



Forestry England

Growing the nation's forests

Proposed new woodland

New Luckhurst Wood in Kent

Forestry England are planting new woodlands to expand the nation's forests

We are working on designs for a new woodland in Smarden, near Ashford in Kent, which will be known as New Luckhurst Wood. We would like your comments on our initial ideas. Your feedback will help shape our final designs.

Working with public and private landowners, we're choosing the right places for woodlands to grow and flourish, carefully planting a mix of tree species to be resilient in our changing climate.

Every new woodland will have public access so you can explore and enjoy them to support your health and wellbeing.

They will be valuable places for wildlife, often linking other woods to provide green corridors for wildlife to move and thrive across the landscape.

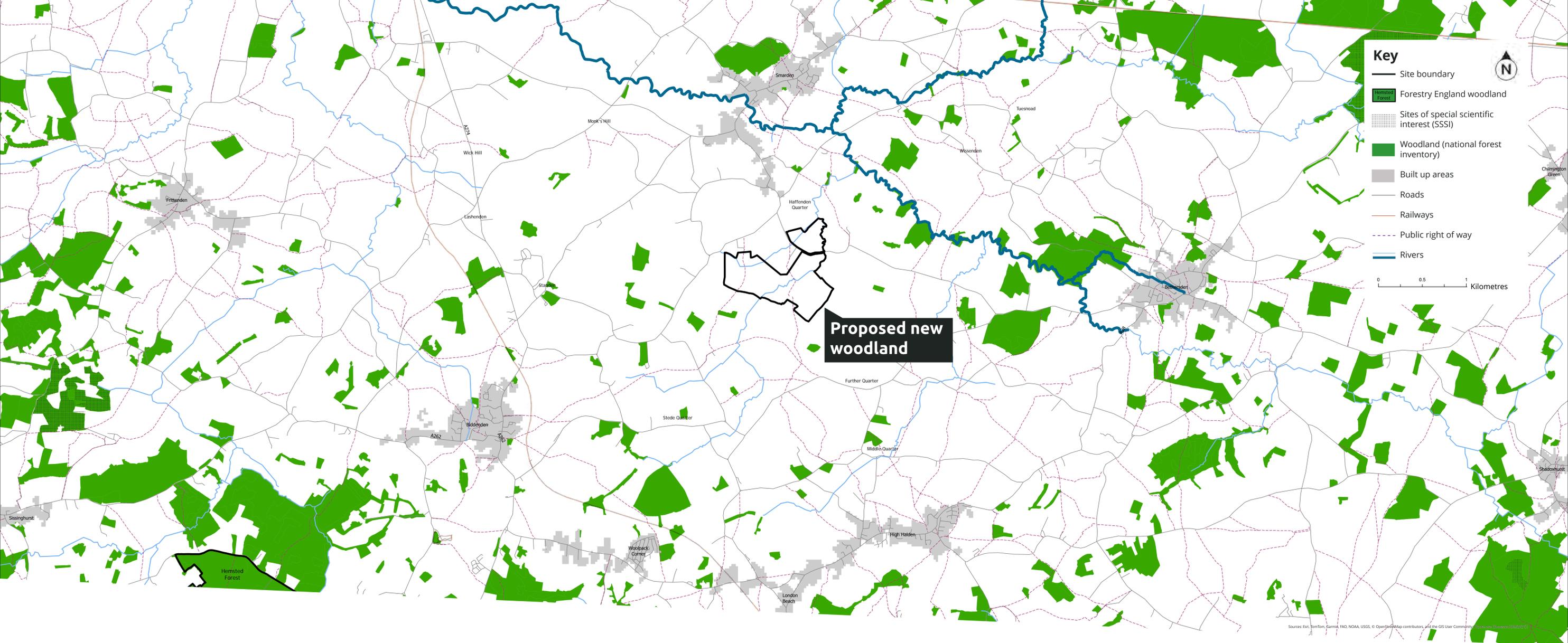
In time, each new woodland will provide sustainable timber, contributing to a green economy and they'll have wider environmental benefits including absorbing carbon, improving soil health and air quality, and water management.

Forestry England is creating these woodlands through the government's Nature for Climate Fund.

Scan the QR code to find out more:

forestryengland.uk

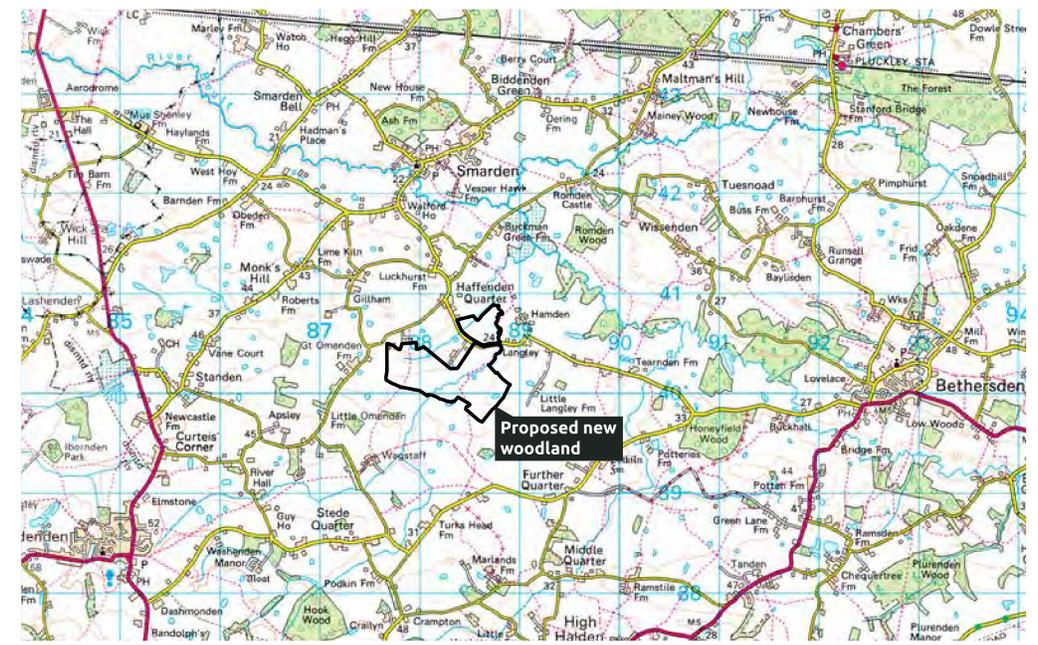




Site location & landscape context

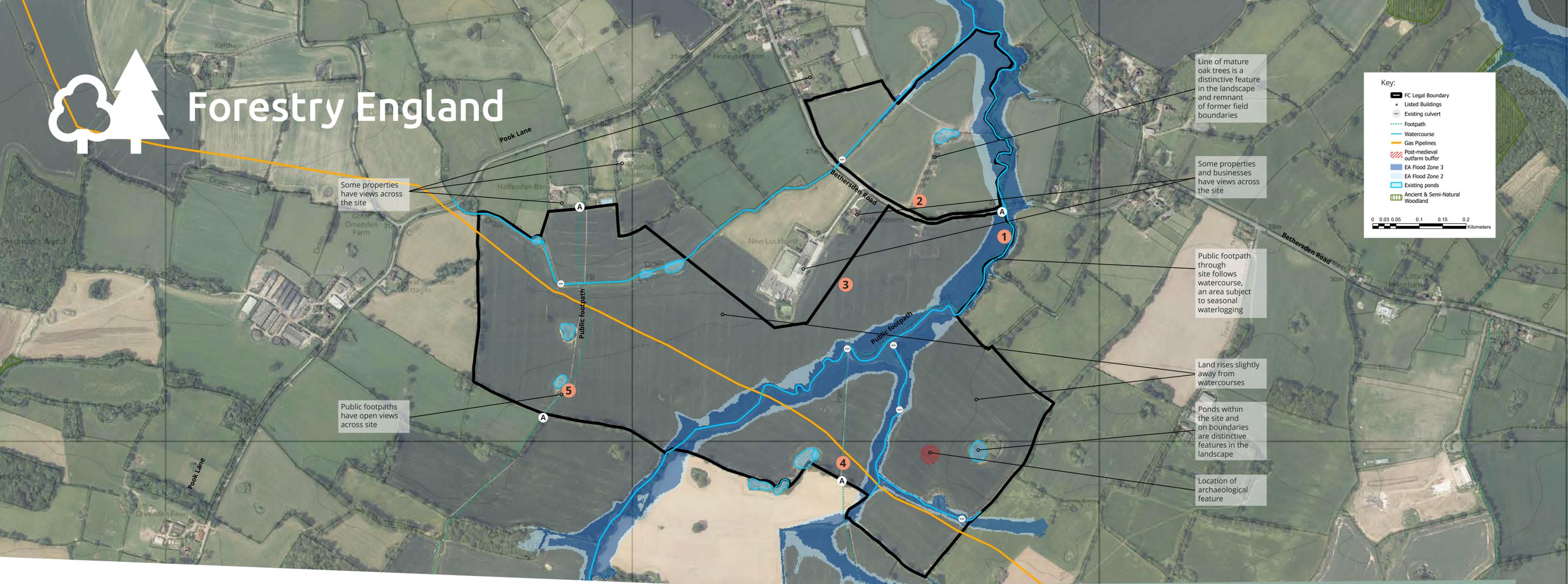
The proposed new woodland in Smarden is within Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) 121 Low Weald. It is a low-lying clay vale which has a landscape characterised as being wet and woody. It is dissected by flood plains, and its impermeable clay soil and low-lying nature make many areas prone to localised flooding, with ponds a common feature. The Low Weald remains essentially rural in character with small-scale villages nestled in woodland. The area boasts an intricate mix of woodlands, much of it ancient, including extensive broadleaved oak over hazel and hornbeam coppice, shaws, small field copses and tree groups, and lines of riparian trees along watercourses. Veteran trees are a feature of hedgerows and in fields. There are many small rivers, streams and watercourses with associated watermeadows and wet woodland. (Natural England, 2013)

The proposed new woodland is approximately 7 miles from land Forestry England manages at Hemsted Forest and 15 miles from Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest.





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Some properties have views across the site

Line of mature oak trees is a distinctive feature in the landscape and remnant of former field boundaries

Some properties and businesses have views across the site

Public footpath through site follows watercourse, an area subject to seasonal waterlogging

Land rises slightly away from watercourses

Ponds within the site and on boundaries are distinctive features in the landscape

Location of archaeological feature

Public footpaths have open views across site

The existing site

The site in Smarden sits in a gently rolling, low lying landscape, rising from around 25 metres in the northeast to about 30 metres in the west. It is divided into two areas: the smaller parcel lies north of Bethersden Road, and the larger parcel sits to the south. Ponds, watercourses and ditches are characteristic features throughout the area. On the larger southern parcel, two ponds on the western side are linked by a public footpath that runs north to south. Another public footpath crosses the eastern side of the site, following the watercourse for part of its route from the access point on Bethersden Road before continuing south. Both parcels were previously used as arable farmland, divided into a patchwork of small and medium sized fields. Internal boundaries are marked by ditches, and traces of historic enclosure patterns remain, where mature trees survive, most noticeably on the land north of Bethersden Road. A number of properties on Pook Lane and Bethersden Road have views over the site.

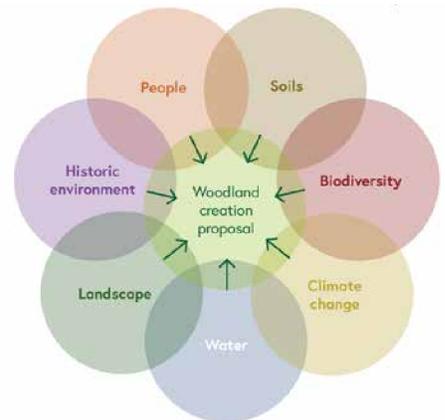
1: Wide view south over site from public footpath next to watercourse, near Bethersden Road.
 2: View north into smaller site from field access point on Bethersden Road. 3: View southeast from boundary with Enterprise Park. 4: View north along public footpath towards Enterprise Park and Bethersden Road. 5: View north from public footpath next to a pond within site.





How New Luckhurst Wood could look

We are designing the new woodland to benefit people, wildlife and the wider landscape (natural capital approach). Our design meets the UK Forestry Standard, which takes into account the following elements (Forestry Commission, 2021):



Detailed desktop surveys, site surveys and analysis will inform our design. This includes:

- Local environment record review
- Preliminary ecological appraisal
- Great Crested Newt survey
- Historic environment records review
- Landscape and visual appraisal
- Soil mapping
- Ecological site classification
- Utilities searches
- Responses to initial consultation

Objectives for the new woodland

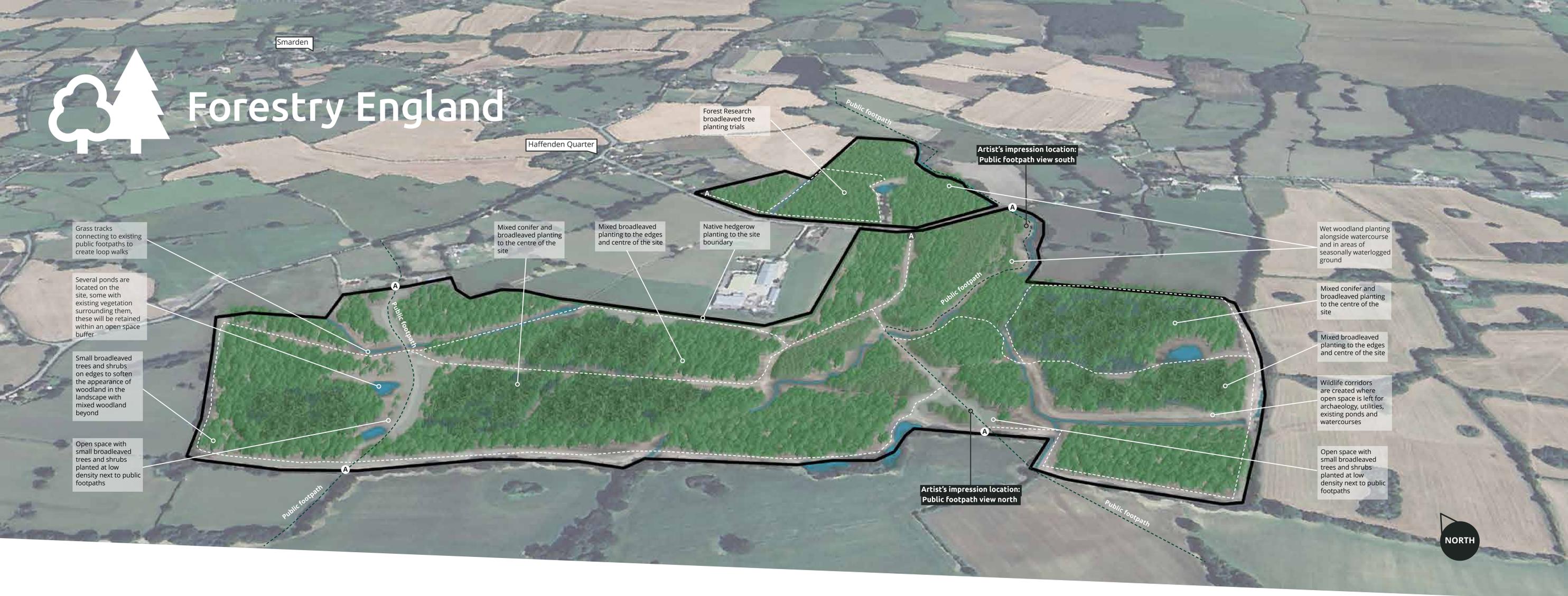
- Future forest resources and resilience:** plant a mix of tree species to create a resilient woodland, for a lasting supply of sustainable timber.
- Thriving habitats for wildlife:** increase biodiversity on site by creating a mosaic of habitats including areas of high forest, low density woodland, wet woodland and open spaces to enhance the landscape.
- Public access for health and wellbeing:** create low-key public recreation opportunities with new green space for people to walk in the woodland.
- Benefits for the wider landscape:** capture carbon, supporting net zero emissions targets.
- Include research trials:** to test which less common broadleaved tree species might be suitable for a future supply of sustainable timber.

Types of woodland we could plant





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How the new woodland could look

Our initial designs include proposals to:

- Plant coniferous and broadleaved trees together, with shrub species along some edges. This will add variety, colour and texture in the landscape.
- Create circular grass routes for woodland management and public access, linking them to existing rights of way that connect with the surrounding landscape and the village of Smarden.
- Create wildlife corridors by leaving open space next to hedgerows, ditches, and pipelines and adding some shrub planting at the edges of woodland for wildlife to thrive.
- Include a mix of open space, native shrubs and trees at low density to keep some open views from nearby properties. This will also make the area look interesting throughout the year.

Artist's impressions:



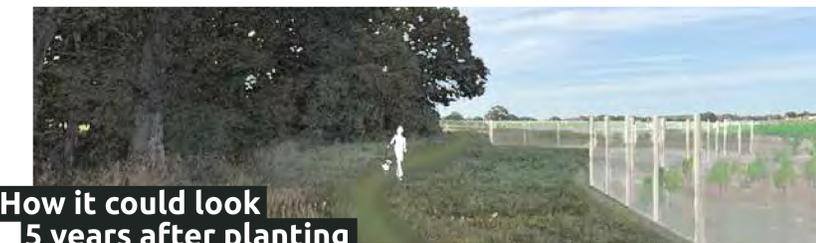
Public footpath view north
how it looks now



Public footpath view south
how it looks now



How it could look
5 years after planting



How it could look
5 years after planting



How it could look
in 25 years



How it could look
in 25 years



Your views are important to us, let us know what you think about proposals for a new woodland in Smarden



A new woodland in Smarden - our response to key themes from early engagement

We recently asked local people for their early views on plans to create a new woodland on land in Smarden in Kent. Here are our responses to the key themes and questions raised:

Public access

The new woodland will be called New Luckhurst Wood, will be open for local people to enjoy as a quiet, natural space. Once it is established, we will dedicate it under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act so people can explore the site.

The new woodland can be reached using the existing Public Right of Way from the village, and the entrances already in place. Once there, a network of new grass paths will make it easy for people to explore the new woodland and for us to look after the site. Other than two new forest tracks needed for our forestry vehicles, we're not planning any additional surfaced trails or facilities for cycling or horse-riding.

Dogs will be welcome, but the woodland will not be fully fenced. We expect all dog owners to act responsibly and keep their pets in sight and close by at all times in the new woodland, following our Forest Dog Code¹. At New Luckhurst, due to the potential presence of otters, dogs should be kept on leads in the areas near the ponds.

Traffic and parking

The new woodland will be easy to reach on foot using local footpaths and lanes and we're not planning any visitor or recreational facilities. We therefore won't be providing public parking. This will help keep local roads quieter and free from extra traffic.

Our forestry vehicles need to be able to access the new woodland from the road so they can manage and maintain the site. We plan to use two existing access points on Bethersden Road, both supported by new forest tracks. We will include barriers at these entrances to prevent unauthorised vehicle access and reduce the risk of antisocial behaviour.

Design, wildlife and views

The new mixed woodland will enrich the landscape by boosting biodiversity and enhancing the natural environment. As part of our planning, we conducted surveys to tell us more about the plants, wildlife, and soil. These surveys, along with a landscape and visual appraisal and feedback from local people have shaped our draft designs.

We have planned the woodland layout to respect views from neighbouring properties and the existing Public Rights of Way. Some open views will remain, complemented by nearby shrubs and small native broadleaf trees, with mixed woodland further back. New grass paths, open spaces, and a native hedgerow along the northern boundary will provide privacy for neighbouring properties while creating diverse habitats for wildlife. These features will support local biodiversity, encourage species such as butterflies, and improve connectivity for wildlife moving through the landscape.

The trees we will plant

We are using years of experience and the latest scientific evidence to choose the right trees to plant in the new woodland. Our surveys help us to choose the trees most suitable for the site now and as the climate changes. Our professional foresters carefully choose what trees to plant and where to plant them. They understand the local soil, how quickly the trees will grow, and the important habitats, species and geographical features nearby. We also consider tree pests and diseases and future climate conditions to keep woods as healthy as possible. The species will be a mix of broadleaf and conifer, often planted together in mixtures, with groups of shrub species along edges to increase the variety, structure, and provide seasonal

colour and texture. Species have been chosen to produce a future source of sustainable timber. This supply of homegrown wood products will support the wider British timber and forestry industry, helping to reduce the demand for imports from other countries.

Species at New Luckhurst might include alder, willow, aspen, oak, hornbeam, lime, walnut, wild service tree, red oak, black poplar, Douglas fir, sweet chestnut and wild cherry. Shrubs could include field maple, hawthorn, hazel, and dogwood.

Establishing and managing the new woodland

We aim to plant the new woodland in winter 26/27. Maintenance during the first five years is especially important to ensure the woodland's long-term success. The woodland will be managed by the Forestry England team and our contractors.

Longer term, Forestry England will develop a Forest Plan to make sure that future timber production is sustainable. As part of our ongoing management of the woodland, we will begin to remove some trees after about 20-25 years to provide a sustainable supply of timber and help the woodland to continue to grow healthily for many years to come.

Protecting the new woodland from deer

The UK is home to six species of deer. As their natural predators (bears, lynx and wolves) are no longer present in the UK, our wildlife management team have to manage the deer populations. Without predators or management, deer populations become unnaturally large, and their browsing can damage or kill young trees and wildlife habitats, reducing the resilience of the new woodland to the effects of climate change and lowering the carbon captured from the atmosphere.

We will use deer fencing to protect larger blocks of new planting and tree tubes in smaller areas. Rabbit and deer fencing will protect young trees from browsing, while tree tubes will safeguard smaller, widely spaced areas. After the woodland has become established, deer fencing and tree tubes will be removed and recycled where possible. This usually happens after approximately 10 years.

Forestry England is part of the Deer Initiative², a partnership that promotes sustainable deer management in England and Wales. Our highly skilled wildlife management team will safely and humanely control deer populations in our woodlands, working to the highest standards. More information about how Forestry England manage deer can be found on our website³.

Why are you planting agricultural land?

We understand concerns around food security, and we want to keep the best-quality land in agricultural production. This is why we do not create woodlands on the most productive land (grades 1 & 2). The land at New Luckhurst Wood is graded at 3 and has not been found to be of agricultural quality.

Forestry England's role is to manage and expand the nation's forests to ensure they are healthy and sustainable and benefit wildlife, people, and the economy. The new woodland will capture carbon, connect existing woodland habitats for wildlife to move between, and provide a sustainable source of timber, which is crucial for the UK's green economy.

References:

1 <https://www.forestryengland.uk/dog-code>

2 <http://www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk/>

3 <https://www.forestryengland.uk/article/managing-deer-the-nations-forests>



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Your views are important to us - let us know what you think

Responding to this consultation

We encourage you to submit your response online. You can view our plans and submit your views by completing the online feedback form at:

- <https://bit.ly/newluckhurstw>
- If you are unable to do this, you can respond via email at woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk

All views should be received by 11.59pm on Sunday
8th March 2026

What's next ?

- Review of consultation feedback
- Further design work to refine our proposals
- Application to the Forestry Commission for permission to create the new woodland
- Planting (Winter 2026/27)

**Scan the QR code
to find out more:**

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