

HARLING
THETFORD FOREST
FOREST PLAN

2014 – 2024

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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.

The mark of responsible forestry



1. What are Forest Plans?

Forest Plans are produced by us, the Forestry Commission (FC), as a means of communicating our management intentions to a range of stakeholders. They aim to fulfil a number of objectives:

- To provide descriptions of our woodlands to show what they are like now.
- To explain the process we go through in deciding what is best for the woodlands' long term future.
- To show what we intend the woodlands to look like in the future.
- To outline our management proposals, in detail, for the first ten years so we can seek approval from the statutory regulators.

Our aim is to produce a plan that meets your needs for the woodland; meets the needs of the plants and animals that live there and meets our needs as managers.

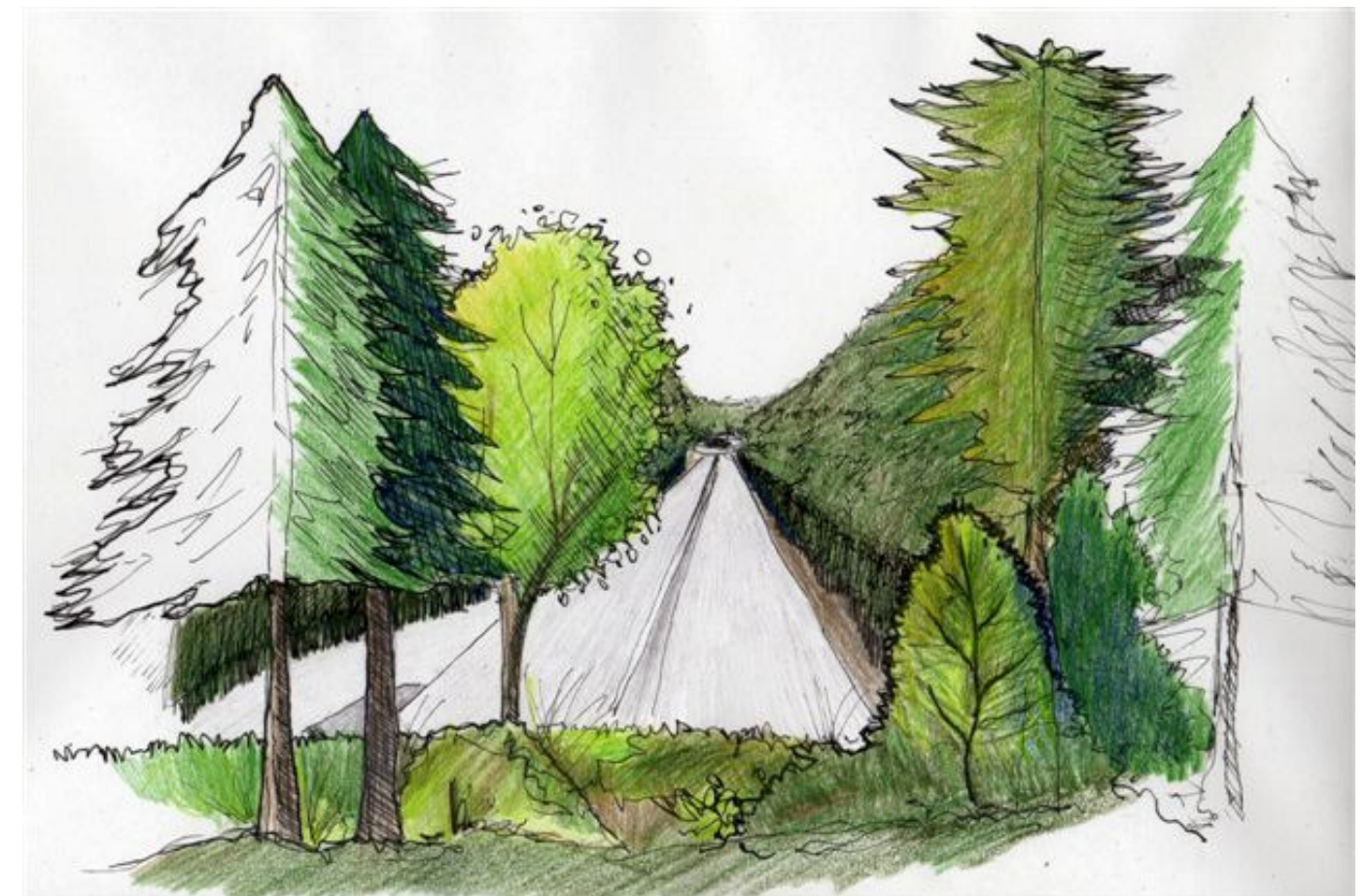
We have produced this draft plan to illustrate our management proposals thereby creating an opportunity for you to comment on the plan, whether you are a user, a neighbour or a member of one of the many stakeholder groups that have an interest in the woodlands. Information on how to get your comments to us is on the webpage.

This plan does not set out the detailed yearly management operations for each small piece of a wood, known as a coupe*. It is not possible to say which year a particular operation will take place, but we can say in which five-year period it should happen.

All tree felling in the UK is regulated and a licence is required before trees can be felled; the scale of tree felling in Thetford Forest is such that the Forest Plan is the best mechanism for applying for this licence.

Responsibility for checking that the plan meets all the relevant standards and statutes lies with another part of the FC (Forest Services). If all the criteria are met, full approval is given for the management operations in the first ten years (2013 - 2023) and outline approval for the medium term vision (2023 - 2043). The plan will be reviewed after the first five years (2018) to assess if the objectives are being achieved. Natural England will approve management proposals for the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) which lie within in our woods.

We use some technical words and phrases in the text because they best describe what we are doing. There is a glossary at the back of the plan with some commonly used technical forest terms and abbreviations these technical words are identified with an * .



2. Standard Practices and Guidance

Underpinning the management proposals in Forest Plans is a suite of standard practices and guidance described briefly below. Some of these practices are strategic national policy, whilst others are local expressions of national policy to reflect the particular conditions found in East England - the policy level is indicated in brackets.

The UK Forestry Standard* (national)

The UKFS sets out standards for the sustainable management of all forests and woodlands in the UK and describes, in outline, good forest practice.

The UK Woodland Assurance Standard* (national)

The UKWAS certification standard sets out the requirements which woodland owners, managers and forest certification bodies can use to certify their woodland and forests as sustainably managed. It is the document which guides all of our management, and against which the FC is certified by outside consultants to ensure our compliance.

Deadwood (national and local)

Deadwood is important in the forest as a habitat for birds, invertebrates and some primitive plants. Guidance is given on how to provide deadwood in the forest of different sorts and sizes and how this will be distributed.

Natural reserves (national and local)

Natural reserves are areas of the forest where little or no active management takes place thereby creating a very different and special habitat in our otherwise actively managed forests.

European Protected Species (national)

In August 2007 amendments to the European Habitat Directive came into force in England and Wales to protect the habitat of a number of vulnerable species. Those European Protected Species (EPS) most likely to be found in a woodland habitat include all species of bat, hazel dormouse, great crested newt, otter, sand lizard and smooth snake.

In Forestry Commission managed woodland where one or more of these species has been confirmed, the FC will manage the woodland in accordance with the good practice guidance documents that have been produced by FC and Natural England (NE). On the rare occasion when woodland management operations cannot be undertaken in compliance with the guidance, NE will be consulted and where necessary, an application will be made to undertake the operation under licence.

It is recognised that EPS can occur beyond woodland therefore the management of open habitats identified in this Forest Plan will also need to consider the presence of these species.

Other Designations

The FC landholding in England has a wide range of European and national designations placed upon it in various locations across the country, such as;

- National Park
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Special Protection Area* (SPA)
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest* (SSSI)
- Scheduled Monuments (SM's)
- County Wildlife Sites*

Along with the standard guidance documents, we have individual plans for our designated sites; these describe work required to maintain and enhance the protected features. We will gradually integrate these into our Forest Plans where appropriate.

In addition, the Forestry Commission has a number of practice guides and specialist bulletins which further inform our management, some of these are available to download from our website <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/>

3. Introduction

This Forest Plan covers 993 hectares of Forestry Commission land which is part of Thetford Forest in the county of Norfolk. We are guided and directed by a number of policies and strategies - the most significant being:

The Government's Priorities

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, FC 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.

Forest District Strategic Priorities for Thetford Forest

The main priorities listed below are taken from the East Anglia Forest District's Strategic Plan which was written in 2005 and is under revision in 2014.

This plan lies within the Thetford Forest strategic zone.

- To manage and monitor SACs, SPAs and SSSIs.
- Take into account the internal and external landscape considerations for the area.
- To collate and prioritise the ideas/objectives of all teams to fully inform the Forest Plan.
- To diversify the range of restock species in response to climate change adaptation and increased threats from pests and diseases.

General Description of Plan Area

The plan area lies on the eastern edge of Breckland approximately 5 miles east of Thetford.

The whole of the plan area lies in the county of Norfolk, and is within the administrative boundaries of Breckland District Council. It falls within three parishes – the small block north of the River Thet lies within Bridgham, the main block is in Harling, and the detached southern Pheasantry and Frogs Hall Carr blocks are in Garboldisham.

A well used minor road known as the Harling Straight runs through the main block.

Most of plan area was acquired by the Forestry Commission in the 1930s apart from the woods in Garboldisham which were obtained from Metropolitan Railway Ltd in 1954. Extensive areas were wooded prior to Forestry Commission ownership.

Harling woods are currently over 20% pure broadleaf with a further broadleaves mixed amongst the conifer plantations. The wooded area within the plan is dedicated as open access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act).

There is over 10% open space including a 50ha grazing unit forming part of the millennium partnership Brecks Heathland Recreation Project. There is a further 40ha grazing unit along the southern floodplain of the River Thet. These grazing areas are not dedicated as open access.

The strategic priorities of the Coalition and the Strategic Plan for East 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', which sets out the main factors we need to consider within this plan. However these may be subsequently modified following consultation. The Brief is used to draw up an Analysis and Concept Map, which feeds into the rest of the Forest Plan. The whole plan is arranged around the three themes of sustainable forest management:

- Land and Natural Environment.
- Communities and Places.
- Working Woodlands.