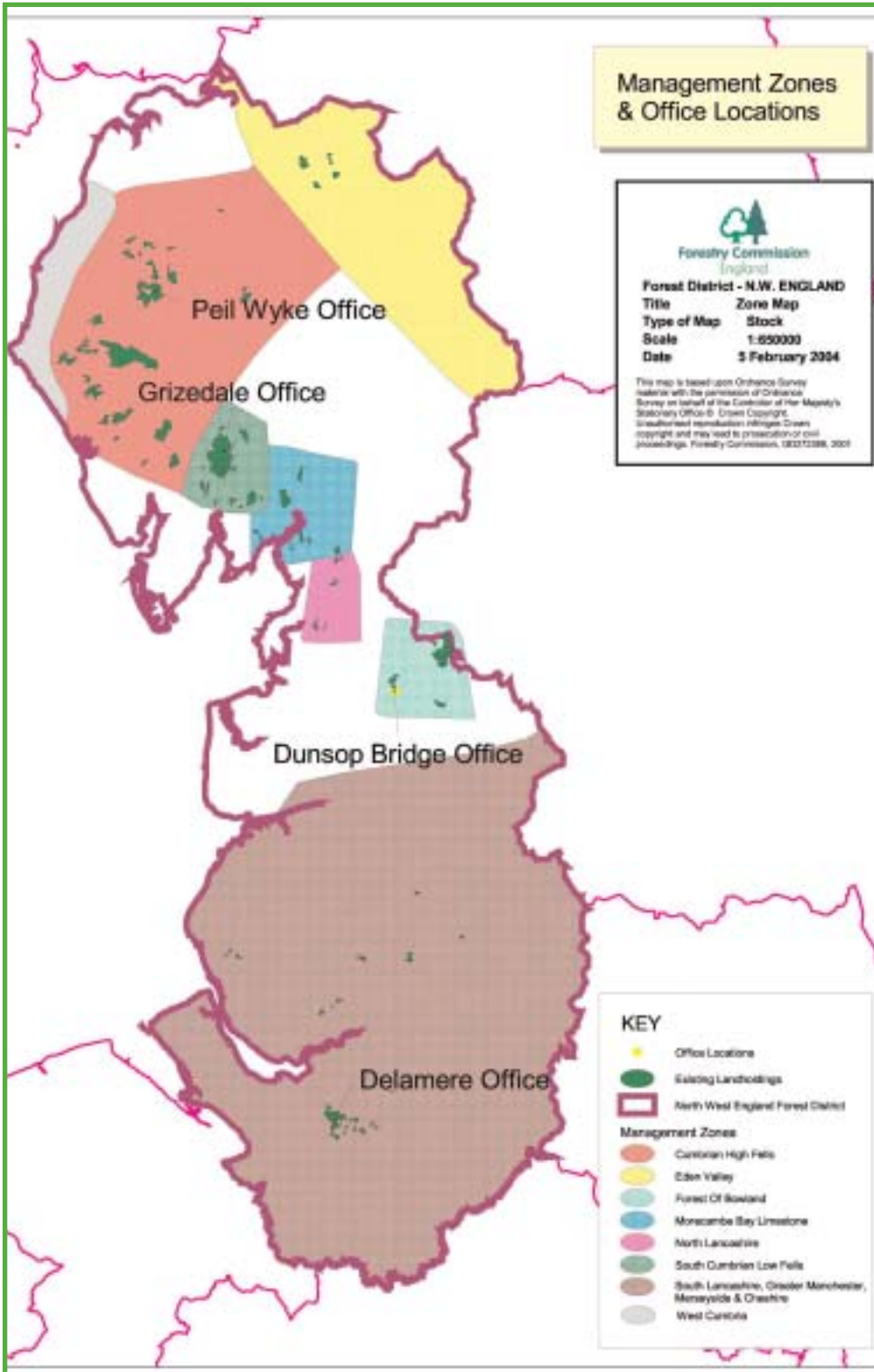
Health

The opportunities provided by the forest estate for exercise and relaxation in a safe and healthy environment are considerable. This is an area which needs further exploration.



8.0 KEY POLICIES FOR MANAGEMENT ZONES

North West England Forest District has been divided into management zones based largely on physical environment and landscape setting (see map below). The key policies for each management zone are outlined below under the EFS programmes.



8.1 EDEN VALLEY

The Eden Valley is a tributary of the Solway Firth to the west of Carlisle/Penrith. It is characterised by a fairly dry climate with an annual rainfall of 600mm, dry sandy soils and gently undulating terrain with steep banks along the sides of the River Eden. Woodlands (private) are generally small and fit in a landscape of mixed farmland which is characterised by small broadleaved copses and mature hedgerow trees, creating an intimate and varied landscape. Scots pine is the main productive conifer and most woods lack species and structural diversity.

Forestry for rural development

Concentrate on growing high yielding Scots pine as the main species. Presumption to thin all areas.

Forestry for economic regeneration

Not a priority in this zone.

Forestry for recreation, access and tourism

Maintain as quiet, appropriate and low key recreation area for locals.

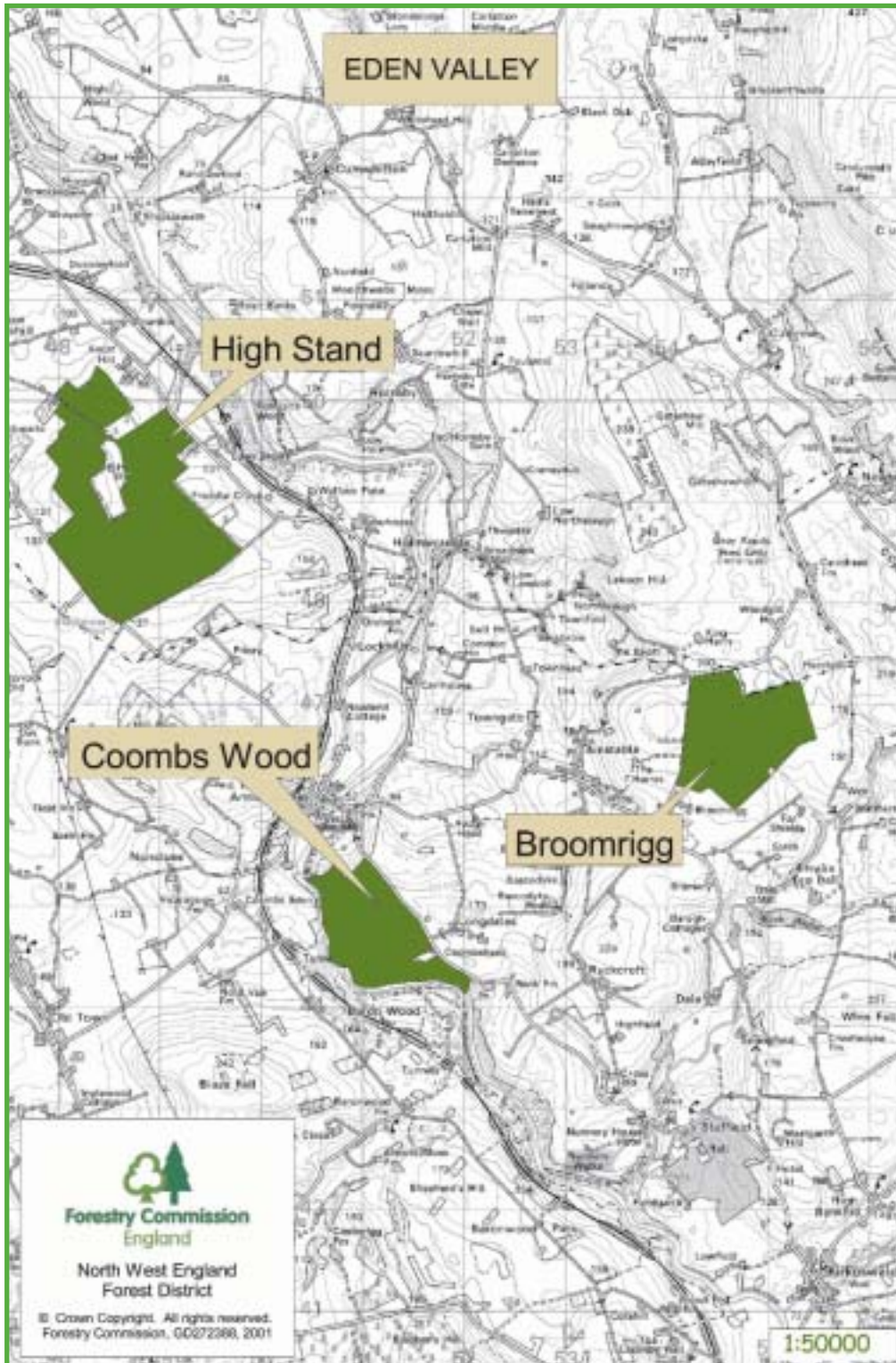
Forestry for environment and conservation

Create permanent network of open space and broadleaves especially oakwoods which are a feature of the Eden Valley.

Through the FDP restructure even aged woods by phased felling and improve forest boundaries so that they fit better to the landscape.



8.1.1 Eden Valley Map



8.2 CUMBRIA HIGH FELLS

These woods are all situated in the northern and western fells of the Lake District including the foothills on the Solway and West Cumbrian plains. Most fall within the Lake District National Park which is internationally renowned for its outstanding landscape of fells and lakes. The Lake District attracts over 14 million visitors each year. The zone includes Whinlatter Forest Park which has comprehensive visitor facilities and attracts over 200K visitors pa. There are significant areas of ancient semi natural upland oakwood which are of European importance and will be managed with conservation as the primary objective. This zone includes areas of predominantly coniferous woodland which will be gradually converted to native woodland where they meet the criteria set out under the Environment and Conservation section. Ennerdale falls within the zone and is the subject of a pioneering project "Wild Ennerdale" where the guiding principle will be to follow natural processes across the whole valley working in partnership with the National Trust and United Utilities. Silviculture and harvesting is technically challenging in the higher fells due to the very rough and steep terrain. Very sensitive forest design and considerable consultation with major stakeholders is essential.

Forestry for rural development

The Lake District Osprey project will support the rural economy.

Main conifer species will be Sitka spruce, Larch, Douglas fir and Scots pine which grow fast and yield high quality timber when planted on appropriate sites. Do not replant with Western Hemlock, Western Red Cedar or Grand fir as there is poor demand from saw millers, and replace with other species. At FDP revision felling will target the early removal of Western Hemlock where this does not significantly compromise other objectives to minimise problem of vigorous natural regeneration. The only exception to the above will be the retention of feature trees around the main visitor facilities.

Presumption to thin all areas of WHC 3 and below (and more sheltered WHC 4). If necessary thin steep areas at zero surplus for both aesthetic and timber quality benefits.

Forestry for economic regeneration

Not applicable in this zone.

Forestry for recreation, access and tourism

Main focus of formal recreation provision and future development will be at Whinlatter Forest Park which is now managed as a single entity with Dodd Wood.

Apply continuous cover management systems to stands of Douglas fir on lower elevation sites, particularly near recreational facilities. Preference to regenerate naturally with planting as last resort. Retain some big conifers indefinitely at Whinlatter.

Thin to improve visual amenity around main recreational facilities and at net cost if required.

In timber marketing and operations management aim to minimise disruption to recreational facilities, particularly forest walks at Whinlatter/Dodd. Market timber from Whinlatter as a long term contract to achieve greater control.



Forestry for conservation and environment

At FDP review consider further boundary improvements to forests in zone including landswap deals to improve most visually intrusive edges where appropriate.

Consider re-aligning top boundary fences at FDP review to improve visual appearance of top margins e.g. Ennerdale, Dodd.

Manage and extend Upland Oakwoods according to HAP. In these areas nature conservation will be the prime objective.

At Matterdale and Blengdale create permanent network of open space/broadleaves at restocking so that average coupe size can be reduced in next rotation.

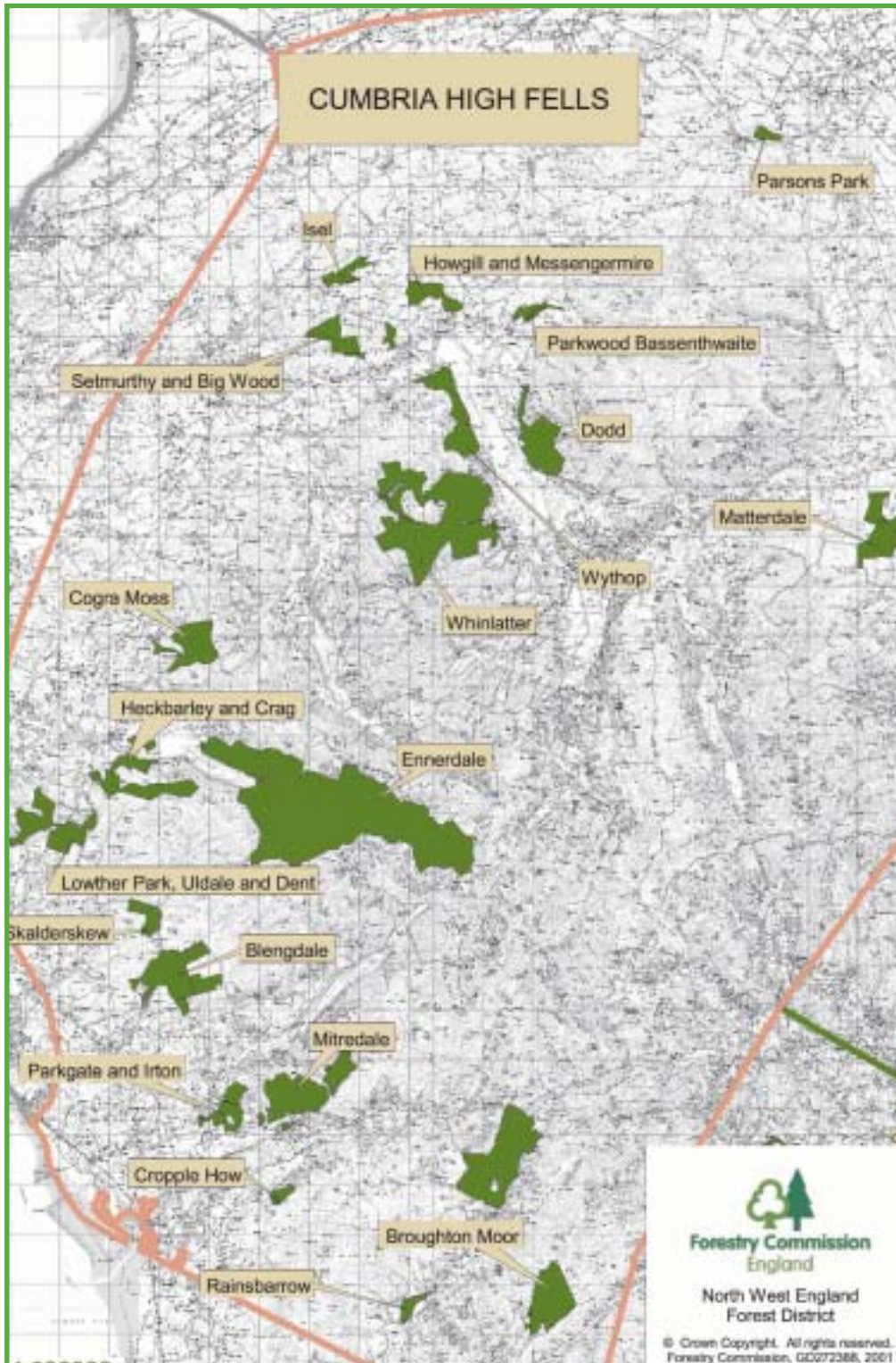
Work in partnership with tenant farmers to improve conservation and landscape value of farmland and open fell. In general, reduce grazing pressure from sheep to improve heathland condition.

Through a partnership with the National Trust and United Utilities develop a long term vision for the whole Ennerdale Valley based on the principle of utilising natural processes and reflect this in the FDP, activities and operations on the FC landholding. This is a very long term, pilot scheme which has the working title "Wild Ennerdale". There will be considerable consultation with stakeholders.

Particularly high archeological interest at Ennerdale to be protected.



8.2.1 Cumbria High Fells Map



8.3 WEST CUMBRIA

This is a predominantly industrial area on the coastal plain which has a long history of mining and other industries which have left significant areas of derelict land. The District are a key partner in the potential development of Broughton Moor (Derwent Forest), and former MOD armaments dump along with Allerdale DC, NWDA, CCC etc. This 435 ha site has considerable potential as both a Forest Park and for stimulating economic development. The District are well placed to become the developer of the "green space" and long term manager of Broughton Moor and other derelict sites in West Cumbria, for example through Newlands 2 working with Cumbria County Council.

Broughton Moor and other sites will have the potential to make a significant to **Recreation, Access and Tourism, Environment and Conservation** and in particular **Economic Regeneration**.



8.4 SOUTH CUMBRIA LOW FELLS

An area of low fells in the southern part of the Lake District quite distinct in character to the more rugged and dramatic central fells. Terrain tends to be broken with a range of soil types. Silvicultural options relate to exposure and soil with often a wide range within the same forest. The zone includes Grizedale which is one of the top tourist destinations in the Lake District with over 200K visitors p.a. There are 11 other blocks ranging in size from small woods of 20 hectares to Claife which is over 300 hectares.

Forestry for rural development

The Grizedale Project will support the diversification of the rural economy in the Furness Fells area.

Main conifer species will be Sitka spruce, Douglas fir and Larch which all grow well and produce quality timber on the appropriate sites. Also plant small areas of Scots pine on knolls for additional diversity. Western Hemlock, Western Red Cedar and Grand Fir will not be replanted as their timber is not in demand by saw millers. At design plan revision felling will target the early removal of Western Hemlock.

Fence non-Sitka spruce restocks in the Red deer range to avoid excessive damage. Continually review this requirement.

Presumption to thin all areas of WHC 3 and below (and more sheltered WHC 4).

Forestry for economic regeneration

Not a priority in this zone.

Forestry for recreation, access and tourism

Main focus for formal provision and future development will be at Grizedale Forest Park.

Manage some Douglas fir stands as continuous cover on appropriate sites and retain indefinitely some big conifers in sheltered locations and high amenity areas.

Around main recreational facilities thin to improve visual amenity and at a net cost if required.

Review relationship with Grizedale Arts.

Minimise disruption to recreation from forest operations, particularly at Grizedale, and use on site interpretation. Maintain direct production harvesting to the highest environmental and safety standards.

Forestry for environment and conservation

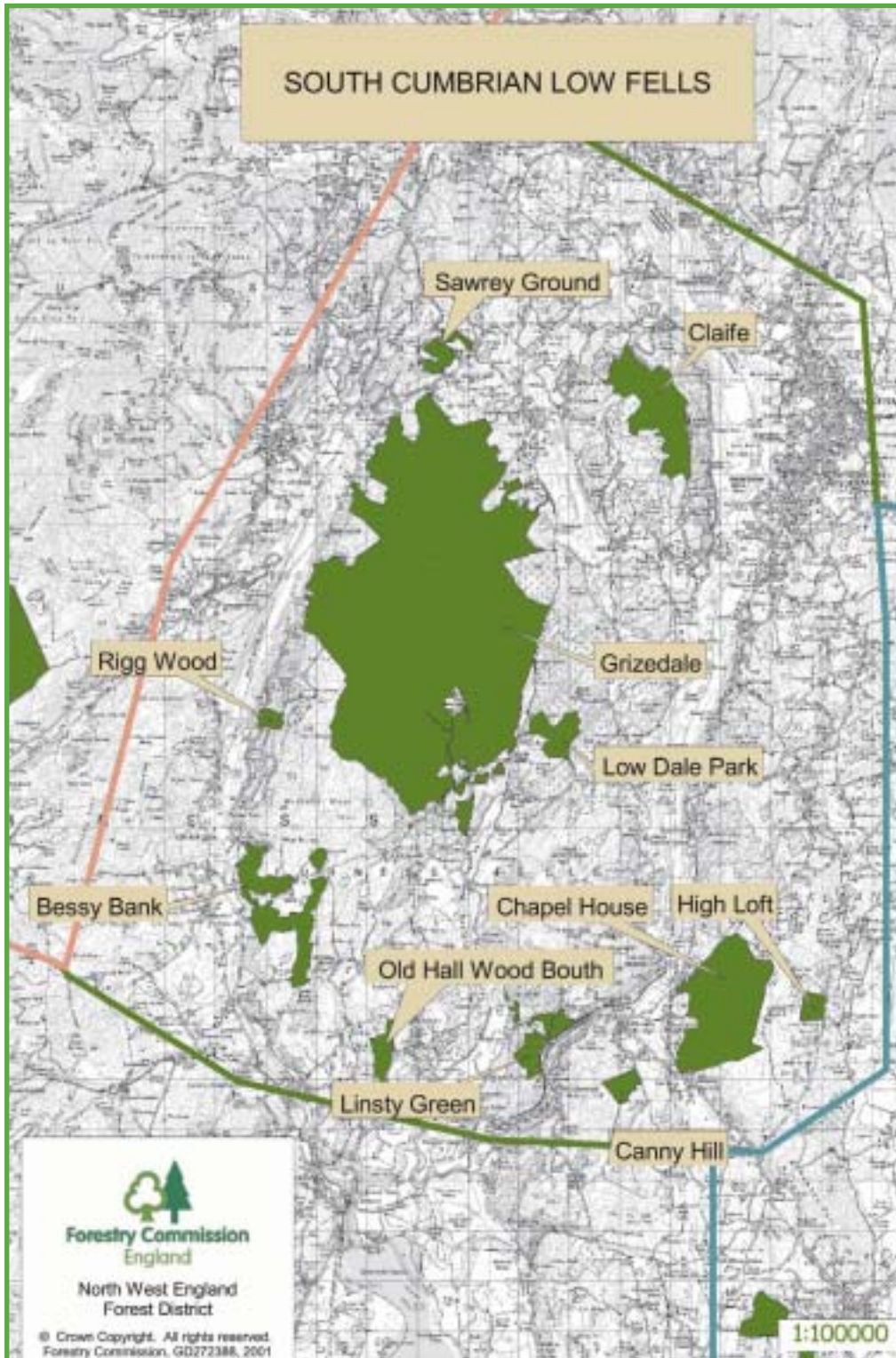
Manage and extend Upland Oakwoods (and component Upland Ashwoods) according to HAP. Nature conservation will be the prime objective in these areas. Designate some non-intervention areas where access is poor and to give a broad representation of woodland stand types. Instigate coppicing where appropriate.

Expand network of permanent open space and native broadleaves at restocking.

Work in partnership with tenant farmers at Grizedale to improve farm conservation and landscape value.



8.4.1 South Cumbria Low Fells Map



8.5 MORECAMBE BAY LIMESTONE

This is an area of outstanding conservation interest which is recognised by the designation of many of the woods as cSAC. Conservation is therefore the prime objective of management and there are HAPs which cover in detail their conservation interest and future management. The woods are internationally important for limestone pavement, yew, juniper, their ground flora and a rare microscopic snail. Internationally important Upland Ashwoods are a component of these woodlands. Some of the woods lie within the Arnside and Silverdale AONB. Whitbarrow and Barrowfield fall within the Lake District National Park.

Forestry for rural development

Well suited to year round harvesting – good winter working area.

Small scale operations and commitment to coppicing some woods for conservation benefit provide potential for development of specialised local contractors.

Forestry for economic regeneration

Not a priority in this zone.

Forestry for recreation, access and tourism

Maintain quiet, appropriate low key access on foot and lead occasional visits by interested groups. Do not provide additional recreational facilities so as to avoid compromising conservation interest.

Provide simple on-site interpretation of management operations.

Forestry for environment and conservation

Manage according to the HAPs agreed with English Nature with conservation (nature, landscape and geological) as the prime objective.

Avoid forest operations which may cause damage to limestone pavements and features.

Remove all exotic conifers over the next 10 years and all exotic broadleaves over the next 20 years and restore the natural vegetation types. The only exception will be a few open grown larch and Scots pine which are an important landscape feature.

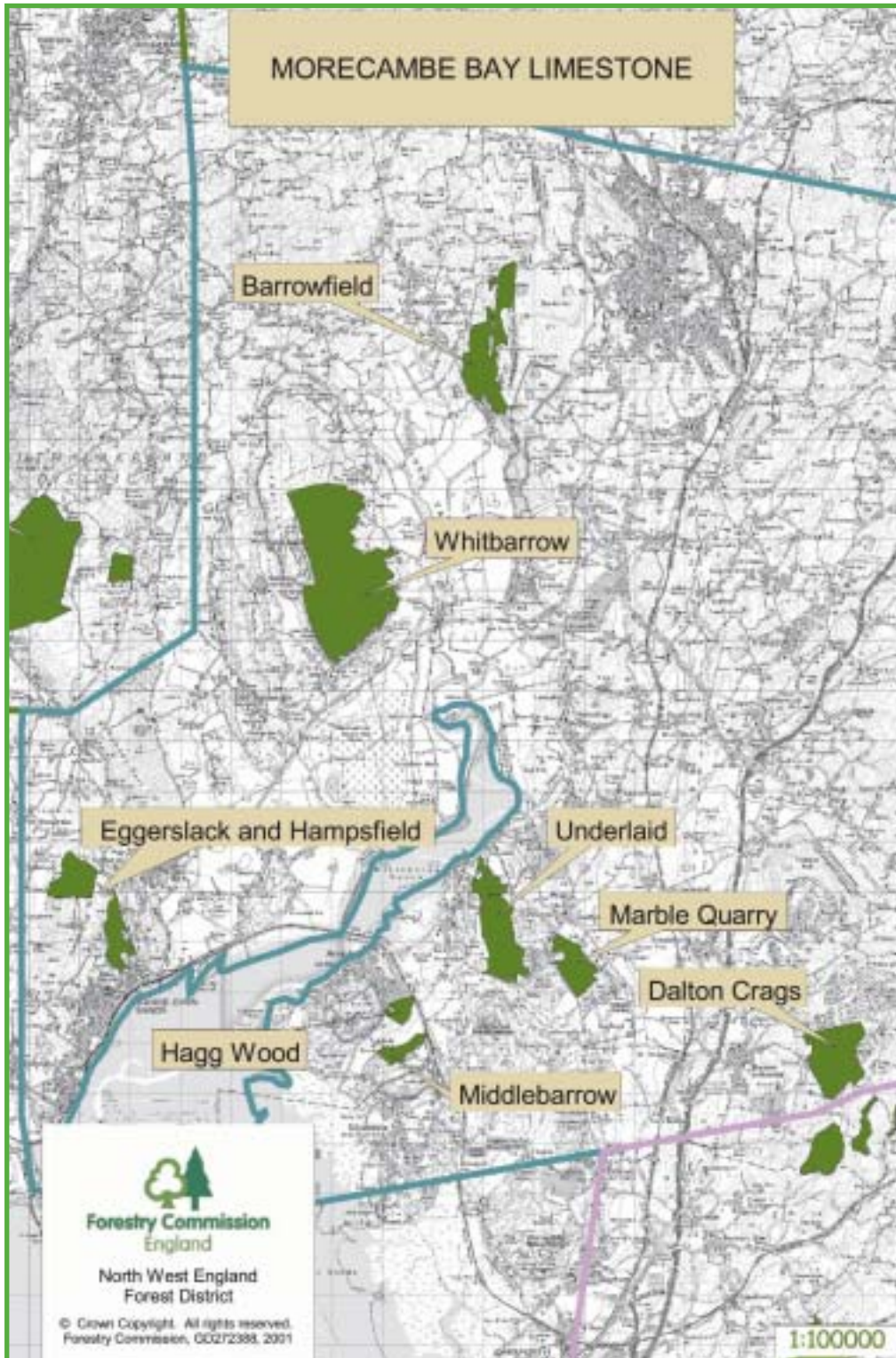
Once exotics have been removed native woodland will be managed on a continuous cover basis.

Re-establish natural vegetation by natural regeneration where possible. Supplementary planting of native species such as yew and juniper will be carried out where there is no seed source using local stock.

Maintain deer cull at a level where the ground flora and natural regeneration can proliferate.



8.5.1 Morecambe Bay Limestone Map



8.6 NORTH LANCASHIRE

These are small low lying woods which are in close proximity to Lancaster in an area with very little woodland cover. Lords lot is important for local people for informal recreation and Knots Wood has considerable potential as a community wood for Lancaster. Access to Knots Wood is currently not permitted by the lease.

Forestry for rural development

Scots pine is the preferred species of choice providing high quality timber.

Increase coupe size up to a maximum of 5ha at FDP review so as to achieve successful establishment and avoid excessive browsing pressure.

Do not replant with beech due to excessive damage from grey squirrels with resultant timber degrade.

There will be a presumption to thin all areas.

Forestry for economic regeneration

Limited opportunities in the Lancaster area.

Forestry for recreation, access and tourism

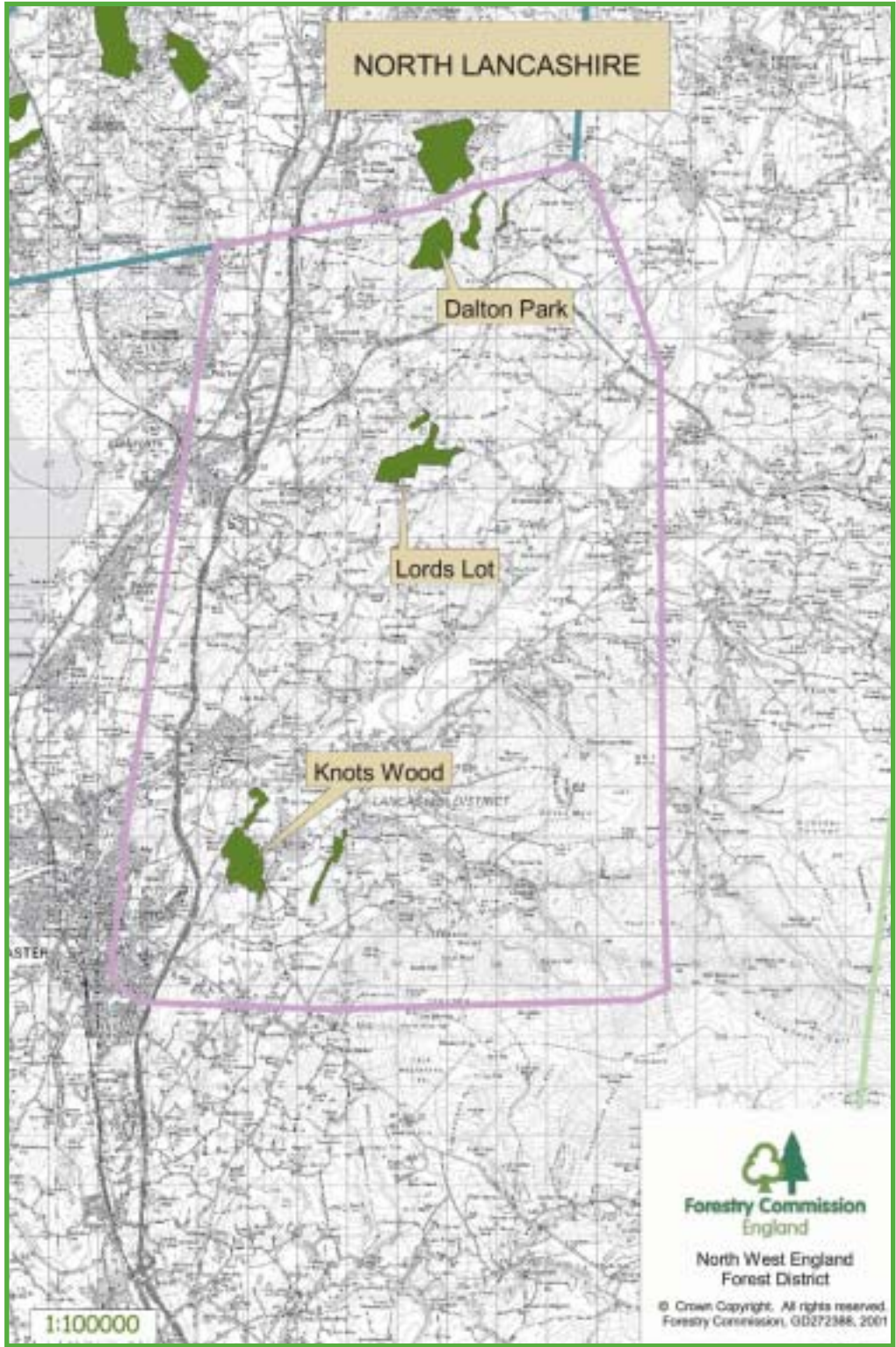
If successful in obtaining freehold of Knots Wood develop as a community wood for Lancaster in partnership with Lancaster City Council.

Forestry for environment and conservation

At restocking, replace introduced broadleaves with native species and concentrate around edges, near informal paths and rides in a matrix with permanent open space.



8.6.1 North Lancashire Map



8.7 FOREST OF BOWLAND

The Forest of Bowland AONB is an area of upland moors in north east Lancashire, inland from Preston. The forests, of which the main block is Gisburn, are in the exposed uplands on peaty gleys which restricts silvicultural options. The dominant forest species is Sitka spruce. Informal outdoor recreation is becoming more important with a large population within a short drive of the area and limited opportunities for outdoor pursuits outside the FC estate. Most land in the area is intensively managed grouse moor.

Forestry for rural development

Through the Upper Hodder Partnership the FC will work with other organisations and the local community utilising Gisburn Forest to support the rural economy.

Well suited to Sitka spruce but not other conifers due to gley soils and exposure.

Clearfelling is appropriate silvicultural system due to high risk of windthrow.

Forestry for economic regeneration

Not relevant in this area.

Forestry for recreation, access and tourism

Maintain and improve existing recreational infrastructure and respond to future demand with focus continuing to be at Gisburn. Develop partnership with United Utilities and co-ordinate facilities network.

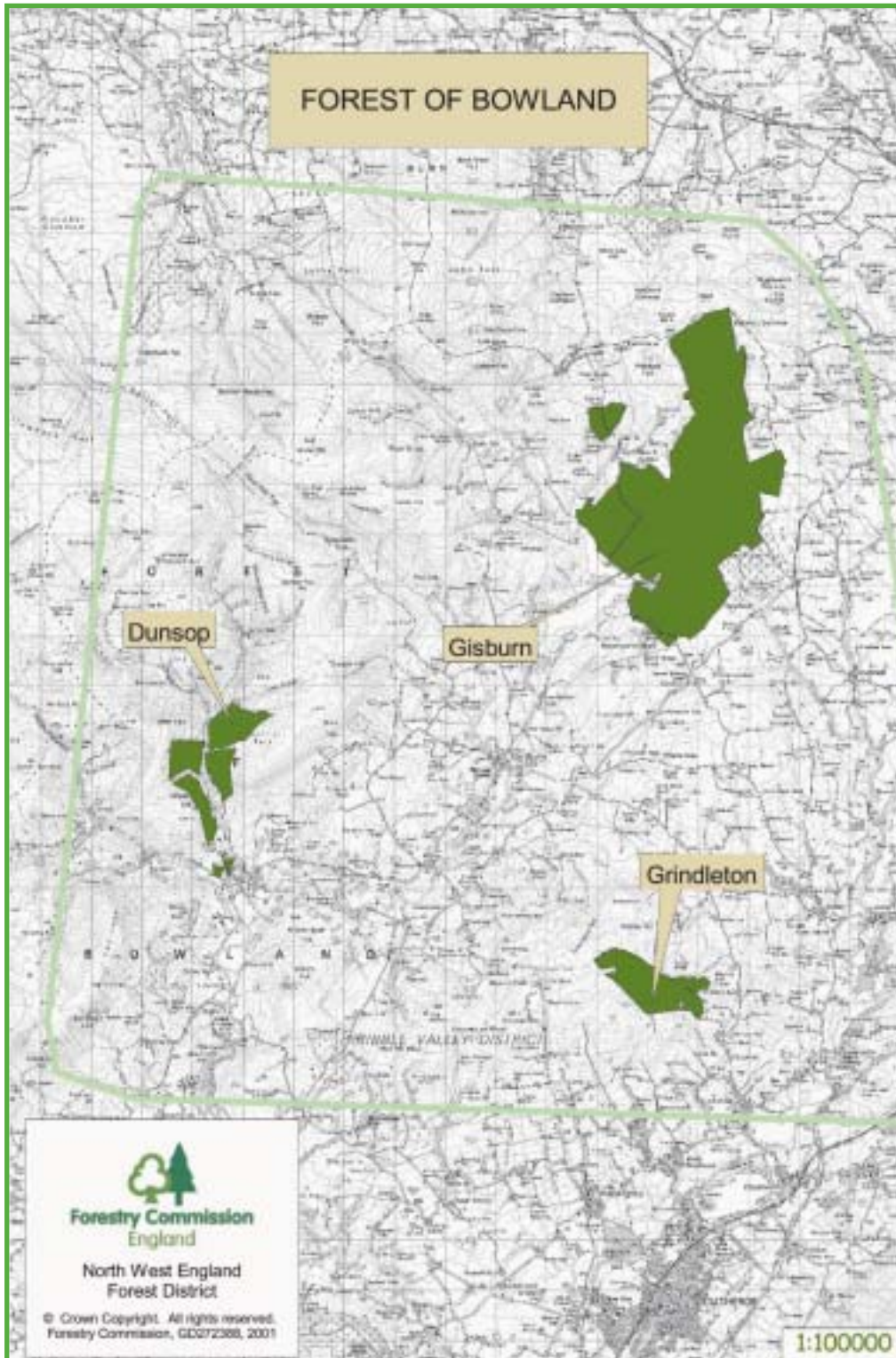
Forestry for environment and conservation

Create permanent network of open space and native broadleaves focusing on watercourses and recreational facilities to provide windfirm boundaries for the future and reduce coupe size. .

Retain some mature stands in sheltered locations as nest sites for tree nesting raptors until second rotation matures.



8.6.1 Forest of Bowland Map



8.8 SOUTH LANCASHIRE/GREATER MANCHESTER/MERSEYSIDE/CHESHIRE

This large geographical zone encompasses the main urban centres and the majority of the population in the north west, particularly the two principal cities of Liverpool and Manchester. Until recent times the FC's sole landholding in the zone was Delamere Forest in Cheshire, an important recreational resource. Through the community forest Capital Modernisation fund the FC has now acquired and developed nearly 1000 ha of new woodlands in urban areas, often on derelict land, and there is the prospect of developing and managing further areas through external funding sources, particularly the NWDA.

Forestry for rural development

Manage Delamere so that it becomes an exemplar of a well managed, mature forest in the community forest area, with regular thinning, well maintained footpaths etc.

Recreation provision and events (Christmas trees and Concerts) at Delamere will help promote rural Cheshire as a destination and contribute to the local economy.

Forestry for economic development

Fully establish the new community woodlands developed under CMF and encourage responsible use and a sense of ownership by the local communities.

Develop and long term manage additional new community woodlands on Derelict, Neglected and Underutilised land through the Newlands programmes with partners.

Seek opportunities to further develop existing sites and new sites, particularly on greenfield land to complement Newlands, through external funding and partnerships.

Forestry for recreation, access and tourism

Develop Delamere as a venue for large scale events such as Christmas trees and concerts, to encourage new forest users, provide entertainment, raise the profile of the FC and what we have to offer and raise additional revenue to invest in improved facilities.

Develop a new visitor centre at Delamere as a focus for more formal recreation and education provision in the management zone. Use to promote the use of other woodlands in the Mersey Belt thereby acting as a hub and central information point.

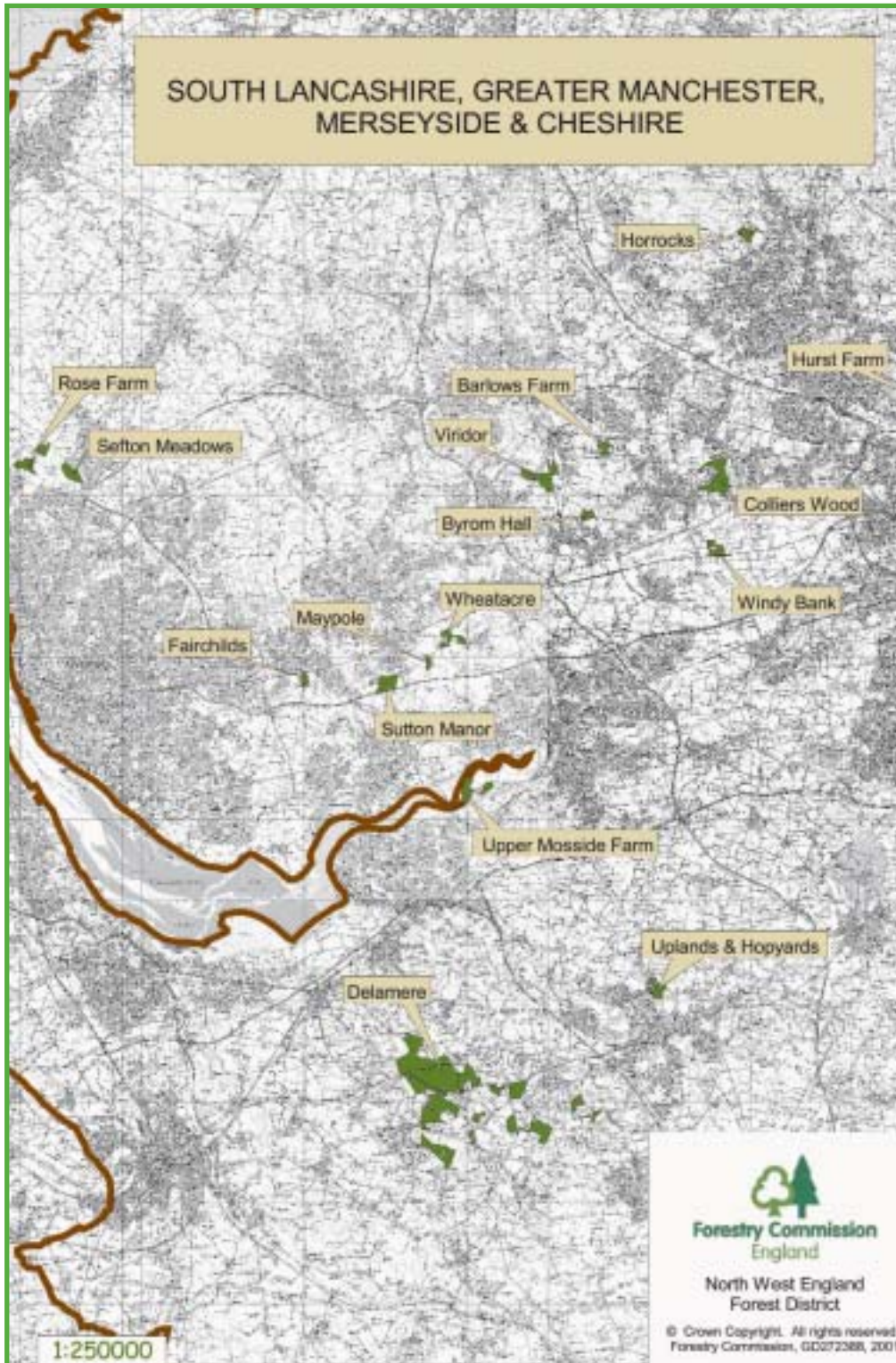
Forestry for environment and conservation

Restore the Meres and Mosses at Delamere through implementation of the Forest Design Plan.

Develop the nature conservation potential of the new community woodlands, particularly through management of the open land component.



8.8.1 South Lancashire/Greater Manchester/Cheshire Map



9.0 REVIEW OF DISTRICT WIDE POLICIES AND OTHER PLANS

Some policies are relevant across several zones or the whole district. These are addressed below by referring to other plans and policies already in place in the District.

Forest District Instructions

Forest District Instructions cover local policy and practice in the North West England Forest District. These are held by all relevant staff in the Forest District and are available for reference by interested parties (except those marked with a * which are for internal circulation only). It will be practice to review each instruction at least every three years to check its continued relevance and update as necessary.

| Inst No. | Title |
|----------|---|
| 1 | Site planning |
| 2 | Outdoor and protective clothing allowance |
| 3 | Re-submission of FDPs |
| 4 | Pollution Control Plan |
| 5 | Management of standing sales* |
| 6 | Clearfell and alternative systems |
| 7 | Whole tree harvesting |
| 8 | Use of chemicals |
| 9 | Spare |
| 10 | Deadwood |
| 11 | Thinning |
| 12 | Consultation and community |
| 13 | Fox hunting and game management |
| 14 | Fencing and tree shelters |
| 15 | Broadleaved establishment policy |
| 16 | H&M Admin procedures* |
| 17 | SCDB/Map updates |

Other plans

Several other plans which relate to the Strategic Plan are available for reference by interested parties. Some, such as the Recreation Plan, were consulted on separately and copies are held by other organisations such as the Lake District National Park Authority.

| Title | Period |
|--|------------------|
| Great Britain for Limestone Pavement | 1997 - 2002 |
| On Forestry Commission Land | |
| Lakes Forest District Biodiversity Action Plan for Upland Oakwood | 1/4/99 - 31/3/05 |
| SSSI management plans (listed under each strategic Zone Appendix) | Various |
| Recreation Plan | Sept 2004 |
| Scheduled Ancient Monument Management Plans (Listed under each Strategic Zone Appendix) | Various |

