



SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

CLOWES WOOD FOREST DESIGN PLAN

2010 – 2040

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**PROTECTING
AND EXPANDING
ENGLAND’S FORESTS
AND WOODLANDS,
AND INCREASING THEIR VALUE TO SOCIETY
AND THE ENVIRONMENT.**



Forestry Commission woodlands have been certified in accordance with the rules of the Forest Stewardship Council.

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1. Introduction

This Forest Design Plan covers Clowes Wood, a 235 hectare woodland in North Kent. It sets out our management proposals for the next thirty years.

We are guided and directed by a number of policies and strategies - the two main documents are summarised below.

1.1 A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests

The Government's priorities for England's trees, woods and forests, and its approach to achieving them, flow from "The Coalition: our programme for government" (Cabinet Office 2010).

Whilst Government formulates the detail underlying this programme, our priorities are to make sure that trees and woodlands help in meeting Government's goals for natural resources, climate change, improved urban environments and a better quality of life for all.

1.2 Forest District Strategic Priorities for Clowes Wood

The main priorities listed below are taken from the South East England Forest District's Strategic Plan written in 2000 and due for revision in 2010. Clowes Wood lies within the Forest District's Clayland Zone.

- To concentrate on growing quality oak and high-yielding Corsican pine.
- To create open space, early successional habitat and wider rides in woods containing BAP priority species.
- To keep a viable proportion of pure conifer stands in mixed woodland to sustain active forest management and provide periodic open space.

The first and last of these three priorities have been overtaken by policy changes. All of Clowes wood is an ancient woodland site and so the maintenance of conifers as a significant productive resource for the long term is no longer appropriate. It is still appropriate to grow quality broadleaves to maintain the sustainability of the woodland.

Two additional priorities have been added to reflect policy changes in our management of Ancient Woodland sites and in the delivery of Favourable Condition for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

- To rejuvenate areas designated as Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS), maintaining and where appropriate enhancing the features of interest. (The Woodscape programme – see glossary)

- To bring all SSSI's into a 'Favourable' or 'Unfavourable Recovering' Condition by 2010.

The strategic priorities of the Government and the Strategic Plan for SE England, set the general direction for the future management of the woodland. We take these and our own local knowledge of the site to prepare a 'Design Brief'. This sets out the main factors we need to take into account within this plan. These may be subsequently modified following consultation. Both the Brief and the rest of the FDP are arranged around three themes; Land and Natural Environment, Communities and Places and Working Woodlands.

2. Design Brief

Land and Natural Environment

- Clowes Wood is an ancient woodland site. The plans should maintain and where appropriate enhance the remnant features of interest, with the most shade casting conifers prioritised for management.
- A small part of the wood is an SSSI and it is also part of a larger SNCI. Management proposed in this plan should maintain the condition of the SSSI and take account where appropriate of the SNCI features.
- The ride network is an important feature of the site and helps to support a number of key species.
- The Wood is a grade C site for butterflies according to the Species Action Plan.
- There are a number of ponds which provide valuable habitat for foraging bats, invertebrates and visitors.

Communities and Places

- There are three centres of population within five miles of the woodland boundary. The woodlands should provide an attractive backdrop to the lives of local people.
- Public use is high, so careful design and management will be needed to ensure a safe and enjoyable visit without compromising important habitats and species found in the wood.
- Clowes Wood is an integral part of the vision of the Blean Partnership for the future of this fascinating woodland landscape. The plan should reflect the interests and expectations of the partners.

Working Woodlands

- Approximately 50% of the wood is conifer. This area should be gradually restored to native species throughout the life of the plan.
- Western hemlock is an invasive conifer. It should be targeted for removal in a way that prevents it from regenerating.

- A continuing sustainable harvest of timber is vital for the continuing maintenance of other programmes which deliver an enhanced environment, secure the woods for the future and thus provide employment opportunities. Plans should reflect these underlying needs.
- In the absence of mature broadleaves, some mature conifers should be retained to maintain diversity, a wide age structure and are important as nesting habitat for large birds of prey.
- Natural regeneration will rapidly colonise sites with native broadleaves but these may be of limited timber value. Some planting may be required to maintain the wood's productivity.

The next three sections describe Clowes Wood as it is now and current management proposals. At the end of each section, the descriptive information will be evaluated with reference to the Brief. Future management options to deliver the brief will be discussed and then objectives set, with indicators of how these will be measured.