

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

FDP Forum

Consultation has been an important part of the FDP mid-term review. An initial FDP Forum meeting was held 5 December, 07 to bring Forum members up to date with progress on the FDP, ensure that FDP objectives were still valid and to introduce the review process prior to starting the actual review. Any suggestions received at this initial stage were incorporated into the draft FDP where practicable.

A second FDP Forum meeting was held on 2 April, 2009 to present the draft FDP to members and to give them an opportunity to review the plans and provide oral and written feedback. On the whole the reaction of members was positive and supportive of the direction the FDP is taking.

The areas of habitat restoration proposed on the FDP has been welcomed or supported by the majority of stakeholders. However, there is still a call for more extensive heathland restoration from certain conservation organisations (e.g, ETAG and Natural England). On the other hand certain Parish Councils and communities have the opposite view and feel that trees are valued by forest users and that further heathland restoration should be opposed. With the exception of Hurn Forest, the proposal of additional grazing units to help maintain the proposed/already established areas of heathland was accepted and indeed suggestions were made to extend existing grazing units.

The development of Cannon Hill for recreational use by the local community was also raised. This will be picked up through the Recreation Plan as resources allow. The FDP itself should help improve the diversity of landscape for forest users.

A summary of key comments/issues raised together with an FC response is presented in Table 1.

Guided Walks & Forest Surgeries

Explaining the existence and content of the proposed FDP to our every day Forest Users and receiving their views was also felt to be important. Therefore:

- A total of 13 events (guided walks and drop-in surgeries) were organised across 5 representative sites.
- A total of **138** people attended a total of 5 guided walks at an average of **c28** people per walk.
- A total of **84** people attended a total of 8 drop-in surgeries at an average of **10.5** per surgery.

An outline of the types of issues raised is set out later in this summary. Many of the issues raised were operational and these have been fed back to the Beat Teams.

Table 1: Comments/Issues Raised by Forum Members

Comment/Issue	FC Response
West Moors Plantation	
Gundry's Grazing unit missing	Checked & added to FDP
Southern half of Gundry's Plantation - Restore to extend heath to link with heathland within Petroleum depot. Allow northern half to go to deciduous woodland.	Discussed feasibility but although area would create an additional area of heathland it would not provide additional habitat links beyond the site itself due to the road and agricultural land beyond. Part of the tree screen to the fuel depot would also be lost. It would become an isolated area of heathland from a management point of view, which also raises difficulty and costs to maintain. Would also need to keep tree nursery to the north, as this is an active seed plantation.
Potential to link West Moors to Lions Hill via woodland, heath, wet habitats etc	Possible, but need co-operation and action by relevant landowners. Intervening land is SSSI. FC would be interested in co-operating with adjacent landowners to help improve habitat linkages.
Consideration of surfacing type where horseriding is allowed	Recreational/operational issue
Castleman Trailway – create additional heathland along trailway adjoining other heathland	Existing proposed heathland ride treatments should provide this link
NW corner - Return fields to public access with grazing joined up with heath grazing?	Tenanted land covered by a new grazing agreement, which should help to improve strategic grazing across FC East Dorset woodlands.
Monitoring strategy/trends of visitor numbers and associated data	Recreation team responsibility – will link into development of recreation strategy.
Encourage people away from more ecologically sensitive sites (e.g. Gundry's) to more robust areas.	Agree. Projects and monitoring are on-going within the District to monitor management of visitor movement and route choices.
On-going plans would be to encourage native woodland along Moors River flood plain. How does this sit with heathland restoration? Current native woodland restoration project underway along the floodplain (former Reddings Coppice).	FC have consulted with Natural England regarding the most appropriate habitats to develop/maintain to link into the restored woodland. Wooded Heath edge has been selected to allow heathland species to move into restored woodland.
Better information/interpretation provision	Recreation team responsibility– link into recreation strategy
Would be concerned if there was more heathland suggested for the plantation	Aim of current plan is to maintain existing balance until Open Habitats Policy is finalised.
Should be a link from Industrial Estate though Gundry's for cycling commuters	There is a current informal link that FC are happy to support/improve as funding allows.
Strong support for better car parking provision e.g. for 5-6 cars. May encourage more local use.	Discussed following Forum. FC view is that we do not wish to encourage short journeys by car in this locality. For those visitors that do drive there is already good on street parking in the vicinity. FC also feel that a car park within the woodland edge would attract fly tipping.
Queens Copse/Horton Wood	
Plan fine. Survey Dragonflies & amphibians. Check out "Million Ponds Project" (HCT David Orchard)	Million Ponds Project is for creation of new Ponds with particular links to amphibians, grass snakes (BAP species). Our Wildlife Ranger/Ecologists are aware of the Project.
Keen to see archaeological value of wood recognised. Use of LIDAR a possibility	FC are testing LIDAR on another area of the Estate and if it gives suitable results we will look to carry out a LIDAR survey in Horton Wood (Queens Copse) as soon as funding allows.
Continued conifer presence important for climate change and timber life cycle analysis	Recognised but long term conifer regeneration (particularly WH) is not compatible with PAWS restoration objectives for this woodland.
Western Hemlock will freely regenerate. No cost & high yield	
White Admiral. Concern about intensity of thinning. Need for shaded honey suckle	Thinning intensity needs to be controlled to encourage best PAWs restoration potential. Thinning will be monitored. Needs of White Admiral will be considered as part of Operational Site Assessment when planning operational activities.
Concern about prolific Western Hemlock regeneration.	WH regeneration will need to be controlled over time.
Ride vegetation vulnerable to light levels	Considered as part of ride management operations
Coppicing continuing	Coppicing will continue and may increase to sustain PAWs restoration process
Context of public estate in landscape	The FDPs take into account both the external and internal appearance of the Forest.
PAWS policy – how will this affect future timber production and linked with RBNB need to consider context of production in East Dorset	PAWs policy will result in a net loss of conifer production in Queens Copse but it forms part of a national initiative/policy to restore PAWs. RBNB also poses a threat of a decrease in yield either through the effects of the disease itself or a requirement to use alternative species. Forest Research will issue advice in due course with regard to management. Options and impacts are being monitored nationally. For the moment the impacts are outside our direct control.
Possible contact for archaeology is Bournemouth University School of Conservation Sciences – Archaeology. Professor Tim Darvill	Noted
Could archaeological survey open can of worms.	Potentially but FC have a duty to safeguard the heritage of our woodlands
Queen's Copse is listed in the joint Forestry Commission England and Butterfly Conservation strategy <i>Lepidoptera on Forestry Commission Land in England; Conservation Strategy, 2007</i>	Butterfly records are maintained on our GIS system and this data is fed into the Operational Site Assessments which consider all environmental aspects relating to site management including ride treatment to

Comment/Issue	FC Response
– 2017. The site is listed as a 'Grade C' site, with White Admiral (UK BAP Priority species) and Silver-washed Fritillary present.	maintain/enhance butterfly/moth interest. Populations are also monitored by our Wildlife Ranger/Ecologists.
Was woodland once wood pasture. Could link to NT NNR to South	Need historical investigation to throw more light on the subject.
Ashley Heath/Moors Valley	
Are FC considering broad-leaved planting at this site	Soil types not appropriate for large scale planting of broadleaves but Birch is a natural coloniser.
Will electric fences be used to manage the stock?	No – only post and rail
Are the gates horse friendly?	Yes. All current specifications are self-closing gates. Special latches are also used in certain location to make the gates easier to operate from horseback.
How is the mire restoration progressing?	Felling trees, drain blocking and infilling to allow restoration of natural hydrological regime is ongoing as funding allows.
Is it possible to link Tree Top Trail Mire to Moors Valley SSSI Dragon Fly ponds on EDDC land?	Yes. Mire link to edge of EDDC land added to FDP.
Will the mire area at Ashley Heath be fenced for grazing to maintain it? The main area of mire and heathland near to Ashley Heath is not in the grazing unit, this should be addressed by bringing the fenceline southwards.	Possibly in the future. It is our aspiration to maintain such areas through grazing in order to achieve good habitat potential and sustainable management. The status of grazing units will be re-visited at the next FDP review.
Pleased that Concert Site is not going ahead.	The plans are on hold but may be revisited in the future.
Proposals for Golfing Academy at EDDC incorporating FC boundary land	FC not aware of any proposals at the current time.
Will the Mire systems be connected?	We are trying to link the natural hydrological regimes. In places separate mire systems will be linked "overland" via our ride edge corridors.
Are there plans to enlarge the car parks at Moors Valley? If so this will have a detrimental effect on the area.	The majority of visitors utilising the car parks concentrate around the play area/recreation zone and do not visit the wider forest zone. It is general FC District policy to try and take pressure away from more sensitive heathland sites through the development of alternative sites/resources such as Moors Valley.
Is the Castleman Trailway link going to be maintained from Jack's Garden to Ashley Heath	Yes and more trails are being created in the Moors Valley area.
Is Bog Myrtle still present at MVCP mire area – it was there 20 years ago.	Bog Myrtle is still present.
What is the comparison between the income from timber sales and recreation in Ashley Heath	FC is managing the area for multi-function use so it is hard to compare.
Grow more Western Hemlock	Need to consider the long-term use of the area. Western Hemlock is causing regeneration problems in many areas.
Release more wet heath and dry heath along Ebblake bog for habitat extension diversity and to provide an educational resource for Moors Valley	Although area is mapped as mire on the plan there is a mosaic of heathland habitats present/developing around the edges of the mire systems. We will monitor the development of the habitats and amend as necessary through future FDP reviews.
Recreation Zone should be amended to avoid two pieces of open heathland, which are occupied by sand lizards.	Agree – boundary on FDP has now been amended.
Tree top trail mire – create dry heath envelope and link to other heaths across tracks & mires.	This is already happening on the ground although it is hard to portray on the map. The existing mire is surrounded by a zone of heathland.
Heathland conservation throughout Ringwood Forest is threatened by the spread of Gaultheria shallon, which is already locally common. We would urge you not to underestimate the seriousness of this threat for our experience of this shrub elsewhere is that it is highly invasive and extremely difficult to control. Unless greater effort is put into control measures soon we fear that it will become impossible to prevent its spread throughout the heath/forest.	FC is seeking funding to help with the removal of Gaultheria shallon that we are aware is spreading. We have had programmes on the Crown Lands to remove Gaultheria from the SSSI and have been experimenting with various techniques.
At Ebblake Bog the extension of the main tributary mire eastwards is welcome. However, forestry right to the edge of this mire system is far from the ideal treatment, particularly as there is at present little open habitat within the grazing unit apart from the mire. In addition we believe the proposed continuous cover forestry will significantly detract from the ability of Ebblake Bog to contribute toward the bird species features of the Dorset Heathlands SPA and thereby achieve favourable condition. Plantation here should be rotationally clear cut to	The use of continuous cover in the area around Ebblake Bog SSSI is primarily for landscape reasons to provide a screen against Ebblake Industrial Estate and main pylons route. However the benefits of rotational clearfell for birds are recognised. As this is a mid term FDP review the integration of further clear fell coupes will be considered at the next full term review in 5 years time, bearing in mind the need to still maintain an adequate screen.

Comment/Issue	FC Response
provide a continuity of open heathy habitat and to increase habitat size for heathland birds in conjunction with the open mire. It would of course be much better if the grazing unit were also extended. These issues should be reconsidered.	
Hurn	
Trees value as a screen	Areas of continuous cover/phasing of felling coupes designed for this purpose.
Douglas Fir could be a possible alternative to Corsican/Scot's Pine	Yes, but need to take into account suitability of soils and any landscape impact.
Concerned that the grazing unit in Hurn would restrict free access and fragment the forest thus reducing people's enjoyment of the area. The presence of cattle was considered detrimental and problematic to use of the area by dog walkers, horse riders, cyclists and the elderly. Potential difficulties in opening gates.	<p>Experience from elsewhere in Dorset and Hampshire show that grazing units have been established and are working well in a number of areas with public access. The levels of stocking would be very low and in many instances users would be unaware that the animals were there.</p> <p>Appropriate gates, with latches designed for the type of users accessing the gates would be installed at all key access points in consultation with forest users.</p> <p>The size of the proposed grazing unit has been increased (from that shown on the draft FDP) to reduce fragmentation of the area and the number of gates required. It should be noted that this grazing unit is an aspiration for the future and if/when funding becomes available the details would be planned out in consultation with the Parish Council and forest users.</p>
There are other measures available to manage heathland, which would still enable open access to the forest for all users.	The Forestry Commission would be pleased to discuss any ideas or suggestions.
There are proposals to heavily thin the trees within this heathland area and it is felt that the presence of trees reduces the effects to local residents of noise and pollution from the airport.	<p>Those coupes that provide the most screening have been switched to continuous cover from previous plans, which proposed clearfell.</p> <p>Studies have shown that trees themselves do not significantly reduce noise levels unless they are extremely densely planted. However they do give the "visual perception" of screening noise together with ambient background noise of rustling leaves etc.</p>
<p>View that a large section of forest will be inaccessible while riding due to the risks of grazing animal and suggestion that as a result the cost of a riding permit should be reduced.</p> <p>The riding experience at Sopley has already been spoiled by the need to open gates.</p>	<p>The Dorset Riding Permit covers all the Dorset Woodlands for an annual cost of £45. This annual cost has not risen for a number of years and FC considers this presents good value for money. As mentioned above there will be no restriction to physical access in Hurn and stocking levels will be very low. There have been no significant problems with stock that FC are aware of where other grazing units have been established. Any issues that have arisen in the Crown Lands tend to be where visitors try and feed the ponies. This is strongly discouraged both in the Crown land and on other grazing units to prevent stock becoming a nuisance.</p> <p>Gate latches are designed to be opened from horseback and if gates are causing problems FC are happy to check that the latches are indeed the most appropriate design and that opening/closing mechanisms are functioning properly.</p>
Sopley Common has been fenced for about 18 months but no cattle have yet been grazed there. The success of grazing cattle on Sopley should be assessed before extending grazing to other areas.	<p>A new grazing agreement is currently in negotiation and it is likely Sopley will be grazed this year.</p> <p>FC will be monitoring all our grazing units.</p>
Could Birch be used as an alternative, commercially viable species	It certainly has possibilities for the fuel wood market and is likely to colonise areas left for natural succession.
Impact of managing sallow on butterflies and moth e.g. Dingy Mocha	FC do try to manage rides to benefit conservation. We will consider sallow management during operational site assessment prior to any work taking place.
Extending grazing units beyond FC land	Would like to work with adjacent landowners where opportunity exists.
Monitoring of public use and potential knock on effects on FDP direction to other non FC sites	<p>Try and work in partnership with other organisations to identify where opportunities and constraints exist.</p> <p>Recreation team – link into development of recreation strategy</p>
Pull back Forest Edge from Barnfield Heath SSSI	It was an option that we considered but the local community is very opposed to further heathland creation in Hurn.
Pleased Hurn Forest to remain as a robust area managed as forest for economic and recreational purposes.	-
Prefer Hurn Forest not to be fenced in any way. Left open as an open environment with no gates. Suggest that FC liaise with Youth Offenders team to maintain the heathland annually. They are always looking for projects.	FC currently do work with Youth Offender teams but they are restricted to where they can assist due to the requirement for certain facilities.

Comment/Issue	FC Response
	In order to manage heathland effectively and restore high value ecological communities this is best achieved through grazing where a grazing regime can be implemented.
Area beside and between SSSI valley bogs especially favourable for reptiles. More open linked heath and not regenerated woodland to conserve wildlife and easier to manage.	Area in question currently bracken dominated and not identified as having high potential for heathland restoration. However consultation with Natural England and other conservation bodies suggests that it would be best left to develop into wooded heath. The FDP will be amended back to wooded heath as per the 2002 Plan.
We would encourage you to reconsider the management of the area around the SSSI at Ramsdown. There is a good case for consolidating the heath surrounding the SSSI rather than the present proposal of narrow strips. We also have concerns about the aim to diversify the plantation around the SSSI at Ramsdown to mixed woodland. Such a policy will hinder the potential for the plantation to be returned to heathland.	SSSI management plans are in process of being reviewed which will allow FC to look at operational opportunities to develop SSSI management. However there is considerable local opposition to the creation of more heathland in this area and it is unlikely that local communities will tolerate larger open areas of heathland, particularly given the areas of heathland restoration on adjacent land holdings. The mixed woodland element will largely be intruded birch among the existing conifer species, which is unlikely to hinder any future restoration potential in the foreseeable future.
Ringwood North	
HCT generally happy with heathland linkages between reptile sites. Suggested expanding heathland ride link from B3081 sand & gravel pit entrance to link up to existing heathland ride links to connect wooded heath area around reptile release area which is currently isolated.	Agree. Heathland ride treatment added to FDP.
Provide more routes into forest from edge of Stephen's Castle to try and take pressure away from Stephen's Castle itself.	Possible. A couple of extraction rides are being used as footpaths into the forest off the main forest edge ride. Potential to formalise these routes through appropriate ride edge treatment. These rides will be identified on the FDP.
Fuller heathland link between Stephen's Castle and forest to improve linkage, reduce fire risk etc.	The tree barrier and associated bracken cover has prevented spread of fire from Stephen's Castle in the past. There is scope to increase heathland linkage but need to achieve what is proposed first and take a view of the success of this in terms of both ecological and landscape impacts. However the edge of continuous cover proposed in the draft FDP will be changed to wooded heath to open up the heathland link and integrate the habitat more effectively into Stephen's Castle SSSI.
Extend heathland block from Noon Hill in addition to linear linkage	Linear linkage is indicative only. In reality some bolder scalloping can be carried out which will provide a heathland link. This particular part of the forest is also very heavily used for dog walking and the coupe between Noon Hill and the wayleave has recently been replanted.
Restore smaller mires around edge of telegraph plantation	Incorporated into revised FDP.
Provide waymarkers/sign posts in forest to help forest users navigate around the forest.	Recreation team responsibility– link into development of recreation strategy. Consultation with other forest users on this point also suggests that they like the potential to lose themselves in the Forest so there are varying views amongst forest users.
A number of suggestions made regarding specific areas where there are opportunities for more heathland creation, which would be valuable in providing more robust habitats and linkages.	We appreciate these suggestions and we are aware of the habitat potential following habitat surveys that were commissioned for the area to specifically look at the habitat restoration potential. This is a mid term FDP review and in light of the pending open habitats policy and economic constraints as well as the need to balance other issues we cannot propose any further heathland restoration as part of this review. However all suggestion will be mapped and saved for consideration during future reviews.
A map for horseriders to help direct them onto appropriate routes/stop them getting lost would be very helpful.	Recreation team responsibility but this would be possible and could potentially be issued with riding permits.
Concern from timber industry regarding the loss of productivity from RBNB and inability to restock with Corsican Pine. Consider restocking Douglas Fir to replace Corsican Pine.	An option being considered. Some areas are being restocked with Douglas Fir where soil conditions are considered suitable, but a large proportion of the area is on impoverished soils. The planting of Douglas Fir on similar soils on the Crown Lands has required premature felling due to poor productivity over time so we need to be very careful.
More cycling routes	The majority of Ringwood North is a leasehold wood so formal recreational development is more restricted. However FC recognise the potential for the forest for cycling and have to date supported various cycling events. A new mountain bike trail is also under development in Moors Valley.
More wooded heath in Telegraph Plantation	FC considers Telegraph Plantation a lower priority for heathland restoration due to its restoration potential. However the cyclical nature of clearfell sites and variation in ages of stands mean that heathland species are still present in the area. Clearfell areas are popular with night jars so area still benefiting heathland species. Would prefer to focus heathland restoration efforts elsewhere for the moment.
Route shown as a bridleway by Tweseldown Farm is actually a bye way	We have checked our data, which was updated in December 08. The latest data layers still show this route as a bridleway as does the DCC right of ways website. We recognise that this may well be a bye way but we are

Comment/Issue	FC Response
	reluctant to change the original external data layer as it is supposed to be the definitive version!
Support heathland links to mineral restoration heaths	Current FDP fits in with future restoration plans for mineral site as they stand at the present.
Horse riders would welcome corridors or preferably swathes of heathland in Ringwood North to join up with Cranborne Common. They have also asked that consideration is given to cyclists and horse riders who currently use the Plumley Farm area to access the New Forest from Verwood via the bridge at Ibsley and that suitable ways are left open. The bridge at Ellingham could be a safer option but would need the consent of the Somerley Estate.	The FDP should help to improve the heathland links and corridors between Ringwood North and Cranborne Common. FC can only deal directly with links that we manage. The management of the area around Plumley Farm is in the process of being handed back to the Somerley Estate for mineral extraction under the terms of the original lease.
Cannonhill/Uddens/Whitesheet	
Whitesheet – ensure/maintain sallow growth along open rides particularly along northern edge of White Sheet/Holt Heath NNR to protect Dingy Mocha Moth.	Will manage sallow along rides/open areas to ensure adequate supply of sallow and will add a note to the FDP as an extra reminder.
Whitesheet – maintain northern fence line to retain flexible grazing units.	Any existing fences would be retained.
Cannon Hill – opportunities to restore viewpoints along the Colehill ridge top.	Existing design plan is looking at opening up areas along the highest points within Cannon Hill
Uddens - Develop more natural edge for example using native broadleaves and link into broader landscape.	Much of northern edge is going to continuous cover mixed woodland, which will contain a fair proportion of broadleaves, which should help to soften appearance. Need co-operation of adjacent landowners to “grow the landscape”
Uddens - ride edges with dense canopy combined with honeysuckle provide valuable habitat for White Admiral– do not open up whole length of rides and try to retain existing areas of dense shade with honeysuckle.	Will address as part of operational site assessment.
Help establish cycle/walking link network to Wimborne using forest tracks where applicable	Quite feasible and FC willing to work in partnership with other organisations if approached.
There is no permanent heathland proposed at Uddens and only a small amount of wooded heath at Cannon Hill. We would urge you to rectify this deficiency.	This is a deliberate policy as Cannon Hill/Uddens is a highly valued community woodland where there is strong opposition to the creation of large areas of open heathland. As a result larger areas of heathland restoration was concentrated in Whitesheet adjacent to Holt Heath through the 2002 FDP.
Uddens/Cannon Hill – increase/improve parking provision along Uddens Drive. May also help to take pressure from heathland at Whitesheet. Support for using Cannon Hill/Uddens as suitable alternative greenspace (SANG)	FC recognise that Cannon Hill/Uddens is a valued and heavily used doorstep, community woodland. Through FC's recreation plan for the area we will be looking to formalise links with the Castleman Trail and develop better cycle facilities. We also have an aspiration to improve the parking facilities for example creating a car park at Cole Hill and expanding/formalising the car park at Uddens Drive.
Suggestion that a Café on view point could be a useful resource.	
Uddens – create more circular/waymarked walking routes and push overflow from Cannon Hill into Uddens.	FC do not have the staff or financial resources to develop any new commercial facilities ourselves and it is questionable how viable any opportunities may be to a third party based on current usage of the woodland. However we would consider any approaches made to us if a third party had a viable proposition.
Creation of a Cycle hire facilities would be useful for people wishing to cycle within Canon Hill Uddens	
Wish to see the Cannon Hill and Uddens used for recreation purposes as they are today as many local residents derive pleasure from being able to walk and ride in the woodlands.	It is hope that the progression of the FDP will continue to improve the landscape interest of the woodland for forest users.
There may be a need for limited commercialisation to encourage users but would hope that this is kept to a bare minimum.	

Comment/Issue	FC Response
<p>Recommend that the FC investigates the potential for a minor development in the Cannon Hill/Uddens area to attract recreational use: parking, toilet facilities, information points, play area and perhaps a coffee stall might be appropriate and provide a useful stopping off point for users of the Castleman Trailway. Local assessment shows that the annual average footfall in these areas is about 120,000. Many of these are regular users who would welcome the facilities: campsite visitors also use both areas during the summer. There would appear to be economic and social potential in this suggestion. It could also provide an opportunity to widen the scope of their walks and not to stick to the existing well-trodden circular walks. It has been suggested that the "Young Rangers" scheme might be extended to areas such as this to collect and use waste (lop and top) from felled timber for a local wood fuel market.</p>	
<p>General – Forest tracks provide good resource for cycling and horseriding in winter.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>Show Castleman Trailway on Map</p>	<p>Noted. Added to FDP.</p>
<p>General</p>	
<p>Visual representation of ride edge management intentions on plans needs to be bolder.</p>	<p>We have experimented with lots of cartographic options and have not yet found the ideal symbol! Difficult to portray ride edge management accurately at the 1:10,000 scale.</p>
<p>Soft copy maps and slide presentations to all attendees on CD with download GIS format</p>	<p>We will endeavour to transfer the final FDP onto CD and our FC website.</p>
<p>Ideally, when land is deforested specifically for heathland restoration, lop and top should be removed and unsaleable timber stacked. This was the policy of the former Dorset Forest District</p>	<p>This technique is still applied where appropriate.</p>
<p>Grazing is not always ideal for reptiles due to impacts of trampling on foci points and sand exposures. Some protection should be given to these areas either seasonally or small areas fenced off.</p>	<p>FC would be happy to work with HCT to identify any areas that are highly susceptible to trampling impacts to try and identify possible mitigation measures. However, grazing cannot be discounted due to the wider benefits.</p>
<p>Picking out the former mires for restoration is excellent but much more consideration needs to be given to the management of catchments and surrounding areas. The importance of mire/wet heath/dry heath transitions has been recognised by FC since the original Forest heathland project but here the plans show that in most cases mires are narrow strips surrounded by forest with little in the way of adjacent heathland. Mires will not fulfill their full potential in these circumstances and future management will be more difficult.</p>	<p>The current plan has widened areas proposed for mire restoration and from observations of existing restored mires it is anticipated that edges of dry and wet heath will establish at the open transition zone between the forest edge and mapped mire areas. There is still significant potential to increase the buffer zone of heathland and this will be carried forward into future FDP reviews when the Open Habitats Policy is developed to give a clearer steer on how much open habitat we are at liberty to develop. However the significant constraining factor is the financial resource to restore/maintain even what is currently indicated on the FDP. Without significant additional funding it will be impossible to restore more than is currently proposed!</p>
<p>Some areas of the forest still have very little in the way of open or permanent heathland. It is important that there is some permanent heath distributed through the heath/forest otherwise some species will be lost entirely from whole areas.</p>	<p>We appreciate this and have tried to make sure that all heathland areas are linked by permanent corridors of heathland provided along ride edges and wayleaves to allow species to migrate through the forest. Many of these areas are wider than portrayed by the symbology on the FDP maps. In addition there are good examples of heather communities (supporting reptiles) which have developed under existing conifer cover. Some of the best examples have been altered to continuous cover to protect these communities for the future.</p>
<p>In some instances the treatment of the land adjacent to heathland SSSIs should be looked at again</p>	<p>The FDP is flexible and we are happy to look at any specific examples at the next review. Fox example, it would be beneficial to have an integrated grazing regime across the SSSI units if adjacent landowners were in agreement. SSSI management plans are currently under review, which give further opportunity to refine management practises.</p>
<p>Links and ride treatments are an important element of heathland conservation in these heath/forests but there are disadvantages compared with larger open heaths, particularly shading, hydrological effects and resulting management difficulties and costs. For example, because of the closeness of trees it is unlikely that such areas would ever support good quality wet heath. In general there is too much emphasis on narrow links.</p>	<p>Point noted and it is important that we try and incorporate wider scallops into ride edge management treatments. However ride edge management is fairly easy to carry out compared to large areas of open heath and does contribute a significant area of heathland which is not always picked up in the statistics. We also need to consider our forest users many of whom are highly opposed to creation of large areas of open heath but will accept more "subtle" solutions.</p>
<p>It is apparent from the layout of paths/tracks that the overall design of the forests are still influenced by the former extraction gridded approach. This has several disbenefits from an ecological and recreational viewpoint. The restoration of mires is hindered hydrologically by the number of crossing points (six in the case of one mire in Ringwood North) and the tracks are for the most part straight which is not very good for visitors. From a strategic viewpoint if one wished to use the network to travel across the forest e.g. from Verwood to Ashley heath there is no longer a distance route easily available. The paths/tracks should be reviewed with a view to establishing a more "naturalistic" and less fragmentary structure, which nevertheless allows for forest operations.</p>	<p>Where tracks cross mires pipes are installed to allow the free flow of water. This has been successful in the mire restoration carried out to date in on the Crown Lands and elsewhere in the District.</p> <p>A key concern of Forest users is that we do not decrease the existing network of tracks. In addition to the more formal routes marked on the FDP (Category A tracks & key wayleaves) there are numerous informal paths throughout the forest created from desire lines and deer tracks which are "naturalistic" For example, it is possible to walk most of the way through Ringwood North to Ashley Heath without following a significant length of main track (if one knows where to go!).</p>

Comment/Issue	FC Response
	<p>The extensive grid system in Ashley Heath was put in place to help fire control when the railway followed the Castleman railway. We will be looking to reduce the track network in this area in favour of maintaining more interesting routes. However FC have found that a key tool in fighting forest or heath fires effectively is a good track network therefore in other forest blocks we would be reluctant to reduce the main track network particularly in those blocks where heathland restoration is planned or where there is already a high incidence of arson. Nor do we do not have the financial resources to realign Category A tracks as they are very expensive to build.</p>
<p>It is now more than 10 years since the “On-the-spot appraisal of the Dorset Heathland” was carried out and led to the adoption of the Bern Convention Recommendation no 67 on the conservation of Heathlands in Dorset. This includes in its first clause a requirement to create new heathland from woodlands or agricultural land. There is very limited potential for using former agricultural land so our critical way to winning back former heathland is from the Forestry Commission coniferous plantations.</p> <p>The key driver in the stated desired outcome of the FC’s programme of restoring and expanding open habitats from woods and forests in England is “Ecological communities able to cope with threats”. In East Dorset the habitat that is most under threat is lowland heath. It is critical that we take this opportunity to maximise the chances of creating not just links to existing heathland but to restore larger areas adjacent to SSSIs that are threatened through isolation and their small area:perimeter ratio. Making them more resilient to threats such as climate change is essential.</p> <p>It is strongly recommend that such areas are given high priority in the conifer felling programme: where it is necessary for heathland habitat protection and rapid restoration to SSSI recovered status, felling should be given higher priority than the economics of the timber crop.</p> <p>Many of the felling timescales proposed on the Plans are necessarily long term but given that the overarching target backing the activities of the ETWF and England Biodiversity Strategy is “to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010” we need to act with some urgency where habitat protection and recreation dictate.</p> <p>Site visits to heathland restoration sites suggest that the FCs approach to heathland restoration should be strongly commended but it is urged that a further look is taken to reconsider where key, meaningful areas of permanent heathland could be more widely implemented without an over reliance on heath/forest rotation and bitty areas of heathlands within the Forest.</p>	<p>To date FC have only had an obligation to restore condition within existing SSSIs/SACs. However FC recognise the value of heathlands and since 2002 FDPs have highlighted additional areas for restoration in order to progress the biodiversity and landscape interest of our woodland blocks as part good practise and the FC policy framework to date. We have currently restored in the order of 229 hectares of heathland (+ 22 ha of wooded heath) in East Dorset, a further 502 ha of heathland + 58 ha of wooded heath on the Crown Lands and over 670 ha of heathland + 15 ha of wooded heath in the Purbeck woodlands.</p> <p>However, it is also important that we manage our woodlands sustainable in order to maintain our FC UKWAS accreditation, which requires us to balance a range of issues including the economic sustainability. We are awaiting the outcome of the Open Habitats Policy to see whether we are given a clearer steer on how much heathland restoration would be acceptable. However, whatever the outcome the fact remains that heathland restoration and maintenance is costly and produces no/minimal income. FC currently receives no funding for heathland maintenance (we are exempt from HLS payments). Without any significant increase in funding we will struggle to restore/maintain the heathland proposed in the current FDP let alone any additional areas.</p>
<p>We consider that the FC is wrongly validating high tree productivity through an unsubstantiated assumption that creating plantation forest is significantly better than retaining heathland for the carbon cycle.</p>	<p>To date the carbon cycle has not featured significantly in the thinking behind the current balance of heathland to woodland at the District level, however it is likely to take on more prominence in the future as climate change and advice from Forest Research works it’s way more into FC national policy.</p>
<p>Mindful that there can be a public reaction against tree removal – but often this is based on misconceptions. A common one relates to the carbon cycle as described above. Another is the hope that trees will protect the site against mineral winning, whereas the truth is the exact opposite as it is heathland, as a rare habitat supporting rare species, more than anything which could preclude mineral winning. Another is that the trees have been there a long time: in fact they are but a relatively short term crop which will be felled in any event. Ironically there was an outcry when the open heath of Ringwood Forest was first enclosed and planted with trees. But the human memory is very short and so now a section of the public regards trees as the norm. Their objection is not based on a preference for one particular habitat but on a reluctance to accept <u>any</u> change. Experience suggests that they would quickly become used to a heathland/woodland mosaic once it becomes the norm and, in time, to the return to the former more extensive tracts of heath.</p>	<p>Discussions with our forest users suggest that a large proportion value the woodland for its trees and are opposed to the creation of large tracts of heathland. Most will accept the ratio of open habitats to woodland that we are aiming for in the current concept plan but are uncomfortable or opposed to pushing the boundaries further.</p> <p>Studies on accessible natural greenspace provision (ANGSt) show that in Dorset much of the provision of accessible woodland is provided by the Forestry Commission.</p>
<p>There are locations where the intended change from conifers to mixed deciduous/conifers is welcome. However, it must be recognised that this change will result in a fundamental change and enrichment of the soil. Once established it will be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to restore heathland from such mixed woodland making it impossible for future</p>	<p>It is envisaged that the intrusion of broadleaves will be by natural succession and likely to comprise birch. The majority of areas where continuous cover is being promoted is for screening or landscape purposes. In several of these areas the creation of heathland would be impracticable/low priority for a number of reasons. However any succession to mixed woodland is likely to take a number of years and we do not anticipate any real degree of</p>

Comment/Issue	FC Response
Forest Plans to even consider further heathland restoration on such areas. Consequently, this trend is unwelcome particularly where the location of such woodland would separate areas of heath that future Plans could otherwise have seen fit to link to enhance their viability.	change in woodland structure by the next full review in 5 years time. Hence we will review these areas more thoroughly in the light of the Open Habitats Policy next time around, for example the area around Ebblake Bog SSSI.
<p>There are several locations where coniferisation of ancient deciduous woodland has taken place and the decision to restore these is greatly welcomed.</p> <p>There are also several locations where the forest blocks run alongside river valleys (Avon and Moors River and tributaries) or are transected by tributary watercourses to these rivers. Only rarely is this recognised in the Design Plans</p>	FC have no jurisdiction over habitat management in neighbouring land. Unless we have some integrated management agreement no reference can be made that would be meaningful to our operations staff. All watercourses within our woodlands are managed with reference to the Forest and Water Guidelines or SSSI management plans (if applicable) and all the key corridors including tributaries are identified on the Design Plans.
<p>Concern about the growing inoculum of Rhododendron harboured in the FC holding and the lack of a comprehensive programme to address the problem. Since then we have heard a great deal more about Sudden Oak Death and the role of Rhododendron in spreading this disease. Now more than ever it is vital for the FC to tackle the spread of this invasive alien seriously. We would urge that it is given a high priority.</p> <p>The Forest Design Plans should include a map of Rhododendron extent for each Forest Block and a plan for its removal around its invading front. The present approach of treatment in conjunction with other work is like trying to put out a fire from the middle.</p>	<p>It is FC policy to try and eradicate as much rhododendron as possible from the forest estate with a focus on eradicating rhododendron from SSSI areas. We have comprehensive GIS layers showing where rhododendron is located and a rhododendron management strategy for Dorset in place.</p> <p>However it is an expensive and time consuming operation to control rhododendron and the amount we can tackle in any one year depends upon funding and resources. Given the distance that seed can travel, as long as Rhododendron ponticum exists in adjacent gardens and parks the problem will be on-going.</p> <p>All this data is analysed as part of operational site assessments and is too detailed to include in the FDP which is designed to be a strategic document which informs the more detailed planning and operational work.</p>
Over 90% of the FC holdings in south-east Dorset are of Corsican or Scots Pine, these being the only two species which will actually grow at all well on the particularly poor soils of south-east Dorset. We are also aware that the yield and timber quality is lower than for these same species and other conifers grown in other parts of the country. The economic logic of growing low return conifers at the expense of heathland in south-east Dorset has thus been questionable since the international importance of that heathland has been recognised. This is further questioned in the light of RBNB and more emphasis on Scots Pine is reducing profit margins further.	Timber is an important source of income for the District and this income (irrespective of profit margin) helps to fund the restoration and maintenance of habitats such as heathland and mire which in themselves are costly to manage with no economic return.
At the site visit, mention was made of possibly using Douglas Fir (apparently resistant to <i>D. septosporum</i>) instead of either Pine. In the past this has not been possible because of the inherently low fertility of the Dorset heathlands. If successful growth of Douglas Fir can only be achieved by significant soil improvement, we presume that such a change would further reduce crop profitability. Further, were it to require soil enrichment, planting of Douglas Fir would most likely mean that the heathland/forest rotation system as currently practised (i.e. with the pine only crop) could no longer function. We are pleased to learn that because it will only grow tolerably well for about 10 years on heathland soils, the FC does not intend to replant with Douglas Fir. We trust this will remain the case.	FC will only plant Douglas Fir where the natural soil fertility is suitable and where the species is appropriate for the landscape.
It would be helpful for Spatial Planning purposes (implementation of the SW Regional Spatial Strategy and preparation of the Local Development Framework) if the Forest Design Plans could be put into the context of Green Infrastructure and strategic access routes such as the Castleman Trailway, Stour Valley Way and Connect 2 & the Sustrans project to provide a crossing of the River Stour.	Castleman Trailway has been added to the FDP. All external data layers that we hold for Public Rights of Way have been added to the plans to try and show the context of the woodlands relative to accessibility and linkages. This can be refined further at the next review as more data becomes available.
Clearance of Rhododendron has been raised by several ETAG members not just because of the <i>Phytophthora</i> threat but to create a feeling of safety particularly for those who walk on their own in the Forests	Programmes are on-going across the District to remove rhododendron with safety and anti-social behaviour in mind.
Use of woodland for burial sites to as an alternative use.	This has been instigated in other Districts and there seems to be general community support for an area to scatter ashes. Potentially an option to explore in the future.
General - recognise shade value of woodlands. Tend to get lower use of heathlands in summer.	Noted

East Dorset Design Plan Forum Attendees– 2 April, 2009

Organisation	First Name	Surname	Title
Alderholt Parish Council	Kate	Mason	Councillor
Avon Heath Country Park	Steve	Davies	Senior Ranger (Eastern Team)
British Herpetological Society	David	Tamarind	Herpetologist/Conservationist
British Horse Society	Polly	Cooper	
Christchurch Borough Council	Denise	Hewlett	Countryside and Open Spaces Officer
Colehill Parish Council	John	Gooch	Colehill Parish Council
Colehill Parish Council	Joe	Kingsmill	Councillor
Cranbourne & Edmondsham Parish Council	Esme	Issacs	
Cranbourne Estate	Andy	Poore	
Dorset Branch Butterfly Conservation	Paul	Butter	Chairman
Dorset County Division Command Team	Mike	Darkin	East Dorset Section Commander
Dorset Rough Riders	Philip	Jesiman	
Dorset Rough Riders Mountain Bike Club	Andrew	Starr	Chair
Dorset Wildlife Trust	Nigel	Brooks	
East Dorset District Council	Matt	Reeks	
EDDC	William	Wallace	Head of Policy and Planning
Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley Parish	Roly	Errington	Councillor
Environmental Theme Action Group (ETAG)	Lesley	Haskins	
Environment Theme Action Group (ETAG)	Hillary	Chittenden	Chairman
Forestry Commission	Dick	Preston	Woodland Officer
Forestry Commission	Andrew	Norris	Recreation & Community Manager
Forestry Commission	Michael	Seddon	Deputy Surveyor
Forestry Commission	Bruce	Rothnie	Head of Recreation & Strategy
Forestry Commission	Simon	Smith	Dorset Operations Manager
Forestry Commission	Mark	Street	Land Agent
Forestry Commission	Laurence	Degoul	Beat Forester
Forestry Commission	Sonia	Lorenzo-Martin	Beat Forester
Forestry Commission	Simon	Weymouth	Ecologist
Forestry Commission	Dominic	Driver	Senior Projects Officer-Policy &
Forestry Commission	Jane	Smith	Planning Manager
Go Ape	Chris	Swain	Manager
Herpetological Conservation Trust	Nick	Moulton	
Holt Parish Council	Susan	Frost	ROW Officer
Hurn Parish Council	Yvette	Greatrex	
Hurn Parish Council	Margaret	Phipps	
Natural England	Douglas	Kite	
Powell Forestry	Alan	Powell	Contractor
Ramblers Association	Jim	Scott	Dorset Area Secretary
RSPB	Renny	Henderson	
RSPB - Dorset Office	Dante	Munns	Dorset Area reserves Manager
Safer Neighbourhood Sergeant	Richard	Partridge	Safer Neighbourhood Sergeant
St Leonards & St Ives Parish Council	Jennifer	House	Chair
TilHill Harvesting	Richard	Baker	Contractor
Tilhill Harvesting	Marc	Mimeau	Graduate Trainee
Verwood Town Council	Jane	Russell	Councillor
West Moors Parish Council	Sarah	Zyga	Councillor
West Parley Parish Council	Paul	Timberlake	Councillor

East Dorset Forest Design Plan Review

Public Consultation Exercises April/May 2009.

Summary

- A total of 13 events (guided walks and drop-in surgeries) were organised across 5 representative sites.
- A total of **138** people attended a total of 5 guided walks at an average of **c28** people per walk.
- A total of **84** people attended a total of 8 drop-in surgeries at an average of **10.5** per surgery.

Review by Site

1. West Moors Plantation

Guided Walk	Saturday 25 th April	10.00	52 attendees
Surgery 1	Tuesday 28 th April	18.00	15 attendees
Surgery 2	Thursday 30 th April	18.00	25 attendees.

Total of 92 people attended 3 events

Issues and Feedback.

Are we (FC) planning to **sell or develop** West Moors Plantation?

Drainage a concern raised by a number of people. Deep ditches and standing (stagnant) water for much of the year. Concerns regarding the quality of the water and its depth (H&S) and concerns regarding its proximity to residential housing along the SW boundary. "Drains that once ran free are now blocked."

Mineral Extraction was raised as a concern that will be a threat to the forest at each 5-year review.

Poor condition of tracks and rides was raised as a concern. The issue of the maintenance of **desire lines** was also raised. Size of the hoggins/stone used last year on the main access track was too large. Concern raised about not wanting any more gravel.

Grazing. Has the grazing land been let? The whole section or just in part? Concerns over **impact on orchid population.**

Allotments. It was suggested that parts of the plantation be offered for allotments to satisfy the demand from within the local community.

Dog Bins. Who owns/manages them? The issue of introducing a 'Stick and Flick' policy was discussed.

Suggestion for **play areas** or opportunities to encourage wild play.

Mountain Bikes going too fast.

2. Ringwood North

Events hosted at Ebblake Bridge Car Park

Guided Walk	Saturday 2 nd May	10.00	22 attendees
Surgery 1	Tuesday 5 th May	18.00	15 attendees
Surgery 2	Thursday 7 th May	18.00	20 attendees

Total of 57 people attended 3 events

Issues and Feedback

Requests for maps.

Sharing of information – could a notice board be put up at the Hub in Verwood?

Condition of tracks and rides. Better maintenance after we finish working (harvesting).

Habitat Restoration – supportive of extent of restoration proposed. Do not want large scale tree felling.

Grazing – supportive of grazing units as long as access is unimpeded. Some users felt that it would encourage dog owners to keep their dogs under better control.

Minerals. Where will minerals be extracted from in the near future and how will it be worked? How will the land be managed after extraction, will it be open water?

Existing Blue Haze Site – when will it be finished and returned to FC management

Recreation – Enjoy feeling of wilderness and the scope to "get lost". Do not want any expansion of Moors Valley across the road into ringwood north. Concern that cyclists and horses do not mix but that they are obliged to use the same tracks.

Dog Bins – provision of more dog bins

Tree Health – concern about tree health issues such as RBNB and Hylobius and whether chemical intervention would be required.

Tree Management – wish to retain trees around certain properties.

3. Hurn & Ramsdown

Events hosted at Ramsdown

Guided Walk	Saturday 9 th May	10.00	6 attendees
Surgery 1	Tuesday 12 th May	18.00	3 attendees
Surgery 2	Thursday 14 th May	18.00	3 attendees

Total of 12 people attended 3 events

Issues and Feedback

Grazing. Concerns over unfriendly cattle in heathland area (Hurn)

Heathland restoration. Why do we need more heathland? Concerns over loss of trees. Animosity towards other organisations involved in heathland restoration locally and towards sand lizards. Questions regarding cleared area near viewpoint (rhododendron management was explained).

Dog bin in car park is over-flowing.

Pleased about boulders at car parks (placed recently to deter unlawful access).

A 'No Access' sign has been seen at the north-western end of Hurn.

Local resident very keen/concerned to see felling plans for next thinning visit. They do not want any further opening-up around their property. Wants plans explained in detail without jargon well in advance.

4. Ashley Heath

Events hosted at Moors Valley Country Park

Guided Walk	Saturday 16 th May	10.00	13 attendees
Surgery 1	Tuesday 19 th May	18.00	2 attendees
Surgery 2	Thursday 21 st may	18.00	1 attendee.

Total of 16 people attended 3 events.

Issues and Feedback

Promotion of event. Concerns over poor notification of these 3 events. Could plans not be promoted via the Parish Council? Could there be an email distribution list for the community.

Concert Site. A number of questions regarding the proposed concert venue within Moors Valley Country Park.

Dog Bins. (Presumably) more needed.

Condition of Tracks and Rides. Restoring tracks (after rally?) "Excellent job, well done."

Access. Is a track to Moors Valley from Verwood a possibility?

Garden waste dumped on FC land.

Jacks Garden - east side is overgrown with Bracken making it difficult to use the footpaths/gateways.

Open Habitats – concern about how much land exactly is being restored to heathland. FC perceived to be responsible for woodland clearance for heathland on land outside our Estate.

Alternative uses - Scope to designated area to scatter ashes. Would probably be supported by the Community.

5. Cannon Hill, Uddens & Whitesheet

Events hosted at Cannon Hill Road entrance into Cannon Hill Plantation.

Guided Walk	Saturday 23 rd May	10.00	45 attendees
-------------	-------------------------------	-------	--------------

It should be mentioned that the mood at the start and during much of the guided walk (as a result of concerns over minerals) was quite hostile and aggressive.

Minerals. How far had discussions gone re working of Cannon Hill for minerals? Was the FDP a smoke screen to 'fob people off?' Were people being told the truth? Was the felling in Uddens a preparation for the gravel pits? What is the point in listening to a Forest Design Plan if the forest is to be dug up?

A number of people dropped-away from the walk once the discussion regarding minerals came to an end.

Condition of Tracks and Rides. A number of questions about the maintenance of tracks. Pathway from PROW to the woods (local residential area) is badly eroded; replace with steps as in other parts of the forest? Access for 'disabled is difficult in parts – especially near the tumulus.' Could we not create an alternative linking slope for disabled access near to steps (near Water Hydrant WO2)?

Harvesting. Contractors not always clearing up after work: Tape and signs left in work area after work has apparently finished.

NB there were no surgeries at Cannon Hill. Due to a break down in communication posters for the surgeries were not erected. Whilst alternative dates could have been arranged it was subsequently agreed that due to the issue of minerals planning occurring at the same time, the FDP issue was being lost or diluted or 'hi-jacked' by this important but separate matter. Staff did attend the site at the allotted surgery times to ensure that if anyone did turn up we would be on hand to meet them (no one did come along).