

Management Plan

Part C: Dorset & SouthWiltshire: July 2010

www.forestry.gov.uk/newforest

**FORESTRY COMMISSION NEW FOREST
MANAGEMENT PLAN
PART C: DORSET & SOUTH WILSHIRE
JULY 2010**

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DORSET & SOUTH WILTSHIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN

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DORSET & SOUTH WILTSHIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN

C1 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The Forestry Commission (New Forest) is responsible for the management of over 32,000 hectares of the Public Estate, split between the Crown Lands of the New Forest and the woodlands of Dorset and South Wiltshire. Part C of the Forestry Commission (Dorset & South Wiltshire) Management Plan deals with the management of Forestry Commission woodlands across Dorset and South Wiltshire together with an area to the west of the River Avon that falls within the Hampshire County Boundary ([Map C1-1](#)). Forestry Commission managed woodland covers 7875 hectares, which accounts for approximately 23% of woodland in Dorset and South Wiltshire. This part of the District also falls under the Forestry Commission SW Region Management boundary.

The woodlands fall into three distinct categories according to their underlying geology of sands, chalk or clay, which closely influences their management. The East Dorset Woodlands and Purbeck Heath Woodlands both have similar geology and soils, overlying the Greensand and were largely reclaimed from former heathland. Due to their impoverished soils and resulting low fertility Scots Pine and Corsican Pine species predominate. However there are a few exceptions to the rule in the form of Horton Wood (Queens Copse) overlying clay and the Lulworth Woodlands overlying both chalk & clay.

Both the East Dorset and Purbeck Woodlands are important for their local, national and European nature conservation interest which is demonstrated by a range of designated sites. However the East Dorset woodlands stretching from the northern edge of Verwood to the edge of the Christchurch/Bournemouth conurbation are surrounded by local towns and villages and form important community doorstep woodlands. Ashley Heath forest also hosts Moors Valley Country Park, which has developed into one of the top 10 outdoor attractions in the UK with around 1 million visitors annually. On the other hand many of the Purbeck Heath Woodlands are more remote from larger communities and the leasehold nature of several of the woodlands means that any recreational development is restricted. Nonetheless several of the woodlands closer to the Poole/Wareham conurbation still attract regular visitors for dog walking and informal recreation. Many of the Purbeck Heath Woodlands lie within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The Cranborne Chase Woodlands are entirely different in character and landscape and are spread out into smaller, scattered woodland blocks within the North Dorset AONB. Lying on the chalk (with the exception of Wardour which overlies Greensand & Gault clay) they are predominantly Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWs). Through the Forest Design Plan process many of these PAWs sites are gradually being restored back to native broadleaves. Many of the Cranborne Chase Woodlands have low levels of recreational use, either as a result of their location remote from larger local communities or as a result of leasehold agreements.

Although the Dorset and South Wiltshire side of the estate is perhaps more conventional than the Crown Lands in terms of general forest management, the varying nature of the woodlands together with their different issues present a very different set of management challenges.

1.2 Aim & Purpose of the Plan

The key aim of this Plan is to inform local Forestry Commission staff on the management direction to be adopted and actions that need to be implemented over the next five years to:

- ◆ Implement National & Regional Forest Policy
- ◆ Conform with relevant legislation
- ◆ Demonstrate that the requirements of UKWAS are being implemented
- ◆ Address other local issues.

The timber value together with the biodiversity and recreational uses of the Dorset and South Wiltshire woodlands means that a number of statutory bodies and other organisations and individuals take a considerable interest in how the woodlands and their integral habitats are managed. Therefore, this plan can also be referenced by stakeholders to find out what direction and actions the Forestry Commission propose to take over the next 5 years to address specific issues of interest.

1.3 Requirement for a Plan

The first Interim Strategic plan for the Forestry Commission's land in Dorset and South Wiltshire was produced in 2004. It was written as an interim, time limited, document to guide and focus work pending the development of a Regional Forestry Framework for the southwest region. At the time, it was not developed in association with external stakeholders to avoid confusion and duplication with the ongoing public development of the regional forestry framework. It was always intended that this Strategic Plan be fully revised with the involvement of local stakeholders once the regional forestry framework was finalised. In the intervening years there have been further developments in legislation and policy that will influence our management, notably:

Publication of the SW Regional Forestry Framework in 2006 and Implementation Plan

- ◆ The publication of the new government forest policy, 'A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forest' (2007), together with a FC England Delivery Plan at the end of 2008.
- ◆ The commitment of the Forestry Commission to a Public Service Agreement Target to improve 95% of the New Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to favourable condition by 2010.
- ◆ Revisions to the Habitats Directive in respect of European Protected Species which influence the way in which forestry and other related operations need to be carried out.
- ◆ Revision in the UKWAS guidelines in relation to the sustainable management of woodland.
- ◆ Designation of the New Forest National Park in 2005 and creation of the New Forest National Park Authority. The Environment Act 1995 (Section 62) places a duty on all Government Departments and other bodies including the Forestry Commission *'to have regard to the purposes of National Parks in the exercise of their own functions affecting land in a National Park'*. The Crown Lands, to the

east of the River Avon lie wholly within the National Park. Therefore the FC has had to holistically consider how it can manage the forest district as a whole to reduce some of the impacts, for example recreational pressure, to meet the objectives of the National Park.

1.4 Organisation of the Plan

The Dorset and South Wiltshire Management Plan forms Part C of the Forestry Commission (New Forest) Management Plan. Part C is sub-divided into the following sections to aid reference by different user groups: -

Section C1 outlines the background and purpose of the plan

Section C2 sets out the general framework and organisation which guides the management of the Dorset & South Wiltshire Estate

Sections C3 to C7 address the management of the Woodlands (C3), Open Habitats (C4), Archaeology & Cultural Heritage (C5), Recreation & Leisure (C6) and Estates (C7) in more detail. The following information is provided for each Section so that the subject area can be read in isolation if required:

- ◆ Background information outlining the key characteristics and management techniques for the subject area.
- ◆ Objectives, Issues, Policies and Actions required to address the management of the subject area.

Forestry Commission (New Forest) Management Plan

Part A - Introduction to the District

Part B - The Crown Lands

Part C - Dorset & South Wiltshire

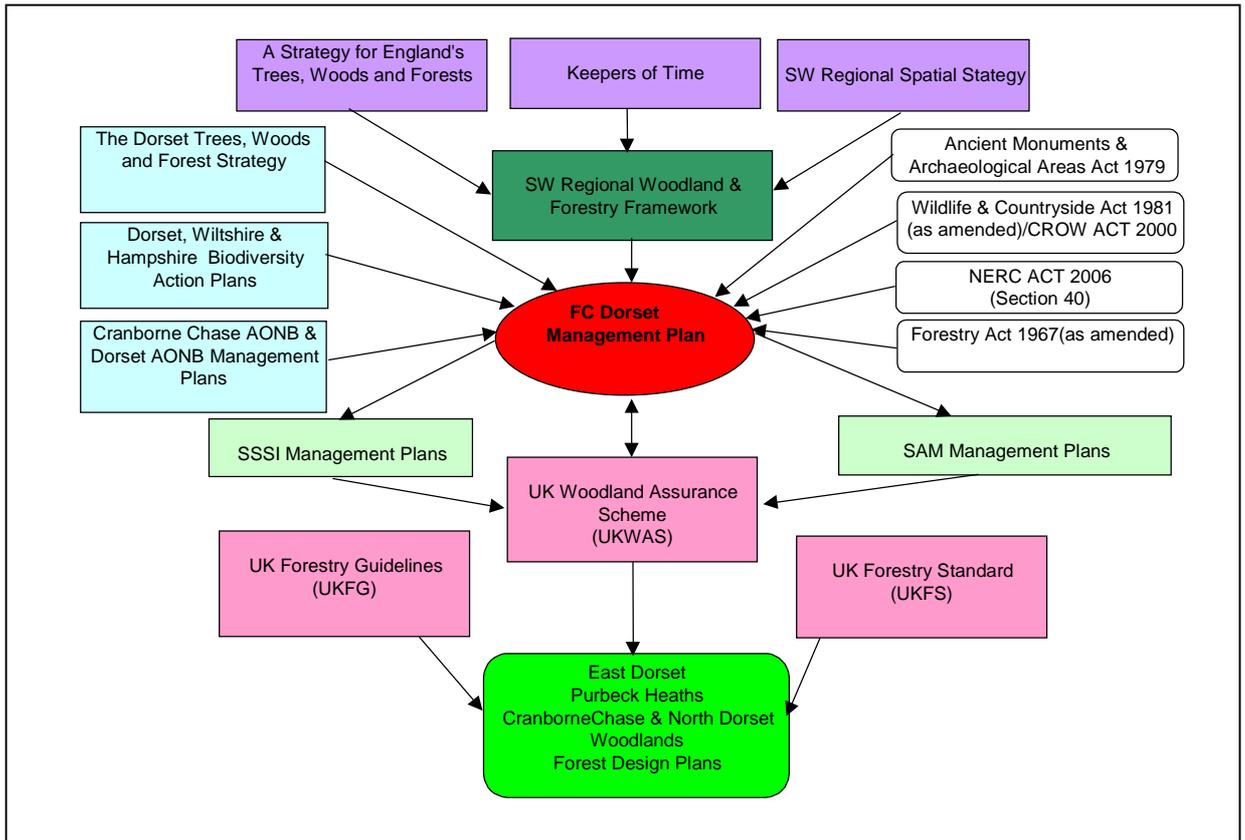
Part D - Internal Local Management Guidelines & Specifications

C2 MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

2.1 Legislative Drivers

The management of the Dorset & South Wiltshire Estate is strongly influenced by a wide range of legislation, government policy, Forestry Commission policy, national standards and strategies (Figure C2.1). The most significant drivers that direct management are summarised below.

Figure C2.1 Policy & Legislative Drivers



Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000/Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981

Under Section 28G of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000), the Forestry Commission and their lease holders have an obligation to maintain, protect and enhance Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Furthermore the Forestry Commission and their leaseholders have a duty to consult Natural England over any Operations Likely to Damage (OLD) the SSSI. Permission is required from Natural England to carry out an OLD.

Part 1 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 makes provision for public access to the countryside in England and Wales. The Act creates a right of access to land mapped originally by the Countryside Agency or Countryside Council for Wales (now known as Natural England) as:

- ◆ open country;
- ◆ registered common land; and
- ◆ land over 600 metres above sea level.

It also created the power of Dedication, which can be applied to any land including woodlands, and gives that land the equivalent status as 'Access Land'

In support of the legislation, the Forestry Commission has dedicated its freehold Estate in England and Wales, with some minor exceptions, and so access rights now exist over this land.

Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended).

Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) set out the requirements for managing sites of European Importance (Natura 2000 sites) designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in the UK. Significant areas within the Dorset Estate are designated as SAC.

Another requirement of the Natural Habitats regulations is the need to protect species of European Importance. Changes to the legislation, implemented in August 2007 have strengthened the legal protection given to European Protected Species in England and Wales. Previously it was an offence to deliberately kill or cause significant disturbance to these protected species, to deliberately destroy their eggs, or to destroy or damage a breeding site or resting place used by them. The amendment now means that it is also an offence to accidentally damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place when carrying out a lawful operation (which was previously exempt). This has considerable implications for the way in which the Forestry Commission manages its' Estate and the methods and practices, which need to be used to ensure compliance with the legislation.

Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006

Under Section 40 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, the Forestry Commission has a duty to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in exercising its functions. The Duty aims to raise the profile and visibility of biodiversity, by ensuring that biodiversity is integrated into policy and decision making and in the day to day management of land and buildings.

Environment Act and the New Forest National Park Management Plan

The Environment Act 1995 (Section 62) places a duty on all Government Departments and other bodies including the Forestry Commission 'to have regard to the purposes of National Parks in the exercise of their own functions affecting land in a National Park'. Following its creation in March 2005, the main purposes of the New Forest National Park are:

- ◆ To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park
- ◆ To promote opportunities for understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities and;
- ◆ Foster the social and economic well being of local communities

Although the Dorset and South Wiltshire part of the Estate lies outside the National Park boundary, the Crown Lands part of the Estate lies wholly within the National Park. The FC will need to holistically consider how it can manage the forest district as a whole to reduce some of the impacts in the Crown Lands, for example recreational pressure, to meet the objectives of the National Park Plan.

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

The main legislation concerning archaeology in the UK is the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. This Act, building on legislation dating back to 1882, provides for nationally important archaeological sites to be statutorily protected as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs). There are over 70 SAMs on the Dorset and South Wiltshire Estate covering sites ranging from burial mounds to Roman Roads. In England, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for implementing the 1979 Act and is advised in this respect by English Heritage (EH). The scheduling of a monument means that permission, notably 'scheduled monument consent', is required for works to a monument.

2.2 National Standards

UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS)

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

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

- ◆ The community
- ◆ Forestry Workforce

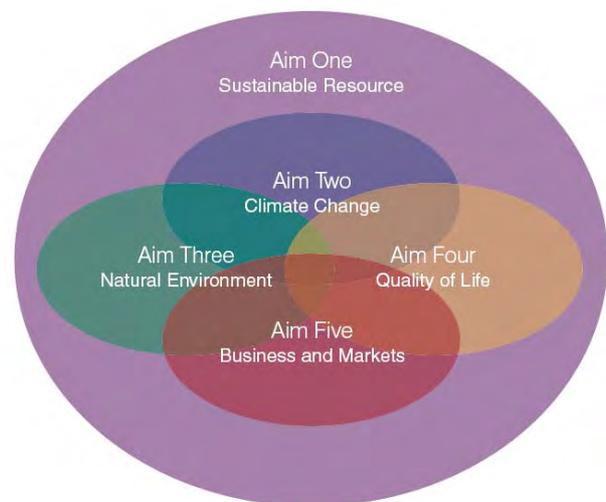
It is necessary to take particular account of UKWAS standards when managing woodland and to be able to demonstrate that the above aspects of woodland management are being adequately addressed.

<http://www.ukwas.org.uk/>

2.3 National & Regional Strategies

2.3.1 'A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forest'

'A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forest', was launched in 2007 and provides the framework to build upon the achievements of 'The England Forest Strategy - A New Focus for England's Woodlands', launched in 1999. The new strategy identifies national priorities and builds on Government policies about the quality of people's lives, the quality of the places, in which people live and work, and the sustainable use of resources to be addressed over the next 10-15 years.



The strategy has five main integrated aims:-

- ◆ **Aim 1: A Sustainable Resource.** To provide, in England, a resource of trees, woods and forests in places where they can contribute most in terms of environmental, economic and social benefits now and for future generations.
- ◆ **Aim 2: Climate Change.** To ensure that existing and newly planted trees, woods and forests are resilient to the impacts of climate change and also contribute to the way in which biodiversity and natural resources adjust to a changing climate.
- ◆ **Aim 3: Natural Environment.** To protect and enhance the environmental resources of water, soil, air, biodiversity and landscapes (both woodland and non-woodland) and the cultural and amenity values of trees and woodland.
- ◆ **Aim 4: Quality of Life.** To increase the contribution that trees, woods and forests make to the quality of life for those living in, working in or visiting England.
- ◆ **Aim 5: Business and Markets.** To improve the competitiveness of woodland businesses and promote the development of new or improved markets for sustainable woodland products and ecosystem services where this will deliver identifiable public benefits, nationally or locally, including the reduction of carbon emissions.

The Delivery Plan (2008-2012), developed by the Forestry Commission and Natural England on behalf of both Defra and wider government, translates the Strategy into

action and results on the ground. It is a national plan that overarches the nine Regional Forestry Frameworks. The aim of the Delivery Plan is to develop synergy with the Regional Forestry Frameworks and to establish evidence, policy direction and national programmes to help facilitate regional and local delivery.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/forestry/strategy.htm>

2.3.2 South West Regional Forest Framework

The South West Regional Framework was delivered in 2005 and sets out a framework of themes, aims and objectives (Figure C2.2) to deliver national forest policy as well as delivering other South West regional strategies such as the South West region's Integrated Regional Strategy "Just Connect". The South West Regional Forestry Framework is set within the context of 'Just Connect' and shows how woodland and forests, and the wider sector can help take forward the region's objectives. In parallel, the SW Forestry Regional Framework aims to show how woods and forests can support the Region's Sustainable Development Framework and also identifies where woodland and forests can help deliver a number of the South West's topic based strategies focused around, for example sport, culture, biodiversity, renewable energy and economics. The Framework is also an integral part of developing future land management options and incentives in the region

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/southwest-rwff>

2.3.3 Keepers of Time

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

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

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

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/keepersoftime>

THEME	AIM	OBJECTIVES	THEME	AIM	OBJECTIVES	THEME	AIM	OBJECTIVES	THEME	AIM	OBJECTIVES
CROSS CUTTING	Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the impact of climate change on woodlands and other habitats Use woodlands to help mitigate the wider impact of climate change Reduce flood flows and conserve soil Contribute to renewable energy Substitute local wood for high energy materials in construction 	LIVELIHOODS	Increase volume of wood consumed in SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase awareness/ potential for local wood to contribute to sustainable development Increase opportunities for local wood use in construction Demonstrate sustainable management of woods Improve quality of region's timber Maintain critical mass in the sector 	QUALITY OF LIFE	Sustainable Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise profile of woods with key audiences (See Cross cutting theme) More new woodland through planning process Continued delivery of Community Forest Plans Community forestry more widely adopted in SW Ensure forestry's role in rural development is fully understood and applied 	NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT	Protect natural resources and biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect, improve and manage ASNW and veteran trees Restore open ground BAP habitats Attain favourable condition of 95% of SSSIs by 2010 Reverse the decline in woodland bird species Promote resilience to climate change (see Cross Cutting theme) Protect natural resources
	Woodland management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand better owners' barriers to woodland management Understand better the condition of woods in the region Increase the number of owners making informed decisions about their woods Increase the area of woodland in management 		Increase woodfuel installations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure learning & knowledge transfer in the region Better knowledge and understanding of potential for woodfuel Increased installed capacity 			More people enjoying woodland			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase area of locally accessible woodland Improve quality of access Increase number of visits to woods Excluded groups making better use of local woods Communities actively involved in managing and owning woods Woods and forests helping people develop healthier lifestyles Greater use of woods for education and culture
	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More targeted and effective messages about woods and forests role in the region Better information and evidence Better joint working within the sector Better representation by the sector in the region Closely aligned investment to achieve public benefits Closer integration of woods with broader land management Excellence and innovation in integrated land management Keep abreast of public opinion regarding woods and forests 		Woodlands and leisure/ tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find ways to re-direct tourism revenues to owners Link up & jointly promote region's woodland tourism assets SW Woods promoted as destination Contribute to sustainable tourism 		More people enjoying woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase area of locally accessible woodland Improve quality of access Increase number of visits to woods Excluded groups making better use of local woods Communities actively involved in managing and owning woods Woods and forests helping people develop healthier lifestyles Greater use of woods for education and culture 		Landscape culture & heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance landscapes through woods and forests Woods used as resource and to inspire for historical/ cultural links Safeguard, promote and manage historic assets in woods
	Environmental Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better understanding of how environment and economy can support each other in woods 		Knowledge and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure flow of new entrants Link regional and national training development Raise skill/ knowledge level of owners More opportunities for new business development 						

Figure C2.2 SW Regional Framework Themes, Aims & Objectives

2.4 FC Local level plans & strategies

Forest Design Plans

Forest Design Plans (FDPs) set out the long term strategic objectives for management of the Dorset woodlands and encompass relevant national strategy and policy. The first FDPs were originally consulted upon and approved during 2002. As part of the England Forest Strategy, the Forestry Commission has a clear aspiration to involve communities in order to achieve sustainable forest management and gain public confidence and support for the benefits of well-managed woods and forests. Thus public participation has been key in developing the FDPs both in terms of influencing the long-term strategy and in undertaking FDP revisions.

New Forest District Deer Management Plan (2006)

The New Forest District Deer Management Plan (2006) sets out how the Forestry Commission proposes to manage the four main deer species (Fallow, Roe, Sika and Red deer) found on the FC Estate.

2.5 Other Plans & Strategies

The Dorset Trees, Woods and Forest Strategy

The Dorset Trees, Woods and Forest Strategy has been compiled by the Dorset Woodlink Project and provides the first countywide tree, woodland and forest initiative in Dorset. The Strategy was developed with reference to relevant regional, national and international strategies and policies and is intended to inform and influence local decision makers including woodland owners and managers. It includes a list of recommendation and priority actions to ensure that Dorset's trees, woods and forests provide a variety of benefits to the people of Dorset.

Dorset & Wiltshire Biodiversity Strategies

Local Biodiversity Strategies stem from The 1992 Rio Convention and the subsequent launch of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan in 1994. Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) enable the UK BAP priorities to be translated to a local level, while also including species and habitats that are of a local, but not national importance and thus do not appear on the UK BAP. LBAPs aim to provide a clear focus for conservation in their local area, prioritising future action and setting targets against which progress can be measured. The Forestry Commission is a partner organisation in delivering LBAP targets.

http://www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/iqs/sid.06985940004712744803610/the_dorset_biodiversity_strategy.html

<http://www.biodiversitywiltshire.org.uk/WiltshireBAP/Default.aspx>

AONB Management Plans

Significant areas of the Dorset and South Wiltshire FC Estate lie within either the Cranborne Chase or Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). AONBs are nationally important protected landscapes. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 confirmed the significance of AONBs and created improved arrangements for their management. Section 85 places a statutory duty on all 'relevant authorities' to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty when discharging any function affecting lands in AONBs.

AONB Management Plans provide a framework for the conservation and enhancement of AONBs and to guide activities that might affect the AONB.

<http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/partnership/dorset-aonb-partnership/33-management-plan.html>

http://www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk/whats_new/publications.asp

C3 Forests & Woodlands

Our aspiration.....

Delivering world class sustainable woodland management that can transform landscapes and habitats and contributes to sustaining the British timber industry and the economy of Dorset & South Wiltshire.

3.1 The Dorset & South Wiltshire Woodlands

1.1.1 Background

The Dorset & South Wiltshire Woodlands cover 7875 hectares spread over an area stretching from the River Avon in the east and extending to Dorchester in the west, as far north as the edge of Salisbury and southwards to the Purbeck coast. They form three distinctive character areas based upon their soils and proximity to local populations as described in Section C1.1: -

- ◆ East Dorset Woodlands
- ◆ Purbeck Heath Woodlands
- ◆ Cranborne Chase & North Dorset Woodlands

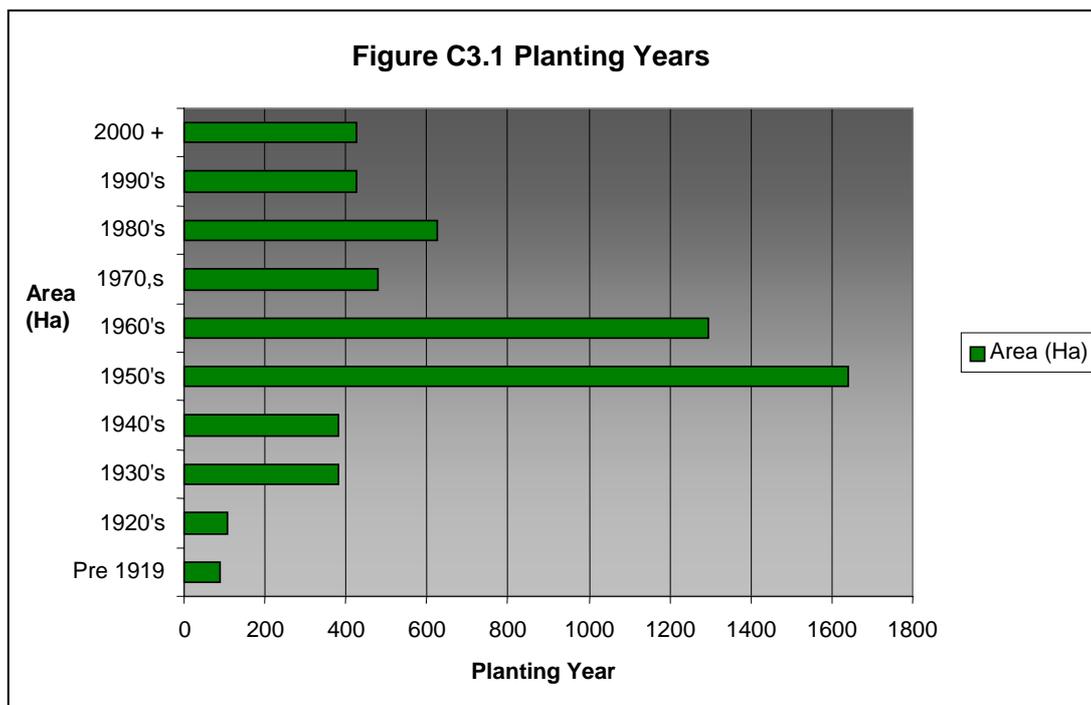
Due to their geographical distribution, the woodlands are managed across two beats - The Ringwood Beat and Wareham Beat ([Map C3-1](#)). The woodland blocks are a mixture of freehold and leasehold tenures ([Map C3-2](#)) which influence the way in which they can be managed. For example, the terms of some leasehold woods place restrictions on recreational access or the extent of habitat restoration. Further details regarding their history, geology & soils, species, productivity and conservation importance are given below.

3.1.2 History

The FC Dorset forests and woodlands have their origins in wartime and post war Forest policy when large tracts of land or existing woodlands were acquired and planted to safeguard the national need for timber. The First World War with its demands for wood for trench warfare together with problems of sustaining wartime imports had drained the Country's timber reserves. A State organisation was seen as the most effective way of co-ordinating a reforestation plan to meet the timber needs of Britain. Thus the Forestry Commission was set up in 1919 to develop and promote afforestation and the production of timber. Stocks were so depleted that the new commission was given a good deal of freedom to acquire land and plant trees. Cheap land prices in the 1920's saw large scale land acquisition and planting of blanket conifers.

The Second World War placed a heavy burden on timber stocks to supply home markets. During the War the Commission produced more than 51 million cubic feet of wood but even so 90% of timber used in the war effort came from private estates. Once the War was over restoring the forest estate became a priority for the Commission and there was a marked increase in the acquisition of felled or derelict woodlands, many of which were planted with broadleaves. This was probably the origin of the scattered woodlands of the Cranborne Chase and North Dorset. However, there was also a demand for home grown food and not surprisingly forestry started to repeatedly clash with agricultural interests, which led to the afforestation of land, which was unsuitable for crops. This is the reason behind much of the heathland afforestation across the East Dorset and Purbeck woodlands.

As mechanism and investment in timber increased, the 1950's, 60's and 70's saw dramatic surges in forest expansion and output. The majority of Forest expansion in Dorset can be attributable to this time with stock maps showing significant planting in the 50's and 60's (Figure C3.1). Forest Policy at the time was to drain and plant every possible square inch of land and little sympathy was given to preserving existing habitats or linkages - the only real break in forest structure was a result of forest fires or windblow.



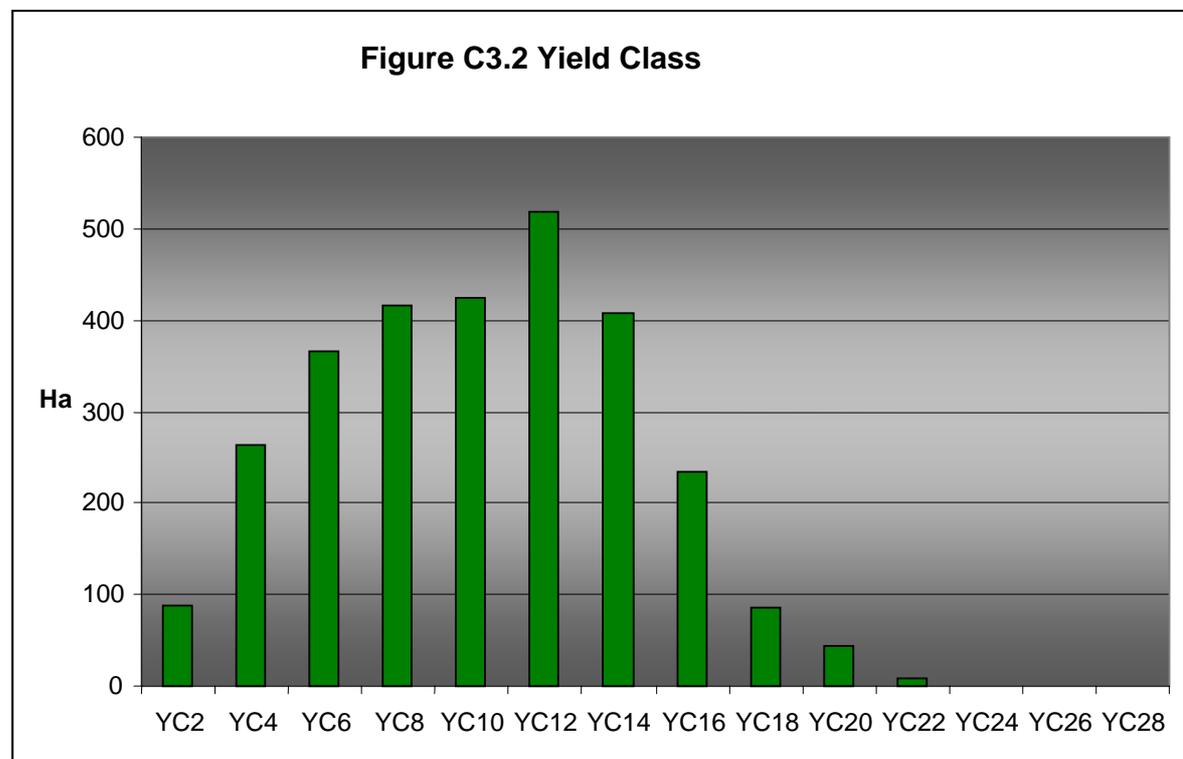
Through the 1980's the Commission's management policies and lack of environmental awareness were receiving heavy criticism. However the Commission sought to address its critics and by the 1990's the balance had shifted towards multi-purpose forestry balancing the demands of commercial production, recreation and conservation. This shift continues to evolve and is expressed today in the England Trees and Woodland Framework (ETWF). The evidence of this shift can be seen on the ground throughout the Dorset Forests and woodlands. Since the early 1990's, Forest Design Plans have helped to start the process of restructuring the forest landscape, increasing the recreational enjoyment for woodland users, restoring PAWs and producing an interlinking mosaic of habitats. Funding and investment has

helped to restore valuable habitats and the process of improving biodiversity is likely to be on-going.

However, the management and development of our Dorset forests and woodland have always been shaped and influenced by forest policy and historic events. There are likely to be new and sometimes unforeseen challenges in the years to come. The impacts of climate change, the outcome of the Study of Public Forest Estate, the new Open Habitats Policy and juggling resources in an ever tightening economic climate may yet all have their part to play!

3.1.3 Geology & Soils

The soil types and underlying geology give rise to two distinct forest types. The heathland forests of East Dorset and Purbeck typically lie on the Greensand and are most suited to pine species with Scot's Pine and Corsican Pine predominating. The rather impoverished, dry soils support relatively low yield classes (Figure C3.2) but this does vary significantly across individual sites.



The chalky soils of the Cranborne Chase Woodlands are well suited to broadleaves and generally support species such as beech, ash, hazel as well as a range of conifer species including spruce, larch and fir.

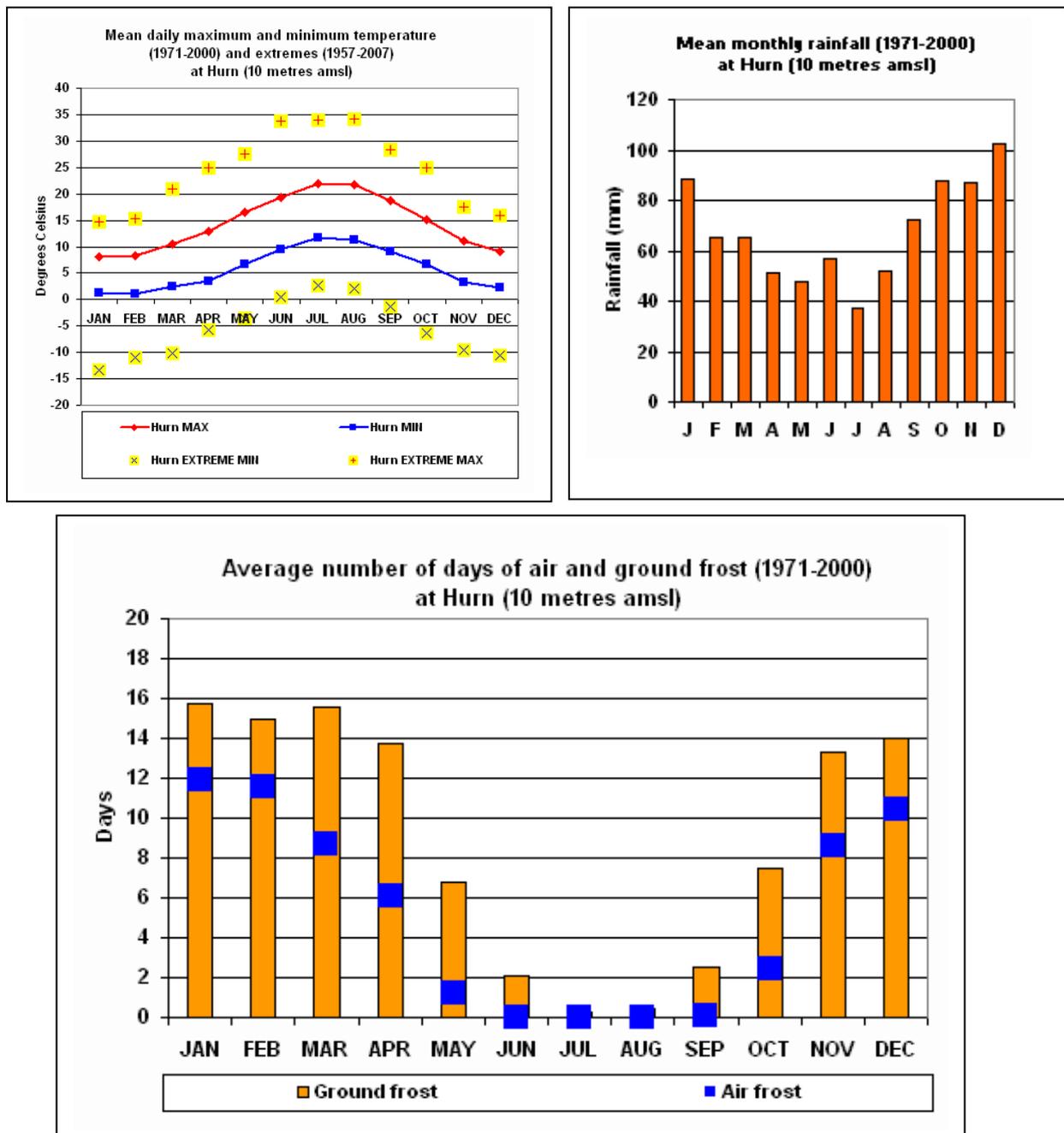
Queen's Copse is one of the few woodlands that is situated on clay and supports a range of species ranging from broadleaf including small leaved lime. Hazel and Sweet Chestnut as well as conifer species such as Douglas Fir, Grand Fir and Western Hemlock.

Parts of the woodlands of Cranborne Chase and North Dorset and a few areas within East Dorset are shown on the Ancient Woodland inventory (Map C3-3). There is now a move in these woodlands to restore Plantation on Ancient Woodland sites (PAWs) back to native woodland.

3.1.4 Climate

The nearest weather station is located at Hurn. Statistics for this station are shown in Figure C3.3.

Figure C3.3: Climate Statistics For Hurn



(Source: Meteorological Office)

3.1.5 Tree Species & Habitats

There is a move through implementation of Forest Design Plans to break up the structure of the Dorset Woodlands and restore a variety of habitat types. [Figure C3.4](#) shows the current tree species composition while [Figure C3.5](#) shows the current and future habitat composition.

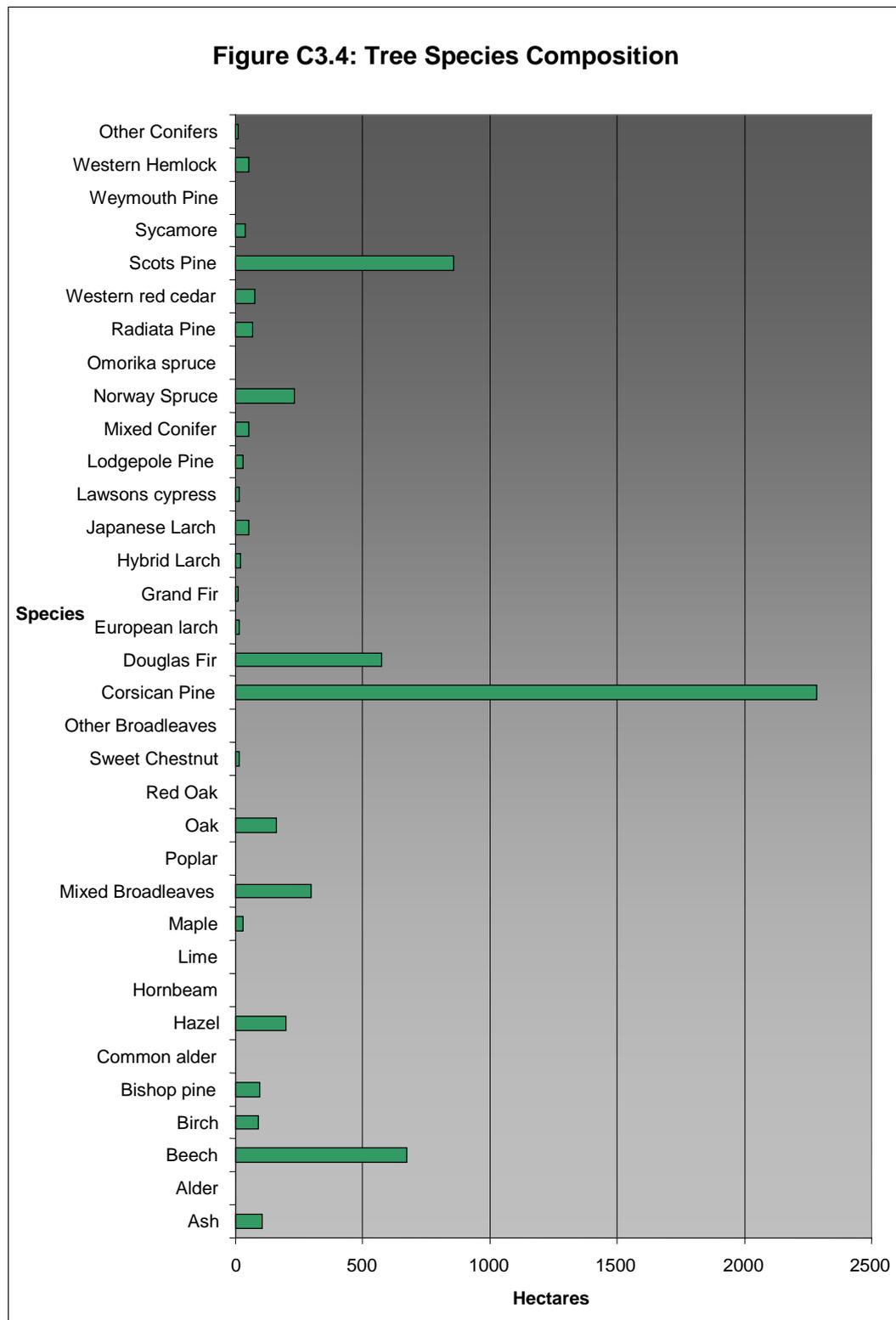
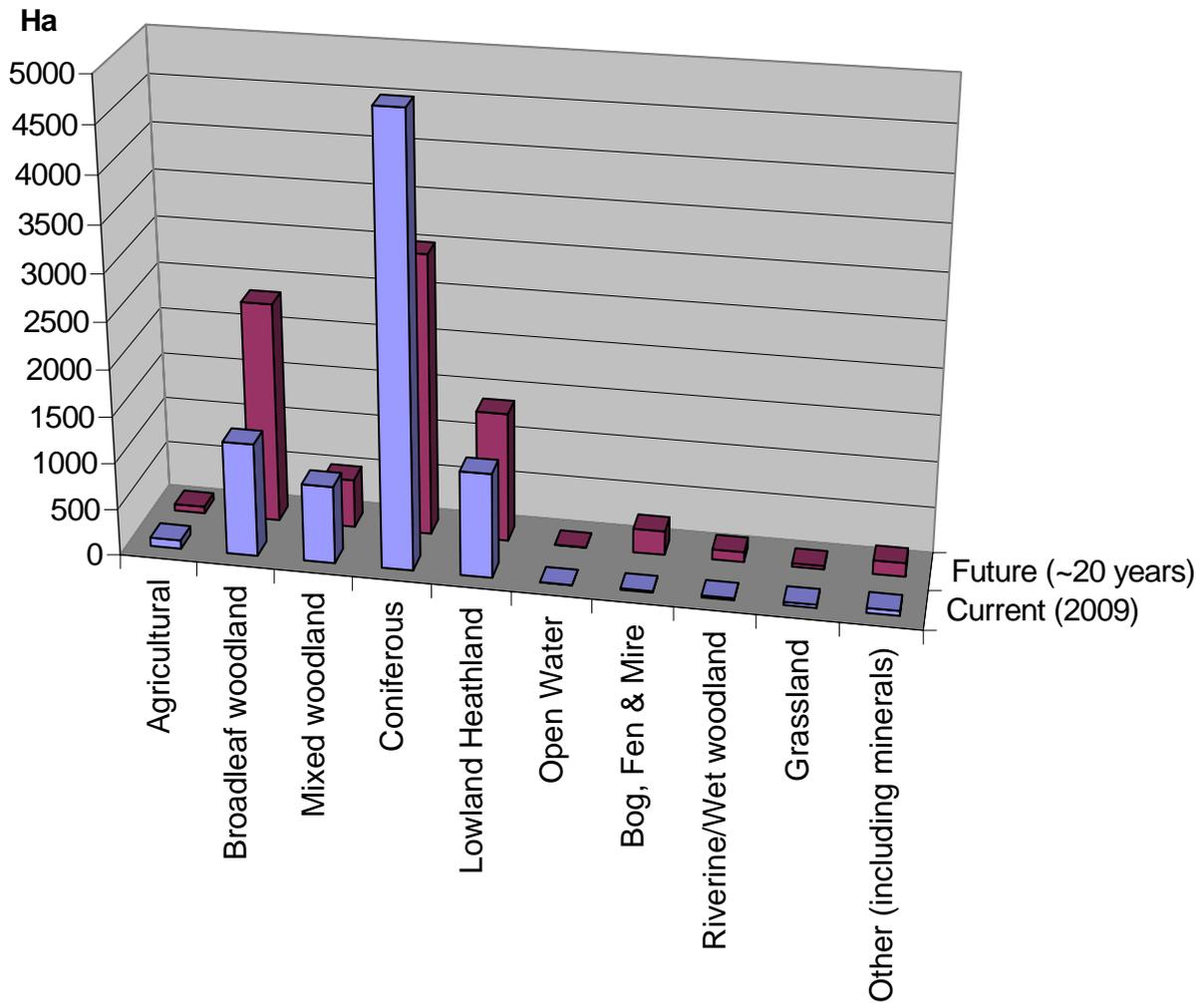


Figure C3.5: Current & Future Habitats



Data extracted from SCDB (Sept 2009) & Forest Design Plan Concept Layers (Sept 2009)

3.1.6 Designated Sites

The importance of the landscape and ecological diversity of the Dorset Woodlands is recognised in a number of statutory and non-statutory designations ([Map C3-4](#)) Management Plans, agreed with Natural England are in place for all SSSIs. Management plans, agreed with English Heritage are also in place for all Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

3.2 Forest Operations

3.2.1 Forest Design Plans

Forest Design Plans (FDPs) set out the long term strategic objectives for management of the Dorset woodlands and encompass relevant national strategy and policy (refer to section C2). The first FDPs were originally consulted upon and approved during 2002. As part of the England Forest Strategy, the Forestry Commission has a clear aspiration to involve communities in order to achieve sustainable forest management and gain public confidence and support for the benefits of well-managed woods and forests. Thus public participation has been key in developing the FDPs both in terms of influencing the long-term strategy and in undertaking FDP revisions. Public participation has taken place through:

- ◆ The Forest Design Plan (FDP) Forum involving statutory consultees and other key stakeholders, local experts and critics who could raise and debate 'expert' issues in relation to forest management and development of the FDP.
- ◆ Community Engagement and feedback through public exhibitions, guided walks, presentations and question and answer sessions out in the Forest.

Getting the support of the Forest Design Plan Forum has been essential in gaining the support of local communities and allowing work on the ground to progress in the knowledge that our aims and objectives are largely supported and conflict minimised.

The Dorset and South Wiltshire Woodlands are covered by three Forest Design Plans ([Map C3-5](#)):

- ◆ East Dorset Woodlands
- ◆ Purbeck Heath Woodlands
- ◆ Cranborne & North Dorset Woodlands

Each individual woodland block within the Forest Design Plan is allocated a:

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

Felling and Habitat Management Map - The Felling and Habitat Management Map sets out the timing and shape of individual felling areas (coupes) that will either be replanted or restored to important non-woodland habitats. It also identifies areas not

to be clear felled, but managed using natural regeneration or open habitat management techniques.

Restocking Plan/Future habitat Map - The Restocking Plan Map shows the proposed replanting pattern and woodland structure resulting from the operations associated with the Felling and habitat management that would lead to the progression of the Design Concept.

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

NOTE FOR FC STAFF

Electronic copies of the Forest Design Plans can be found at
<..\..\PLANNING\P4 Policy & Plans New Forest District\P4.6 Forest Design Plans>

3.2.2 Operational Activities & the Working Block System

Operations carry on throughout the year as shown in Table C3-2. In order to minimise disturbance, woodlands are worked on a 5-year rotation as shown in [Map C3-6](#). From time to time “special works” need to be carried out outside the Working Block timetable such as works funded under specialist projects to restore habitats and/or enable SSSI units to return to favourable condition. The working block system has been designed to ensure a consistent supply of timber over the five year period and to minimise disruption to public access by ensuring that alternative woodlands are available for use as work progresses around the forest. Conifers and younger broadleaf stands are generally thinned on a five year cycle whilst mature broadleaves are generally thinned on a ten year cycle.

3.2.3 Operational Site Assessment (OSAs)

Operational Site Assessments (OSAs) are detailed site plans, drawn up for each woodland prior to work taking place and are a key tool in delivering the objectives of the Forest Design Plan (FDP) (refer to [Section 2.4](#)). The OSA contains details of site features relating to archaeology, conservation and public access and is an essential tool for identifying and addressing any environmental issues and sensitivities. It provides an essential link between the broad objectives of the Forest Design Plan and the detailed practical issues relevant to operational delivery and implementation on the ground.

An operations map bringing together all the practical issues relating to the woodland and the required interventions comprise an essential part of the OSA and copies of this document must be given to all staff and contractors involved in the delivery of FDP objectives. Further guidance on preparing OSAs can be found in [Part D](#).

Table C3-2: Operational Activities within Woodlands

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Timber Harvesting	Conifers and stands of young hardwoods												
Timber Harvesting				Mature Hardwoods									
Ride Restoration													
Ground Preparation													
Planting													
Chemical Weeding													
Hand Weeding													
Cleaning													
Ride management (swiping)													
Fencing													
Protection (Deer control)													

3.3 Issues and Proposed Policies & Actions to meet management objectives for the Dorset & South Wiltshire Woodlands

Woodland Management Objectives

1. To transform Forests & Woodlands in accordance with Forest Design Plans to enhance the special nature conservation and landscape qualities through appropriate habitat restoration and management.
2. To work in partnership with stakeholders in the revision of Forest Design Plans.
3. To manage sustainable timber production from our Forests through the generation of reliable production forecasts and provision of a regular supply of good quality timber to the market place.
4. To carry out targeted monitoring to ensure that our Forests & Woodlands are being managed in a sustainable way and meeting our management objectives in relation to UKWAS.
5. To create a woodland environment that promotes the enjoyment of woodlands for recreation within freehold woods and where opportunities allow within leasehold woods.

Issue 1 Managing Forests & Woodlands in accordance with UKWAS

Policy C3-1: We will manage the Dorset & South Wiltshire Woodlands in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard and UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS)

The UK Forestry Standard sets out the standards for the sustainable management of all forests and woodlands in the UK and guides the methods and protocols used in everyday forest management and monitoring. It also provides the basis from which UKWAS was developed. The UK Forestry Standard is supported by a number of instruments and standard notes relating to:

- ◆ New woodlands
- ◆ Tree felling and replanting
- ◆ Plant health and forest reproductive materials
- ◆ Information of forestry practice
- ◆ Approval mechanisms
- ◆ Environmental Impact Assessment
- ◆ Procedures for consultation
- ◆ Monitoring national performance

The international timber products market is increasingly demanding assurance about the quality and environmental impacts of woodland management. The UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) is a certification standard which sets out the requirements which woodland owners and managers and certification authorities can use to certify woodland management in the United Kingdom. The Forestry Commission nationally has gained UKWAS certification and it is the duty of every Forest District (FD) to uphold UKWAS standards in order to maintain the accreditation.

UKWAS recognises that one of the strengths of UK woodland management is its diversity. Therefore, there is broad scope within the standard for managers to decide on appropriate objectives for each woodland. The standard generally prescribes what must be achieved overall but leaves it to the owner/manager to decide how this is best done. UKWAS addresses specific aspects of woodland management and types of operation, notably:

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

Certification to UKWAS is subject to periodic review and monitoring. Certification is valid for up to 5 years and is subject to periodic surveillance to ensure continued conformance with the standard.

Actions

- i. Ensure all actions to meet UKWAS guidelines and audits are implemented*

Issue 2 Transformation of Woodland in accordance with Forest Design Plans

Policy C3-2: We will progress the transformation of the Dorset & South Wiltshire woodlands in accordance with the Forest Design Plan, following agreed generic management prescriptions.

The Forest Design Plan indicates a transformation of the current woodlands to a new mosaic of:

- ◆ plantation conifer, broadleaf & mixed woodland
- ◆ Restored PAWs
- ◆ natural or near natural woodland
- ◆ heathland & open forest habitats
- ◆ wetland habitats developed along river and stream corridors

The main methods for undertaking the transformation are likely to involve:

- ◆ Thinning & harvesting
- ◆ Natural Regeneration
- ◆ Fence re-alignments to facilitate or restrict grazing by commoning stock or deer.

Some transformations can be achieved relatively quickly but most will require a series of carefully planned interventions to achieve the end result. Even when the habitat structure is achieved, it may take some time to accrue the ecological interest from surrounding areas. Predicting this speed of adaptation is difficult and experience is limited. The FC favours a patient approach, working in sympathy with nature's pace and felling areas when it is economically sensible in preference to more expensive, rapid change. However, in some instances it may be necessary to clear trees from heaths, mires and pasture woodlands before the maximum economic value of the timber is achieved.

Relevant Specifications and Plans for undertaking Woodland Transformations

- ❖ New Forest FD Thinning Plan
- ❖ Transformation to wooded heath
- ❖ Ancient Woodland Guidance
- ❖ Debris Dam Policy
- ❖ Pollution Control Plan
- ❖ Fire Plan
- ❖ Chemical Reduction Strategy
- ❖ Management of Veteran Trees
- ❖ Access to timber stands/use & reinstatement of Forest rides
- ❖ OSA Guidance

Key Actions

- i. Protect & enhance veteran trees (refer to Issue 7)*
- ii. Increase PAWS under positive management for biodiversity in accordance with FDPs, Keepers of Time or successive guidance documents.*
- iii. Manage all woodland operations in accordance with UKWAS standards*

Issue 3 Timber Production

Policy C3-5: We will continue to meet our 5 yearly timber production forecasts based upon long term Forest Design Plans and at the same time respond to any changes in market opportunities or competing forest interests.

Timber harvesting is often the principal activity that delivers the Forest Design Plan objectives either as part of the process to transforming the woodland to other habitats or in maintaining the woodland itself. Harvesting operations follow the 5 year working block cycle and seek to deliver the detailed prescriptions identified in the OSA. Computer modelling of the FDPs enable production forecasts to predict the volumes, dimensions and species of timber that will be produced in each 5 year period (refer to Table C3-3). This information forms part of national published figures and provides a commitment to the timber trade on which they can plan future investment in processing.

Table C3-3: Timber Production Forecasts

Vol to 7cm Top Dia in m ³	Period	All Spp	Conifer	Pines	Spruce	Larch	Douglas Fir	Other Con	Broadle aves
	2007-11	95,753	80,551	54,121	5,183	1,596	13,898	5,753	15,185
	2012-16	102,378	87,333	61,035	4,082	1,822	14,727	5,667	15,045
	2017-21	134,574	114,983	84,561	6,359	1,798	16,887	5,378	19,591
	2022-26	104,005	88,576	63,355	4,706	1,882	14,501	4,132	15,429

Note:

1. Based on production forecast run 3rd April 2006 and the FDP's approved at that time
2. Volume is for the Forest District; approx 50% will come from the Crown lands; 50% from Dorset.



Over the past twenty years there has been a sharp decline in the number of sawmills across the country due to the struggle to compete with imported timber or a change in production to favour the processing of recycled material. Today the sawmills that remain are either small, specialising in supplying local niche markets, or are highly mechanised with a clear focus in competing with imported timber. The former often process larger diameter timber and/or the minor species whereas the latter are reliant on a more

uniform product supplied from the principal timber species. Difficulties in marketing significant volumes of the minor species (e.g. Western Red Cedar, Lawson Cypress, Silver & Grand Fir, Redwood) can result in delaying FDP actions. [MapC3-7](#) identifies the principal sawmills that process timber from the FC Dorset Woodlands.

Harvesting operations are either worked by the Forestry Commission where the timber is sold directly to the mill or via timber merchants who buy the timber standing and organise their own harvesting. The vast majority of timber is now worked by mechanised harvesting equipment that enables the fast and efficient felling of trees far more safely than manual felling by chainsaw. However chainsaw felling is still used to fell the larger diameter timber, especially the large hardwoods.

Timber production requires a flexible approach in order to respond to:

- ◆ marketing opportunities and customers needs
- ◆ restoration projects that require timber to be felled outside normal thinning programmes
- ◆ ongoing site constraints such as weather conditions, conservation and recreation restrictions.

Key Actions

- i. Meet commitments to deliver timber in accordance with the FC 5 year national forecast*
- ii. Restocking in accordance with Forest Design Plans*
- iii. Look for opportunities to develop niche markets for our woodland products*

Issue 4 Protecting & Enhancing biodiversity (also refer to Section C4 - Open Habitats)

Policy C3-6: We will continue to carry out our obligations as land managers to protect and enhance our designated sites. We will seek to improve and maintain designated sites to deliver favourable condition of SSSI units.

The Forestry Commission as land managers have an obligation under Section 28G of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to take reasonable steps to protect and enhance the SSSI. Under a Public Service Agreement (PSA), 95% by area of all SSSIs is required to be in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition by 2010.

However, not all SSSI units lying within our woodlands are currently in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition. Thus a number of actions are required to improve the condition of these units as set out below.

Key Actions

- i. Restore and improve habitat linkages through the Forest Design Plans*
- ii. Removal of invasive exotic and alien species as funding allows.*
- iii. Restore open habitats within woodlands (refer to section C4 Open Habitats)*
- iv. Introduction of grazing to heathland & mire systems (refer to C4 Open Habitats)*
- v. Raise profile of our restoration and enhancement projects*

Policy C3-7: We will operate within the law with regard to European Protected Species (EPS) through the use of good practice and appropriate mitigation wherever possible

Following a change made to the Habitats Regulations in August 2007, the legal protection given to European Protected Species (EPS) in England and Wales has increased. Amongst the woodland species to receive greater protection are all of the bat species, otter, common dormouse, great crested newt, sand lizard and smooth snake. It is now an offence (even when carrying out a lawful operation) to:

- ◆ deliberately capture, injure or kill an EPS animal
- ◆ deliberately pick, cut or destroy an EPS plant
- ◆ deliberately take or destroy the eggs of an EPS animal
- ◆ deliberately disturb animals of an EPS significantly (i.e. to affect the ability of a significant group of animals to survive, breed, rear or nurture young, or to affect the local distribution or abundance of that species)
- ◆ Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an EPS.

Defra, FC, and other partners have been developing the means of implementing these changes and embedding them within the forestry sector. FC is committed to increasing the sustainable management of England's woodlands, not least for the biodiversity protected by the Habitats Regulations. As such it has worked with partners to ensure that this amendment is as far as possible drawn into good practice

guidance for sustainable forestry, rather than being seen as an additional regulatory measure

Actions

- i. Ensure that the GIS database is up to date with regard to EPS records for Dorset & S. Wiltshire***
- ii. Commission specialist surveys for EPS where required***
- iii. Provide staff/operators with appropriate training and awareness relating to EPS and good practice***
- iv. Ensure adequate forward planning for Working Blocks & OSAs to take into account the guidelines/working practices required to safeguard European Protected Species***
- v. Make EPS licence application where required***

Policy C3-8: We will continue to manage our woodlands to take account of BAP species and specific BAP targets in accordance with relevant FC actions set out in the Biodiversity Action Plan for Dorset.

Woodlands, particularly those compartments which still support ancient semi-natural woodland and heathland potentially host priority BAP species and habitats. The Forestry Commission/Forest Enterprise is a partner of the Biodiversity Action Plans for Hampshire, Wiltshire & Dorset and is responsible for the implementation of a number of actions both at a regional and district level.

Key Actions

- i. Collect monitoring data for key BAP species and make available for reporting purposes***
- ii. Monitoring and protection of Bats through implementation of FC Bat Policy & local guidance***
- iii. Improve BAP habitats through on-going habitat maintenance & restoration through the FDP and OSA processes***
- iv. Support & assist national initiatives to reverse the decline in woodland bird species***

Further details regarding BAP species & habitats can be found at www.ukbap.org.uk

Issue 5 Removal & Control of Pest species & Exotics

Policy C3-9: Non –native trees, shrubs and other exotic or pest species will be systematically removed or controlled within habitats where they present an invasive threat to the natural ecology.

A number of exotic plant species are found within our Dorset woodlands as shown in Table C3-4. Species such as Rhododendron, American Strawberry (*Gaultheria shallon*), Turkey Oak and Red Oak, have been introduced as a result of natural colonisation or deliberate planting. It is considered that they can detract from the natural species diversity of woodland habitats and take up space that could otherwise be used for native species. In recent years large scale programmes have particularly focused on the removal of Rhododendron.

Table C3-4: Plant Exotics/Pest Species found in Dorset/S Wiltshire Woodlands

Exotic	Characteristics
Rhododendron	A highly invasive shrub introduced from Asia as a garden ornamental shrub. Abundant in private grounds throughout the New Forest and surrounding area. It has negligible nature conservation or browse value. Its provides dense shade which excludes ground flora. Its litter and leachates also have a sterilising effect on the soil.
Gaultheria shallon	Invasive ericaceous shrub from NW America. Spreads by a system of underground rhizomes. Its leathery leaves resist penetration by herbicides and once established it dominates the ground and understorey layers of wood and heath.
Turkey Oak	Introduced into Britain from the Balkans around 1750. It is invasive and is usually presents as a small number of mature trees amongst a host of younger stems. It is of little timber value as it is prone to warping and shrinkage. A key host to the knopper gall. Can hybridise with native oaks thus compromising the genetic make up of native oak in the New Forest.
Red Oak	Introduced from North America as an amenity tree. Like Sweet Chestnut it does not support a rich insect or lichen community

Significant pest species Exotic/invasive

Key Actions

- i. Continue removal and respray programme for Rhododendron ponticum*
- ii. Monitor and respray sites where Gaultheria shallon has been removed and continue to look for alternative methods of treatment*
- iii. Take opportunity to tackle pest species during clear fell cycles*
- iv. Monitor location and spread of any existing or new exotic species*

Issue 6 Mammal Control

Policy C3-10: We will carry out control of deer, Grey Squirrel and rabbits where populations are causing significant damage to trees and threatening the biodiversity of a woodland.

Deer are controlled in accordance with the District Deer Management Plan. Meanwhile our Wildlife Rangers monitor the threat posed by other mammal species such as rabbits & squirrels and carry out control programmes accordingly.

Key Actions

- i. Carry out annual deer cull in relation to deer population monitoring*
- ii. Carry out grey squirrel control programmes as necessary in accordance with District Squirrel policy*
- iii. Keep up to date on latest guidance on squirrel control methods from Forest Research.*
- iv. Carry out control on rabbits and other vermin as required.*

Issue 7: Veteran Trees

Policy C3-11: We will take action to protect our veteran trees and increase the deadwood resource within our woodlands

Several of our Dorset Woodland blocks contain remnants of ancient woodlands or are PAWs sites where the occasional veteran/ancient tree has survived previous clearance of the woodland. These ancient trees are often full of character and form a valuable contribution to the history and ecological diversity of our woodlands.

Key Actions:

- i. Work in partnership with the Ancient Tree Forum/Woodland Trust to record the location of veteran trees on FC land.*
- ii. Ensure the location and details of important veteran trees are recorded on our GIS databases*
- iii. Draw up local guidelines which set out the protocols for the treatment and maintenance of veteran trees*
- iv. Follow national and local guidance on treatment of deadwood during thinning operations and treatment of fallen timber*

Issue 8: Reconciling forestry & recreational issues

Policy C-12: We will manage operations to ensure the safety of the public and to minimise disturbance to recreational activities.

Woodlands are worked using a 5-year working block system to minimise the impact to a particular area. Larger forest blocks may be divided up into two or more discreet blocks. Forestry operations have implications for recreational use in terms of access, health & safety and visual impact. The OSA system is a key mechanism for planning operations to take account of recreational issues.

Key Actions

- i. Work woodlands in accordance with working block system and OSA process*

- ii. Reinstatement of rides and tracks following completion of works*
- iii. On dedicated land implement a "Discretionary Restriction" or "Outline Direction" to restrict public access on safety grounds when required in accordance with National Forestry Commission Operational Guidance Bulletin (OGB30) Access Management Under CROW.*
- iv. Enhance the design of forest areas in relation to recreational issues as part of FDP process*

Issue 9 Monitoring

Policy C3-13: We will carry out appropriate and targeted monitoring to ensure and/or demonstrate that our management techniques and prescriptions are achieving their objectives

Through the Forest Design Plan process a number of monitoring methods have been devised to track the implementation of FDP objectives. In addition, a variety of monitoring projects have been carried out over the years. However it is difficult to appreciate the true value of this monitoring or use the results to make informed management decisions because much of the monitoring has been carried out in a piece meal fashion or the results have not been collated or are hard to locate. Lack of resources has also meant that monitoring has not always been given a high priority. Due to the FDP process, UKWAS and other projects, monitoring is now taking on a more significant role and the usefulness of good, targeted monitoring to inform management decisions is becoming more appreciated.

Key Actions

- i. Monitoring FDP Objectives*
- ii. UKWAS Monitoring (see Issue 1)*
- iii. Seek collaborative partnerships with Forest Research and/or universities to assist in the analysis of data collected to date*
- iv. Feed data into FC National Monitoring Programmes as required.*

Issue 10 Plant Health

Policy C3-14: We will continue to monitor the health of our timber crops and other key species, carry out surveys as required and take any necessary measures to control the spread of disease following advice from Forest Research and FEFRA

Any forest is susceptible to pest and disease outbreaks. It is also considered that climate change may exacerbate conditions favourable to the spread of disease or result in increased incidences of new pests and diseases. In recent years Red Band Needle Blight and other fungal diseases including *phytophthora* have been on the increase and outbreaks of *hylobius* (Bark Beetle) have required treatment. Therefore increased vigilance and awareness is required at all times.

Key Actions

- i. Support of national monitoring schemes for specific diseases*
- ii. Remaining vigilant to new outbreaks of disease or pests and call in advice as required.*
- iii. Uphold moratorium on the planting of Corsican Pine and follow management guidance on the control of Red Band Needle Blight and other pests as advice emerges.*

Issue 11 Addressing Climate Change

Policy C3-15: We will take note of research and national advice regarding climate change and take a proactive approach in implementing measures to adapt to climate change

Forest crops being planted today will potentially not be ready for harvesting for the next 50 to 200 years or more depending on the species. If scenarios for climate change take hold this could have serious consequences for the crops that are being planted today. The issues of summer drought and wet winter ground conditions that already impact operations could potentially become much worse. Forest research is carrying out work on the impacts of climate change upon forestry and guidance is starting to appear which needs to be noted and acted on where appropriate.

Key Actions

- i. Review species & provenance choice during replanting*
- ii. Alter annual cycle of management as required to address seasonal shifts in climate patterns.*
- iii. Use methods that preserve greater quantities of soil carbon (e.g. stump mulching instead of de-stumping)*
- iv. Keep abreast of forestry impacts and potential mitigation through FDP process and advice from Forest Research.*

Issue 12 Wood fuel

Policy B3-16: We will support the development of local wood fuel initiatives

The Forestry Commission is working through our network of woodfuel co-ordinators, the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), Regional Development Agencies and the Biomass Energy Centre to co-ordinate and improve knowledge and support for this important and emerging industry in line with the Woodfuel Strategy for England.

Growth in the use of woodfuel for renewable energy is dependent upon the available resource, its location and price. Small amounts of fuelwood are currently sold to

contractors through standing sales and birch clearance. However, there may be further scope to supply the woodfuel market as demand increases.

Actions

- i. Develop actions following development and implementation of national delivery plan.*

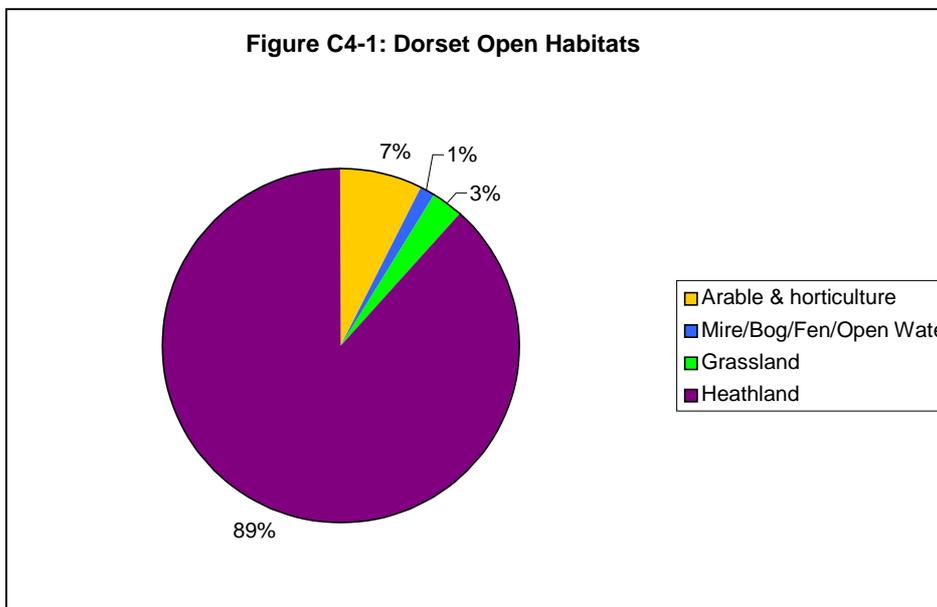
C4 OPEN HABITATS

Restoring and sustaining the area's unique mosaic of open habitats to conserve nature conservation into the future

4.1 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Dorset & South Wiltshire woodlands support a mosaic of open habitats of varying size throughout the woodland blocks covering approximately 1267 ha¹, including:

- ◆ Heathland (1120 ha)
- ◆ Mire/Bog/Fen (16 ha)
- ◆ Open Water (3 ha)
- ◆ Grassland (34 ha)
- ◆ Arable & horticultural land (94 ha)



The aim of developing these habitats is to improve the landscape and biodiversity of the woodlands as well as providing linkages to larger and more contiguous areas of open habitat, particularly designated sites.

¹ Based on analysis of SCDB – August 09

Maintaining open habitats is one of the biggest and most costly challenges with a constant battle being fought against secondary scrub and tree growth and bracken invasion through pulling, cutting, swiping, burning and spraying. The Forestry Commission has built up considerable experience of controlled burning in the New Forest and this is now being translated to Dorset where areas are deemed suitable. The establishment of grazing on many of these areas will be key to restoring and maintaining these habitats to their full ecological potential.

4.2 OPEN HABITAT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES, ISSUES, POLICIES & ACTIONS

Open Habitat Management Objectives

1. To maintain and restore a mosaic of habitats in order to support and enhance the landscape and biodiversity of our open habitats.
2. To develop the extent of open habitats in relation to emerging national and regional policy on open habitats.
3. To carry out targeted monitoring to inform management decisions and to ensure that open habitat management objectives are being achieved.

Issue 1 Protection & enhancement of designated sites

Policy C4-1: We will continue to carry out our obligations as land managers to protect designated sites.

The Forestry Commission as land managers have an obligation under Section 28G of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to take reasonable steps to protect and enhance the SSSI. Under a Public Service Agreement (PSA), 95% of the New Forest/Dorset SSSIs are required to be in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition by 2010. However, not all Heathland SSSI units are currently in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition. A number of actions are required to maintain or improve the condition of these units as highlighted below.

- i. Every effort will be made to achieve our PSA Target for Open habitats by 2010 with works prioritised to target SSSI units currently in unfavourable condition.*
- ii. Development & implementation of Management Plans for SSSI sites.*
- iii. Consultation and liaison with Natural England and other key stakeholders as required.*
- iv. Preparation of Operational Sites Assessments (OSAs) which will take into account works and impact on open habitats.*
- v. Use of GIS based data to assist in monitoring and management of open habitats.*
- vi. Networking with other heathland managers to keep abreast of new research and developments.*

Issue 2 Grazing

Policy C4-2: We will re-introduce grazing to maintain and improve the ecological condition of our heathland and mire habitats.

Maintenance of open habitats to prevent invasion by scrub, birch and bracken or to remove conifer regeneration requires costly and time consuming management operations. Grazing can make a significant contribution to the maintenance of an area as well as helping to enhance the ecological value. There are some wider issues with grazing in terms of the perception by some forest users that it can impinge on access and it is not widely supported by reptile interests. However, the benefits far out weigh the negatives and most issues can be resolved through careful management and liaison. For the success of the open habitat restoration to continue it is essential that grazing units are established where there are significant areas of open habitat requiring maintenance.

Key Actions

- i. Identify the location of grazing units through Forest Design Plans*
- ii. Seek opportunities in conjunction with major projects to derive funding for infrastructure and maintenance necessary to support grazing on heathland/mire habitats.*
- iii. Establish grazing agreements*
- iv. Work with adjacent landowners to establish larger cross boundary grazing units to improve habitat linkages.*
- v. Work with communities & Parish Councils to overcome grazing issues.*

Issue 3 Delivery of the Cut & Burn Programme

Policy C4-3: We will undertake a programme of cutting and controlled burning to maintain a succession of age structures within heathland habitats and to improve grazing.

Controlled Burning is an effective management technique for vegetation control, which provides a number of benefits for habitat management and grazing. The Forestry Commission will continue to give priority to the achievement of an agreed programme of cutting and controlled burning to promote fresh growth of gorse, heather and *molinia* and to control the re-growth of Scots Pine. Cutting is used both in conjunction with burning and as an alternative method of vegetation control. Cutting is carried out using mowing/swiping with a tractor-mounted machine or hand cutting with chainsaws, brush cutters, bow saws or loppers. Cutting is primarily used for controlling pine & birch succession, gorse, willow and general scrub management.

Key Actions

- i. Delivery of a burning program between 1st Nov to 31st March using skilled teams*
- ii. Careful location of fire traces*
- iii. Delivery of cutting programme & mowing of woody species from October to onset of Spring to tackle areas too sensitive to burn, to treat degenerate gorse and cut firebreaks/traces*
- iv. Maintain rotational cutting programme for ride edge habitats.*

Issue 4 Control of Exotics and other alien invasive species

Policy C4-4: It is our aim to control and reduce the spread of Rhododendron and other invasive, exotic species from the open habitats of Dorset and South Wiltshire.

Open habitats are susceptible to colonisation by a number of exotics and undesirable native species. Specific treatments vary from species to species but in many instances removal of non-natives is carried out using a combination of mechanical clearance grubbing out the roots with an excavator and chemical spraying.

In Dorset the key species requiring removal and control is *Rhododendron ponticum*. Rhododendron is a highly invasive shrub, which has negligible nature conservation or browse value. Its dense shade excludes ground flora while its litter and leachates have a sterilising effect on the soil. Large-scale programmes are in progress to tackle Rhododendron.

Key actions

- i. Continue control programme for Rhododendron ponticum.*
- ii. Establish control programme for Gaultheria as funding allows.*
- iii. Continue to follow developments in new technologies for treating persistent pest species and carry out trials where appropriate.*
- iv. Monitor location and spread of any existing or new exotic species.*

Policy C4-5: We will maintain open habitats using a range of techniques to control the spread of birch seedlings and other invasive native woody species and bracken onto open habitats

The restoration of open habitats continues to be threatened by the re-colonisation of birch, pine and other woody species. The survival of gorse brakes may also be endangered by over-shading, whilst heaths may be threatened by the encroachment from existing woodland edges and more widespread colonisation by wind-borne seeding.

Key actions

- i. Implement control programmes to limit the spread of birch seedlings and other invasive native woody species onto open habitats.***
- ii. Undertake scrub control and bracken spraying where necessary***
- iii. Review seasonal restrictions on the timing of treatments in relation to nesting birds e.g. Nightjar***

Issue 5 Restoration & Expansion of Open Habitats

Policy C4-6: We will continue to restore areas of open habitat identified in Forest Design Plans. Further expansion may take place in the light of the emerging FC open habitats policy and regional implementation of the policy.

Restoration of Open Habitats began in the early 1990's under the Forest and Heathland Project, which was a FC Dorset Forest initiative. The first heathland restoration took place in Hurn forest followed by Moredon Bog. This project acted as a catalyst to restore further heathland identified through Forest Design Plans. To date around 1120 hectares of heathland & wooded heath has been restored throughout the East Dorset & Purbeck Heath woodlands.

Current Forest Design Plan concept maps suggest that around another 600 hectares of open habitat is still due to be restored as crops reach their economic maturity. This figure may increase depending upon the outcomes of the Open Habitats Policy.

In recent years, attention has also been given to restoring mires (bogs). When many of the Dorset forests were first established mires were ditched and drained before being planted with trees. Now the trend is restore these mires where practical by removing the trees and blocking the drains to bring the water table back to its natural level.

In Cranborne Chase, there is also scope to restore further areas of Downland in partnership with neighbouring landowners.

Key actions

- i. Continue programme of heathland and mire restoration within SSSIs and other appropriate locations in accordance with Forest Design Plans.***
- ii. Restore areas of downland in locations specified in the Cranborne Chase and North Dorset Woodlands in accordance with Forest Design Plans.***
- iii. Monitor rates of recovery***
- iv. Where possible work with adjacent landowners to restore habitat linkages***

Issue 6 Prevention of uncontrolled fire

Policy C4-7: We will endeavour to protect our heathlands from uncontrolled fire through education programmes to inform the public of the dangers of heathland fires and by working with Dorset Fire & Rescue Service, neighbouring land owners and other relevant groups to maximise fire prevention.

Uncontrolled heathland fires can be very damaging to heathland communities and pose a danger to both to people and property. In the summer months the heathlands are vulnerable to both accidental fires and arson attacks.

Key Actions

- i. Revision and updating of the fire plan*
- ii. Working closely with local Fire & Rescue Service and Urban Heaths Partnership to prevent fires*
- iii. Work in partnership with other organisations to reduce anti-social behaviour and increase public awareness.*
- iv. Managing the structure of heathlands to help control fire through the maintenance of a diverse vegetation structure, fire breaks and good access for fire fighting.*

Issue 8 Survey, monitoring & research

Policy C4-8: Surveying and monitoring will be strategically planned to provide targeted information to help inform open habitat management decisions and address areas of particular concern.

Monitoring is an important tool to ensure that our heathland management techniques are working effectively and to steer future management. Due to finite resources, future surveying and monitoring needs to be strategically planned to provide targeted, accessible information to inform heathland management decisions. It is important that monitoring data is compiled and stored in a form that can be used by land managers.

Key actions

- i. Strategic planning of Monitoring Programme to fit with national monitoring protocols*
- ii. Review of existing monitoring data/programmes*
- iii. Continued support for student projects*
- iv. Build relationships with other bodies gathering data on the Forest*
- v. Promote exemplar, best practise*

Issue 9 Impacts of climate change on Open Habitats

Policy C4-9: We will monitor the impacts of climate change on our Open Habitats and adapt our practices as required.

Climate change has a number of potential impacts upon heathland management, particularly in relation to seasonal changes, which affect activities such as burning, where sensitive thresholds apply. For example spring seems to have been coming earlier and this is indeed reflected in the climate statistics with March showing an average temperature rise of 0.55°C between the climate averages based on data from 1961 to 1990 and 1971 to 2000. This temperature rise is resulting in an earlier nesting season and earlier emergence of reptiles from hibernation which, is already having significant implications for the window of opportunity in which to undertake the annual burn programme and other operations

Although research is emerging on the various impacts of climate change, it is not yet clear exactly what climate change scenarios will emerge and what the precise impacts will be on heathland communities will be.

Key actions

- i. Keep up to date with findings of research and national advice.*
- ii. Adapt management practises in response to climate change as necessary.*

C5 ARCHAEOLOGY & CULTURAL HERITAGE

Enhancing appreciation about
Dorset & South Wiltshire's
archaeological heritage and
preserving historic features for
future generations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Archaeological Sites

The Dorset & South Wiltshire FC Estate contains 80 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) in addition to a number of unscheduled archaeological sites ([Map C6-1](#)). The types of sites preserved are as follows:

Bowl Barrows (tumuli) - The majority SAMs on FC land are Bowl barrows (tumuli). Bowl barrows are funerary monuments dating from the late Neolithic period to the late Bronze Age with most of the examples in Dorset belonging to the period 2400-1500 BC. They were constructed as earthen or rubble mounds, sometimes ditched and either occurring in isolation or in groups. They often are found in prominent locations in the landscape and many of the examples occurring on FC land are found on hilltops and highpoints within the present day forest. It is important to preserve/enhance their setting thus most of the Barrow sites are located in clearings or larger open areas.

Hillforts - Hillforts such as the site at Woolsbarrow date to between the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (800 to 500 BC). They are defined as enclosures of various shapes, generally between 1ha –10 ha in size, situated on or close to hilltops and defined by a single line of earthworks. It is believed that they were used as stock enclosures, redistribution centres, places of refuge and permanent settlements.

Linear Boundaries – These features such as Battery Bank comprise substantial earthwork features made up of single or multiple ditches and banks which may extend for significant distances (1-10km). For example, the monument at Battery Bank forms part of a group of similar monuments, which extend (discontinuously) for a distance of 5.55km. Their construction spans the millennium from the Middle Bronze age when it is thought that the earthworks were constructed by large social groups and were used to mark important boundaries in the landscape such as territorial holdings

Cross Dykes – These linear earthwork dating from the Bronze Age are typically between 0.2km and 1km long and comprise one or more ditches arranged beside and parallel to one or more banks. It is thought that they were used as boundary markers, probably demarcating land allotment within communities, although they may also have been used as trackway, cattle droveways or defensive earthworks. A good example can be found at Okeford Hill.

Roman Road – Part of the Ackling Dyke Roman Road runs through Puddletown Forest. Current theory suggests that the Ackling Dyke is an early first century road that was constructed to link Old Sarum (Salisbury) with Exeter and might be military road, which served the Roman fort at Exeter. The section ranges from 26 to 34m in width and preserves the original Roman construction.

5.2 PRESERVATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Forests & Archaeology Guidelines

It is Forestry Commission policy that sites of archaeological importance should be conserved. The Forestry & Archaeology Guidelines specify the requirements for archaeological conservation in the creation of new forests and in the management of existing woodland. The guidelines apply to both the protection of scheduled and unscheduled sites.

Scheduling

Scheduling is the legal system for protecting nationally important archaeological sites in England with the aim of preserving significant examples of an archaeological resource for the educational and cultural benefit of future generations. Monuments are scheduled under the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended). It is an offence to disturb a Scheduled Monument, either above or below ground, without having obtained prior permission in the form of Scheduled Monument Consent from the Secretary of State.

The Forestry Commission has a legal duty to maintain these sites in good condition. Therefore, the Forestry Commission, in consultation with English Heritage, has prepared a management plan for each scheduled site within Dorset/South Wiltshire. Actions prescribed in the plans aim to ensure the long-term conservation of each site. Each plan sets out objectives of management, both within the five-year approval period and for the longer term, and describes the actions required to ensure the protection and conservation of the site. A regime for monitoring each site has also been agreed and recorded in the plan. In addition to the approved Management Plans, Scheduled Monument Consent will be obtained from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport where any repair resulting in disturbance to the monument is prescribed in the plan.

Unscheduled Sites

The Schedule of Ancient Monuments contains only a relatively small proportion of known archaeological features found our Forests and woodlands. Many sites, even though they are unscheduled, are extremely valuable. Advice regarding the location, management and protection of these unscheduled sites is provided by the Council County Archaeologist and listed on the County Sites and Monuments Records. Information and data from these sources is used to protect all known archaeological sites from disturbance or damage during forest operations through the Operational Site Assessment (OSA) process which considers all environmental sensitivities in the vicinity of an area to be impacted by forest operations.

Forest Design Plans

The Forest Design Plans take account of the location of all SAMs with the Crown Lands. Within the Forest Design Process, strategic opportunities are reviewed every five years to enhance the setting of SAMs in relation to surrounding land use/planting

schemes and to ensure that no new planting affects the sites. The Forest Design Plans also consider the cultural aspects of the landscape and seek to enhance these where possible over time. With impending changes in legislation and likely local requirements to increase the protection of cultural heritage assets may alter the way in which FC need to manage key unscheduled sites.

Draft Heritage Protection Bill

The draft Heritage Protection Bill was published for pre-legislative scrutiny in April 2008. This is a draft Bill for England and Wales, which sets out to reform cultural heritage protection and provide a legislative framework for a unified and simpler heritage protection system that will be more open, accountable and transparent. The new system has been designed to provide more opportunities for public involvement and community engagement in understanding, preserving and managing our heritage.

In terms of terrestrial archaeology & cultural heritage assets, the Bill will unify the designation and consent regimes and transfer responsibility for designation of these assets in England from the Secretary of State to English Heritage. The draft Bill is based on the proposals set out in the [White Paper, Heritage Protection for the 21st Century](#) (March 2007).

Once passed the Bill is likely to have implications for the future management and protection of archaeological and cultural heritage sites on FC land.

5.3 Issues and Proposed Policies & Actions to meet management objectives for Archaeology & Cultural Heritage

Archaeology & Cultural Heritage Objectives

1. To preserve, manage and increase the understanding of the wealth of archaeological sites with our woodlands to help protect the ancient heritage of Dorset and South Wiltshire.
2. To manage sites in such a way that they integrate with the surrounding habitats and landscape and retain their value for nature conservation
3. To take opportunities to restore and enhance cultural heritage sites as they arise
4. To protect and preserve examples of more recent man-made structures relating to activities in our woodlands to inform the cultural heritage of the future

Issue 1 Preservation and Protection of Scheduled Ancient Monuments

Policy B6-1: We will prepare and maintain management plans in consultation with English Heritage for all Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) on the Dorset/S Wiltshire Estate

The FC Estate in Dorset & South Wiltshire contain in the order of 80 SAMs ([Map C5-1](#)), all of which require individual management plans drawn up in consultation with English Heritage.

Key Actions:

- i. Update Management Plans based on 5-year review period re-set where necessary to coincide with FDP review.*
- ii. Obtain Scheduled Ancient Monument consent from the Dept of Culture, Media and Sport to carry out any repairs to SAMs*
- iii. Implement necessary actions on the ground required as part of individual SAM management plans*

Issue 2 Preservation of Unscheduled Monuments

Policy B6-2: Information and advice regarding the protection of unscheduled Ancient Monuments (uSAMs) will be sought from the Dorset and Wiltshire County Archaeologists.

Many of the known sites of archaeological interest on the Dorset & South Wiltshire Estate relates to unscheduled sites. In order to protect these sites we rely on

information relating to their location from the County or Archaeological interest groups.

Key Actions

- i. Take account of advice and location of uSAMs during preparation of Operational Site Assessments (OSAs) and planning/implementation of ground works***
- ii. Prepare management plans where required for key uSAMs***
- iii. Investigate opportunities for further survey to increase knowledge about our archaeological resource***

Issue 3 Consideration of Nature Conservation interests in relation to Archaeological Sites

Policy B6-3: In carrying out any repairs to a SAM or uSAM we will protect the nature conservation value of the site.

At times there is conflict between the recommended methods required to maintain SAMs in good condition and nature conservation objectives particularly in relation to vegetation management. For example, vegetation clearance through methods such as burning and cutting prevents the establishment of trees on SAMs and subsequent root damage to the structure. However, those same methods are also considered to be potentially damaging to the reptile interests of the site. In order to resolve these conflicts the Forestry Commission (with the agreement of English Heritage & Natural England) devised a rating system to assess the reptile interest of each site and thus define a protocol for its future management built into the management plan for each site. Further nature conservation issues are addressed through the Operational Site Assessment (OSA) Process which is carried out when any works are scheduled to take place in the vicinity of a SAM or uSAM.

Key Actions

- i. Evaluate ecological sensitivities through the OSA process***
- ii. Consult Natural England where sites are identified as being particularly sensitive.***
- iii. Call in external assistance to advise when internal FC expertise is not sufficient.***

Issue 4 Management of Scheduled Ancient Monuments within Open Habitats

Policy B6-4: All open heathland SAMs should be maintained under heather or grassland cover and managed as part of the surrounding habitat.

The majority of Scheduled Ancient Monuments are located in open habitats such as heathland. The long-term objective of management is to have all Open Forest heathland Scheduled Ancient Monuments maintained under heather or grassland cover and managed as part of the surrounding habitat in line with open habitat

management. Required actions are specified in the individual SAM management plans and generally relate to the removal of woody growth, such as gorse, birch and seedling pine.

Key Actions

- i. Removal of woody growth such as gorse, birch or pine and treat re-growth with a suitable herbicide.*
- ii. Spray bracken*

Issue 5 Management of Scheduled Ancient Monuments in woodland

Policy B6-5: Scheduled Ancient Monuments found within coniferous woodland will be maintained in open space with low, shallow rooted ground cover. Features within areas of mature broad-leaved trees will generally be maintained under mature tree cover, unless damage to the trees by the wind, or instability is evident.

With regard to sites under coniferous woodland, prescriptions contained within management plans will generally follow those described above for those features found within Open Habitats.

Archaeological features within areas of mature broad-leaved trees will generally be maintained under woodland, unless damage to the trees by the wind, or instability is evident. In these instances there is risk that the structure of the monument could be damaged either by movement of the root ball and disturbance to the soil or physical damage from a tree falling and/or pulling out of the root ball. In such cases the management plans for individual sites prescribe the removal of unstable or windblown trees only.

Key actions

- i. Review and update management plans for woodland cover SAMs during FDP review*
- ii. Follow SAM management plan prescriptions including the removal of secondary tree growth or unstable or windblown trees where required.*

Issue 6 Protection against damage & erosion

Policy B6-7: SAMs and other key heritage features will be protected from erosion and disturbance from people and wildlife.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments located on the open, commonly exist in the form of burial mound earthworks, some of which have been damaged by the burrowing activities of mammals (usually rabbits). Repair of damaged monuments is specified in a number of plans and will consist of infilling excavations using techniques agreed with English Heritage. Depending on the level of effectiveness of rabbit control in an area, it may be necessary, subsequent to any repair, to cover the monument with netting to prevent further mammal excavation damage.

Damage arising from erosion due to the close proximity of tracks and paths, and the establishment of unauthorised riding or cycling-routes, will be treated in a similar way. However, the provision of on site interpretation may be required and the diversion of certain tracks and paths is sometimes prescribed. All work necessitating disturbance to the monument will require Scheduled Monument Consent in addition to an approved management plan. Where required the following actions will be undertaken.

Key Actions

- i. Repair monuments using techniques agreed by the English Heritage or the County Archaeologist in accordance with consents and approved management plan.*
- ii. Where necessary cover sites in netting to protect from excavation by mammals*
- iii. Provision of appropriate interpretation where a key heritage feature is at risk from damage due to its location close to tracks or paths*

Issue 7 Preservation of recent archaeological heritage for the future

Policy B6-8: We will preserve more modern archaeology such as recent earth banks and important World War features to ensure that the recent archaeological heritage of the Forest is preserved for the future.

Modern archaeological sites, particularly those dating from the last 200 years or so tell an important story about the area's more recent history. Earth banks forming part of historic estate boundaries chart the land management of the Forest prior to planting. The area was also of strategic importance during the Second World War and there is potential to find and preserve World War II sites still remaining within the Forest.

Key Actions

- i. Retain earth banks*
- ii. Identify any remaining WW2 features that should be retained for the future.*

C6 RECREATION & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Our Aspiration....



6.1. INTRODUCTION

The FC Woodlands of Dorset and South Wiltshire provide an important recreation resource for informal recreation. They are especially important in terms of providing doorstep community woodlands. ANGSt (Accessible Natural Green Space) modelling shows that FC managed woodland within the Dorset and South Wiltshire accounts for ~ 67% of all accessible woodland and 26% of all accessible open space¹.

The ANGST model states that:

- ◆ No person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural green space of at least 2 ha in size.
- ◆ There should be at least one accessible 20 ha site within 2km of home
- ◆ There should be one accessible 100 ha site within 5km of home.
- ◆ There should be one accessible 500 ha site within 10 km of home

Natural greenspace is taken to be natural and semi-natural green spaces including woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grassland, wetlands, green corridors (including river and canal banks) and Country Parks.

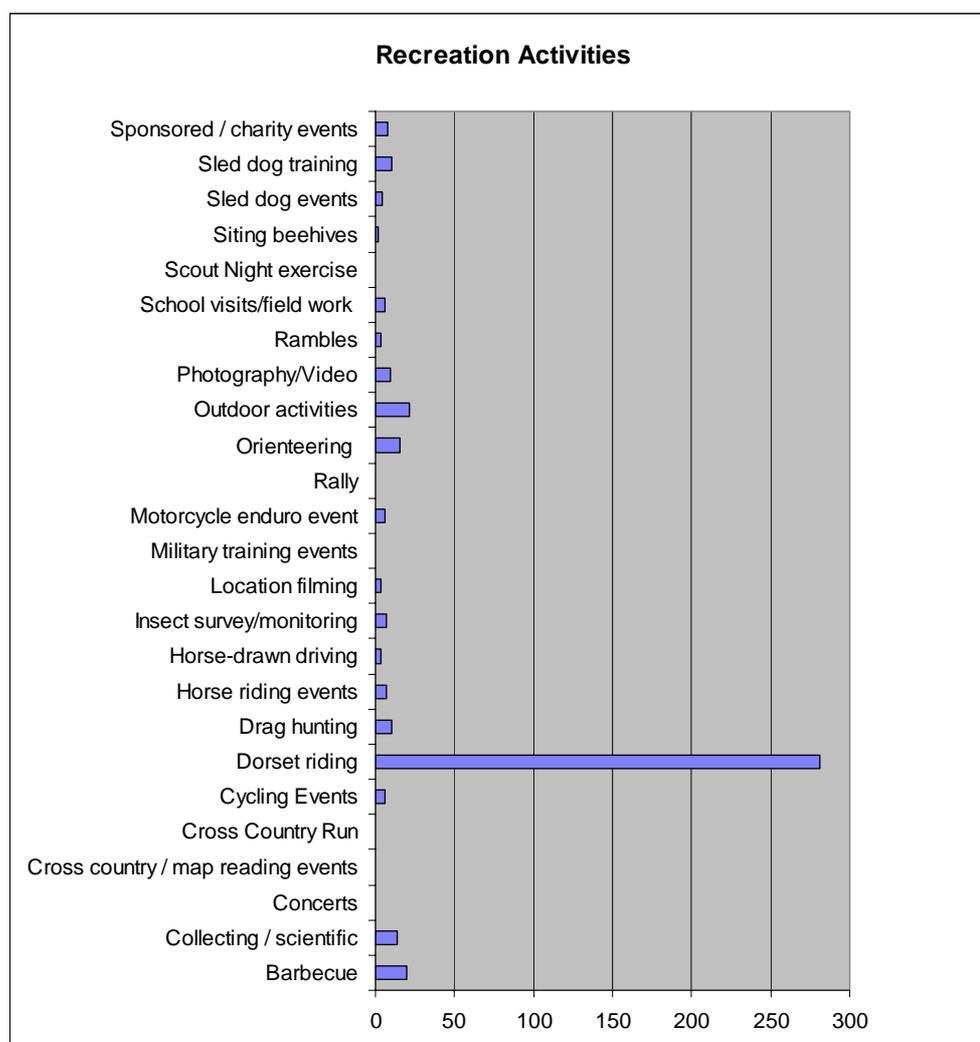
Table C6-1 shows how the FC woodlands contribute to accessible natural green space in terms of size of site. [Maps C6-1](#) shows how these sites relate to greenspace accessibility in terms of the local population.

In addition to informal recreation, the FC woodlands provide sites for specialist forms of recreation such as orienteering, horse riding, rallying, husky dog racing and mountain bike events to name but a few. Specialist activities are controlled by a permission system ([Figure C6.1](#)). All activities are assessed for their compatibility with the Forest environment and any legislative requirements governing the presence of sites designated for their nature conservation interest.

¹ Statistics have been extracted for the Ringwood & Wareham Beats from ANGSt modelling carried out for FC (New Forest District)

Table C6-1: ANGST Criteria for Size of Accessible Natural Greenspace

Land Ownership	Size of Accessible Natural Greenspace		
	2 – 20 ha	20-100 ha	>100 ha
All Accessible Natural Greenspace	2555	7544	20684
FC Managed Accessible Natural Greenspace	310	1322	6340
% under FC Management	12%	18%	31%

Figure C6.1: Recreational Permits Issued (2008)

Moors Valley Country Park is the most popular site that we manage in conjunction with East Dorset District Council. It has developed into one of the foremost

recreational attractions in the region with around 1 million visitors per annum and is currently one of the top 10 outdoor sites to visit in Britain in terms of visitor numbers. [Map C6-2](#) shows where visitors to the Park originate from based on the 2008 visitor survey. Moors Valley provides an important source of income for the FC through car parking and franchises. It also provides a key resource to support our work with people and communities.

4.2 ISSUES AND PROPOSED POLICIES & ACTIONS TO MEET MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR RECREATION & COMMUNITY

Recreation & Community Management Objectives

1. *To provide experiences for people of all ages, abilities and cultures and promote the benefits of our forests and woodlands for improving health and well being.*
2. *To work with partners, visitors and local communities to promote the qualities of our forest and woodlands and our local practices to develop an increased understanding of the Forest environment.*
3. *To target recreational resources effectively to ensure that maximum benefit is delivered in locations where local communities can easily access and enjoy our forests and woodlands.*
4. *To monitor recreational activities in our forests and woodlands to inform our management planning.*
5. *To maintain Moors Valley Country Park as one of the leading recreational attractions in Dorset and the South West.*

Issue 1 Promoting Forests for Health and Enjoyment

Policy C4-1: We will promote the benefits of our forests and woodlands for health, relaxation and active play

Forests have a number of benefits for health². The Forestry Commission has signed a health accord and undertaken to promote the public forest estate to provide health benefits. In 2005 the Forestry Commission launched the highly successful 'Active Woods Campaign' which the recreation team has embraced with the aim of:

- ◆ Increasing visits to woods and boosting the amount of healthy activities participated in by existing forest visitors
- ◆ Establishing an association between health, well being and woodlands in people's minds.
- ◆ Promoting physical activity among forest users
- ◆ Helping foster healthier lifestyles

In addition new national initiatives have been launched to promote forests for informal play and to encourage different social and ethnic groups to discover the opportunities that forests offer which need to be implemented at a local level.

² Trees and woodlands: nature's health service

Key Actions

- i. **Continue to incorporate health related events into our Active Woods Campaign**
- ii. **Work in partnership with others to allow the use of the Public Estate for managed activities to promote health and relaxation where appropriate.**
- iii. **Promote forests for informal play**
- iv. **Explore ways to promote health and enjoyment opportunities to different ethnic groups in partnership with others.**

Issue 2 Consulting & engaging the wider community

Policy C4-2: We will engage the wider community and non-statutory stakeholders as appropriate when we develop programmes of work and/or undertake to deliver major projects or promote major aspects of our work.

We believe that gaining the trust and support of the community and local stakeholders is vital in progressing new initiatives, minimising conflict and enabling work to be implemented to enhance the enjoyment and protection of the Forest.

Key Actions

- i. **Engage with the wider general public through the media, public events, guided walks, parish newsletters and special events, particularly with regard to FDP renewals and development of other major plans.**
- ii. **Train field staff and their managers in effective communication skills**
- iii. **Develop a recreation & community strategy to prioritise where resources should be targeted.**

Issue 3 Involving the Community in the protection and enhancement of the Forest

Policy C4-3: We will develop opportunities for local people to become actively involved in the protection and enhancement of the Forest Estate.

Many local people take a keen interest in the Forest and are seeking opportunities to become more involved in looking after its special qualities. The Dorset Wood Warden Scheme currently has several members who patrol the forests on a voluntary basis and work with local staff on key projects and everyday tasks. This service will continue to be developed into the foremost means of involving and inspiring local people in the every-day management of the Forest. The Conservation volunteers are also thriving and provide a vital addition to our workforce in carrying out tasks to benefit habitats across the Forest. In addition we have also provided projects for the "Nature and Offenders Programme" to get involved in work programmes and conservation tasks around the Forest.

Key Actions

- i. **Maintain the Wood Warden Service to allow people to engage and contribute to the FE Estate.**
- ii. **Utilise the services of the Crown Lands Volunteer Ranger Service and Conservation volunteers to cover the Dorset Woodlands when specific need arises.**

Issue 4 Increasing Visitor Understanding & Awareness

Policy C4-4: We will increase the understanding of visitors and users about what makes our Forests and woodlands special and how people can contribute to their future

The Forestry Commission prides itself in providing a high quality of service and presence. We believe that face-to-face contact with users of the Forest is the most effective way of raising understanding and ensuring that everyone has a say. Our Staff maintain regular contact with Parish Councils to liaise over issues important to community users and our Wildlife Rangers, Foresters and field teams are on hand to talk to forest users on the ground. We also maintain a permanent Ranger presence at Moors Valley.

As well as maintaining a presence in the Forest through routine patrols we run a comprehensive education programme designed to reach people both within and outside the boundary of our Estate. The Forestry Commission's events programme, 'What's On' is well established and is continuing to grow and develop. It currently incorporates more than one hundred varied events across the Forest District aimed at both local people and visitors alike. This commitment to providing a range of opportunities for people to learn, become involved in, and practically contribute, is a priority that shall be maintained and developed.

In practice, due to the many millions of people that this involves, we also have to develop alternative means to raise understanding and encourage participation by everyone with an interest in the Forest. As such we have launched a dedicated website maintained and managed by the Forestry Commission which continues to be an essential tool for spreading information and understanding about the New Forest both within and beyond the Forest Boundaries. We also see the use of the media as a useful medium through which to publicise our work and inform the public. Our public relations programme was reviewed in 2005 to ensure that it was providing the right focus and a monitoring process put in practice to record PR hits. Our commitment to partnership working and the provision of essential information about the Forest can also be appreciated through our contributions to a variety of targeted publications.

Key Actions

- i. ***Maintain a permanent Ranger and Wildlife Warden team supplemented by seasonal staff and volunteers during peak periods focused in key areas***
- ii. ***Hold Forest Surgeries and Guided Walks to communicate and receive feedback on key activities & developments.***
- iii. ***Ensure that staff are easily identifiable to the public***

- iv. Provision of work experience placements for local schools and colleges.*
- v. Proactively engage universities and colleges to ensure that dissertation and research projects are focused to provide mutual benefit.*
- vi. Maintain and develop FC New Forest web site to include aspects about Dorset forests and woodlands*
- vii. Develop partnership approach to presenting and disseminating key messages.*
- viii. Targeting of younger and more diverse audiences.*
- ix. Review our interpretation strategy to ensure that the right messages are being given in the right locations*
- x. Carry out PR monitoring to ensure that our focus is correct and reaching the required media outlets.*
- xi. Allow individuals and organisations to utilise our forests and woodlands as an educational resource.*

Issue 5 Strategic development of Moors Valley Country Park

Policy C5-5: We will continue to work in partnership with East Dorset District Council to maintain Moors Valley as one of the leading recreational attractions in Dorset and the South West.

Moors Valley Country Park not only provides a highly valued regional recreation resource but also provides a key source of income for the Forestry Commission. It is also a key focus for investment and improvement to maintain its quality and interest. Moors Valley is also seen as a site that can potentially help to attract some of the recreation pressure away from other sensitive sites in the locality including the Crown Lands. Recent investments and funding have helped to replace play structures and start the development of a new single-track mountain bike trail.

Key Actions

- i. Explore and pursue opportunities for further investment to improve facilities and community value.*
- ii. Prepare a development Plan for Moors valley*
- iii. Improve links into Moors Valley from surrounding public rights of way*
- iv. Promote Moors Valley as an exemplar of best practise.*

Issue 6 Measures to Tackle Anti-Social Behaviour

Policy C5-6: We will work to reduce the incidences of Anti-Social Behaviour on the Public Estate through implementation of our own initiatives and joint partnership with others

Anti-social behaviour is an unfortunate and undesirable occurrence throughout the Forest and can be difficult to control. We are keen to minimise anti-social behaviour both to protect the Forest itself and to ensure that other people's enjoyment of the Forest is not spoiled. The most common types of incidents relate to fly tipping, arson, theft from vehicles and illegal trespass. We work proactively in partnership with others including the police, Dorset Fire & Rescue, the Environment Agency and the local authority to try and deter and monitor anti-social behaviour.

Key Actions

- i. Use of incident databases to target anti-social behaviour either through our own initiatives or using a multi-agency approach.*
- ii. Share incident data with Crime & Disorder Partnership/Dorset Explorer.*
- iii. Work with Police on joint working initiatives to reduce crime incidents on FC land.*
- iv. Review Duty Officer role and responsibilities.*

Issue 7 Access to the Public Estate

Policy C5-7: We will maintain unrestricted access to our freehold Public Estate on foot or for activities where formal agreements exist and access to our leasehold Estate where the conditions of the lease allow. Other activities may be granted in accordance with our permission system and in accordance with national recreation agreements

In December 2001 the Forestry Commissioners decided that wherever possible any of our Freehold land would be dedicated, giving right of access in perpetuity. Even before dedication the Forestry Commission allowed access on foot to our freehold estate unless there were legal or operational constraints. Dedication will not change this status and bylaws will continue to apply. Access to leasehold woodlands is subject to the conditions of the lease but in most instances a degree of access can be gained via the public rights of way that run through most of our leasehold woodlands.

Key Actions

- i. Maintain contact with the Dorset Local Access Forum.*
- ii. Ensure FC Web site accurately details levels of physical access within our woodlands*

- iii. On dedicated land we will implement National Forestry Commission Operational Guidance Bulletin (OGB30) Access Management Under CROW.**
- iv. Operate a system of temporary closures to maintain safety during operational work programmes.**

Issue 8 Maintenance & Upkeep of recreation facilities

Policy C5-8: We will target our resources to maintain and develop recreation facilities in our East Dorset Woodlands and Wareham to serve large centres of population adjacent to the Public Estate. Elsewhere we will continue to provide a strategic network of maintained car parks for quiet enjoyment of our forests and woodlands.

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

Key Actions

- i. Review range of facilities and funding requirements as part of Recreation & Community Strategy based upon the following priorities:**
 - a) Maintain principal car parks at Wareham and Moors Valley Country Park**
 - b) Maintain local car parks, for example, those at Hurn, Ramsdown, Affpuddle subject to resources**
 - c) Elsewhere maintain a basic ride and path network**
- ii. Develop a set of defined standards and improve or maintain our facilities to meet these standards as part of the Recreation & Community Strategy.**
- iii. Prior to any major refurbishment or installation of new facilities, the sustainability, economic viability, design and appropriateness of facilities must be reviewed.**
- iv. Consult and submit the appropriate planning consents to the Local Planning Authority and where required carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment or Appropriate Assessment.**

Issue 9 Sporting Leases & Permitted Activities

Policy C5-9: Ensure that sporting leases and other permitted activities under FC control are reviewed when they come up for renewal or approval to ensure that the type and level of activity is appropriate to the conservation management and recreational objectives for the woodland.

Several of the Dorset/South Wiltshire Woodlands are leasehold woods where the leasor has maintained the sporting rights. In certain instances these can restrict with the recreational use of the wood.

Figure C6.1 demonstrates the wide range of permitted activities that take place on the public forest estate. The review of applications for these activities under the permissions system enable the FC to work with organisers of events to ensure that activities are planned and undertaken safely with minimal conflict with other forest users and environmental sensitivities.

Key Actions

- i. Review the sporting rights leases when they come up for review.*
- ii. When considering or issuing approvals for permitted activities ensure that the applicant is given clear guidance on any conditions of the permit. Consider any CROW restrictions associated with permitted activities.*

Issue 10 Monitoring

Policy C5-10: Monitoring will be strategically planned to provide targeted information to help inform recreation management decisions and address areas of particular concern.

Monitoring is important in determining the sustainability of recreation in our Forests and is necessary in helping to maintain our UKWAS Certification and ensuring that recreational activities are not damaging SAC or SSSI habitats or other nature conservation interests.

Key Actions

- i. Develop a monitoring strategy for the District, which can also feed into national monitoring strategies.**

C7 ESTATES

Using the assets of the public forest estate in Dorset to progress sustainable use and public benefit.

7.1. INTRODUCTION

In Dorset and South Wiltshire, our Estates team has a large remit covering the management and maintenance of the Forestry Commission Freehold and Leasehold estate including the:

- ◆ Upkeep and maintenance of all operational buildings including out stations, depots, deer larders, sheds and workshops.
- ◆ Leasing and maintenance of Forestry Commission cottages, houses and farms.
- ◆ Leasing grazing land
- ◆ Managing licences to private properties and access requirements for the network of utility corridors and wayleaves across FC land
- ◆ Permissions & access for County Council highway maintenance along unfenced roads
- ◆ Management and liaison with landlords regarding Forestry Commission leasehold land.
- ◆ Trespass and Byelaw prosecution

[Maps C7.1](#) show the extent of the Dorset & South Wiltshire Estate holding and responsibilities.

As a government organisation, a large part of how the Forestry Commission can manage its land and property is dictated by statute. In Dorset and South Wiltshire the estates management is largely governed by:

- ◆ Forestry Act, 1967 (as amended)
- ◆ Agriculture (Miscellaneous provisions) Act
- ◆ Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)
- ◆ Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- ◆ Forestry Commission Byelaws

7.2. Issues and Proposed Policies & Actions to meet management objectives for Estates

Estates Management Objectives

- ◆ Seek to maximise taxpayer value for money through appropriate management of the Forest Estate.
- ◆ To ensure that utility companies adopt a sensitive and responsible approach when carrying out work along utility corridors and that safety issues are fully considered.
- ◆ To increase the energy efficiency and environmental sustainability of Forestry Commission core and leasehold buildings.

Issue 1 Maintenance of Housing Stock

Policy C7-1: We will seek to improve the condition of FC housing stock where it is retained.

The Forestry Commission has four tenanted properties located across the FC Dorset Estate. These are retained to allow effective delivery of the Estate management. Tenants are selected according to operational need.

There is also the requirement to maintain properties. Many of the properties are ageing and in need of on-going investment to bring facilities and infrastructure up to modern day standards and improve energy efficiency.

Key Actions

- i. Where properties are not linked to the main sewer, ensure septic tanks meet current day standards*
- ii. Rolling programme to upgrade heating systems and windows to modern standards.*
- iii. Explore additional opportunities to improve the environmental sustainability of the housing stock.*

Issue 2 Management of Utility/Infrastructure Corridors

Policy C7-2: We will manage utility and infrastructure corridors in the interests of maintaining, protecting and where possible enhancing the special qualities of our woodlands.

A number of utility and infrastructure corridors and wayleaves run across the FC Estate including gas, oil, water pipelines and electricity cables. Sensitive management is required both during the route planning, installation and maintenance

of utilities infrastructure and a number of restrictions apply which might not be required elsewhere, for example methods for ground reinstatement. Visual impact is also important and initiatives are currently underway in some areas to re-route overhead electricity cables underground.

Key Actions

- i. Negotiate access permissions and prepare specifications for utility companies to take account of environmental sensitivities.*
- ii. Support and encourage the underground re-routing of overhead lines.*
- iii. Maintain accurate record of utilities and safe working margins.*

Issue 3 Travellers

Policy C7-3: We will take measures to prevent and deal with the illegal trespass of travellers onto FC land

The FC is committed to working with local authorities and other statutory agencies to consider the needs of travelling communities in Dorset and South Wiltshire. However, illegal trespass by travellers is an on-going issue on FC land. Illegal encampments can hold up forestry operations, cause issues with other forest users and result in lengthy and costly legal proceedings. Eviction often sees the occupants moving on to another site on FC land where the whole process starts again.

- i. Continue to secure and upgrade access routes and gateways to prevent illegal trespass by vehicles*
- ii. Serve injunction notices against any illegal occupation of FC land*
- iii. Work with local authorities to find appropriate sites for travellers.*

Issue 4 Minerals

Policy C7-4: Where applications for mineral extraction are being made on leasehold land we will work alongside landowners and mineral companies to ensure the appropriate working and reinstatement of land for forestry land management interests.

A number of our woodland leasehold blocks are underlain by significant reserves of sand and gravel. When the leases were originally drawn up our landlords retained the mineral rights. In the last few years, some of these sites, for example Plumley Wood and Pithouse, have had planning applications for the extraction of minerals approved by the relevant Planning Authority. In such instances the FC has an obligation to pass the land back to the Lessor for the duration of the mineral working. Depending upon the terms of the lease, FC will take over management of some of these sites once the mineral working and restoration of the area is complete.

Key Actions

- i. Negotiation of compensation and mitigation measures*

- ii. Set standards for reinstatement plans*
- iii. Work with Planning Authority to ensure that timescales for mineral extraction are built into the Forest Design Plan process.*

Policy C7-5: Where FC freehold land lies within a site allocation for mineral extraction within the Dorset Minerals Core Strategy we may consider the viability of raising revenue from this resource.

The FC is obliged to increase its efficiency and generation of income from the Public Forest Estate and to deliver best value for money. With this in mind the whole of the FC Estate in England was surveyed for mineral reserves. Some of the best reserves were found under the Dorset Forests. The most feasible sites (purely in terms of their mineral working potential¹) have been put forward for consideration in the Dorset Minerals Site Allocation process being carried out by the County to identify areas for future quarrying. The County will assess the suitability of these sites in terms of environmental impacts and other factors before deciding whether to formally allocate these sites.

Key Actions

- i. Work with minerals companies to assess the extent of the mineral resource and viability of working.*
- ii. Set standards for restoration of the sites.*
- iii. Ensure timescales for extraction link into Forest Design Plan process.*

Issue 5 Other development opportunities

Policy C7-6: We will look for appropriate opportunities to maximise income from the Forest Estate in line with FC national policy and local planning frameworks.

A study of the Public Forest Estate is currently being undertaken to consider the future long-term sustainable role for the Public Forest Estate and make recommendations about any necessary changes required to improve its ability to deliver relevant priorities in the Government's Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests and contribute to other Government objectives. The outcomes of this review are likely to influence our future direction and opportunities sought to maximise income.

Key Actions

- i. Work with local authorities to identify potential opportunities via the local planning framework processes.*

¹ Cannonhill/Uddens, Moreton & Great Plantation (Hethfelton)

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- ii. Prioritise strategy in line with recommendations arising from the Study of the Public Forest Estate.*

Issue 6 Acquisitions and Disposals

Policy C7-7: Manage disposals and acquisitions in accordance with the nationally agreed framework

The FC is obliged to obtain best value return and use of the Estate and at times this can be achieved through disposal or acquisition.

The FC national Disposals Policy covers the disposal of tangible fixed assets i.e. land and buildings. As a public department the Forestry Commission England (FCE) must act in accordance with the principles of public accountability and in accordance with the instructions in the Government Accounting Manual. Disposals must be carried out in a publicly acceptable manner and all those who are interested must be given the opportunity to bid and the best possible price established on the open market must be achieved for the public purse. For a sale at other than the best price that can reasonably be obtained, the Chief Executive, England (CEE) must give approval.

The FC acquisitions policy for England is currently under review but at present acquisitions guidance states that "The Forestry Commission will adjust its land portfolio not only through purchasing the freehold of leased land, but also through carefully targeted acquisitions, so as to increase the recreational opportunities on its estate. The Commission will also explore opportunities to play a key role in the development of community forest initiatives and the New National Forest through targeted acquisition of land in such areas."

Actions

- i. We will consult the Regional Advisory Committee on any acquisitions or disposals.*

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