

South Hampshire Forest Plan

South England Forest District

Woodlands Included Within This Forest Plan

Rownhams Wood

Lords Wood

Hutt Wood

Home Wood

Date of Commencement of Plan: **2017**

Approval Period: **2018 to 2028 (10 Years)**

Summary of Activity within Approval Period:

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

Forestry Activity	Habitat Type (ha)			
	Conifer High Forest	Broadleaf Woodland	Mixed Woodland	Open
Clearfelling	12.7			
Native Woodland managed under a low impact silvicultural system		45.6		
PAWS restoration managed under a low impact silvicultural system		101.3		
Shelterwood Silvicultural System	33.5		57.3	
Continuous Cover Management	24.9			
Mixed woodland thinning			9.1	
Wet Woodland		5.9		
Restocking	12.7			
Temporary open space creation through a low impact silvicultural system				4.7
Non forestry activities				
TOTAL MAPPED AREA	295			

FOREST ENTERPRISE Application for Forest Plan ApprovalsForest District: **South England Forest District**FC Geographic Block No: **74**Forest Plan Name: **South Hampshire**FE Plan Reference Number: **304/74/17-18**Nearest town or village: **Chilworth**OS Grid Reference: **SU41831791**Local Authority: **Test Valley District Council, Hampshire County 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:

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Bruce Rothnie, Deputy Surveyor, South England FD

Date:

Approved:

Forest Services Area Director

Date:

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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. Forest Plans largely deal with silvicultural management and not the management of non forestry activities which may arise during the plan period.

This plan represents the first major review of the South Hants Forest Plan that was originally consulted upon and approved in 1999. The revised Forest Plan has been prepared following a review of the original plan undertaken by FC staff, and in consultation with stakeholders. It has incorporated 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 engage any amendments to the forest plan that may be required.

Objectives for South Hants Forest Plan

- Maintain and increase the native composition of ancient semi-natural woodland.
- Initiate restoration of planted ancient woodland sites to native and honorary native woodland.
- Increase the conservation value of existing habitats and enhance and support the creation of non wooded semi-natural areas.
- Maintain and increase the species and age diversity of the woodland.
- Control invasive plant and animal species and reduce their impact across the sites.
- Provide a regular supply of quality timber to support local employment and local timber processing industries.

Location

Reference: Location Map

The South Hampshire woodlands are situated on the northern edge of the city of Southampton between the towns on Eastleigh, Chandlersford and North Baddesley.

Landscape and Historical Context

In total the woodlands cover an area of 295.5ha and provide important areas of green space in the landscape. Due to the narrow altitudinal ranges and gentle topography many of the woodlands cannot be seen in their entirety and external landscaping issues are largely negligible.

The woodlands all lie in an area which historically has been a dynamic and changing landscape. During the 18th Century, the surrounding areas were largely common land with a mosaic of heathland, grassland, wood pasture and enclosed woodland, as reflected on the Ancient Woodland and Heathland Sites Map. Over the course of the next two hundred years, the land was more formally farmed, with hay meadows appearing and more woodland being enclosed. It was during the mid to late 19th Century that Rownhams appears as more or less the shape as we see it today. Likely heavy harvesting of oak and beech during the two World Wars was followed by conifer and beech planting in the 1950s and 1960s, which has led to the current woodland composition.

Altitude ranges from 75m above sea level to a maximum of 130m.

The climate is typical of south-east 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.

The forest falls within South England Forest District and is managed by Forest Enterprise an agency of the Forestry Commission.

Tenure

The Forestry Commission manages the woodlands under a leasehold agreement.

Current Woodland Structure

33% of the woodland is classified as Ancient. This can be further broken down by separating the areas into ASNW (Ancient Semi Natural Woodland) 4.7% and PAWS (Plantation on Ancient Woodland) - 28.3%

In terms of species, there is a significant coniferous component in the blocks with over 44% being either *Pinus sylvestris* (Scots Pine) or *Pinus nigra var maritima* (Corsican Pine). With *Tsuga heterophylla* (Western Hemlock) *Larix* (larch) species being the next largest components. Ref - species diversity maps and associated chart.

As mentioned above much large areas of the woods were planted in the 1950's and 1960's this means that the current age structure could be not very diverse. The timing of clearfells and subsequent restocking as well as the introduction of continuous cover management systems aims to promote a more varied age structure and produce a more resilient woodland for future generations.

Silvicultural Systems

In appropriate areas the forest plan favours the use of continuous cover forestry systems. This 'close to nature' approach has been deemed appropriate because of the large amounts of semi natural woodland across the forest blocks and the freely regenerating nature of the understory. In these areas management will look to transform where appropriate even aged plantations to an irregular forest structure over the long term. These lower impact systems aim to provide a balance of objectives, a sustainable timber resource as well as safeguarding important habitats and improving the woodlands resilience into the future. For more specific prescriptions please see the felling table and habitat restoration maps.

In other areas a more traditional clear-fell restock system will be utilised.

Open Space

Open space is an important feature of a forested environment and this plan revision aims to provide a minimum of 10% open space in the woodlands at any one time. Due to the nature of the harvesting operations this will be rotational in nature and consist in many cases of areas between 0.25–2ha in size depending on the species looking to be regenerated. Additional to this many of the woodlands will have permeant areas created through a managed ride and road network. Specific prescriptions will be determined at the operational stage of management and could include a scalloped and graded structure providing pinch points, box junctions, forest glades etc for a variety of key flora and fauna. These will also serve to improve the connectivity throughout the forest blocks.

Veteran Trees and Deadwood

Veteran trees are an important feature of a forested environment. The UKFS classifies a veteran tree as 'a tree of considerable age that is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size or condition, including the presence of deadwood micro habitats'. Management interventions will aim to leave a proportion of standing and fallen deadwood in areas of high ecological value and create linkages where appropriate. Existing veteran trees will aim to be retained where appropriate and management will focus on selecting individuals to eventually take their place. The use of the continuous cover silvicultural systems further advocates the retention of a proportion of trees beyond the rotation length and specific prescriptions in the felling table imply an interconnecting area of old growth woodland creation.

Biodiversity and Conservation

All the woodlands have been designated as SINC's (Sites Important for Nature Conservation). Notable records include *Equisetum sylvaticum* (Wood Horsetail) and *Musccardinus avellanarius* (Dormouse).

The biodiversity interest in the woodlands has been enhanced and maintained through a history of sustainable forest management and open habitat maintenance. 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 any resident reptile populations, both common and rare.

Biodiversity and Conservation Continued

Other areas of conservation interest include areas of wet woodland which depending on the individual characteristics will be managed under a system of minimum intervention taking care avoid any unnecessary ground disturbance or under a coppice regime looking to increase the light levels on a cyclical basis.

People

The woodlands are managed under a leasehold and due to restrictions on the lease public access is limited solely to any rights of way that exist in the blocks.

Historic Environment

Some of the woodlands are home to a variety of historic features including, an enclosed settlement in Hutt Wood and Scheduled Ancient Monument at Castle Hill in Lords Wood. Operational planning before management interventions will look to safeguard these important resources inline with guidelines set out in the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS). All scheduled features are also covered by an individual management plan.

Water

Water is an important feature in a forested environment. All forest management operations follow the guidance set out in the UKFS regarding good practice when working with water-bodies. These deal with issues such as acidification, sediment delivery and nutrient enrichment. Water bodies are mapped within the forest plan as a reference to inform operational planning. Many of the woodlands are criss-crossed by a network of permanent and seasonal streams together with forest drains and a scattering of important wildlife ponds.

Tree Diseases, Pests and Invasive Plants

The main diseases of concern currently are Dothistroma Needle Blight on Corsican Pine (*Pinus Nigra*), *Phytophthora ramorum* (*Larix* species) and *Hymenoscyphus Fraxinea* (Ash Die-back). Corsican Pine is a significant component and there is Larch growing. However, the move toward a more diverse range of species should make the woodland more resilient if a significant pathogen does arise.

Invasive rhododendron (*R. ponticum*) and *Impatiens glandulifera* (Himalayan balsam) are also spreading and continued monitoring does take place to ensure that species posing a threat to native flora do not become established.

Guidance and action plans regarding plant health are constantly evolving to adapt to plant health 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 as required and take appropriate action. Any changes to the forest design plan will be notified or agreed with Forest Services in accordance with the relevant guidance.

Deer will be managed in accordance with the South England Forest District Deer Management Strategy and in the wider landscape through partnership work with relevant agencies such as the Deer Initiative.

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 incidence of extreme weather and the frequency and severity of summer drought.

This is 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.

Wildfire Resilience

Reducing the incidence and impact of wildfires in forests and woodlands through good management planning is important for sustainable forest management and to protect the provision of forest ecosystem goods and services.

This plan will aim to build on the wildfire resilience already present in the woodland by acting on the following points

- Managing the vegetation to maintain a network of fire breaks, reducing fuel across an entire site especially along roads and rides.
- A wide of use of continuous cover forestry to create a diverse woodland structure.
- Where appropriate fragment high risk species and habitats into smaller areas to reduce the risk of fire spread.
- Restore, maintain, enhance and increase broadleaved native woodland particularly around high risk areas.
- When restocking sites use appropriate species relative to the forests wildfire risk.

These management principals will be implemented during the operational stage of planning and are intended as a guide only.

A site specific wildfire risk assessment for all the woodlands can be found in the appendices and should be should used in conjunction with a wildfire management plan.

Forest Plan Maps

When consulting on the maps, please refer t the glossary for further detail about the prescriptions

Aerial

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

Indicative Age Diversity

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 (includes 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 within a sub-compartment.

Ancient Woodland

Shows which areas are categorised as ancient woodland (woodland which has existed for several centuries of more) and the percentage of native trees.

Current Structure

An overview of the current habitat types existing in the woodlands.

Medium Term Vision

Illustrates the proposed medium term structure of the woodlands and other habitats consistent with the Forest Plan objectives. While there is no fixed time scale for the habitat transformations depicted , an indicative term of around 20 years is assumed.

Long Term Vision

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

Forest Plan Maps Continued

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.

Pasture Woodland Considerations

Provides guidance on pre-operational planning and decision making specifically regarding the management of relict pasture woodland in Parkhurst forest.

Fire Risk Map

Shows the current fire ratings for the woodlands on the Isle of Wight as well as the existing fire break network and water sources.