

# Bourne Wood and Crooksbury Common Forest Plan

South England Forest District

## Woodlands Included Within This Forest Plan:

**Bourne Wood**

**Crooksbury Common**

Date of Commencement of Plan:   **2016**

Approval Period:                   **2016 to 2026 (10 Years)**

A separate Felling License provides approval for standard silvicultural thinning across the South Forest District estate as a whole.

**FOREST ENTERPRISE   Application for Forest Plan Approvals**

**Forest District:**                   **South England Forest District**

**FC Geographic Block No:**    **88**

**Forest Plan Name:**           **Bourne Wood & Crooksbury Common**

**FE Plan Reference Number:**   **304/88/16-17**

**Nearest town or village:**    **Farnham**

**OS Grid Reference:**           **Bourne Wood - SU85564435**  
  **Crooksbury Common - SU88934533**

**Local Authority:**               **Surrey County Council & Waverly Borough Council**

**I apply for Forest Plan approval for the property described above and in the enclosed Forest Plan.**  
**I undertake to obtain any permissions necessary for the implementation of the approved Plan.**

**Signed:**  
  
                                  **Bruce Rothnie, Deputy Surveyor, South England FD**  
  
**Date:**  
  
**Approved:**    .....

**Forest Services Area Director**  
  
**Date:**

Summary of Activity within Approval Period:

Forestry Activity	Habitat Type (ha)			
	Conifer high forest	Broadleaf natural regeneration or re-planting	Mixed natural regeneration or replanting	Open
Clearfell 2017–2021	7.7		7.7	
Clearfell 2022–2026	0.7			0.7
Clearfell 2027–2031	12.4		12.4	
Clearfell 2037-2041	3.6			3.6
Clearfell Beyond	10.10			
Permanent Open Space				24.8
Long Term Retention	13.03			
TOTAL MAPPED AREA	105.2			

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## Forest Planning

Forest Plans define the long term vision for a woodland or a collection of woodlands, usually looking 50 to 100 years ahead. It sets objectives and illustrates how management will move towards achieving this vision over the initial 10 to 30 years.

This plan represents the first major review of the Bournewood and Crooks-bury forest plan that was originally consulted upon and approved in 2002. The revised Forest Plan was prepared following a review of the original plan undertaken by FC staff and in consultation with stakeholders. It incorporates developments in policy and local initiatives that have occurred in the intervening years.

## Consultation and Approval Process

At key points throughout the forest planning process, we seek the views of external stakeholders including local communities and organisations involved with nature conservation, public recreation and the timber industry. Through this consultation process we can ensure that an appropriate balance of objectives is achieved. Details of the consultation strategy for this Forest Plan can be found in Appendix A.

Approval of the Forest Plan is granted by the regulatory arm of the Forestry Commission, known as Forest Services. This regulatory approval is usually valid for 10 years and grants a 10-year felling licence.

The approved plan will be reviewed at year 5 to ensure proposals are still relevant, suitable and in line with current policy and guidance. This will also be an opportunity to evaluate the success of management over the 5 year period and include any amendments to the forest plan that may be required.

## Objectives for Bourne Wood and Crooks-bury Common

- Maintain and increase the native composition of ancient semi-natural woodland.
- Initiate restoration of planted ancient woodland sites to native and honorary native woodland.
- Take opportunities to increase the nature conservation value of existing habitats.
- Provide, maintain and enhance the recreational capacity of the woodland where possible.
- Maintain and increase the species and age diversity of the woodland.
- Provide a regular supply of quality timber to support local employment and local timber processing industries.

## Location

Reference: Location Map

Crooksbury and Bourne Wood lie between 2 and 3 miles Southeast of Farnham in Surrey. The area is semi-rural with interconnecting fields and woodlands. Alice Holt Forest, a busy woodland owned by the Forestry Commission, lies 3 miles to the West.

## Landscape and Historical Context

Combined the woodlands cover an area of 105.2 hectares (Bourne 51.4 and Crooksbury 53.8) and have important landscape value by forming a larger woodland complex in the surrounding area. This helps to connect other areas of woodland, heathland and open space, which protects vulnerable habitats and increases their resilience. Both woodlands are in the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and make up part of its 40% woodland and 18% heathland cover (SurreyHills.org 2015). This Forest Plan will seek to enhance and uphold the principals and objectives of the AONB management plan, in particular the woodland aspects of its vision statement.

23% of Crooksbury is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This designation is supported by an additional management plan that will be consulted when deciding the scale and type of interventions.

Both woodlands have an undulating topography, rising gently from between 60 metres above sea level to a max height of 130m.

An area of Crooksbury is also part of a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme administered by The Amphibian and Reptile Trust since 2008.

The climate is typical of Southeast England with rainfall below 700mm per annum and temperatures ranging from a mean 14.2°C for the warmest month and 5.3°C for the coldest month.

Both woodlands fall within South England Forest District and are managed by Forest Enterprise, an agency of the Forestry Commission.

## Tenure

Crooksbury is currently under a leasehold agreement and is owned by Guildford Borough Council. Bourne Wood is freehold and owned by the Forestry Commission.

## Current Woodland Structure

Both Bourne Wood and Crooksbury are not classified as Ancient Woodland.

Within Crooksbury, crops were largely planted in the 1930's, 1940's and the 1950's. Large parts have subsequently been cleared and restocked over the last 13 years, a direct result of the wind blow experienced during the storms of 1987 and 1990. Mature stands remain yet to be felled and restocked. The Forest comprises 98% pine and 2% other conifer species.

An area of around 12 ha is managed as open space under its SSSI designation for the benefit of amphibians and reptiles.

Bourne Wood is predominately pine woodland, however birch regenerates freely on restock sites, ride edges and unplanted areas, contributing to a greater diversity of species.

Crops within Bourne Wood were planted in the 1940's and 1950's. Parts have subsequently been cleared and restocked over the last 10 years and akin to Crooksbury, mature stands remain yet to be felled and restocked.

The age class of canopy trees ranges from 100 plus to just over a year. However, around 25% of the area accounts for one age class (81-90 years old).

## Current woodland structure continued—

Within areas of Crooksbury the introduction of Continuous Cover management systems aims to develop a much more varied age structure and a more resilient woodland in the long term. However depending on specific stands and soils, supplementary planting may be used. Continuous Cover management has not been deemed appropriate in Bourne Wood due to the high levels of Gaultheria, a wide spread invasive non-native species which presents a significant challenge for establishing woodland via natural regeneration. A continuation of the clearfell-restock cycle and the subsequent ground preparation that this will entail is deemed the most appropriate technique for eradicating this species from the woodland.

## Biodiversity and Conservation

### Bourne Wood:

The biodiversity interest at Bourne Wood has been enhanced and maintained through a history of sustainable forest management, open habitat maintenance and the site's long established filming activity. This was delivered via a tandem input from filming supported contractor management and conservation volunteer work parties. Key areas for biodiversity include the Lowland Dry Heathland component to the South of the block, the Northern boundary of the RSPBs Farnham Heaths Reserve, the outlying area of open habitat in the Northeast of the block and the interconnecting heathy corridors which span the site and connect it to the surrounding landscape. The Bourne Woods linkage to the RSPB Reserve to the South and Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) Trust managed Gong Hill Reserve to the South West reflects the site's ecological value in a landscape context, recently reinforced by its inclusion within the Farnham Heaths Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA).

The open habitat units and corridors as identified in the 2014 filming related planning application will be maintained through periodic treatments of vegetation and bare earth. Management interventions during the period of this plan will seek out opportunities for ride enhancement in order to improve structural diversity and ecological connectivity across the forest block. This will prove of principal benefit to invertebrates associated with open and warm conditions as well as the resident reptile populations, both common and rare. Invasive plant species (most notably Gaultheria spp.) will be managed in order to protect the native vegetation on this site.

### Crooksbury Common:

The Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) Trust lease 19.6 hectares of the Crooksbury block as a flagship Nature Reserve on the Wealden Greensand. This part of the forest is designated as a SSSI and comprises 12ha of the wider Puttenham and Crooksbury Common SSSI. The majority of the reserve is classified as Lowland dry heath but a number of artificial ponds have been created to enhance the site's ecological value. The heathland resource on the reserve is managed via a combination of volunteer and contractor input with sporadic clumps of trees and individual trees retained to provide perch points for the heathland/forest gap bird assemblage. In addition, a series of South facing banks and sand scrapes have been created to enhance reptile breeding and overwintering habitat. The SSSI is home to both Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) and Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*). The core protected area managed by the ARC Trust is buffered by the Forest Enterprise managed rotational forest stands with the conifer clearfell-restock system providing valuable breeding habitat for European listed ground nesting birds in particular.

Management interventions during the period of this plan will seek out opportunities for ride enhancement in order to improve structural diversity and ecological connectivity across the forest block. This will prove of principal benefit to invertebrates associated with open and warm conditions as well as the resident reptile populations, both common and rare. Invasive plant species (most notably rhododendron) will be managed in order to protect site native vegetation.

## Water

The main water features are in the heathland area of Crooksbury Common. They consist of a network of small ponds, primarily used for reptile and amphibian conservation. Bourne Wood does not have any water features except forestry drains.

## People

Bourne Wood lies in relatively close proximity to the town of Farnham and the village of Lower Bourne and as such has a relatively high recreational use. The woodland is favoured by walkers particularly those with dogs, gaining access to the site via the numerous footpaths or by parking in the bell mouth at the main entrance. A bridleway also runs through the site and sees regular use by horse riders. In general the riders restrict their use to the statutory route, and with the local free draining soils, conflicts with other users are minimal.

Crooksbury is also popular with local dog walkers and horse riders who access the site via public rights of way.



## Tree Diseases and Pests

The main diseases of concern currently are Dothistroma (red band) Needle Blight on Corsican Pine, Phytophthora ramorum on Larch, Hymenoscyphus Fraxinea (Ash Dieback) and Chronic Oak Dieback. These species are all present in the wider landscape, however the move towards diversifying species makeup in the long term should make the woodland more resilient if a significant pathogen does arise.

Invasive rhododendron and Impatiens glandulifera (Himalayan balsam) are also spreading and will require a joined-up landscape wide approach.

However continued monitoring does take place to ensure that species posing a threat to native flora do not become established, particularly after fly tipping incidents.

Plant health guidance and action plans are constantly evolving to adapt to current threats. The sudden emergence of a disease can result in the need to fell a coupe earlier than planned or alter restocking plans. We will continue to monitor for disease and take appropriate action. Any changes to the Forest Plan will be notified or agreed with Forest Services in accordance with the relevant guidance.

Mammal browsing is also a threat to the sustainability of woodlands in Southern England. Muntjac and Roe deer are the most prevalent browsing mammals within the Bourne and Crooksbury Woodlands.

Deer will be managed in accordance with the South England Forest District Deer Management Strategy. Invasive non-native plant species which may pose a threat to native flora and fauna will be monitored in accordance with policy and guidance.

## Climate Change

Climate change represents one of the greatest long-term challenges facing the world today. Conventional forest management systems have developed in a climate that has undergone fluctuations but remained relatively stable since the end of the last ice age (around 10,000 years ago). However, the average global temperature is now rising and there is evidence that rainfall patterns are changing. There is also likely to be an increase in the occurrences of extreme weather and the frequency and severity of summer drought.

These factors are likely to represent the greatest threat to woodlands from climate change in the UK over the coming decades. UK forest management needs to respond to these threats in two principal ways: through mitigation, including ensuring management is sustainable, and adaptation, including species diversification.



## **Forest Plan Maps**

When consulting the maps, please refer to the glossary for further details about the prescriptions.

## **Location**

Shows the location of the woodlands in the wider landscape.

## **Aerial**

Shows the location of the woodlands in the wider landscape using aerial photography.

## **Tenure**

Shows which areas are owned by the Forestry Commission and which are managed under a lease agreement.

## **SSSI Extent**

Shows which areas of the woodlands have been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

## **Ancient Woodland**

Shows which areas are categorised as Ancient Woodland (woodland which has existed for several centuries or more) and the percentages of native trees.

## **Indicative Age**

Shows the planting year and age of the trees in the woodland.

## **Species Diversity**

Gives an indicative illustration of the number of different species within the woodlands (including open space). However it should be noted that the data only accounts for trees in the canopy and should only be taken as a general overview of the number of different species present.

## **Long Term Vision**

Illustrates the proposed long term structure of the woodland and other habitats consistent with the Forest Plan objectives. While no fixed time scale for the habitat transformations is depicted, an indicative term of around 100 years is assumed.

## **Current structure**

An overview of the current habitat types that exist in the woodlands.

## **Habitat restoration and felling**

Shows the management proposals in the shorter term (10 to 30 years). These proposals are the initial stepping stones towards achieving the long term vision.