

8. Working Woodlands

8.3 Review and Analysis

There are three objectives stated in the brief that the plan should address.

- Design and management of the woods, which are in places exposed and on thin calcareous soil overlying chalk, should aim to minimise the risk of wind-blow.

All of these woods will be managed under a continuous cover type of silviculture. This allows for small felling coupes less than 0.5 hectare, which together with the natural 5-10 year cycle of thinning, will result in managed, regenerating and stable woodlands.

- The dominance of beech in most of these woods make them more vulnerable to the impacts of new diseases and climate change. Design and management should seek to diversify the variety of species present.

Whilst beech is likely to struggle in the worst climate change scenarios, ironically the greatest threat now lies with Chalara disease of ash, the dominant species found regenerating and diversifying the beech plantations. Already this is a widespread species and if ash is to be lost, we will have to be creative in our species choice and future management to provide a continuity of woodland cover in the long term.

- A continuing sustainable harvest of timber is vital for the continuing maintenance of other programmes in the ETWF, which deliver an enhanced environment, secure the woods for the future and thus provide employment opportunities. Plans should reflect these underlying needs.

Since this plan was started, the ETWF has been replaced by the government's response to the Independent Panel on Forestry. The age structure in the South Downs is rather narrow but there are good levels of broadleaved regeneration where deer numbers are controlled and there is sufficient light reaching the forest floor. The employment of silvicultural systems which maintain woodland cover will gradually extend the age range and increase diversity across all of the Downs woods. This results in a more attractive woodland for visitors and a range of niche habitats for a wide range of species. And of course, a steady stream of utilisable timber provides security for those employed in the timber industry.



Natural regeneration of ash on an ancient woodland site managed under a continuous cover silvicultural system (FC picture)

8. Working Woodlands

8.4 Management Prescriptions

(Ref: Habitat Restoration and Felling Maps)

Management of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and Planted Ancient Woodland Sites

These sites are classed as High Conservation Value sites in the UKWAS and are highlighted in red hatching to identify them on the following maps. All ASNW stands should comprise native broadleaves, and often a mix of species and ages. PAWS will be managed to conserve and enhance the features of interest, which may be woodland plants, veterans, native trees and heritage features. Specific silvicultural treatments are covered below under the relevant section.

Broadleaf dominated ancient woodland

These have a pinkish colour in the legend. These are stands that comprise 80% or more native species. These stands will generally be managed as high forest using a shelterwood system to produce quality timber.

PAWS woodland

These have an orange key in the legend and comprise stands with more than 20% of non-native species on or adjacent to areas mapped as ancient woodland. In general they will be managed to develop into native broadleaf high forest, with thinning and selective felling gradually reducing the non-native components to below 20% of canopy. Where beech is dominant, regeneration of other native broadleaves will be encouraged to provide more diverse and climate resilient stands. Some planting may be required to introduce native species other than those present on site, especially if ash falls victim to Chalara.

Other woodland suited to continuous cover management

Shown with a light green key, this covers all other stands not on ancient woodland sites, which can be managed under a lower impact silvicultural system, thus maintaining long term canopy cover. Thinning will look to maintain the best timber tree for the site. Where species are not suited to soil or are otherwise not growing well, management will aim to gradually change these to more site and climate suitable species. This may require some group felling and planting to effect successfully and may take many decades to change.

Clearfelling

There is only a very limited area in this plan to be managed under a clearfell silvicultural system. These are a few small areas of pure conifer where the short

term creation of open space provides a niche for open habitat species. They will be restocked through either natural regeneration or by replanting. Small coupes may be felled adjacent to rides, protected areas and where open habitat species can colonise - these sites will be small and identified at the operational assessment stage and will be in line with internal corridor management guidance.

Old stands and long-term retentions

Shown as light blue in the legend, these are stands over a 100 years old or sited adjacent to popular access routes. They will be managed to develop into large trees during the life of this plan.

Yew

There are significant areas of yew in Marden and scattered occasionally throughout the Downs woods. Yew is a very valuable timber and a sustainable harvest of individually selected trees will be taken to meet market demand. However, the older, character trees will be conserved and protected during any thinning. Regeneration of yew will be encouraged where open space is created within beech stands.

Sweet Chestnut coppice

Sweet chestnut and other coppice, although very limited in extent, will continue to be maintained on an economic rotation where markets permit.

Open space

Rotational open space is found along the road and ride network. A margin, varying in width but up to 15 metres deep, comprising broadleaf coppice, scrub and a herb layer, will be managed wherever possible on a 7-10 year rotation.


Temporary open space follows felling when the site is relatively open before the next stand of trees develops. These areas will be limited in continuous cover systems, where coupes for felling are small and intended to encourage regeneration.

Permanent open space is limited in these broadleaf woods and is currently found on exposed Scheduled Monuments and along powerlines. Open space is being created adjacent to Kingley Vale to support downland extension from the NNR and there are plans to investigate grazing this area for efficient management and to create further diversity.

The combination of permanent open space and temporary open space from coupes felled to encourage regeneration should provide sufficient open space for people and wildlife to enjoy.

8. Working Woodlands

8.5 Working Woodlands Objectives

Forest Design Plan Objectives	Forest Design Plan Outputs At Year 10 (2023)	Monitoring
Working Woodlands 	Forestry Commission woodland continues to provide examples of best practice for appropriate and sustainable management and utilisation of England's woodland resource.	FSC Certification. UKWAS audit. Professional meetings held, e.g. Royal Forestry Society, Institute of Chartered Foresters.
	An output of sustainably produced wood products has been maintained for local and national markets.	Sales Recording Package (SRP). Production forecasts.
	Local contractors have been encouraged to tender/bid for forestry contracts.	Sales Recording Package (SRP).
	Efforts have been made to cut the increment in the forest, including active marketing of coppice and poor quality broadleaves.	SRP. Comparison with forecast.
	Productive stands have been established to support government forest policy.	FMM4 survey.
	Management proposed in this FDP has taken place as intended and is meeting the needs of the organisation and stakeholders.	FDP review based on observation and OSA implementation.