

## 8. Working Woodlands

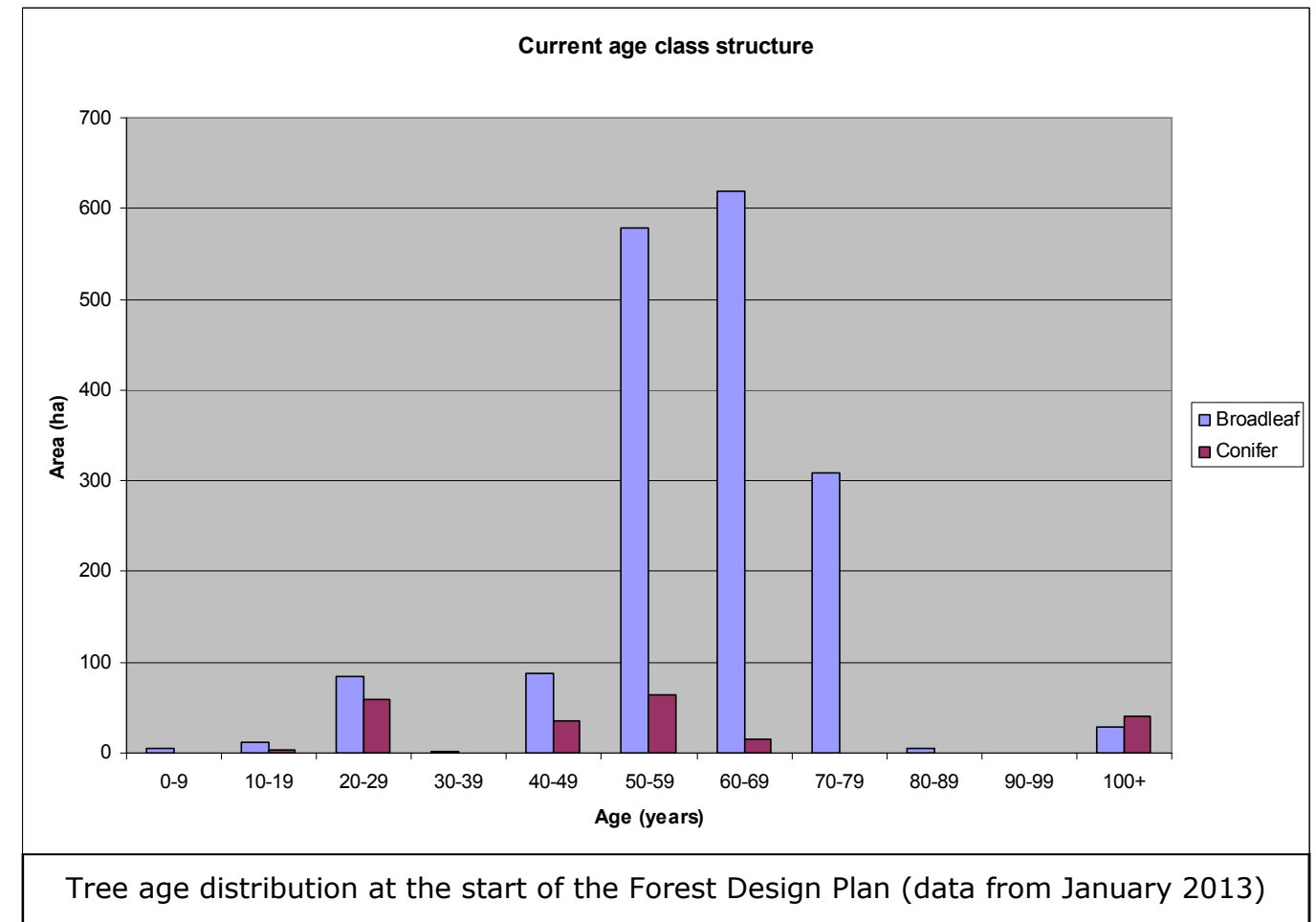
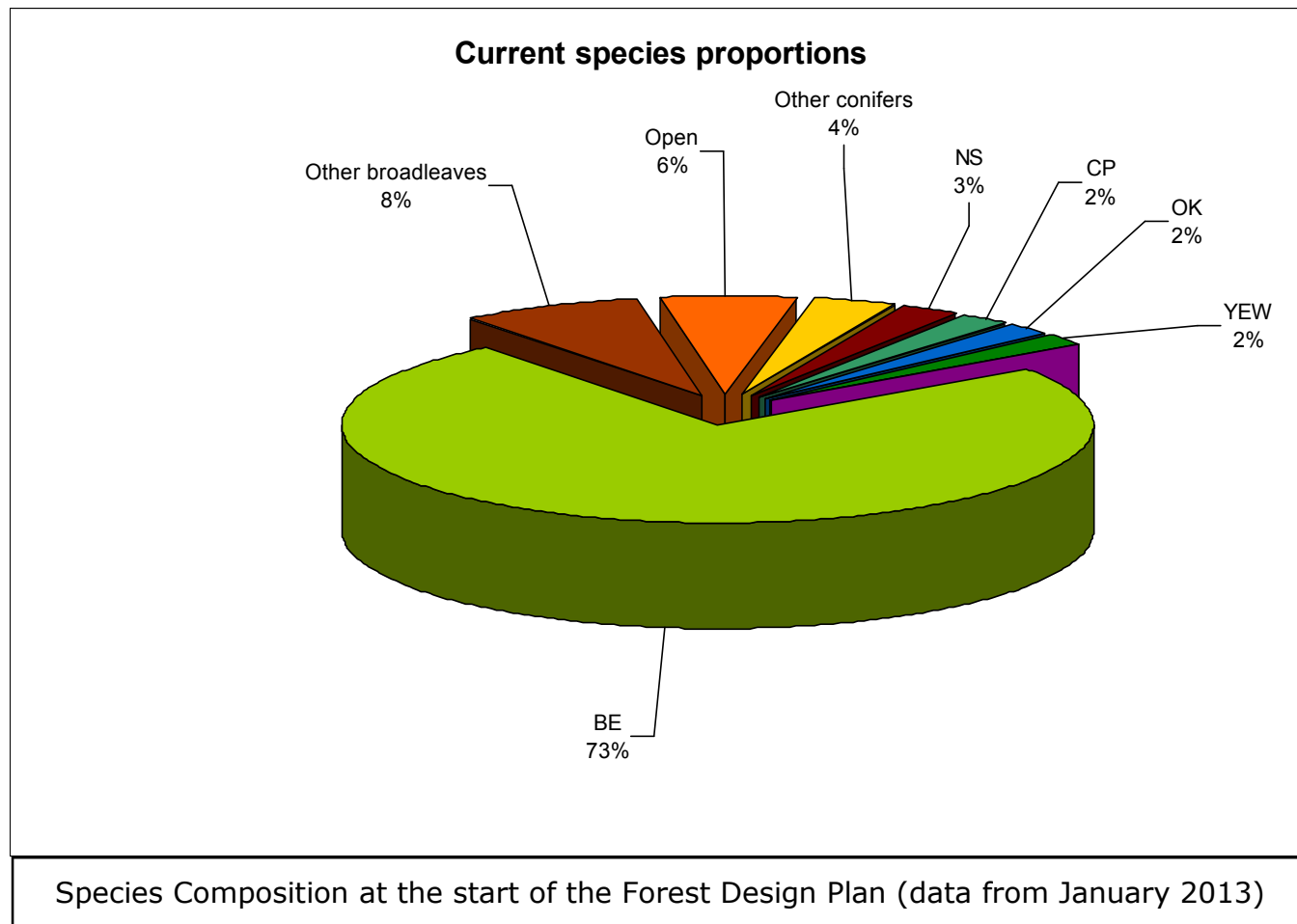


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### 8.1 Tree Species and Age Classes

Diagram one illustrates the species composition within the woodlands as a whole. Yield classes range from Y.C. 6 in the Beech areas to Y.C. 16 in areas of Corsican pine. The existing species maps show the composition of the woods as they are now and form the start point against which to measure future management outcomes.

Overall (see pie chart below), 82% of the wood is broadleaf and 12% is conifer with 6% permanently open or other land use. Most of the conifer compartments contain a proportion of re-asserting broadleaves, which is not included in the species assessment and most of this is of poor quality. Conifers have traditionally been grown largely as nurse species in the Downs woodlands, planted most often with beech to provide an early return before the beech matures. Conifer and beech mixtures however are more prone to squirrel damage, so the quality of the beech is variable. Most of the conifers have now been removed from these 'nursing'



mixtures. Some conifers are showing signs of chlorosis, which occurs as conifers reach maturity on thin, calcareous soils - visible as a yellowing of the foliage. This is most noticeable in the Corsican pine behind the car park in Stoughton. On the deeper soils in the valleys, conifers have grown well and the few remaining mature stands are developing size and stature and will be retained as aesthetic features and for raptor nesting. Yew is an important conifer component in some areas and is highly prized for its red coloured timber. Natural regeneration is unfortunately dominated by Ash, which is now under threat from Chalara disease. It seems likely that planting of other native broadleaves may be needed to regenerate these stands, although those most likely to succeed include Sycamore and Hornbeam.

The age class structure (see chart above) is unevenly distributed. This tends to result in an uneven harvest of timber as we try to balance the woodlands. However, a move to continuous cover systems reduces this effect and allows us to diversify the age structure by enabling regeneration gradually as the stands develop.

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### 8.2 Timber Production

The most recent forecast of timber production from these woods shows a maximum mean annual increment of about 15000 cubic metres (m3). This means that up to 15000m3 can be cut each year without any loss of woodland cover - this is a sustainable figure.

The bulk of this volume is hardwood timber which goes into firewood and chipwood for wood-based panels. Larger dimensioned beech will go into furniture.

In the life of this plan, the move away from clearfelling on ancient woodland sites will not have a significant effect on volume production as the woods are predominantly broadleaved and on longer rotations.

The income derived from timber harvesting operations helps to support the other management activities in the Downs woods. Overall, timber related activity will generate employment for about 12 people.



Quality oak and yew logs (FC picture)



Harvester used to thin in broadleaved woodland (FC picture)