

OPERATIONS INSTRUCTION No. 1 PLANNING & MANAGEMENT OF FOREST OPERATIONS (August 2010)

1. INTRODUCTION

This instruction has been re-issued as a replacement for the previous Operations Instruction No.1 issued in September 1998 (and intermediate versions written during 2009).

It aims to provide guidance on the minimum requirements for all site operations undertaken on the public forest estate in England. The aim is to ensure that all forest operations are undertaken in a safe and competent manner and that all appropriate considerations within the wide scope of our multi-functional land management remit are taken into account, both before and during any operations.

Completion and retention of 'Ops 1' records is a key requirement of our UKWAS certification.

The Ops 1 process is intended to be used as a communication and operational aid, as well as being an opportunity to improve the forest and our management, not as a constraint.

The main changes to the 1998 version are:

- To ensure the inclusion of work carried out by FC Business Units and other parts of the FC follow these procedures along with FD based staff
- Technology changes (GIS, Contract Mapper, Intranet, etc)
- Regulatory and legislative changes (EPS and CRoW)
- Expanded use to cover major development opportunities (section 3.1)

In order to assist with issues relating to **Wildlife Disturbance during Forest Operations**, Annex 1 to this Ops 1 has been produced. This guidance note for staff on Forest Operations and Wildlife Disturbance is located on the Intranet as a separate document, adjacent to this Ops 1.

2. THE OBJECTIVES OF 'OPS 1' PLANS ARE TO:

- Provide a framework for the planning and management of all major forest operations.
- Provide a framework for a site assessment reference document for all staff involved with management of the project site.
- Ensure that all opportunities and constraints that could impact on the project have been addressed, as far as is practical, prior to the commencement of work.
- Allow the monitoring of site work against a considered and approved standard.
- Avoid conflict after work has started.

- Avoid missing opportunities to improve other aspects of the project area when the proposed operations are taking place.
- Ensure Forest Design Plans (FDPs) are implemented correctly and that all operations have the appropriate approval.
- Provide operational information for future management.
- Maintain a historical record of all major work carried out on a defined area.
- Act as a link or catalyst for updating records and FD plans.
- Provide a record of our operational planning to meet UKWAS, regulatory requirements or if challenged.

3. OPERATIONS REQUIRING AN OPERATIONAL SITE ASSESSMENT (Ops 1)

- All harvesting operations
- All new planting, restocking and natural regeneration operations (including associated ground preparation works)
- All major or sensitive civil engineering work
- All major or sensitive estates work
- All major or sensitive recreation projects (new, upgrading and removal)
- All major or sensitive conservation projects
- Maintenance projects at the discretion of the Forest Management Directors.
- All Major Development Opportunities (those requiring planning consent and strategic planning processes such as Minerals and Waste Plans, etc on FC property). See section 3.1

A major project is defined as any upgrading, new construction or significant change from current usage. The classification of sensitive projects will be at FMD's discretion, but must include any works where the ground surface is broken or disturbed by any form of powered machinery.

3.1 Major Development Opportunities

A policy and governance framework for handling developments on FC land was first issued in March 2008 and is available on the Intranet at: FC England > Estates Support England > Property-Land > Development 'Development of FC Land GB. This document was revised in February 2009 (paper 10/09 to EEB on 24/02/09) to become formal guidance for FC staff. This document is located on the Intranet as Annex 2 to Ops 1 (located with this Ops 1). This document requires the use of the Ops 1 process to record all site assessment details and mitigation options.

Annex 2A is a Development Proposal Approval form required for all major developments (**Annex 2B** is a completed example of this form).

As Ops 1's for major development opportunities are expected to become public documents (as part of the Planning process), it is particularly important that comments by all staff are restricted to their area of work and/or professional expertise. It is not appropriate for Forest

District staff to comment on FC National level policy, which will be addressed at National office level.

[It is proposed that the document in Annex 2 is re-written to become a shorter more succinct Estates Guidance Note, which will be available on the Intranet in place of the March 2008 document mentioned above. At this time this Ops 1 document will be amended].

4. RESPONSIBILITY AND TIMING

Each site or project must have a nominated Project Manager who will collate the plan and ensure all relevant documents have been referenced and all relevant staff have been able to comment on the proposed operations. It is the Project Manager's responsibility to chase for completion of the site assessment.

It is advisable that the Project Manager is the person who is ultimately responsible for supervising the work in the field. Where operations are to be undertaken or supervised by staff not based at the Forest District (particularly FC Business Units) it may be appropriate to have joint project management for Ops 1 preparation, that includes an FD member of staff and the responsible person from the Business Unit or other work organiser. There must be a single Project Manager for the works themselves. This person must be from the part of the FC that is undertaking the works.

Ops 1 documentation must be completed sufficiently in advance of any proposed operation for all consultation, notification and permissions to be obtained. It should not be completed any further in advance than is necessary in order to minimise the chance of conditions altering between initiation and completion.

Documentation must be completed and approved before any contracts are let or operations started on site. All harvesting sites must have a site assessment completed before mark and measure activities involving the felling of sample trees begin (or any offer for sale if on an unmarked basis, as any later changes may render a sale contract invalid).

It is the FMD's responsibility to ensure that sufficient reference is made to this Instruction on District staff's Forward Job Plans and to ensure that a high level of operational planning and consultation is maintained throughout the District.

5. PRODUCING AN OPERATIONAL SITE ASSESSMENT RECORD (Ops 1)

5.1 Format and Content

There is no set format for the production of an operational site assessment record. However, the details below are the minimum standards required. Any format used must be well presented and

easy to follow as these documents will be used as an historic record by successive staff and may prove to be vital documentary evidence in the event of a dispute with external organisations (including UKWAS). Existing FC guidelines, UKWAS, and the UK Forestry Standard, must be the absolute minimum standard for all operations.

Consideration should be given to the following:

- Forest Design Plans
- Environment
- Heritage
- Recreation
- Legal/Estates
- Civil Engineering
- Physical features and Health & Safety

Appendix 1 contains a list of factors compiled from various existing Ops 1 documents. This may be a useful check list for the construction of individual FD specific Ops 1 documents.

In order to reduce the number of items to be checked, it may be desirable to have different forms/check lists for different operations. (Restocking operational sheets may for example not need any of the civil engineering items to be included).

All documents, including maps, should be dated at the time of writing/preparation, and contain the name of the author.

At least two FD's use an Intranet based system for completing Ops. 1 forms. (Kielder and NW England). These systems allow all staff to have access to the documentation at once. This can speed up full completion of Ops 1 documentation. All FD's are recommended to view these systems and consider their introduction.

The Kielder site can be found at:

http://alpacorn.forestry.gov.uk:7777/cgi-bin/keilder_fd_discus/discus.cgi

The NW England site can be found at:

<http://alpacorn.forestry.gov.uk:7777/cgi-bin/discus/discus.cgi>

(Enter the site as a 'Guest' on a read only basis)

5.2 Location Detail & Maps

The Project Manager should initiate the site assessment form with all relevant project title reference detail and accompany it with a map(s). The map(s) should be formatted using the standard legend used in 'Contract Mapper'. This can be enlarged upon to highlight extra detail where necessary.

It is suggested that where possible maps are prepared using Contract Mapper. Initial maps for internal consultation should be produced as drafts of and in the same format as final maps. This will avoid re-drawing maps (when mistakes and omissions could occur) and ease possible time pressures between the completion of consultation and the letting of contracts or the application for CRoW directions and completion of notices.

Where available air photos with site boundaries and access routes may be a helpful addition.

Where operations cover multiple sub-compartments it may be appropriate to include a SCDB printout.

5.3 Detail of Proposed Work

It is necessary to give a short description of work to be carried out on the site. This must include a statement on the objective or aims of the work and the timing of the operation including a proposed start and finish date. (Proposed timing is essential for all operations requiring CRoW closure).

5.4 Information Collation

5.4.1 Existing information

All existing information relative to the site must be combined and collated in a structured format. Where it has been considered necessary to inform other bodies of the intended work, copies of all correspondence should be retained and referenced in the Ops 1.

As a minimum requirement the following subjects must be assessed with information recorded on the site assessment forms:

- **Forest Design Plan and SCDB** – For all felling and restocking work the Project Manager must consult an approved Forest Design Plan (or felling licence) to ensure that the proposed operation is acceptable within the constraints of the FDP (or felling licence).
 - Are there any designations on the SCDB that need to be noted or actioned (research plots, etc)?

- Ensure that operations do not make parts of the forest inaccessible (particularly important when new recreation routes are being installed, areas of woodland must not be 'landlocked').
- **Environmental** – All environmental issues should be considered. Any external agreements or plans such as National Park restrictions, SSSI management plans and Local Authority designations must be considered and recorded. European Protected Species (EPS) known to be present in the District must all be considered and positively dismissed for the area or adequately addressed (a check list/tick box for each species present in the FD is suggested). Actions to address EPS should be made with reference to the EPS guidance notes and check sheets (completed check sheets must be included with Ops 1 documentation when completed, including any licences or correspondence about licences). In Ancient Woodland areas (ASNW & PAWS) it is important that all vegetation is considered, not just the trees.

Once it is fully operational, the 'Conservation and Heritage recording package' of our 'GIS Forester' system will be able to supply much of the required information.

- **Heritage** – All cultural heritage issues should be considered. Any external designation should be referenced (SAM's or unscheduled sites). Existing plans/reports should be referenced and FD specific features should be mentioned in a check list/tick box.
- **Recreation** – District recreation plans, projects, routes, activities, facilities, permissions, etc. should be noted along with the amount of informal use the site may receive.
- **Legal/Estates** – Details of applicable information such as leases, shooting rights, access rights (including PROW), neighbours, etc.
 - CRoW dedications must be checked. Where closure is required adequate time must be allowed and required closure times should be specified.
- **Civil Engineering** – Details of any civil engineering features and or work requirements either before, during or after the proposed operations should be detailed.
- **Physical Features and Health & Safety** – Power lines, underground hazards, bridges, watercourses, fences, and any other FD specific potential hazard should be identified from a check list/tick box.
- **Other** – Anything else relating to the site thought to be of relevance or concern should be noted.

5.4.2 External information

External organisations may be notified/consulted of impending work in order to seek advice, e.g. County Archaeologist. This will be at the FD's discretion depending on local relations with such bodies and the internal level of knowledge.

5.4.3 Site Visit information

A field assessment of the site is crucial to the integrity of the system and must confirm the detail of information already collated and record any new information pertinent to the proposed operation. A field assessment sheet must be prepared for each type of project (see list of possible subjects in Appendix 1). The nature of the project will dictate the importance of each factor.

The field assessment must be made by the members of staff most suitable to attain the information required and those who will be supervising the operations. Staff making field assessments must be aware of all proposed operations and the timings of the work. It may be beneficial for staff to visit the site jointly in order to discuss proposed work. It may also be necessary to visit the site more than once depending on its complexity and seasonal interest.

It may be appropriate to take and include site photographs with the documentation. It is suggested a digital camera is taken on all site visits.

6. COMMENTS AND APPROVAL

Once the information and work proposals have been detailed, the proposals should be circulated by the Project Manager for comment (with names and dates by which comments are required).

It is the FMD's responsibility to:

- Set out who within the FD should be consulted for each type of operation, and/or location of work.
- Ensure that an appeals/arbitration procedure is in place to sort any disagreements between staff.
- Ensure that operations organised or directly controlled by Business Units and other FC divisions outside the FD follow the agreed FD procedures
- Ensure that the final signing off level within the FD structure is appropriate.

If there are to be any changes throughout the life of the plan these must be recorded as additions (and not substitution or replacement of the original documentation) and approved by the final signatory.

Once the planned work has been completed the project documentation will be signed off as complete by the Project Manager and the final signatory, after the site has been visited for approval. (It may be appropriate to add post operational comments and/or photographs to the documentation at this stage).

7. FILING AND STORAGE OF SITE ASSESSMENTS

Site assessment records are to be retained as a historical document of work carried out. It is therefore important that the completed documentation (hard copy or electronic) is stored in a structured manner within the District filing system. Filing should ensure that documents can be referenced for future work of the same type, on the same site, or at an adjacent location. Completed Ops 1 records should not die with the completed contract file (due to storage with the contract) and must continue to be available in the Forest District office.

John Tewson
Head of Planning and Environment
12/08/10

OPS 1: APPENDIX 1

Check list of possible items to be included within any Operational Site Planning documents

1. Location and Project Details

Location

Project name/number

Beat

Project Manager

Forest Design Plan name/number (+ approval dates)

Grid reference

Coupe number(s)/road number

Compartment number(s) (+ extract of SCDB)

Size of area (Gross/Net)

Type of operation

Description of operation and/or reason for the operation

Proposed start and finish dates

Date of project initiation

List of attached maps

2. Environment

Forest Design

- Potential to improve internal landscape (coupe boundaries, road/ride side edges, appearance of racks, etc).

Designation

- SSSI
- NNR
- SPA/SAC
- National Park
- AONB
- Forest Nature Reserve
- Local Nature Reserve
- ASNW/PAWS

EPS

- Bats
- Otters
- Great Crested Newts
- Dormice
- Smooth snakes/sand lizards

Other protected species

- Badger
- Raptors (specify)
- Other birds

- Other mammals
- Insects & Butterflies
- Reptiles

Water features

- Watercourses/water supply
- Drains
- Ponds/reservoir/other water features

Deadwood

Veteran trees

Retentions required

Understory treatment/protection

Ground Flora (particularly on ASNW & PAWS sites)

Conservation rides

Wildlife

- High seats
- Shooting lines
- Pheasant pens
- Rabbit control

Urea/chemical usage or restrictions

External Consultations

- Natural England
- Local wildlife trust
- Other

3. Heritage

SAM

County record/Unscheduled Ancient Monument

Other

- Walls
- Ruins
- Earthworks
- Boundaries
- Other

External Consultations

- English Heritage
- County records office
- FC Archaeologist
- Other

4. Recreation

PROW

- BOAT

- Bridleway
- Footpath
- RUPP
- Frequently used none legal permissive routes

Forest routes & facilities

- Waymarked trail
 - Surfaced route
 - All ability route
- Cycle trail
 - MTB route
- Riding route
- Car park
- Formal group use
- Orienteering
- Other

Events and activities

Closures needed (+ permissions required)

Diversions needed (+ permissions required)

External Consultations

- PROW officer
- Other

5. Legal/Estates

Land holding

- Freehold
- Leasehold
- Partnership land

CRoW

- Dedicated (restriction required)
- Open access (restriction required)

Planning permission required

Research plots

Rights of access and access restrictions

Shooting tenants/reserved shooting

Neighbours

Fences/boundaries

Access controls and/or keys required

6. Civil Engineering

Access routes

- Cat 1A road only (any work required?)

Other routes (FCE approval for use required?)

- Public highway preferred routes

Bridges (weight restrictions)

Culverts

Turning points & lay-bys

Loading/stacking areas

Machinery/fuel/chemical storage areas identified

7. Physical features and Health & Safety

Overhead power lines

- Power outages required (dates)
- Goal posts (location + height)

Overhead telecoms

Underground services

- Gas
- Water
- Electricity
- Telecoms
- Sewage

Public highways

Mine shafts/quarries

Adverse terrain

Responsible person for

- Risk Assessments
- Method Statements
- Site safety Rules

Location of prohibition and warning signs identified

8. Public relations/communications/Limits to working

Press release

Inform Parish Council

Other consultation

FD events diary

On site information (location + date of start & finish for on site information)

Seasonal or weekend/evening working restrictions

No go or out of bound areas identified

Banksman required

9. Completion Report

Additional end of project comments

Post operational changes made

- GIS
- Other plans

MANAGEMENT OF FOREST OPERATIONS (January 2010)

Project Manager sign off (& date)

Final approval sign off (& date)

END of Appendix 1

End of Ops 1 (dated 12/08/10)