


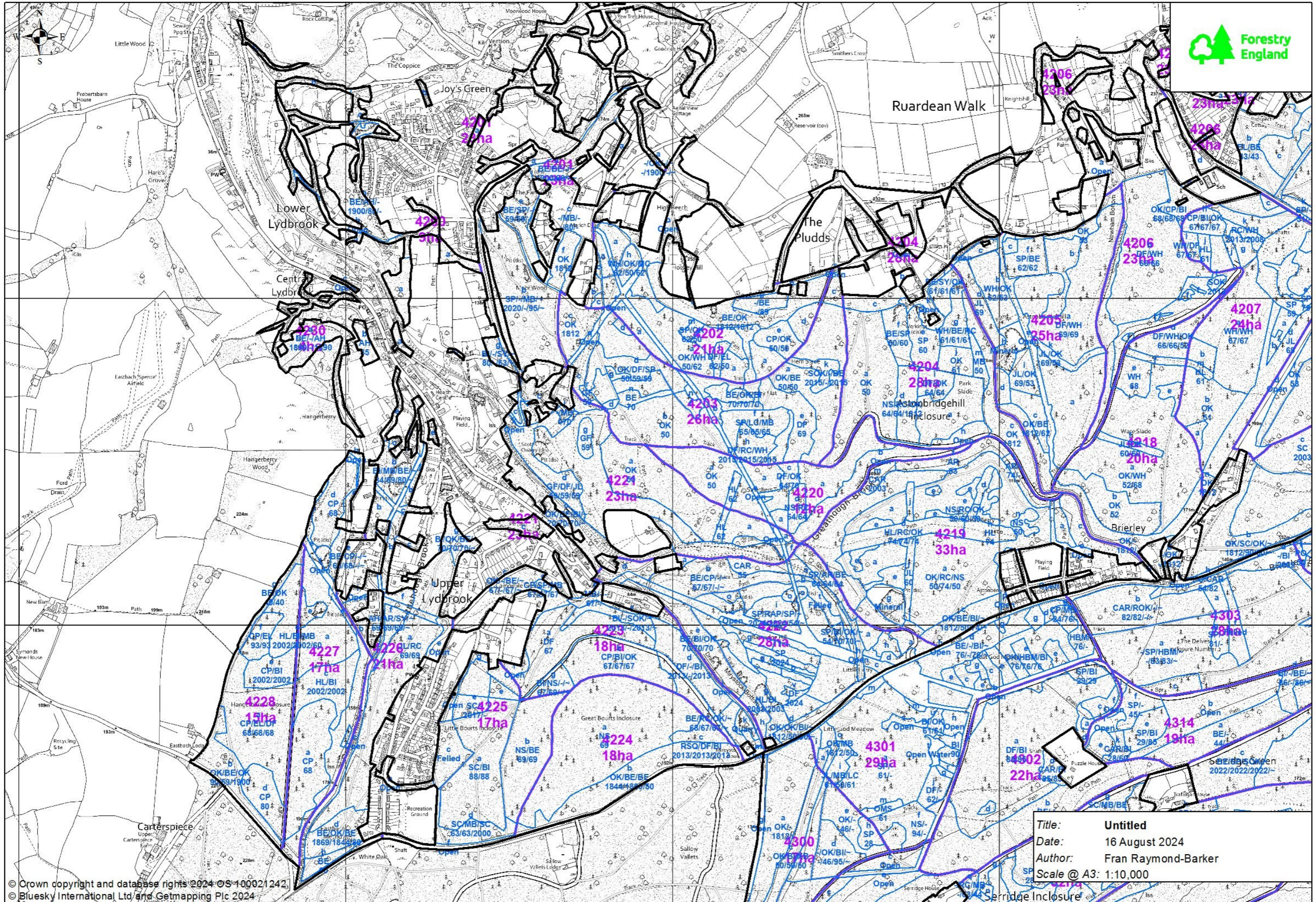
APPENDIX 3: Supporting Information Glossary

Term	Abbreviation	Description
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland	ASNW	An ancient woodland site, where trees and other plant species appear to of established naturally rather than having been planted. Predominantly these sites will contain 80% or over of site native species or species native to the surrounding area.
Alternatives to Clearfell	ATC	Alternative to Clearfell is similar to CCF and refers to management systems where stands are regenerated without clearfelling.
Ancient Woodland Site	AWS	A site that has technically been wooded since 1600AD and is unlikely to have been converted to farmland in the last few centuries.
Continuous Cover Forestry	CCF	Continuous Cover Forestry is an approach to forest management that enables an owner of woodland to manage the woodland without the need for clearfelling. This enables tree cover to be maintained, usually with one or more levels and can be applied to both conifer or broadleaf stands. With Conifer it is possible to regenerate the crop a lot faster than in broadleaf crops, where the canopy is generally removed a lot slower and over a much longer time span. A decision to use CCF must be driven by management objectives and will have long-term vision often aimed at creating a more diverse forest, both structurally and in terms of species composition. There are no standard prescriptions meaning CCF is very flexible in ensuring opportunities can be taken advantage of as they arise. This development of a more diverse forest is a sensible way to reduce the risks posed by future changes in the climate and biotic threats.
Compartment ----- Sub-compartment	Cpt	Sub-cpt The second largest management unit within a woodland whose boundaries are defined by fixed features such as roads, rides or watercourses etc and are numbered numerically e.g. 4223. Compartment boundaries are fixed and not usually subject to change. A smaller management unit within a compartment. Usually defined by a change in species, age of tree. Sub-cpts are identified by a letter of the alphabet that appears as a suffix to the compartment number.
Component		The smallest management unit that records a species or land-use within a sub-compartment. Components are usually mapable areas no smaller than half a Hectare, with upto nine components within a sub-cpt.
Coppicing		A traditional method of woodland management where trees are felled at or near to ground level, leaving a stump (or “stool”). New shoots regrow from the stool, creating numerous stems or “poles”. Areas of coppice are usually managed on a rotation system, with each area getting cut on a regular cycle after a certain number of years. Length of the rotation will depend on the markets being supplied and other objectives like . Traditionally woodlands managed this way produced a sustainable source of wood suitable for many uses (such as firewood, fencing and basket-making). Today, coppicing is mostly implemented for its ecological benefits as it provides a variety of habitats, improves structure along ride edges benefiting wildlife and periodically allows light to reach the woodland floor which is important for woodland flora.
Clearfell	C/F or CF	To cut and remove all trees from a certain area of woodland.
Coupe		An area of management that can span both sub-compartment and compartment boundaries. They can be of virtually any size, aligned to the context of the woodland and wider landscape. Size can also be influenced by physical constraints such as wind stability, disease management or restructuring objectives. Coupes can be managed through Clearfelling or through Low Impact Silviculture.
Crop		A stand of trees. Often associated with stands completely or partially managed for its timber. Just as farmers manage crops so does forestry the only difference is a farmers’ rotation is shorter and often realised in 1 year. Trees are a much longer term crop with rotations varying from 6 years to 400 years. (also see definition for rotation)
Ecosystem Service		Ecosystem Services are the direct and indirect contributions ecosystems (known as natural capital) provide for human wellbeing and quality of life. Nature provides us with water, clean air and food, and raw materials for medicines, industry and buildings. Our crops rely on insect pollination and the complex biological processes that create soil. Enjoying parks, landscapes and wildlife improves our health and well-being. All of these benefits, are known as known as ecosystem services, depend on a healthy environment.
Enrichment planting		Planting different species within areas of regen that helps diversify the range of species in a wood and in doing so can make it more resilient to future climate change and future threats from disease. Enrichment may be desirable in areas where success of regeneration is uneven, patchy or where a regen crop is limited by the number of species present.
Forest Development Type	FDT	A “Forest Development Type” is a long-term vision of how the species composition and structure of a forest stand is intended to develop. The concept encourages greater use of mixed-species stands and a wider variety of stand structures. It also promotes better use of site adapted species and natural regeneration. Forest Research have developed some management tools which will help practitioners to use FDTs to diversify their forests and increase resilience. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They provide a comprehensive view of the potential species, mixtures and stand structures for a site. • They provide a framework and common language for managers helping them to describe different forest structures. • They challenge current silvicultural practice. • They aid long-term planning and management of resilient forests, helping consecutive managers work towards a long-term goal. • They promote the trend towards mixed stands and diverse forest structures. • They facilitate multi-purpose forest management as economic, environmental and social objectives ensuring all are embedded.
Forestry Stewardship Council	FSC	An international non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting responsible forestry. FSC certifies forests all over the world to ensure they meet the highest environmental and social standards. Products made with wood and paper from FSC forests are marked with the FSC ‘tick tree’ logo. When you see this logo, you can be confident that buying it won’t mean harming the world’s forests.
Group felling / group planting		This is where small areas of woodland are felled hence the name “group felling” and then either allowed to develop through the use of nat-regen or in this case planted hence “group planting”. These techniques can help to develop structure* within a wood over a given length of time and is often used in conjunction with continuous cover. *Either in terms of age or number of tree species present, since shelter and shade are provided by the remaining upper storey one can consider a larger number of tree species when deciding what to plant.
Hectare	Ha	Unit of area equating to 2.47 acres.
Habitat Regulations Assessment	HRA	This is an assessment carried out under the Habitats Regulations, known as a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), tests if a plan or project proposal could significantly harm the designated features of a European site (SAC or SPA) - The assessment’s outcome decides whether to approve/adopt a project or plan (‘a proposal’).

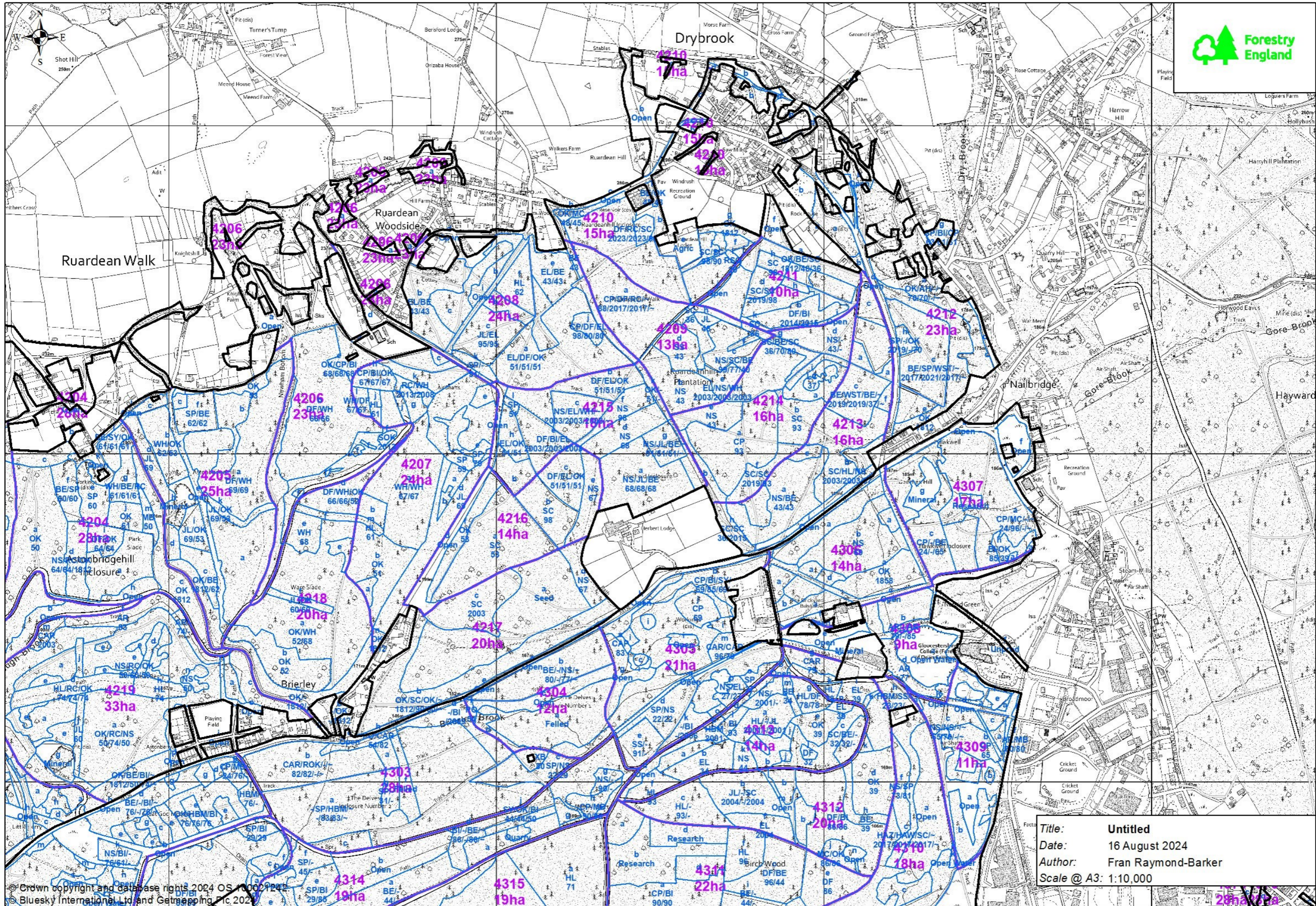
Landscape Character Assessment	LCA	Landscape character assessment (LCA) is the process of identifying and describing variation in character of the landscape. LCA documents identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive by mapping and describing character types and areas. They also show how the landscape is perceived, experienced and valued by people.
Lepidoptera		An order of insects, including moths and butterflies.
Low Impact Silviculture System	LISS or LIS	LISS for Low impact silvicultural System or LIS for Low Impact Silviculture. LISS is a type of woodland management that helps to increase species and structural diversity and promotes environmentally desirable alternative to conventional plantation forestry, delivering improved ecosystem services and a more adaptive silvicultural system (i.e. more climate proof), than more traditional methods of clearfelling and restocking. It normally causes less rapid change to the landscape and to the physical environment than clear felling systems and so can help the landowner meet multi-purpose objectives.
Mixed Wood		Usually a Woodland consisting of both conifer and broadleaf species. Sometimes refers to a mixed species conifer or broadleaf woodland.
Native (and honorary native)		The trees making up the woodland are part of England's natural, or naturalised flora. Determined by whether the trees colonised Britain without assistance from humans since the last ice age (or in the case of 'honorary natives' were brought here by people but have naturalised in historic times); and whether they would naturally be found in this part of England.
National Character area	NCA	National Character Areas (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct areas. NCA boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape, not county or district boundaries. Each is defined by a unique combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • landscape • biodiversity • geodiversity • history • cultural and economic activity
Natural Regeneration	NR Regen or nat-regen	Trees growing on a site as a result of natural seed fall, and can be used as a management process and can allow cleared areas of woodland to germinate, grow and develop naturally. This process can happen anywhere and woods can be managed to encourage nat-regen although there is no guarantee of success. In these instances, or if nat-regen is unlikely for a variety of reasons, one can use enrichment planting or group planting to achieve the same affect. The process usually relies on an overstorey of "parent trees" being present or on parent trees being close by to provide the seed. These parent trees will usually of been thinned and managed with natural regeneration in mind. Existing areas of nat-regen are then usually developed through carefully thinning the surrounding woodland over a number of years, to give more light and space to ensure the young trees can establish themselves into larger trees eventually allowing them to be incorporated ('recruited') into the main crop for the next rotation at some point in the future. Usually done in small groups or in strips this system can allow a varied woodland structure to develop over time. Protection from competing plant species and mammal browsing might be required in the early stages by fencing or using tree shelters. Enrichment planting maybe used if regen is patchy or does not provide the diversity one requires. (Also see definition for continuous cover, shelterwood and enrichment planting)
Naturalness Scores		A scoring system from 1 to 4 used by FC to determine the native content of an area of woodland. Where class 0 refers to open, un-planted, felled or bare ground. Class 1 has a content of 80% or more site native species. 2 = Reasserting native wood with 50-80% site native content. Conifer plantations with 20-50% site native species are in class 3 and class 4 contains conifer plantations with less than 20% site native species.
Open Access Land	CROW	Land designated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act), which gives the public a right of access on foot to land mapped as "open country", and these areas are known as "open access land". This access can be used to walk, run, climb, sight-see and bird-watch.
Operational guidance 1	Ops1	A site analysis, assessment and methodology statement carried out during the planning of harvesting operations. It outlines management considerations, looks at other influences on proposed work and states how the proposed work will be carried out. It also looks at work to ensure compliance with the Forest Plan. Ops1 can also be carried out for other operations such as Restocking following felling and ensures the potential of the land is prioritised.
Plantation on an Ancient Woodland (Site)	PAW(S)	This is an ancient woodland site that appears to have been planted, usually with a species that is not native to the site and surrounding area and usually conifer.
Pollarding		Pollarding used originally to feed animals or grow wood. The interval between pollarding intervention dictates the end use of product. Shorter intervals promote denser growth with more leaves, helping feed livestock. A more lengthy interval between pollarding produces multiple stems on each "knuckle" of an upright character and larger diameter with wood used for a wider range of uses like construction. Pollarding helps to lengthen a trees life, and is beneficial to wildlife too especially lepidoptera. Usually carried out when the tree is quite young. Similar to coppicing in that it results in multiple stems, although in the case of pollarding the branches of the tree are cut back to the main stem or a branch knuckle, often reducing the height of the tree to around 10 or 20 feet, which keeps the regrowth out of browsing range.
Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification	PEFC™  Promoting Sustainable Forest Management www.pefc.org	PEFC™ is an international non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) through independent third-party certification. It is an umbrella organization and works by endorsing national forest certification systems developed through multi-stakeholder processes and tailored to local priorities and conditions.

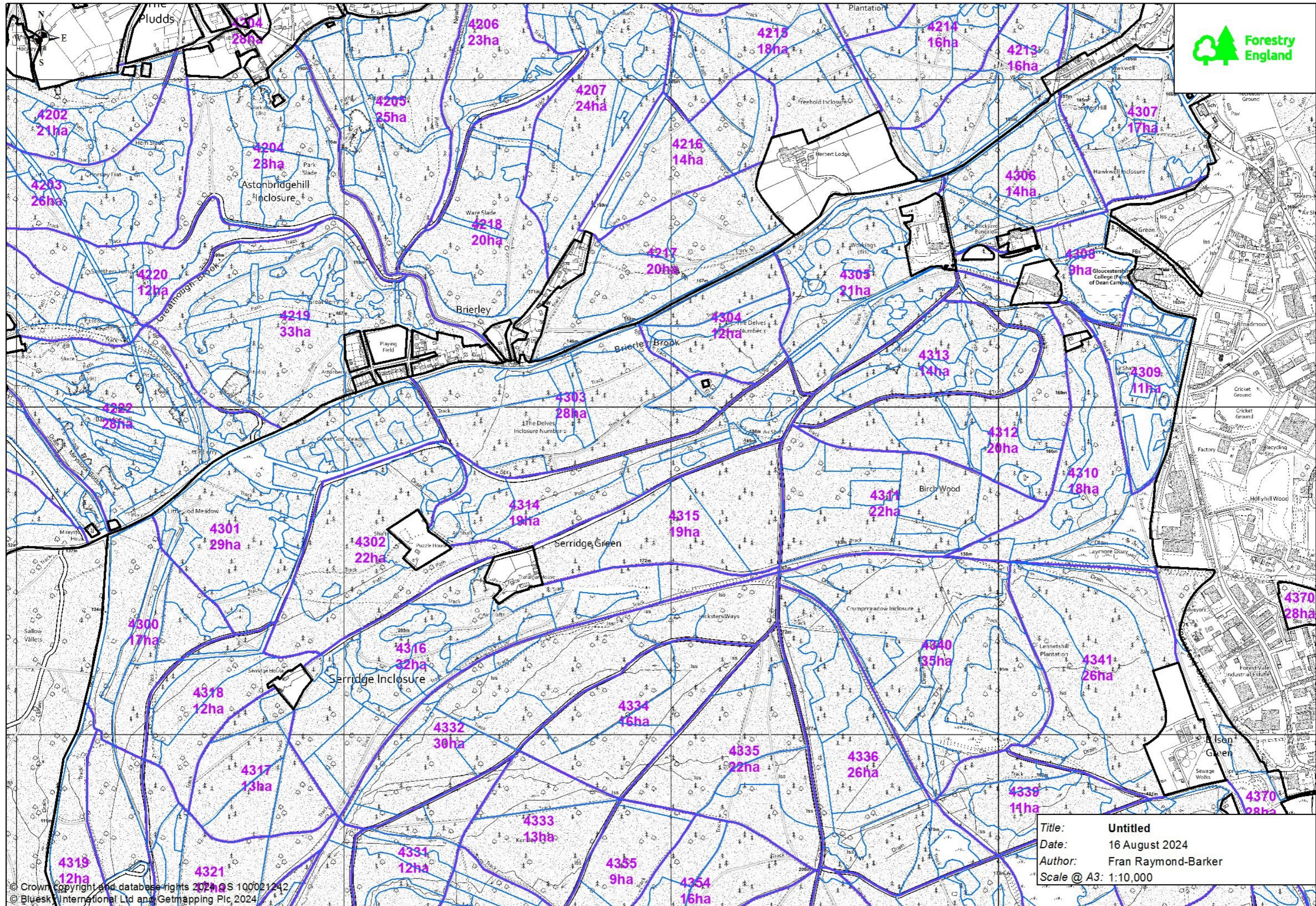
Rotation		Generally a commercial term used to describe the length of time an area of trees is growing for, from the time of planting to the time of felling. For broadleaves a rotation is generally a lot longer than that of conifer species* and can broadly speaking be anywhere between 80 years to 3-400 years, as opposed to conifer crops whose rotation is generally shorter but can vary from 20-25 years to 120 years plus. *The exception being that of coppice where rotation length can vary from 5 or 6 years up to 30 years plus depending on management objectives. “First rotation” would refer to an area of wood planted on open ground not previously wooded. And so “second rotation” is one where woodland has been cleared and replanted.
Special Area of Conservation	SAC	Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are protected areas designated under: The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in England and Wales (including the adjacent territorial sea) SACs are designed to establish a network of important high quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the habitats and species identified in Annexes I and II of the European Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora, known as the Habitats Directive. - they are designated by the government of each Country whose territory the site lies.
Scheduled Monument	SM	A nationally important heritage site which has been selected by Historic England for protection.
Secondary Woodland		Woodland located on a site which has <u>not</u> been continuously wooded throughout history (unlike ancient woodland).
Sense of Place		A factor or set of factors that give a specific location special character, making it unique in its own intangible way. Often it is a combination of character, features, quality, space and associations that creates and gives a unique sense of identity to a location.
Selection System		The selection system can be very complex. In the selection system, mature timber (trees) are removed either as single scattered individuals or in small groups at relatively short intervals, repeated indefinitely, where an uneven-aged stand is maintained. Regeneration should occur throughout the life of the stand with pulses following thinning interventions. This system depends on recruitment of trees into successive age classes over time and the predictable yield from merchantable age classes. Yield will be obtained by thinning clumps, harvesting individual trees, or by harvesting whole groups of the most mature age class to create small openings scattered throughout the stand. Also see Shelterwood System (below)
Shelterwood		A management system that is applicable to conifer or broadleaf, where tree canopy is maintained at one or more levels without the need to clearfell the whole site. Felling can occur, but generally in small “groups” whose size shape and spatial distribution will vary depending on site conditions. The “groups” are then either: allowed to develop and establish by the use of natural regeneration, are planted or are established using a mixture of both techniques. This known as a “group shelterwood system” A variation on this is “Single tree selection”. This variation removes individual trees of all size classes more or less uniformly throughout the stand to maintain an uneven-aged stand and achieve other stand structural objectives. While it is easier to apply such a system to a stand that is naturally close to the uneven-aged condition, single tree selection systems can be prescribed for even-aged stands, although numerous preparatory thinning interventions must be made to create a stand structure where the system can truly be applied.
Silviculture		A term coined during late 19th century from the Latin <i>silva</i> meaning 'wood' and the French <i>culture</i> meaning 'cultivation' and so Silviculture is the art and science of controlling the establishment, growth, composition, and quality of forest vegetation to achieve a full range of forest resource objectives.
Site of Special Scientific Interest	SSSI	A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the land notified as an SSSI under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). SSSI are the finest sites for wildlife and natural features in England, supporting many characteristic, rare and endangered species, habitats and natural features.
Stand		A group or area of trees that are more or less homogeneous with regard to species composition, density, size, and sometimes habitat.
Thin	TH	Selective removal of trees from a wooded area, giving remaining trees more space to grow into larger trees. Thinning is done to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the quality and vigour of remaining trees. • Remove trees interfering with mature or veteran broadleaf trees. • Give space for tops (or “crowns”) of broadleaf trees to develop and potentially act as a future seed source. • Give space for natural regeneration to grow and develop with the intention of recruiting these younger naturally grown trees as a part of the future woodland structure. • Create gaps for group planting or enrichment. • Remove species of tree that may compromise the intended management objective of the woodland eg: non-native or invasive species such as Sycamore, Western Hemlock or birch. • Improve the economic value of a wood. • Help realise opportunities to enhance ecological value. <p>NOTE: This list is not in any order of priority and will vary depending on management objectives.</p>
Tree of Special Interest	TSI	Can be conifer or broadleaf. TSI are trees of particular note and interest for one of many reasons, including its age, size, form, cultural or historic significance.
UK Forestry Standard	UKFS	This guidance sets out the UK governments' approach to sustainable forestry, including standards and requirements, regulations and monitoring, and reporting.
UK Woodland Assurance Scheme	UKWAS	The UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) is an independent certification standard for verifying sustainable woodland management in the UK. A new fourth edition of the UKWAS was introduced on 1 April 2018. This revised version was prepared by the UKWAS Steering Group and subsequently adopted for use in the UK by both the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC™).
Yield Class	YC	A method of measuring the growth rate or “increment” of a crop of trees by age and height; measured in m ³ per Ha per annum. E.g. A crop with a YC of 16 is one that has an annual increment of more than 16m ³ but less than 17m ³ , although generally only even numbers are used when stating YC.

APPENDIX 3 - SUPPORTING INFORMATION - Stock Data - 2024

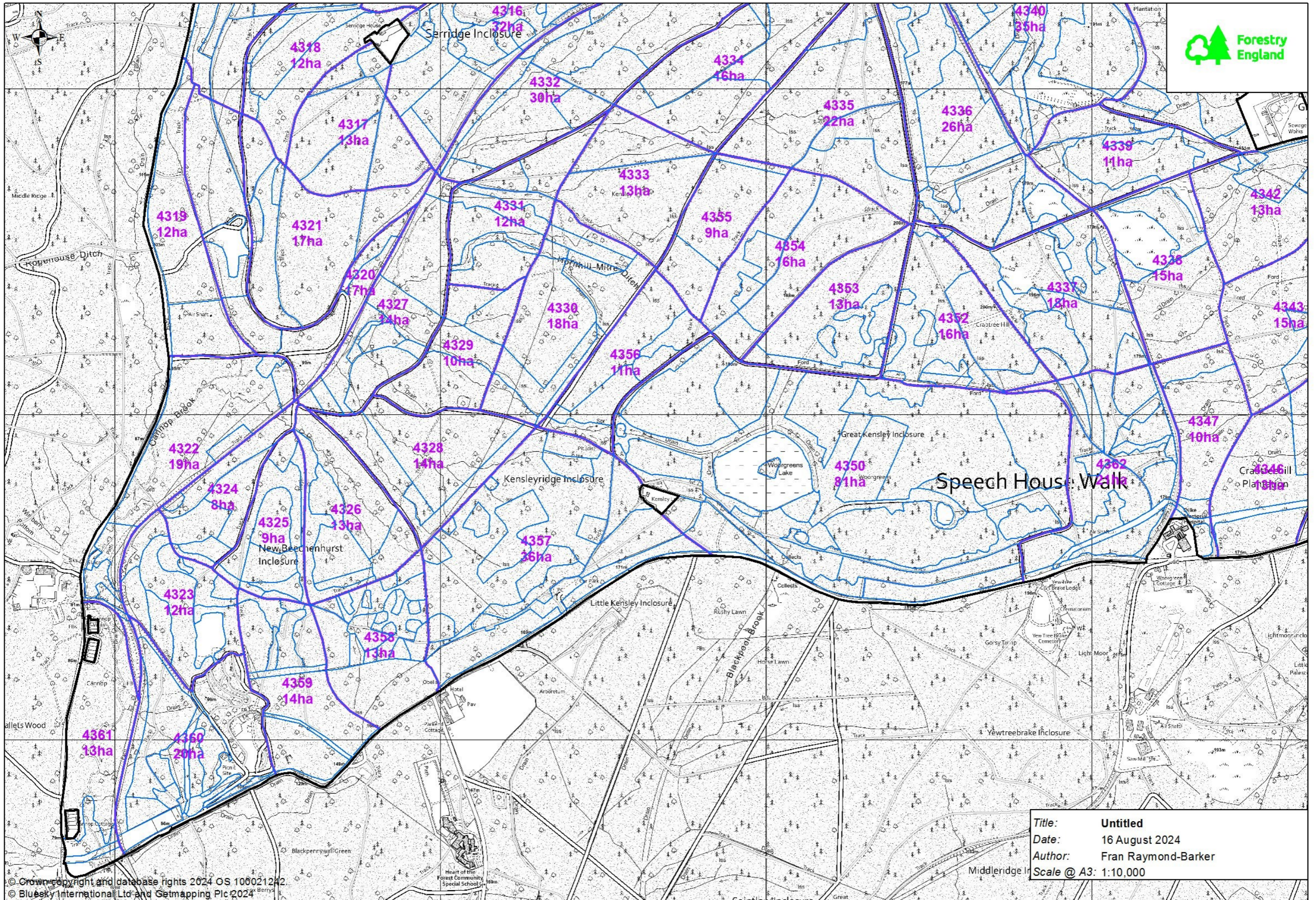


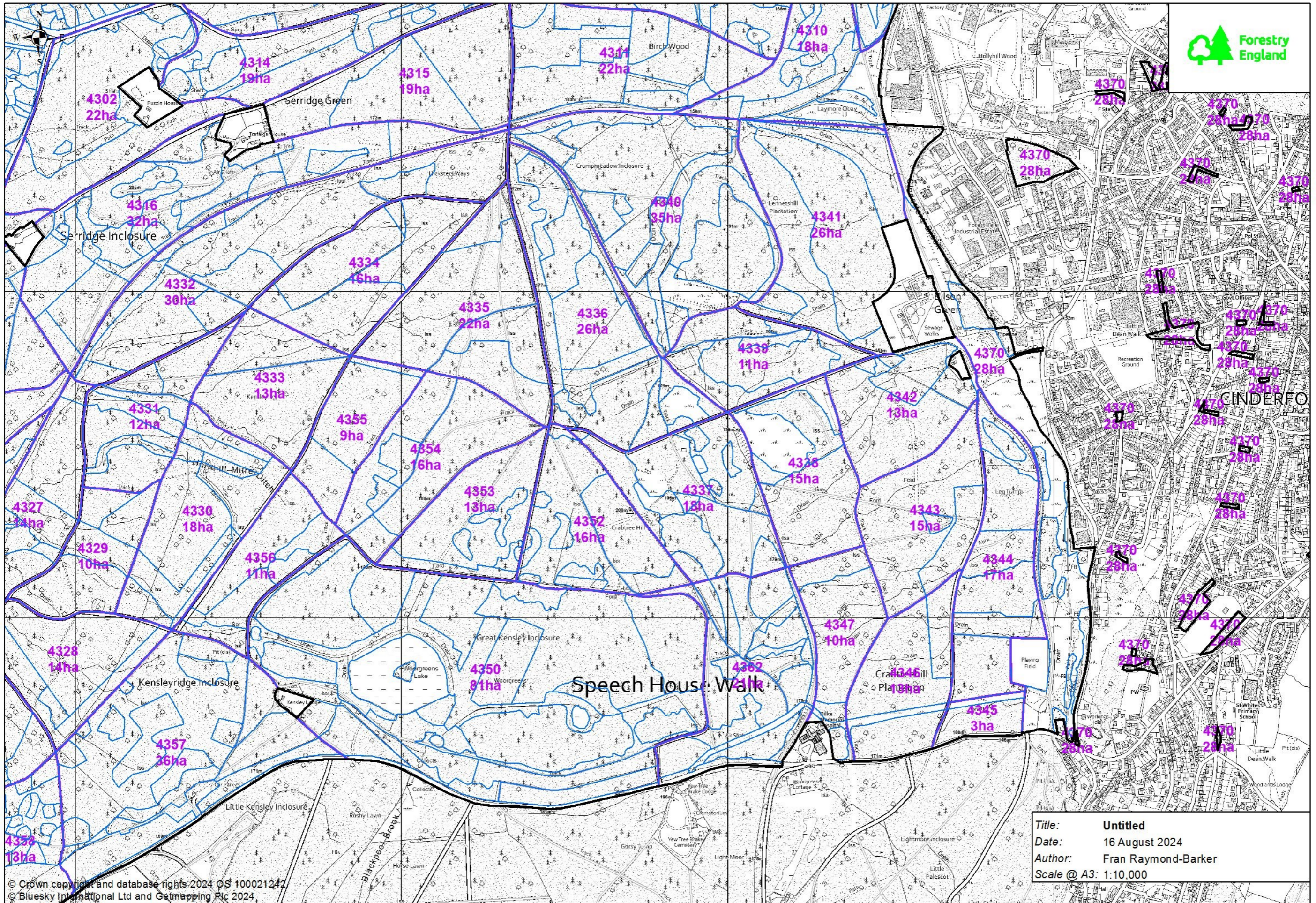
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Habitats Regulations Assessment screening form - Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan 2024 - 2034

European Protected Site type, name, and qualifying features

Project name	Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan 2024 - 2034
Block name(s)	Serridge and Crabtree Hill, Astonbridge
Site type	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Site name	Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Bat Sites/Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy a Fforest y Ddena SAC (UK0014794)
Associated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and other site information	<p>England</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blaisdon Hall SSSI • Buckshrafft Mine and Bradley Hill Railway Tunnel SSSI • Caerwood and Ashberry Goose House SSSI • Dean Hall Coach House and Cellar SSSI • Devil's Chapel Scowles SSSI • Old Bow and Old Ham Mines SSSI • Sylvan House Barn SSSI • Westbury Brook Ironstone Mine SSSI • Wigpool Ironstone Mine SSSI <p>Wales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Llangovan Church SSSI • Mwynloddfa Mynydd-Bach SSSI

Proposed Operations

1. What operations are proposed as part of this project?	<p>The Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan includes the proposed woodland management of approximately 1671ha of the Forest of Dean from 2024 to 2034.</p> <p>Woodland management will include forestry actions such as thinning, clear-felling, restocking and extraction. The forestry operations will include the use of various forestry machinery and will involve the maintenance of forest infrastructure.</p> <p>Additional activities will include (but not be limited to) coppicing, management of riverine corridors and maintenance of open habitats.</p> <p>The Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan includes 80ha of conifer felling and 16ha of broadleaf felling. The following work is planned:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Coupe</th> <th>Fell period</th> <th>ha</th> <th>Coupe</th> <th>Fell period</th> <th>ha</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>43085</td><td>2022-2026</td><td>6.6</td><td>42127</td><td>2022-2026</td><td>2.6</td></tr> <tr><td>43069</td><td>2022-2026</td><td>9.5</td><td>42060</td><td>2027-2031</td><td>1.5</td></tr> <tr><td>42098</td><td>2022-2026</td><td>3.2</td><td>42125</td><td>2027-2031</td><td>4.5</td></tr> <tr><td>42020</td><td>2022-2026</td><td>0.2</td><td>42144</td><td>2027-2031</td><td>1.5</td></tr> <tr><td>43051</td><td>2022-2026</td><td>2.6</td><td>42059</td><td>2027-2031</td><td>4.1</td></tr> <tr><td>43058</td><td>2022-2026</td><td>2.9</td><td>43271</td><td>2027-2031</td><td>0.3</td></tr> <tr><td>43060</td><td>2022-2026</td><td>0.9</td><td>43030</td><td>2027-2031</td><td>5.0</td></tr> <tr><td>43156</td><td>2022-2026</td><td>0.9</td><td>43049</td><td>2027-2031</td><td>3.9</td></tr> <tr><td>43103</td><td>2022-2026</td><td>4.2</td><td>43196</td><td>2027-2031</td><td>0.9</td></tr> <tr><td>43182</td><td>2022-2026</td><td>1.9</td><td>43047</td><td>2027-2031</td><td>3.0</td></tr> <tr><td>42050</td><td>2027-2031</td><td>4.6</td><td>43155</td><td>2027-2031</td><td>2.7</td></tr> <tr><td>42115</td><td>2027-2031</td><td>1.1</td><td>43162</td><td>2027-2031</td><td>3.3</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Coupe	Fell period	ha	Coupe	Fell period	ha	43085	2022-2026	6.6	42127	2022-2026	2.6	43069	2022-2026	9.5	42060	2027-2031	1.5	42098	2022-2026	3.2	42125	2027-2031	4.5	42020	2022-2026	0.2	42144	2027-2031	1.5	43051	2022-2026	2.6	42059	2027-2031	4.1	43058	2022-2026	2.9	43271	2027-2031	0.3	43060	2022-2026	0.9	43030	2027-2031	5.0	43156	2022-2026	0.9	43049	2027-2031	3.9	43103	2022-2026	4.2	43196	2027-2031	0.9	43182	2022-2026	1.9	43047	2027-2031	3.0	42050	2027-2031	4.6	43155	2027-2031	2.7	42115	2027-2031	1.1	43162	2027-2031	3.3
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HRA Screening: Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newton Court Stable Block SSSI • Wye Valley Lesser Horseshoe Bat Sites SSSI (comprising 4 separate sites): Itton Court Stud; Penallt Old Church; Priory Llandogo; Tregeiriog Farm
Qualifying features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S1303. <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>; Lesser horseshoe bat (LHS) • S1304. <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>; Greater horseshoe bat (GHS)

Conservation Objectives

Conservation Objectives for Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites/Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy a Fforest y Ddena SAC	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species • The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species • The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely • The populations of qualifying species, and <p>The distribution of qualifying species within the site.</p>
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2. How will these operations be carried out?	All operations will be undertaken under best practice guidelines (UKWAS etc.) and will be preceded by an Operational Site Assessment.																																				

HRA Screening: Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan

Exempt Works Test

1. Are the operations proposed in this project already covered by a plan agreed with Natural England?	No
<i>If yes, which agreed plans cover the designated area?</i>	N/A
2. If no, are operations directly connected with or necessary for maintaining the site's listed features?	The Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan area is approximately 2.5km from the closest component SSSI of the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites/Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy a Fforest y Ddena SAC. No works within the Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan are directly connected with (or necessary to the maintenance of) any component of the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites/Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy a Fforest y Ddena SAC.

Significant Effect Test

All operations on Forestry England land are carried out to standards defined in the following documents:

- UK Forestry Standard
- UK Woodland Assurance Scheme
- European Protected Species Regulations
- Forest Industry Safety Accord
- Heather and Grass Burning Code 2007

In addition to being UKFS/UKWAS compliant, and with reference to the potential impacts and risk framework listed in the tables below, are these operations likely to have a significant adverse effect on the qualifying features?	Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites/Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy a Fforest y Ddena SAC	The Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites/Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy a Fforest y Ddena SAC is designated for populations of greater horseshoe bats (GHS) and lesser horseshoe bats (LHS). The Core Sustenance Zones (CSZ) of GHS and LHS are 3km and 2km respectively ¹ . These CSZ and the maternity buffers described in the interim guidance published by Natural England ² (GHS, 2-4km and LHS 3km) are considered to be functionally linked habitat. The CSZ of GHS and LHS populations using the component SSSI of the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites/Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy a Fforest y Ddena SAC includes all of the Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan area. No direct impacts to the component SSSI of the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites/Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy a Fforest y Ddena SAC are predicted due to their distance from the plan area, however all habitat within the Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan area is deemed to be functionally linked habitat.
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¹ BCT (2020) Core Sustenance Zones and habitats of importance for designing Biodiversity Net Gain for bats. Bat Conservation Trust, London. <https://www.bats.org.uk/resources/guidance-for-professionals/bat-species-core-sustenance-zones-and-habitats-for-biodiversity-net-gain> Access on 07/12/2021
² Natural England, July 2021, Interim Guidance; Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat SAC Development Management - Horseshoe Bat activity survey and assessment guidance,

		<p>The Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan includes proposals for approximately 96ha of clearfell within the 1671ha Forest Plan area (approx. 5% of plan area). The areas planned for clearfell are typically building on existing areas of open space or are adding structural complexity to homogenous woodland. The planned works will be undertaken in discrete operations over the ten-year life of the Forest Plan and the surrounding woodland will not be affected. Following clearfell operations the areas affected will either be restocked with trees or be managed as dynamic open space, generally associated with existing areas of open habitat.</p> <p>Due to the scale of the Forest Plan and surrounding wooded landscape there have been no studies into the flight-lines of GHS and LHS and the relative importance of individual rides or linear features. The Forest Plan area is however between known breeding and hibernation roosts, and therefore is assumed to be important for connectivity and foraging. As such all linear features such as rides, roads and waterbodies are assumed to be part of a network of flightlines crossing the Forest Plan area linking breeding and hibernation sites.</p> <p>The majority of existing potential flight-lines across the plan area will not be affected by the proposed works, and those that are will be improved in the long term through progression to more natural habitats. Short term changes to some existing linear structures (such as forest rides) will occur through the planned widening and clearfell. The widened ridesides will continue to be bordering retained woodland, meaning that any potential flight-lines will be modified rather than lost. Areas of clearfell will also be bordered by significant areas of retained woodland and will only affect a small proportion of the potential flightlines available. As such, it is not anticipated that the planned clearfell and ride widening</p>
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	<p>are likely to significantly alter connectivity through the Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan area.</p> <p>The planned restocking/natural regeneration or conversion of conifer woodland to dynamic open space should increase the proportion of suitable habitat for prey species for both GHS and LHS. The expansion of open space grazed by animals (both wildlife and stock) in the Forest Plan should also support this.</p> <p>The proposed works also involve the thinning of crop trees surrounding watercourses to promote scrubby and open riparian corridors, as well as installing woody debris structure to 'slow the flow'. This is predicted to increase connectivity and foraging opportunities within the Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan area, as well as improve water availability for bats.</p> <p>Proposed thinning operations are deemed beneficial to the management of the woodland and likely to increase diversity of structure and species composition. This increase in diversity should in turn increase foraging opportunities for bat species.</p> <p>The proposed management is a continuation of existing Forest Plans that have been in place during an average increase in both GHS and LHS populations within the relevant component SSSI of the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites/Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy a Fforest y Ddena SAC since 2010³. It should however be noted that, at the time of writing, the only complete monitoring dataset available to Forestry England between 2012 and 2024 for the relevant SSSI was for Old Bow and Old Ham Mines SSSI.</p>		<p>Populations of both GHS and LHS were observed to decline within Old Bow and Old Ham Mines SSSI during 2017, 2019 and 2021 when compared to recent years, however this was attributed to unseasonal cold weather in late Spring 2022 that caused increased mortality and reduced breeding success across numerous species groups^{4,5}.</p> <p>Population counts in 2023 were higher than 2019 and 2020, with 2024 similar to 2020. Wigpool Ironstone Mine SSSI returned a lower number of bats in 2024 than in 2023, however it has been noted that the 2024 data was limited by a late survey date during warm weather. The survey in sub-optimal conditions for hibernation may have contributed to a lower number of individual bats being present⁶.</p> <p>The Buckshraft Mine component of Buckshraft Mine and Bradley Hill Railway Tunnel SSSI and Westbury Brook Ironstone Mine SSSI both returned higher numbers of LHS in 2024 compared to 2023, with Westbury Brook Ironstone Mine SSSI also returning higher numbers of GHS (numbers of GHS in Buckshraft Mine were comparable in 2024 to 2023).</p> <p>The population counts between 2012 and 2024 still show an average increase on the period 2002-2012.</p> <p>The proposed works detailed within the Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan are considered unlikely to cause significant effects to GHS or LHS populations in the surrounding area.</p>
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³ Monitoring data provided by The National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP), December 2021, Bat Conservation Trust, in partnership with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, and supported and steered by Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, and Scottish Natural Heritage.

⁴ Priddis, D. (11/01/2022), Re: Bats in the Forest of Dean, [email, personal communication]

⁵ Schofield, H. (08/12/2021), Bats and Martens in the FoD, [email, personal communication]

⁶ Phillips, B. (25/03/2024), GBG Underground Section bat hibernation counts - Noxon 16th Mar and Wigpool 17th Mar [email, personal communication]

	<p>No Likely Significant Effects to the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites/Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy a Fforest y Ddena SAC are therefore predicted as a result of proposed activities within the Speech House Walk & Ruardean Walk Forest Plan.</p>
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END



Speech House Walk and Ruardean Walk Forest Plan
2025-2035
Part of Our Shared Forest project
WEST ENGLAND FOREST DISTRICT