

APPENDIX 17 - FORESTRY COMMISSION RESTRUCTURING PLANS FOR FOREST

INTRODUCTION

In 1997 the Forestry Commission (FC) prepared a Forest Design Plan (FDP) for Threestoneburn Forest. This plan showed how the FC intended to restructure the forest during the period 1997 – 2031, identifying how landscaping and environmental improvements could be incorporated.

As part of the FDP scoping process the Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) were consulted. Their reaction to plan was that although they were happy to approve the minor habitat improvement works envisaged for the first phase 1997-2001 they were not prepared to approve the restructuring described in the rest of the plan as the NNPA wished Threestoneburn Forest be a single rotation forest and after each felling operation the land be converted back to moorland, with an appropriate amount of Native broadleaf planting in the riparian zones.

CURRENT SPECIES COMPOSITION

The plan describes the current situation with the property comprising approximately 80% conifer, 18% open space and 2% agricultural land.

FELLING SCHEDULE

The plan shows how the Felling phases programme is derived from the optimum economic felling proposals based on yield class and amended to take into account operational and landscape improvement issues. The Felling Proposals map attached shows the phasing over the period 1997-2036, with the bulk of the work during the period 2007-2031.

To date only the small scale work identified in the period 1997-2001 has been carried out.

LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

The FDP shows the intention to improve the appearance of the forest in the landscape to reduce the height of the tree-line, by not restocking the upper margins of the Cpts on the upper slopes of Hedgehope, Dunmoor Hill and around the rock outcrops of the Cunyan Crag.

Landscape improvements would also be made by leaving more open space on the Northern boundary and widening the riparian zones.

CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT

The plan also focuses on environmental improvements. These are identified on the attached map but can be summarised as follows;

- Widen riparian zones by replacing felled conifers with Native broadleaves and open space
- Establish area of Black grouse habitat on Northern boundary adjacent to Broad Moss. Plant broadleaves and groups of mixed conifers to create a more diverse habitat.



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Above; Main riparian zone within forest

RESTOCKING PROPOSALS

The restocking proposals would have significantly altered the species composition as the areas of native broadleaves were introduced and additional open space incorporated in addition to that already located on the summits of Hedgehope and Dunmoor Hills.

Sitka spruce - 63%
Mixed conifers - 11%
Broadleaves - 6%
Open space - 20% (This area does not include hill tops area)