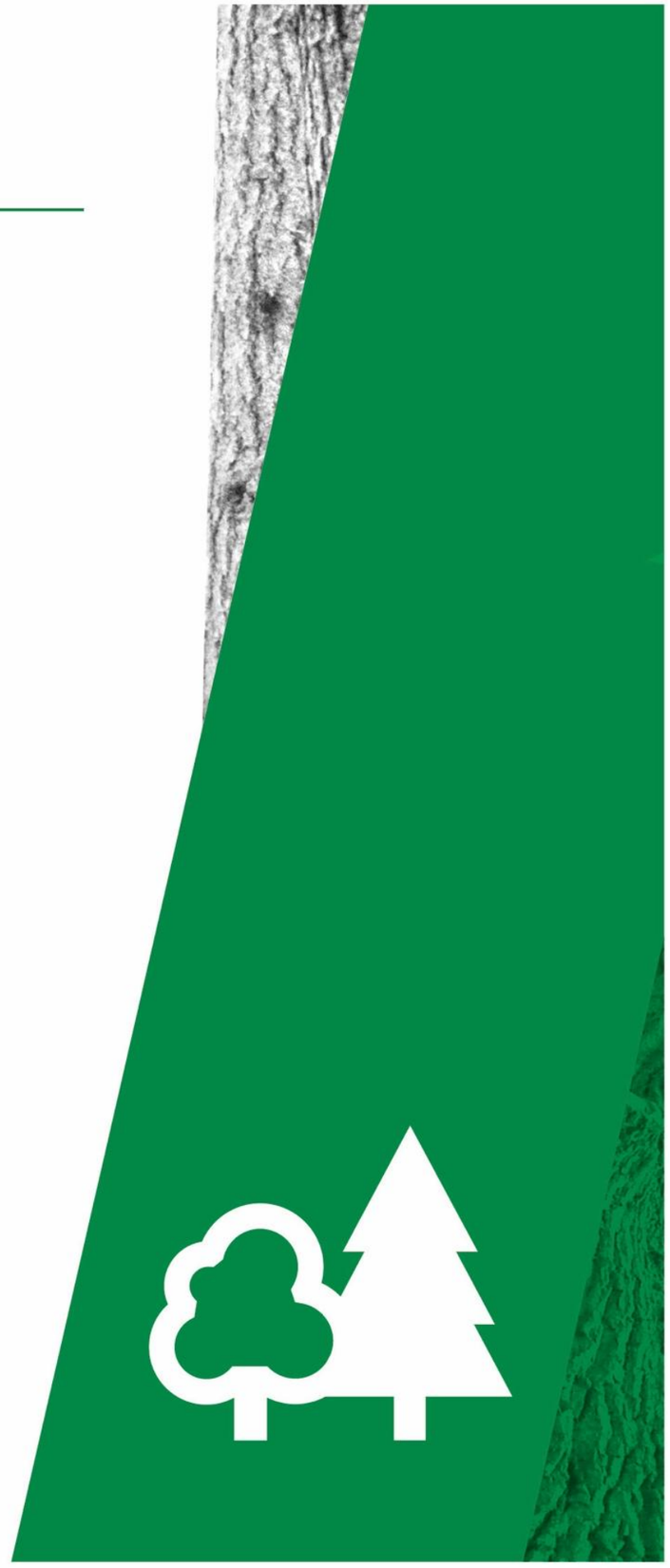
Forestry England

Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan

2027 – 2037

West England Forest District

FE Reference: FE / WEST / FP / SAVERNAKE / 2027



Forestry England forests and woodlands have been certified in accordance with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS)

FSC www.fsc.org FSC® C123214 The mark of responsible forestry

PEFC PEFC/16-40-1001 Promoting Sustainable Forest Management www.pefc.co.uk

Forestry England

Application for Forest Plan Approval

Forest District:	West England Forest District
Woodland or property name:	Savernake Forest, Bedwyn Common, Bloxham Copse, Cobham Frith, Noke Wood, Withy Copse, Chisbury Wood, Leigh Hill Copse, Knowle Hens Wood
Nearest town, village or locality:	Marlborough Great Bedwyn
OS Grid reference:	SU 2252 6680, SU 2557 6552, SU 2660 6364, SU 2559 6712, SU 2693 6757, SU 2633 6695, SU 2730 6552, SU 2190 6375, SU 2540 6839
Local Authority:	Savernake Parish Council, Little Bedwyn Parish Council, Burbage Parish Council, Wootton Rivers Parish Council, Mildenhall Parish Council

Plan area:	1540.13ha
Area under LISS:	1449.6ha
Conifer felling:	21.45ha
Broadleaf felling:	7.17ha **Note:** in addition to the figure above, small (≤0.25ha) group fells are to be integrated into thinning operations in locations across the Forest Plan area under group shelterwood management, with no more than 30% of stand volume being removed per intervention.

FSC www.fsc.org FSC® C123214 The mark of responsible forestry

Forestry England forests and woodlands have been certified in accordance with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS)

PEFC PEFC/16-40-1001 Promoting Sustainable Forest Management www.pefc.co.uk

1) I apply for Forest Plan approval for the property described on this page and in the enclosed forest plan.

2) I confirm that the scoping, carried out and documented in the Consultation Record attached, incorporated those stakeholders that FE agreed must be included. Where it has not been possible to resolve specific issues associated with the plan to the satisfaction of consultees, this is highlighted in the Consultation Record.

3) I confirm that the proposals contained in this plan comply with the UK Forestry Standard.

4) I undertake to obtain any permissions necessary for the implementation of the approved Plan.

Signed .....
Forest Management Director

Date .....

Signed .....
Area Director

Date of approval .....

Date approval ends .....

Forestry England

List of Contents

Part 1: Vision, Introduction and Objectives

Application for Forest Plan Approval	2
Contents	3
Forestry England's Vision	4
Our Shared Forest	5
Introduction	6 - 7
Forest Plan Objectives	8

Part 2: Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan Area

Designations in the Forest Plan Area	9
Trees and Woodlands:	
Woodland Composition	10
Structural Composition	11
Ancient Woodland and Naturalness	12
Wildlife and Wild Spaces:	
Priority Habitats in Savernake & Bedwyn	13
Savernake Forest SSSI	14 - 15
County Wildlife Sites	16
Trees of Special Interest	17
Other Notable Ecological Features	18 - 19
Geology and Soils & Water:	
The Soils of Savernake and Bedwyn	20
Ponds and their Associated Species	20
Cultural and Built Heritage:	
Heritage	21 - 22
Community and Recreation:	
Recreation and Access	23 - 24

Part 3: Our Plans for Savernake & Bedwyn

Analysis and Concept	25 - 28
Silviculture	29 - 30
Felling and Restocking 2027 - 2037	31 - 32
Management Prescriptions 2027 - 2051	33 - 34
Future Habitats and Species	35 - 36
Our Shared Forest - Making Progress Towards Our Commitments	37 - 39
Landscape Analysis	40 - 44
Appendices	
Appendix 1: Glossary of terms	45 - 48

Forestry England

We are Forestry England

We are the country's largest land manager, caring for the nation's forests for people, nature, and the economy. The foundation of our organisation is our world-class sustainable management of the nation's forests.

Growing the Future to 2031:

Forests forever – We will grow forests that are sustainable, productive, diverse and thriving in a changing climate

Forests for nature – We will grow forests that are bigger, better connected, and which support fully-functioning ecosystems

Forests for all – We will create forests that feel relevant, welcoming and inclusive, where everyone is invited

Read more about our Growing the Future to 2031 strategy here, or search online for "Forestry England Growing the Future".



Forestry England

Our Shared Forest

Savernake Forest Land Management Plan (2023)

Our vision for Savernake Forest:

To nurture a shared forest unlike any other

100 years from now, the woodlands of Savernake Forest will be a vibrant blend of ancient veteran trees and their younger successors. The woodland landscape and its associated ecology will have evolved successfully with our changing climate. The Forest will be accessible to people and thriving in a society where biodiversity, the historic environment, and access to the outdoors for fresh air and exercise is highly valued.



We published Savernake's Our Shared Forest Land Management Plan in 2023, with the purpose of setting out what the Forest will look like, feel like, and be like in 100 years' time. To develop this Land Management Plan, we sought views from a wide cross section of individuals and organisations. The plan focuses on 6 land management principles:

- **Trees and woodlands**
- **Wildlife and wild spaces**
- **Cultural and built heritage**
- **Geology and soils**
- **Community and recreation**
- **Water**

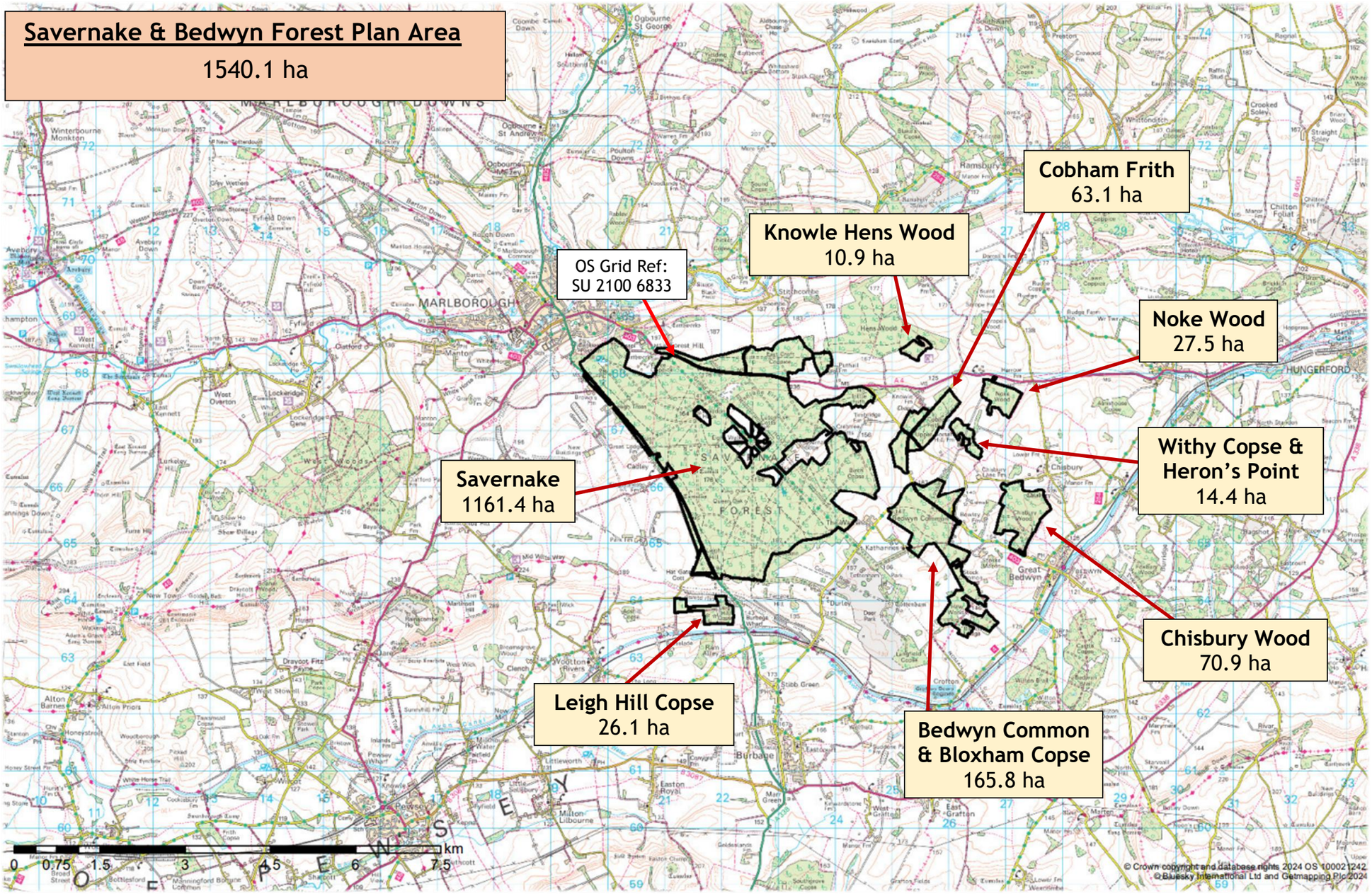
From this Land Management Plan, we will create more detailed, shorter term Forest Plans that will direct operational activity decade by decade. Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan 2027 – 2037 (this document) is the first of these, and throughout this Plan there are details on how our proposed management in the Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area will help to move towards the vision set out in Our Shared Forest, with reference to the six land management principles. The information in Part 2 of this Plan is divided into sections which relate to the 6 land management principles in the Our Shared Forest Land Management Plan.



Further details about Our Shared Forest Savernake Land Management Plan can be found here

Forestry England

Introduction



Forestry England

Introduction

The Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area is situated in the county of Wiltshire, in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. The Plan area consists of Savernake Forest, plus seven additional smaller nearby woodlands which are Bedwyn Common, Knowle Hens Wood, Cobham Frith, Noke Wood, Chisbury Wood, Withy Copse and Leigh Hill Copse. The woodlands are located south-east of the town of Marlborough. Covering a total area of 1540.1ha, this large block is a mix of broadleaf and conifer species, and the majority of the Forest Plan area is classed as either Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites, Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland or Infilled Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland. The entirety of the block is leased from the Savernake Estate. Sporting rights are retained by the Estate.

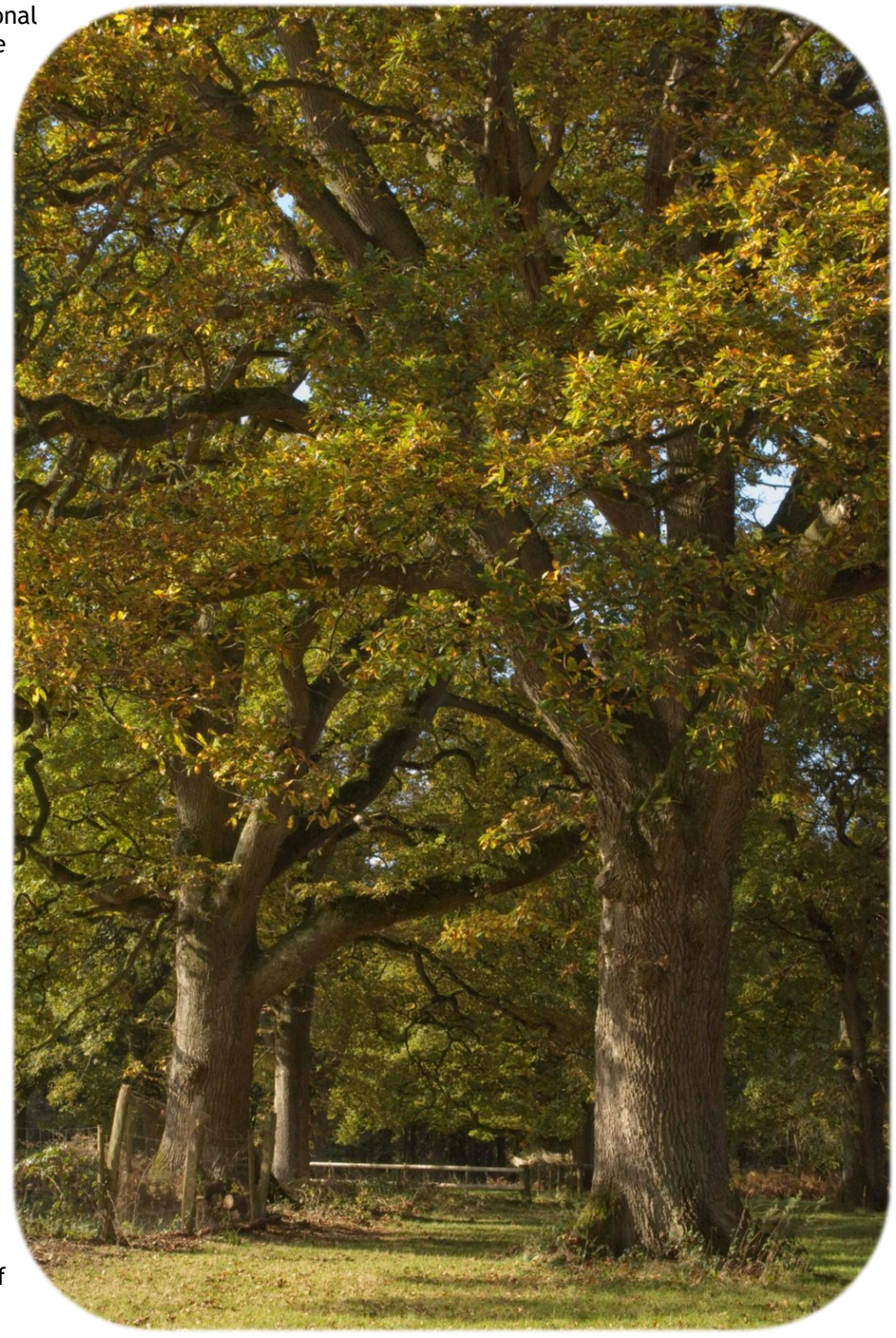
Savernake Forest stands out as one of Great Britain's most significant remnants of wood pasture. It boasts a remarkable density of ancient and veteran trees, some dating back to before 1750 AD, and is comparable with very few other sites across the country. As a forest it is hugely important from an ecological, and a historical perspective, and is one of the largest woodlands in Wiltshire. Savernake Forest SSSI covers approximately 70% of Savernake Forest, and has been notified for a variety of reasons including its areas of Ancient Wood Pasture, its outstanding lichen assemblage, its diversity of invertebrates (some of which are associated with deadwood), lepidoptera, scrub, and breeding birds. The site is also important for bats (particularly barbastelle), fungi, dormice, great crested newts and the purple emperor butterfly. Improving the condition of the areas of wood pasture within Savernake Forest will be a priority for this Forest Plan period, given that this is a key feature of the SSSI, and the long term vision for the forest is to see widescale restored wood pasture. The plan will also take steps to address the challenge of ensuring that current ancient and veteran trees are succeeded by younger individuals that can take their place.

As well as ecological richness, Savernake Forest is of significant historical and cultural importance. It is a Registered Park and Garden, and also contains numerous scheduled and unscheduled historical monuments dating from pre-historic times, as well as a number of listed buildings. One of the oldest woodlands in England, the first records of its existence date from the Saxon period. Savernake is known to have been a hunting forest in medieval times, and was later landscaped by Capability Brown. The Forestry Commission leased Savernake Forest from the Savernake Estate in 1939 on a 999-year agreement, and today Forestry England continues to manage the forest with diverse objectives.

The Forest Plan area falls within the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs National Character Area (NCA), and also North Wessex Downs National Landscape. Our objectives within this Plan contribute to the aims and priorities for wooded landscapes outlined in the National Landscape Management Plan. This Forest Plan also delivers a number of actions for woodland as outlined in the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

The woodlands within this Forest Plan area are highly valued and well used by the public, with Savernake Forest in particular being a very popular location for walkers and families who come to enjoy the quiet tracks and paths and the tranquillity provided by the woodland. In the north-west of Savernake Forest is a car park known as Postern Hill. The car park is well used throughout the year, and there is a seasonal toilet and easy access to picnic tables and footpaths into the forest. Across the other woodlands within the Forest Plan area, visitors tend to be limited to local walkers who can reach the woodlands on foot.

Our long-term vision for the Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area is one where the wooded landscape is successfully evolving with our changing climate, ancient and veteran trees are alive and thriving, people continue to enjoy recreational access and the health benefits it brings, and the biodiversity and heritage value of the woodlands are recognised.



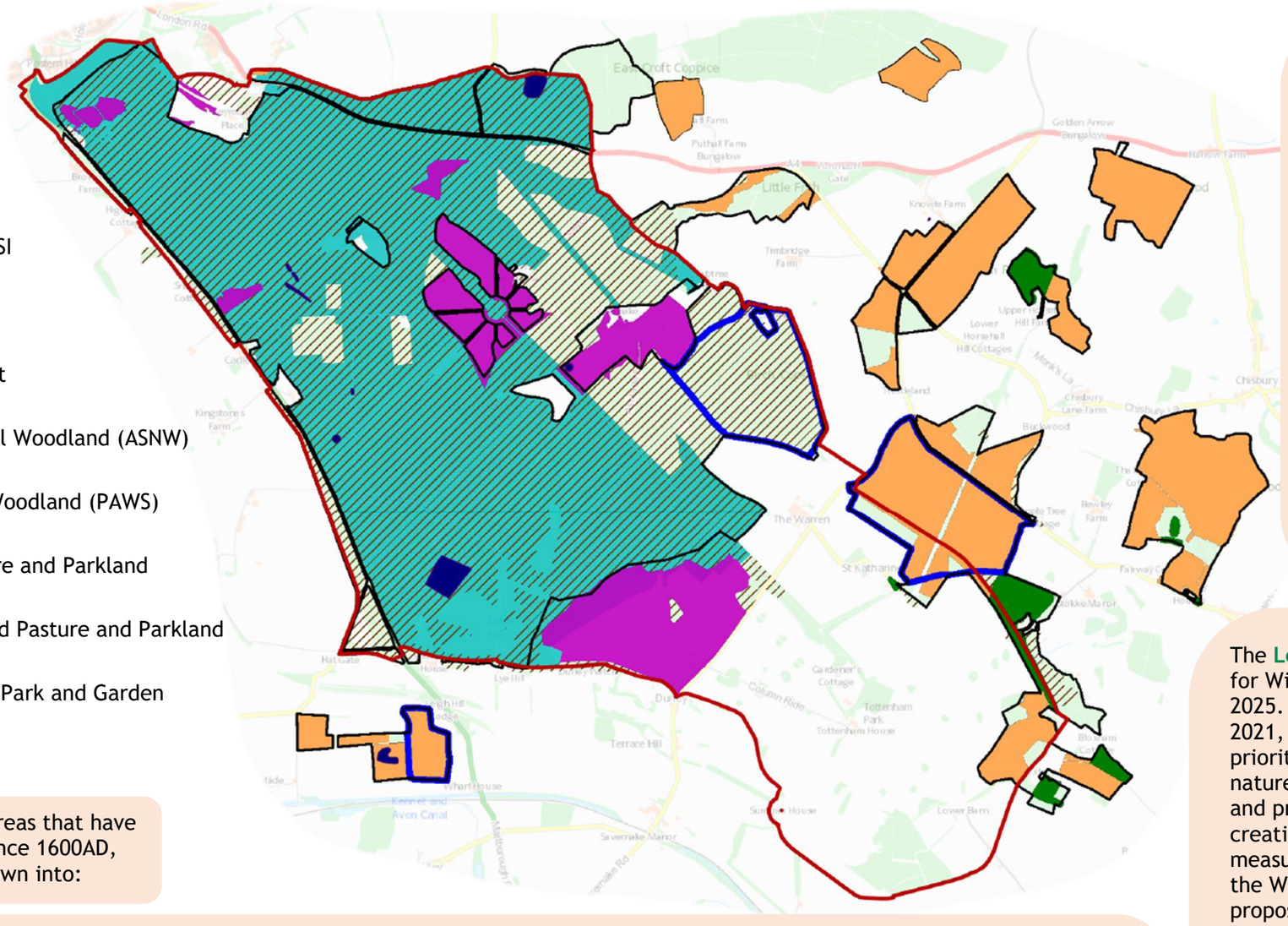
Forestry England

Forest Plan Objectives

Forestry England's Vision	Forest Plan Objective	Meeting Objective / Monitoring	Related Land Management Principle in Our Shared Forest
For wildlife **Our vision: The nation's forests provide the most valuable places for wildlife to thrive and expand in England.**	❖ To protect and enhance areas of Ancient Semi-natural Woodland and restore areas of PAWs in line with the 'Keepers of Time' policy	➢ Clear timeline for restoration (long term due to limited clearfelling) with analysis of naturalness at end-of-plan review	Trees and Woodlands
	❖ To protect and enhance trees of special interest including veteran trees, and to recruit future generations of both	➢ Undertake systematic programme of haloing work around veterans. Progress assessed at end of plan	Trees and Woodlands
	❖ The restoration and management of Savernake Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	➢ Carry out management prescriptions as detailed in SSSI management plan	Wildlife and Wild Spaces
	❖ To protect and enhance woodland and open habitats and their associated species	➢ Maintenance and further enhancement of ride-sides and open areas. To be checked at plan review stage	Wildlife and Wild Spaces
For people **Our vision: The nation's forests are a living treasure for all, deeply connected to people's lives improving the health and wellbeing of the nation.**		➢ Restoration of historic ponds	Water
	❖ To deliver woodlands with social amenity value	➢ Maintain visitor access, and increase diversity through Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS) to improve aesthetics	Community and Recreation
	❖ To conserve, maintain and enhance cultural and heritage assets	➢ Carry out management prescriptions detailed in Scheduled Monument (SM) management plans. Assess at plan review	Cultural and Built Heritage
	❖ To deliver well-designed forests that both protect and enhance the internal and external landscape, in keeping with the local landscape character	➢ Use of fixed-point photography to monitor changes in landscape aesthetic as a result of forest management.	Trees and Woodlands Community and Recreation
For the climate **Our vision: The nation's forests are resilient to climate change, increasing their value for communities by producing high-quality, sustainable timber and absorbing carbon emissions.**	❖ The continued production of sustainable and marketable woodland products	➢ Comparison of the production forecast yield (approximately 7500m^3 (2027 – 2032) and 17,000m^3 (2027 – 2037)) to actual production at the five- and ten-year Forest Plan reviews	Trees and Woodlands
	❖ The continued use of or gradual development of continuous cover forest systems	➢ Survey undertaken at plan review stage	Trees and Woodlands Geology and soils

Forestry England

Designations in the Forest Plan Area



The Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area sits within **North Wessex Downs National Landscape**. National Landscapes are areas protected in the national interest for their unique character and beauty. When writing this Forest Plan, the aims and objectives of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape were taken into consideration to ensure that this plan is complementary to, and helps to deliver those National Landscape objectives. For example, our work towards restoring PAWS sites to native broadleaf cover, managing areas of existing ancient woodland to increase structural diversity, and restoring ancient wood pasture are ways in which our actions are supporting the National Landscape objectives.

Ancient woodland sites are areas that have been continuously wooded since 1600AD, and can be further broken down into:

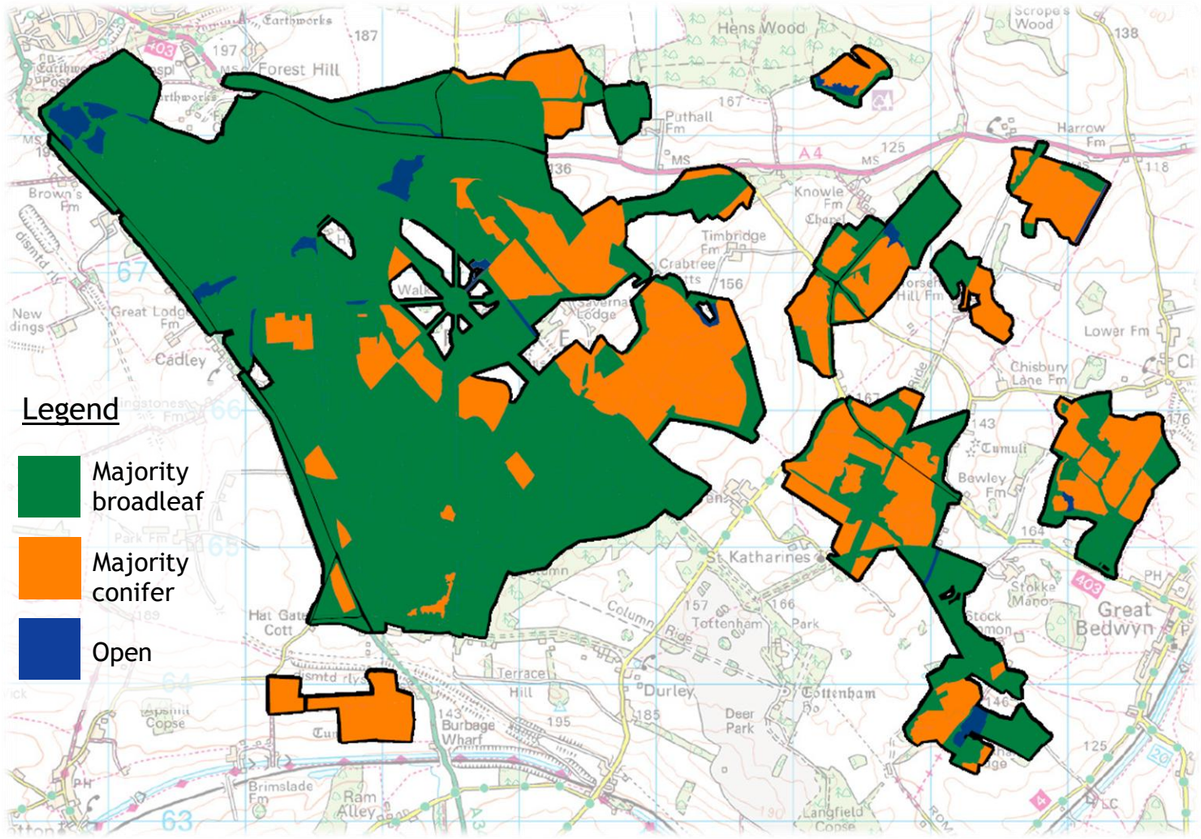
- **Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)** - trees and other plant species appear to have established naturally rather than having been planted, and typically these sites will contain at least 80% site native species, or species native to the surrounding area
- **Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)** - the original semi-natural woodland has been cleared and replaced with a plantation of either native or non-native species, resulting in a decline in ecological value
- **Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland (AWPP)** - derived from the traditional practice of managing trees in tandem with grazing, characteristically with open grown or pollarded veteran trees or shrubs, old-growth characteristics and diverse and dynamic open and open-wooded habitats
- **Infilled Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland (IAWPP)** - where the open habitat between open grown or veteran trees in AWPP has infilled, either through natural regeneration or planting, resulting in closed canopy woodland

The **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)** for Wiltshire and Swindon was published in 2025. Introduced under the Environment Act 2021, a LNRS is a locally-led plan with priorities and actions to recover and enhance nature, which is specific to a particular area and prepared by a responsible authority. When creating this Forest Plan, we considered the measures put forward for woodland habitat in the Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS, to ensure our proposed work supports the LNRS objectives. Examples of actions we will be taking that support the vision of the LNRS include:

- Adopting ecologically sound forestry practices including continuous cover
- Appropriately managing ancient and veteran trees by, for example, halo-thinning
- Restoring PAWS to a more semi-natural composition by increasing the proportion and diversity of native tree species

Trees and Woodlands: Woodland Composition

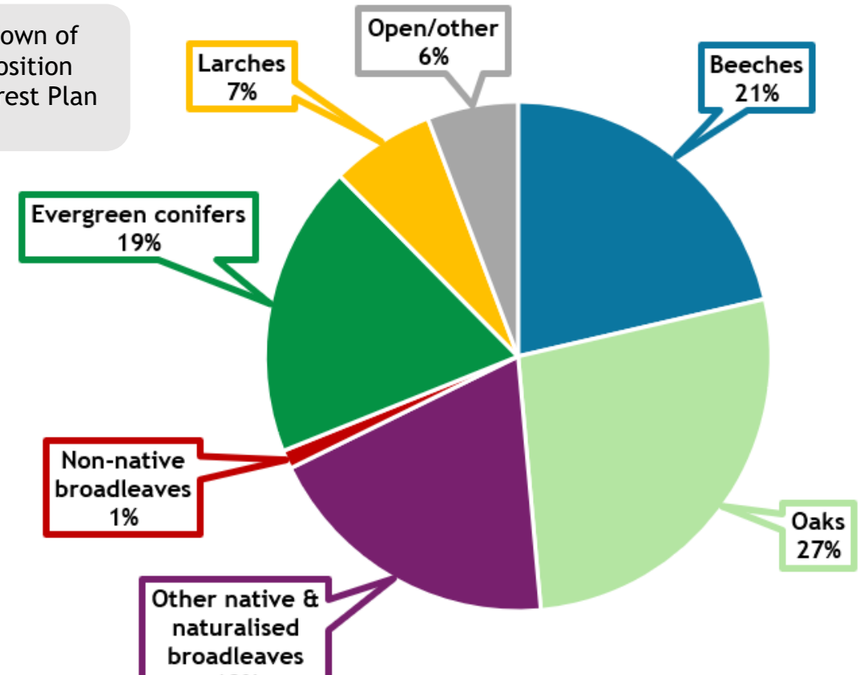
Below: Map showing the distribution of areas that are composed of a majority of broadleaved trees, a majority of coniferous trees, and open areas.

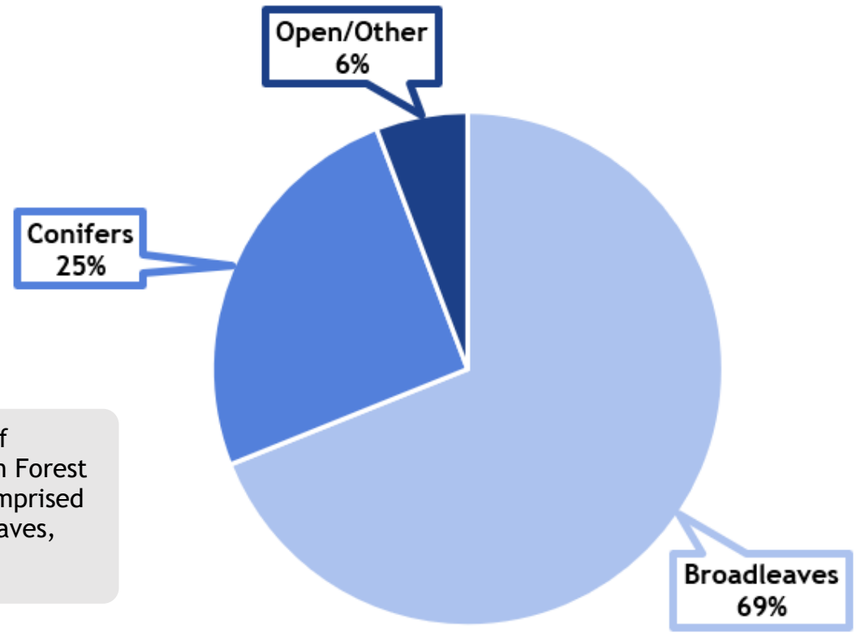


The Savernake and Bedwyn Forest Plan area consists of a mix of broadleaf and conifer species, with broadleaves comprising 69% of the plan area. The most abundant broadleaf species group is oak, which covers 27% of the Forest Plan area, followed by European beech which covers 21%.

Douglas fir is the most abundant conifer species, covering 8% of the Forest Plan area. Some conifer stands are providing valuable nesting habitat for Schedule 1 bird species, and will be retained into the future to ensure continuity of habitat provision. Other stands will be felled when the trees reach economic maturity, and where these stands fall within PAWS areas, the aim will be to return them to broadleaf cover.

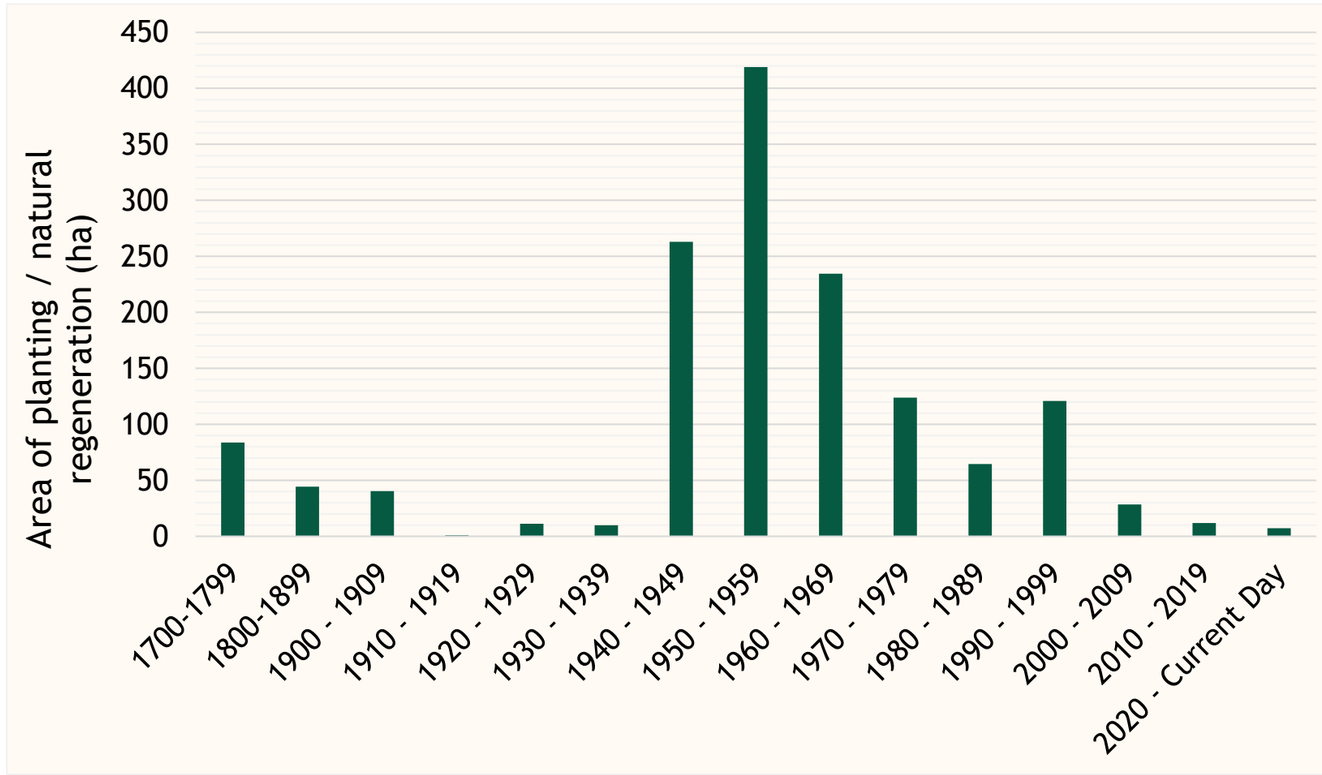
Right: Breakdown of species composition within the Forest Plan area





Right: Percentage of Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area that is comprised of conifers, broadleaves, and open areas

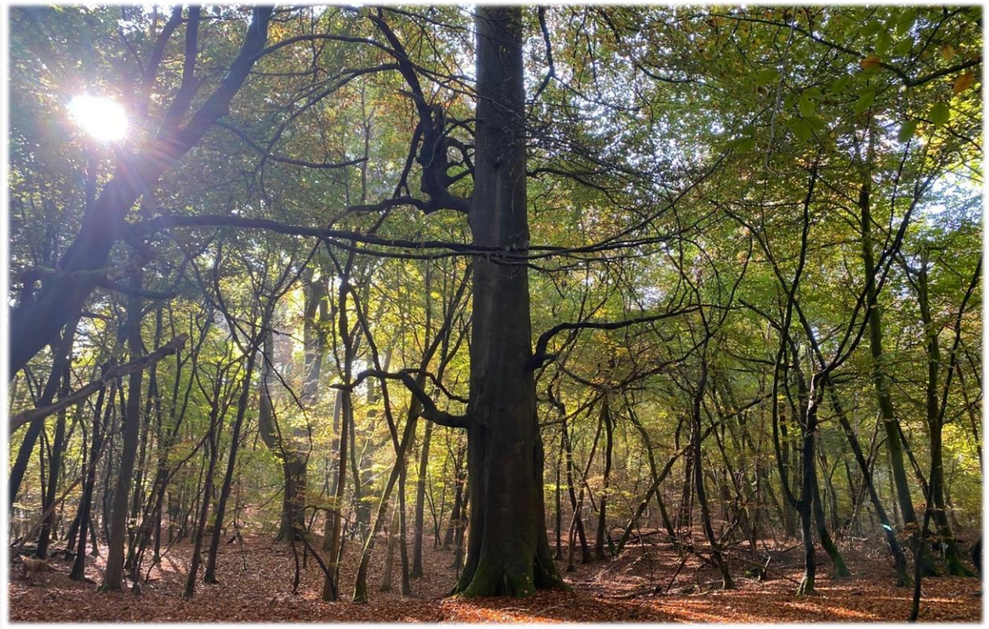
Trees and Woodlands: Structural Composition

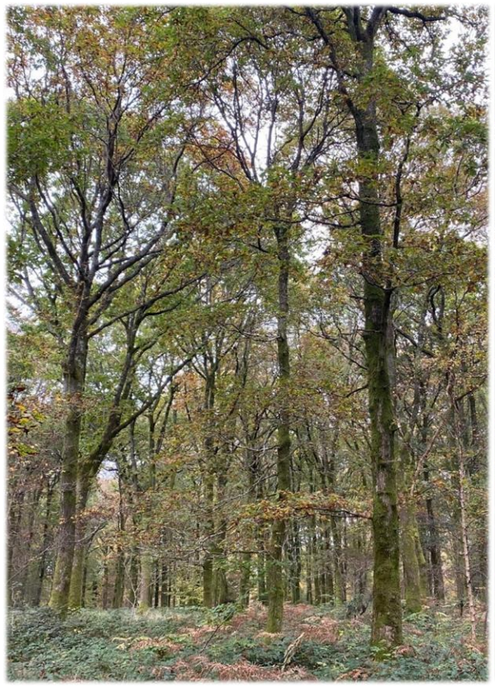


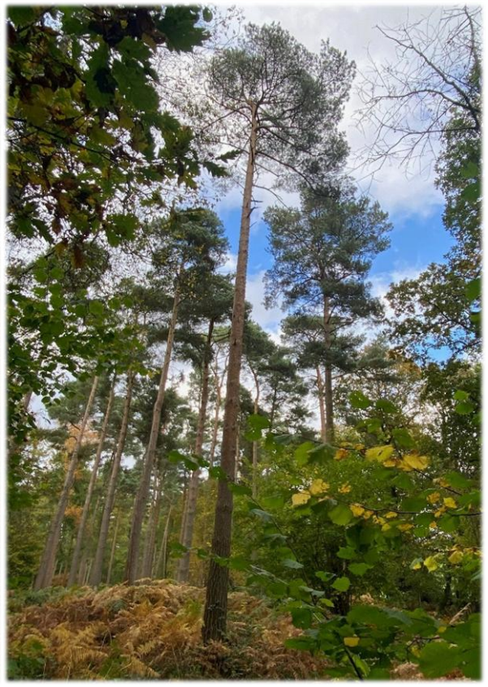
Above: Area (Ha) of planting or natural regeneration per decade in the Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area

As shown in the graph above, the majority of planting and/or natural regeneration of trees in the Forest Plan area took place between the 1940s and the 1990s.

The Forestry Commission leased Savernake Forest from the Savernake Estate in 1939, on a 999-year agreement. Soon after, large areas of "the Old Forest" were planted with beech, oak, and conifers. This focused planting effort contributed to the decline of open woodland and clearings within Savernake Forest. Older oak, beech, and sweet chestnut trees dating from the 18th century are commonly associated with the rides and plantations dating from that time.







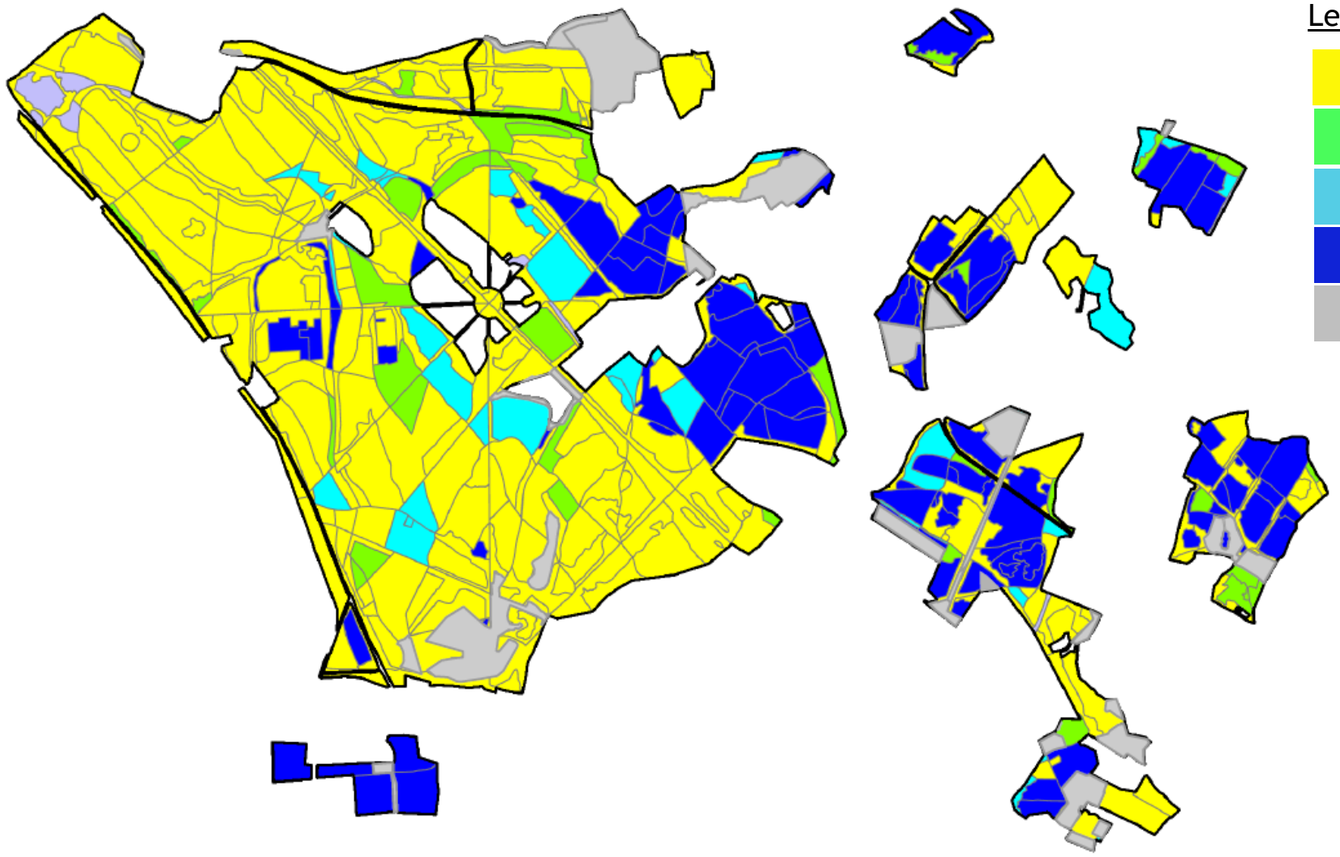
Above right: Naturally regenerated beech saplings under a canopy of 1970s beech in Savernake Forest.

Far Right: Scots pine planted in 1948 at Cobham Frith.

Right: 1950s plantation oak in Savernake Forest.

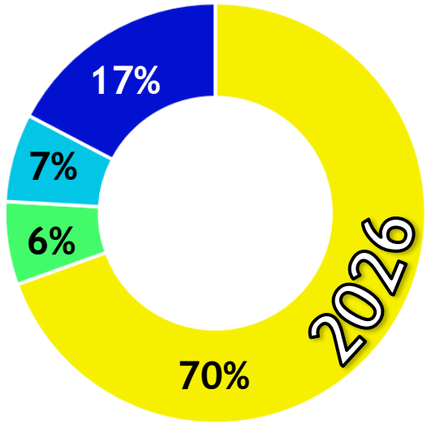
Forestry England

Trees and Woodlands: Ancient Woodland and Naturalness



Legend

- Class 1 - >80% Site Native Species
- Class 2 – 50% - 80% Site Native Species
- Class 3 – 20% - 50% Site Native Species
- Class 4 - <20% Site Native Species
- Not Ancient Woodland



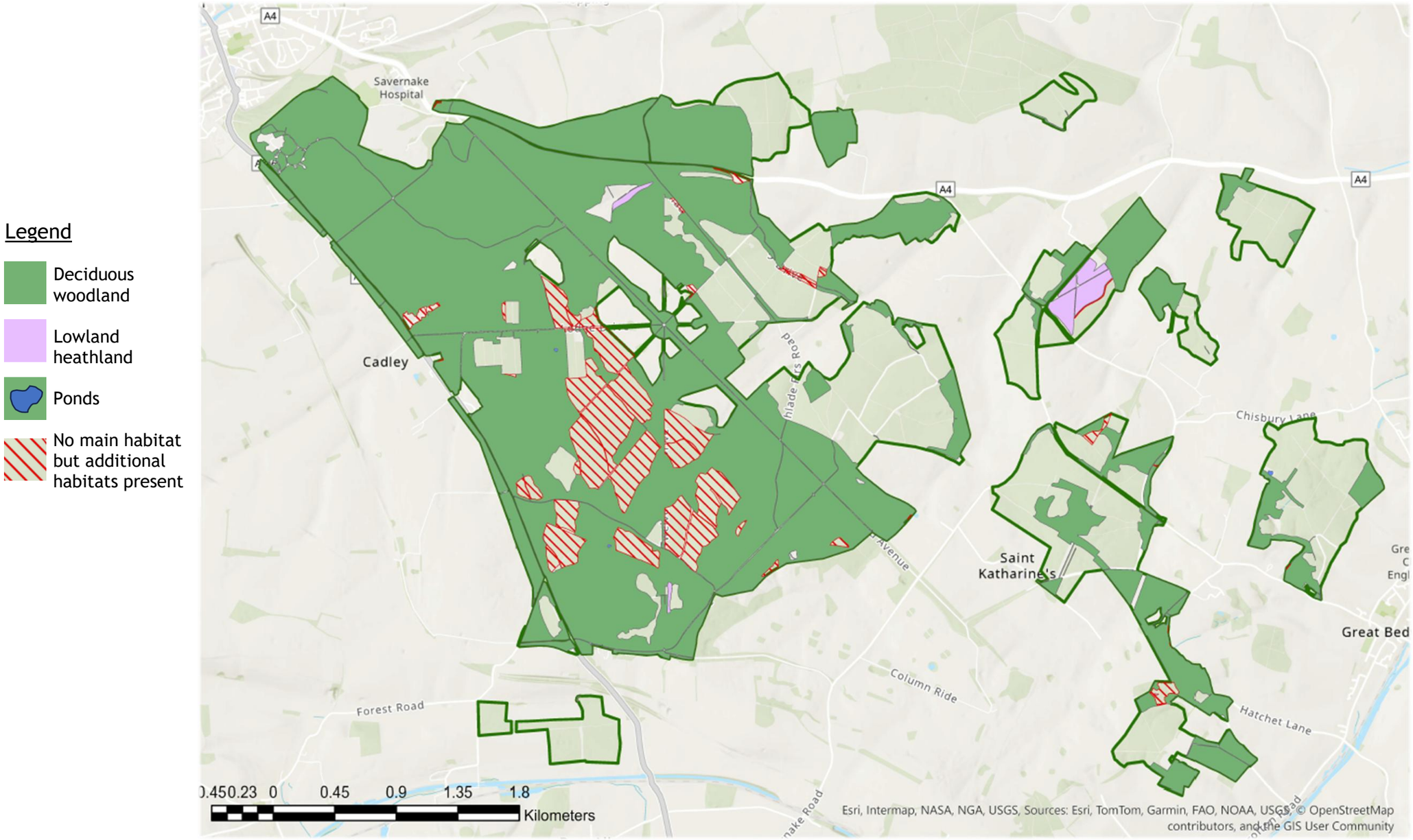
Left: Map showing Savernake & Bedwyn forest block (black outline), with areas of ancient woodland categorised according to their naturalness class (see Legend for categorisation). Areas on the map coloured grey are not considered to be Ancient Woodland, as per Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory.

Above right: Pie chart showing the proportion (%) of Ancient Woodland area falling into the different naturalness classes within the Savernake and Bedwyn forest block.

Naturalness scores are a measure used to show the percentage of site native tree species in a particular area. The map on this page shows the naturalness scores for the areas of ancient woodland (including Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, PAWS, Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland, and Infilled Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland) in the Savernake and Bedwyn Forest Plan area. Class 1 indicates the highest level of nativeness, and class 4 the lowest. The measure of naturalness is used to monitor the condition of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, and scrutinise progress in the restoration of PAWS sites back to native broadleaf cover. With the majority of the forest block being composed of oak, beech, and other broadleaves, it scores well for naturalness, with semi-natural class 1 being the most abundant class. Semi-natural class 4, the lowest level of nativeness, is the next most abundant class found within the Plan area. These areas reflect conifer plantations which were planted for timber production largely between the 1940s and 1990s, with small areas of more recent planting.

We have a long-term objective to restore areas of PAWS back to native broadleaf cover across the Forest Plan area, which will see areas of semi-natural classes 2, 3 and 4 moving progressively towards class 1. The reason this objective is long-term and not achievable within a short time frame is that we have made a commitment to move away from clearfelling blocks of trees towards lower impact silvicultural systems. This is for multiple reasons, including: increasing climate change resilience; improving soil integrity; reducing ecological disturbance and maintaining continuity of wildlife habitat; reducing landscape impacts; and maintaining forest microclimates. Clearfelling will still be used as a forest management technique, but its use will be significantly reduced. As a result of this, changes to species composition (and specifically moving from conifer-dominated to broadleaf-dominated stands) will be gradual and take time. Regular thinning interventions, as well as areas of small-scale group felling will progressively remove conifers in PAWS areas. The space created by these fellings will either be planted or left to naturally regenerate with broadleaf species.

Priority Habitats in the Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area



Savernake Forest SSSI

Savernake Forest is an ancient and vast wooded landscape with more than a millennium of recorded history. It contains a wide range of ecological habitats, giving rise to exceptional biological diversity. Savernake Forest SSSI covers approximately 70% of the forest. The history of traditional management within the forest, including coppicing, pollarding and the use of grazing animals, has helped to preserve and enhance its ecological richness. The prevalence of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, wood pasture remnants, and veteran trees are key to Savernake's designation as a SSSI. Some of the ancient trees found within Savernake are estimated to be over 1,000 years old, including the iconic Big Belly Oak and Cathedral Oak. The remnants of Ancient Wood Pasture are characterised by open-grown examples of sessile and pedunculate oak, many showing a wide array of ancient or veteran features including splits, cavities, deadwood and hollowing of the stem. These trees provide ideal habitat for rare invertebrates and lichens associated with deadwood, and the lichen assemblage found within Savernake is remarkable. A 2007 lichen survey recorded 144 epiphytic (tree growing) species within the forest, and a range of rare and geographically-restricted lichen species are found here. In the 2007 survey, 10 lichen species of national conservation interest were recorded, including one endangered and one critically endangered species. Deadwood is an important feature of the SSSI, and the abundance of ancient trees ensures that levels of deadwood across the forest are generally good. The extraordinary diversity of fungi species found on site is partly due to this abundance of decaying wood, but can also be attributed to the continuity of beech woodland.

The invertebrate fauna found within the SSSI is diverse, and includes rare and nationally scarce species of fly, beetle, butterfly and moth. Savernake is a known breeding site for the elusive purple emperor butterfly and the vulnerable white-letter hairstreak butterfly. A wide variety of woodland birds breed in Savernake, and species that nest in holes such as nuthatches, woodpeckers and tawny owls benefit from the prevalence of ancient and veteran trees, which provide plenty of nesting options.

There are several ponds within the woodland which support invertebrates such as dragonflies, and amphibians including great-crested newts, a European Protected Species. As well as woodland habitat, Savernake Forest also contains important areas of calcareous and acid grassland, which support a variety of floral species, some of which are uncommon or rare. Scrub is also an important component of the forest, as it provides perching opportunities for birds and invertebrates, and is a source of nectar, pollen and berries for birds and invertebrates. Low thorny scrub also provides protection against browsing deer to young regenerating tree saplings. Our management of scrub beneath the canopy across the forest is deliberately not uniform. In some areas, we will clear small areas of scrub and young saplings from beneath the mature tree canopy, so that light can reach the stems of the trees, benefiting lichens which grown upon the trees. In other areas, we will leave scrub in place, for the benefit of birds, invertebrates, and mammals such as dormice and bats.

Following a trial in 2004 – 2009, a wood pasture grazing scheme was established in 2020 within the forest, consisting of three fenced grazing units, with the aim of restoring wood pasture habitat in these areas. This scheme is being operated in collaboration with the Savernake Estate Trust and Natural England, under a Countryside Stewardship agreement. This milestone marks the long-term return of grazing animals to Savernake Forest for the first time since the 19th century. A herd of Hereford cattle are rotated between the enclosures throughout the spring and summer months, browsing and trampling



Purple Emperor



Nuthatch



Hereford cattle within Red Vein grazing enclosure, Savernake Forest



An ancient tree within Savernake Forest benefitting from haloing, meaning surrounding younger trees have been cleared to give the ancient tree light and space.

the woodland scrub and vegetation, helping to create open space and a more diverse mosaic of tree-covered and open habitats. Not only does this traditional management provide opportunities for woodland flora to establish in newly opened up areas, it also benefits existing veteran trees as the cows help to maintain the open conditions that these trees depend on. Maintaining and opening up new open areas also gives younger trees the opportunities to develop open-grown features, putting them in a strong position to become veteran trees in the future. Many of the invertebrate, fungi and lichen species associated with Savernake's ancient trees and relict wood pasture habitat will in turn benefit from the gradual restoration of this habitat that the grazing scheme aims to achieve.

A 2023 Natural England SSSI condition assessment has highlighted the need to improve the condition of areas of wood pasture within the forest; to ensure existing ancient and veteran trees receive the management attention they require; and to take steps to ensure current ancient and veteran trees are succeeded in the future by younger individuals. The majority of Savernake Forest is classed as Infilled Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland. This means that previously open habitat between open grown or veteran trees has infilled, either through natural regeneration or planting, resulting in closed canopy woodland and the loss of true wood pasture habitat. Ensuring the grazing scheme is operating effectively and as designed, with a sufficient grazing intensity, should help to gradually reestablish more open areas in the forest and restore more of a mosaic of tree-covered habitat and open spaces, as is typical of wood pasture. The grazing scheme is led by the Savernake Estate Trust. At the time of writing, discussions are ongoing about how the movement of cattle between grazing enclosures can best be managed. A long term aspiration for the forest would be to see the grazing scheme expanded into new areas. We will ensure that currently open areas are maintained as such, and are not permitted to slowly infill with regenerating trees and scrub.

We currently undertake "halo" felling work around ancient and veteran trees, which means felling younger trees around the tree of focus. This ensures those younger trees aren't competing with the veteran for light or resources, therefore giving the veteran the best chance to thrive and remain healthy. Going forwards, we will introduce a pragmatic and systematic approach to our haloing work, which will be tied in with planned thinning operations. When a compartment of the forest is due to be thinned, before operations commence we will undertake a haloing assessment within that compartment, individually checking the majority of ancient and veteran trees to assess their need for haloing. Required haloing work will either be undertaken using harvesting machinery, or by a chainsaw operator, whichever is deemed most appropriate. A carefully designed protocol will be followed for any haloing work using harvesting machinery, to avoid risk of soil compaction impacting ancient tree roots.

To improve the "cohort continuity" within the forest (i.e. the provision of younger trees able to grow into future veterans and eventually replace the current cohort of ancient trees), we will undertake a number of actions. Firstly, we will ensure that younger beech and oak trees that have branches lower down the stem showing good foliage growth are not felled. Trees grown in tight spacing in a plantation-like fashion (which is the case for many areas of younger beech and oak within Savernake) will very often grow tall and straight with few side branches. These characteristics aren't beneficial for growing into future veteran trees, as the features that characterise a veteran tree (such as splits, cavities, deadwood and decay) more often occur in open-grown trees with large lateral branches. The presence of lower branches showing new foliage growth is also an indicator that the tree in question is likely to respond positively to being opened up to more light through the felling of surrounding trees. In this scenario, the lateral foliage would help to utilise light for photosynthesis and produce energy for the tree to accelerate its growth into the newly available space and light. Therefore, these trees will be good candidates to give more space and light to when we're conducting our thinning operations. When opening up gaps in stands to encourage natural regeneration, a key objective of ours will be to promote the development of open grown trees from the very start of their life. Once regenerated trees appear, our intention is to go in and "respace" the regenerated trees to a lower density, meaning we will selectively remove a proportion of the regeneration in order to provide the remaining regenerated trees with space to develop open grown forms, and prevent another generation of straight-formed closed canopy woodland developing.

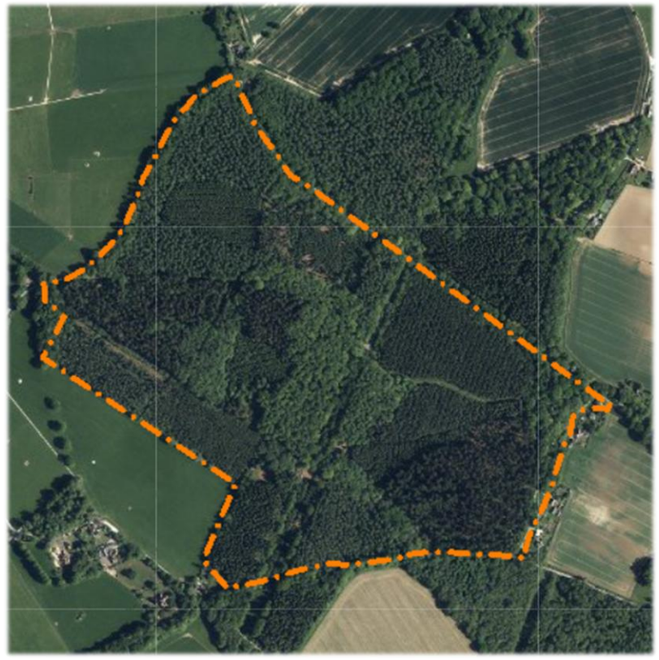
We also plan to implement two small-scale pollarding trials: one within a uniform plantation oak stand, and the other in an area of young beech. Pollarding a number of trees in these areas will encourage these particular trees to develop veteran features (i.e. increasing the prevalence of trees with the potential to become future veterans). Selective pollarding will also reduce canopy coverage in the stand, increasing light levels and giving nearby trees the opportunity to increase lateral growth. The trial will be followed by at least 10 years of observation, at the end of which we will assess whether the pollarding work resulted in a long-term benefit for the overall stand structure, and the individual trees themselves.

County Wildlife Sites

The Savernake and Bedwyn Forest Plan area contains three County Wildlife Sites. Although County Wildlife Site designation does not provide legal protection to a site like SSSI designation does, the designation recognises the high wildlife value of those sites and the important role that they play in protecting and conserving biodiversity at a local level.







Left: County Wildlife Site at Birch Copse, Savernake Forest
Above: County Wildlife Site at Leigh Hill Copse
Right: County Wildlife Site at Bedwyn Common

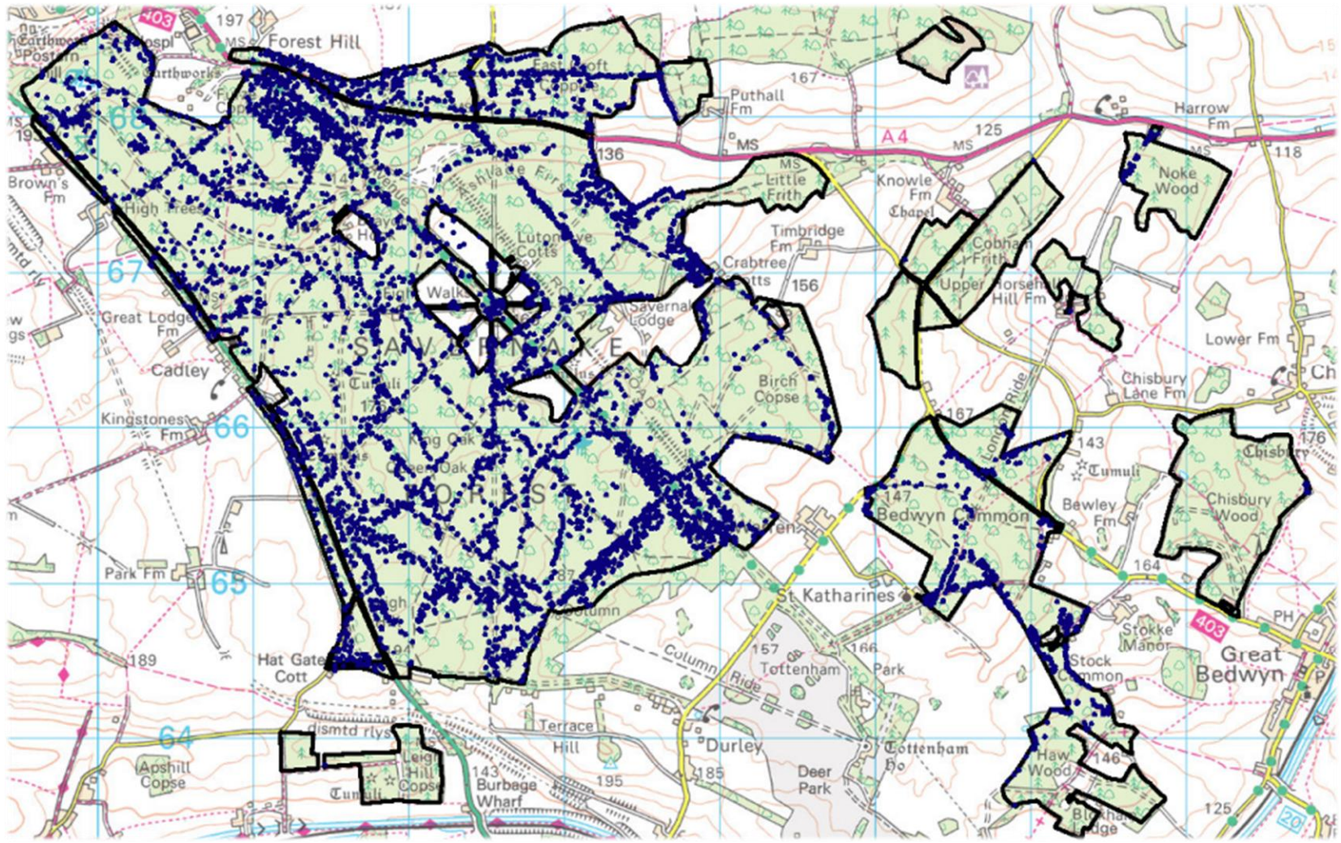
All three County Wildlife Sites are composed in large part of conifer plantations. Birch Copse is now classified as Infilled Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland, and Leigh Hill Copse and most of Bedwyn Common are classified as PAWS. The priority for these areas is the progressive removal of conifers, followed by replanting or natural regeneration of broadleaf species in order to restore the woodlands to a more native composition.

In Birch Copse and Bedwyn Common, Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS) will be employed to gradually reduce the conifer component of the woodlands. At Leigh Hill Copse, the conifer currently planted within the County Wildlife Site will be removed via clearfell during this Forest Plan period. Although we are generally moving away from clearfelling within the Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area, this timber has reached peak harvesting age. A small number of clearfells within this Forest Plan period will provide transient open space and a supply of sustainable timber for local markets. There is a belt of broadleaves planted around the outside of the Norway spruce stand at Leigh Hill Copse. It is hoped that seeds from these broadleaves will help to encourage natural regeneration of broadleaf species within the newly open area once the clearfell has taken place. However, levels of regeneration will be assessed after a 5-year period, and if natural regeneration is lacking, or is composed of undesirable species, we will consider planting broadleaves in clusters throughout the open area.

Trees of Special Interest

The density of ancient and veteran trees dating from before 1750AD in Savernake Forest is comparable with only a handful of other sites across England. As a valuable remnant of wood pasture habitat, a veteran and ancient tree survey was undertaken in Savernake Forest between 2014 – 2018, identifying and mapping more than 4,000 ancient and veteran trees. These trees are predominately oak, beech and sweet chestnut. Savernake's traditional past management would have involved extensive grazing. Open-grown trees would have been pollarded to produce fire wood and other wood products, with the cut taking place high enough up the tree that the resulting new growth is out of reach from the grazing animals.

The decline in management of the forest as wood pasture, and the increase in plantation-style planting since the 20th century has resulted in encroachment of the ancient and veteran trees by younger crop trees. This has negatively impacted the veteran trees by increasing competition for light, space and nutrients, as well as affecting the many species that the veteran trees support. Ancient and veteran trees provide habitat for a wide range of plants and animals. At Savernake this includes an exceptional diversity of lichens and fungi, which have contributed to Savernake's designation as a SSSI.



Above: Map of the Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area showing recorded ancient and veteran trees (blue dots)

Deadwood

Many of the lichen and fungi species found within Savernake are closely associated with deadwood. When we undertake forestry operations, we always consider and protect existing standing deadwood, leaving it in place where it is safe to do so. We also leave fallen deadwood in place, and take opportunities to leave varying stump heights in order to allow new deadwood to develop. In this Forest Plan period, we plan to undertake some ringbarking within the uniform plantation areas of oak trees. This means deliberately removing bark from a small number of trees, leading to their eventual death. The purpose of this is to increase ecological interest within these unnaturally uniform stands of trees, by providing additional habitat for species which use deadwood, such as lichens and fungi.

Ancient tree = A tree that has reached a significant age for its species, and will often have a large girth, deadwood in the canopy, and may have hollowing in the trunk

Veteran tree = A tree that has developed habitat features such as splits, cavities, deadwood or decay, but is not necessarily ancient in age



Above: Spider Oak, one of numerous named ancient and veteran trees in Savernake Forest

Other Notable Ecological Features of the Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan Area

Ponds and Great Crested Newts

The Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area contains a number of ponds dotted throughout the woodlands, which provide habitat for a wide range of species, including invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles. Amongst these species is the great crested newt, a European Protected Species identified in a number of ponds across the Forest Plan area using eDNA sampling. Targeted restoration work has been carried out across a number of ponds within Savernake over the past five years, and we aim to continue this work within the new Forest Plan period. Recent work has included sediment excavation, planting of willow for the benefit of purple emperor butterflies, and the installation of fencing in order to prevent dogs entering the ponds and disturbing the wildlife.



Bitham Pond, Savernake

Fungi & Lichens

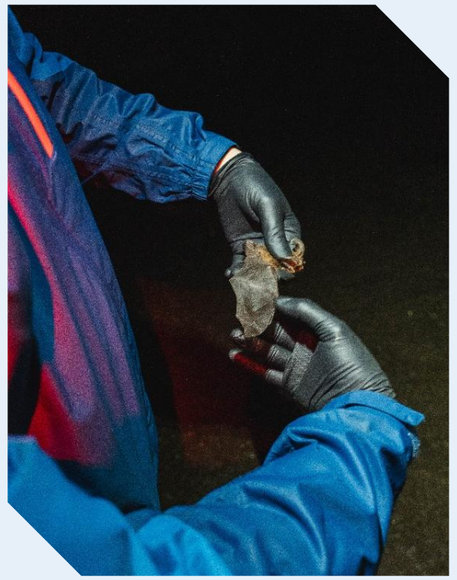
Savernake Forest supports a remarkable diversity of fungi, with over 1000 species having been recorded. This exceptional assemblage can be attributed to several factors, including the continuity of woodland here, the high levels of dead and decaying wood, the presence of open grassland areas found within the woodland and the relatively stable nature of the decay communities within still living trees. An exceptional diversity of lichens are also found within Savernake. In a 2007 survey, 10 lichen species of national conservation interest were recorded, including one endangered and one critically endangered species.

Below: Magpie inkcap, Savernake Forest





Barbastelle bat



Bat survey work in Savernake Forest

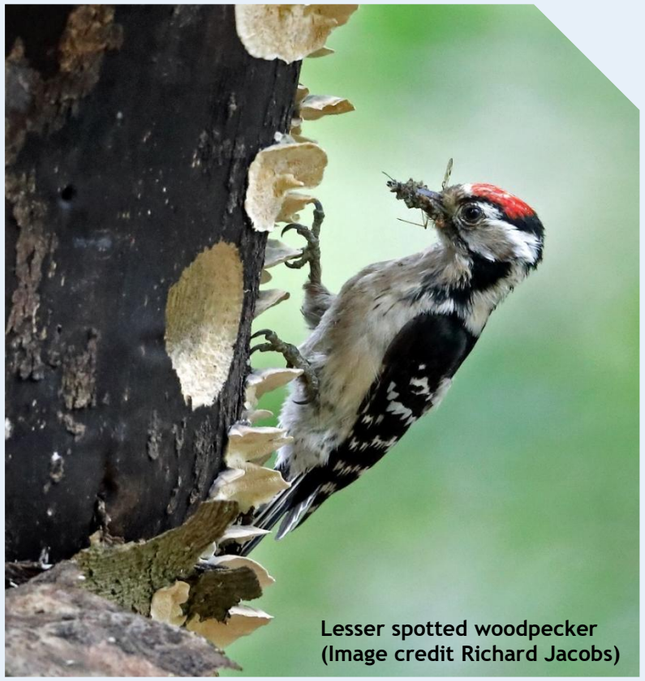
Bats

Woodlands provide essential foraging and roosting opportunities for bats, and the majority of the UK's bat species will utilise trees, woodlands and hedgerows. Vegetation alongside forest rides, and scrubby understorey beneath the forest canopy provide habitat for a variety of insects which are a food source for bats. Holes, splits, and cracks in trees are used by bats for roosting, particularly in ancient and veteran trees. Linear features such as forest rides, woodland edges and hedgerows provide navigational landmarks and commuting corridors. Some species of bat are woodland specialists, such as the barbastelle. Savernake Forest is known to be a particularly important site for barbastelle, and recent surveying work has confirmed their continuing use of the forest for foraging, roosting and breeding. As standard practice, we protect veteran trees and trees with potential bat roost features from forestry operations, and leave standing deadwood in place where it is safe to do so. These actions help to maintain these habitats for bats such as barbastelles.

Forestry England

Woodland Birds

Bird populations in the UK have declined steadily since the 1970s, for several reasons including habitat loss, increasing use of pesticides and fertilisers, climate change, and diseases such as bird flu. Woodland birds have experienced a particularly worrying accelerated decline in recent years, with over half of woodland species populations decreasing in the past decade. Savernake Forest is home to a wide variety of nesting birds, which is acknowledged in the SSSI designation. Ancient and veteran trees particularly support hole-nesting species such as nuthatch, tawny owl, and species of woodpecker. In 2022, an assessment of Savernake's breeding bird assemblage was carried out, which involved a woodland survey. This assessment found that since the SSSI was notified in 1988, there has been a loss in diversity of the breeding bird assemblage. Whilst the site is still deemed to be in favourable condition for breeding birds, and there have been some notable new species recorded such as red kite, this masks the loss of other species which are no longer confirmed as breeding on site. These species include lesser spotted woodpecker, redstart, and willow tit. The assessment recommended some targeted follow up actions for certain species, such as lesser spotted woodpecker and willow tit, because the survey timing had not been optimal for detecting these species. In 2025, we began a small-scale trial using static acoustic recorders to detect lesser spotted woodpeckers. Whilst the scale of the forest makes this work challenging, we intend to increase our surveying capacity with a greater number of recorders in future years. One issue impacting woodland birds is a change in woodland structure. Habitat niches can be lost through the development of a more enclosed canopy, the loss of open clearings and glades, and a reduction of the shrub layer. We are working to reduce this impact by restoring areas of wood pasture within Savernake, and carrying out vegetation control in open areas to ensure open space is retained. We have also taken the decision not to replant the area within the old nurseries in Savernake, which will be felled in this Forest Plan period. Instead, we will allow a diverse shrub layer to regenerate, and we will maintain the vegetation at this stage of succession. Shrubs are an important source of cover, nesting sites, and food for many woodland bird species. As well as these specific actions, our general approach to safeguarding woodland birds across the forests that we manage includes avoiding conducting forestry operations during springtime, and implementing buffer zones around known Schedule 1 bird nests.



Lesser spotted woodpecker
(Image credit Richard Jacobs)



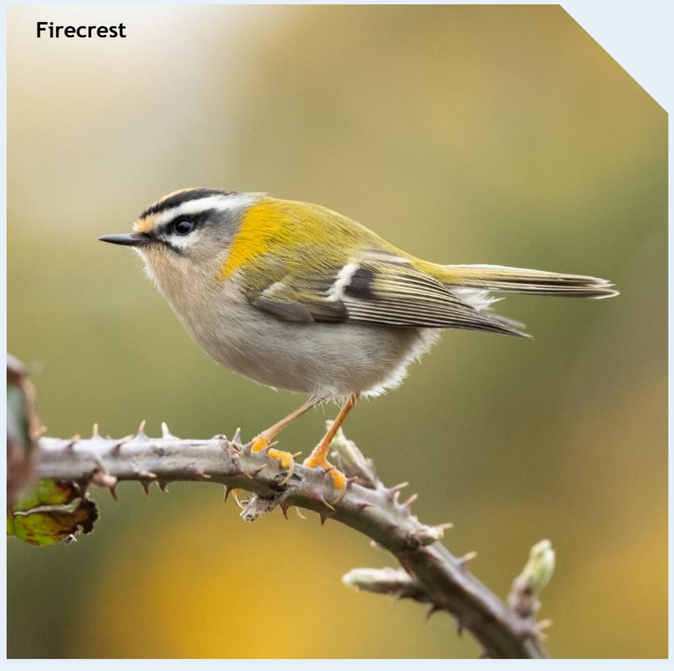
Red kite

Dormice

The hazel dormouse is a European Protected Species which has declined significantly in both range and population in the UK over the last century. Savernake Forest has a dormouse monitoring scheme in place, managed by Wiltshire Mammal Group.
A series of nesting boxes placed in selected locations within the woodland are used to monitor the local dormouse population.



Hazel dormouse



Firecrest

Forestry England

Geology and Soils: The Soils of Savernake and Bedwyn

Savernake Forest is located on a plateau in the North Wessex Downs, composed of chalk overlain with clay and flints. Further to the east, there are clays, sands, and gravels of London Clay, the Reading Beds, Bagshot Beds, and Plateau Gravel associated with the Tertiary period. The landform is gently undulating and falls away to the north towards the town of Marlborough. In the low-lying valley bottoms of Savernake, areas of wetter soils are present due to poor drainage. In other areas, stretches of sandier soils give rise to more heath-like vegetation. Historically, these areas may have been more open than other parts of the forest.

Forest soils are an important store of carbon, as centuries of leaf litter mix as organic matter into the mineral earth. As a result, the soil within Savernake Forest and the outlying woodlands is a greater store of carbon than the trees growing there. As well as carbon, Savernake's soils host an exceptional diversity of fungi, with over 1000 species recorded.

We've made a commitment through Our Shared Forest to limit soil compaction damage from heavy machinery, and to move away from clearfelling blocks of trees to reduce the impact on soil qualities. Maintaining tree cover reduces the negative impact of large-scale clearances on ecosystem functioning and soil processes, such as soil moisture regimes and micro-organisms. In line with these commitments, the majority of conifer stands within Savernake Forest and the outlying woodlands will be managed going forwards under LISS (Low Impact Silvicultural Systems), such as shelterwood or selection systems.

In a small number of locations, carefully planned clearfells will be undertaken to achieve particular objectives, such as restoring PAWS stands or reinstating historic landscapes. We can limit damage by scheduling work for drier periods, and identifying and protecting specific extraction routes.



Stands of conifer previously earmarked to be clearfelled at economic maturity will now be managed via Low Impact Silvicultural Systems going forwards, in an effort to help maintain soil integrity and carbon stores.

Water: Ponds and their Associated Species

There are no perennial watercourses within the Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area, however there are a number of historic ponds scattered throughout the woodlands with associated wetland and wet woodland habitat. Historically, these ponds would have been important drinking water sources for grazing animals. However, over the last several decades many have been encroached upon by successional vegetation, or have dried up. In the early 21st century, several of these ponds were brought back into management through tree removal and dredging. As the Forest has no watercourses, the restoration and maintenance of these ponds provides essential aquatic habitats with great wildlife value.

Ponds and wetland areas support dragonflies, invertebrates, and frogs. In turn, these provide food and habitats that are attractive to a range of important bird species, such as hobby, honey buzzard, and willow tit. Utilising emerging eDNA technology, we have established that the Forest Plan area supports a population of great-crested newts, a European Protected Species.

In recent years, dogs entering the ponds have caused disturbance to wildlife and the loss of vegetation on the banks of the ponds. As a result, a number of ponds now have sections of fencing installed around them and signage erected to keep dogs out. This has enabled vegetation covering the pond banks to recover, and has reduced ecological disturbance. Additional pond works undertaken in the past three years include excavation of sediment, and the planting of willow in wet areas for the benefit of purple emperor butterflies. To reduce the impact on pond wildlife of changing the habitat too quickly, work is phased over time. We will continue to monitor all ponds and take action to improve, restore and protect habitat from disturbance when required.

Working with our ecologists, we will explore opportunities to create new ponds in suitable locations when opportunities arise.



We have installed fencing around Bitham pond in Savernake Forest to prevent dogs entering the water, therefore protecting the pond habitat from disturbance and damage.

Cultural and Built Heritage: Heritage Features in Savernake and Bedwyn

Amongst England's oldest forests, the first record of Savernake Forest occurred in a 934AD charter. With a rich history spanning from the Bronze Age through to the Second World War, Savernake offers an insight into life in Britain throughout history. Evidence of thousands of years of occupation and land use can be found across the Forest as visible or buried archaeological remains. Sites include prehistoric burial mounds, Roman infrastructure and industry, surviving attributes of the medieval hunting forest, designed landscape features attributed to Capability Brown, and structures erected during the war efforts. A number of these sites have been identified as nationally significant, with Savernake encompassing six scheduled monuments, five listed buildings, and a substantial portion of the Tottenham House and Savernake Forest Grade II* registered park and garden. As is common within forested environments, the sites, monuments, and relic landscapes within Savernake Forest are extremely well preserved.

The bowl barrows, early earthworks, and Romano-British kilns found within the Forest Plan area are evidence of early human occupation, and all are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Bowl barrows are funerary monuments used to denote burial locations, and date from the Late Neolithic period to the Late Bronze Age. Earthworks generally consist of an earthen bank alongside a ditch, and would have had several possible functions, including controlling domestic animals, defence, and demarcating territories. As reported by Historic England, excavation of Savernake's Romano-British kiln site has shown that the kilns were functioning during the first and second centuries AD, at which time the Savernake Forest pottery industry was regionally important.



Felling an oak in Savernake Forest, March 1958
Forestry Commission / Crown Copyright

During the Medieval period, Savernake Forest likely featured a predominantly open landscape, interspersed with thickets, coppices and areas of wood pasture habitat. The forest was used as a hunting ground, with Henry VIII enjoying visits to the forest to hunt deer. Savernake was a Royal Forest, governed under Forest Law. This set of laws aimed to preserve the king's hunting grounds, and regulate the use of woodland resources by those living in the area.



Land Army Girls weeding young conifers in Thornhill Nursery, Savernake, 1948
John Wildash

The extent of the forest fluctuated over time. By the late 17th century, several areas had been enclosed for agricultural use. The area of wood pasture had diminished to roughly the size of the present-day forest, and the landscape remained a patchwork of scattered copses and heavily browsed woodland. Grazing cattle belonging to nearby communities would have covered much of the land, and there was little structured management of the forest. During the early 18th century, the estate's landscape was entirely revised under the guidance of Lord Charles Bruce. His vision included opening up scenic views, reworking the layout of several major avenues, and creating new buildings near Tottenham Park. The centrepiece of these improvement works was the building of Tottenham House. Later in the century, Lancelot "Capability" Brown was employed to design further enhancements to the layout of Tottenham Park and Savernake Forest. His work built on the developments of the previous decades, unifying the landscape, aligning rides and creating new ones. Capability Brown likely inspired Lord Bruce's steward, Charles Bill, to continue his work, which included the creation of the radial arrangement of eight tree-lined rides meeting at a central point, now known as Eight Walks, and its regularly spaced "platoons" of trees. Despite often being credited with its creation, Capability Brown did not create the Grand Avenue (Marlborough Walk), which pre-dates his involvement by some decades (Lennon, 2011*). The Grand Avenue is thought to be the longest straight avenue in Britain and stretches from the A4 on the north-western edge of the forest right through the centre of the forest to Tottenham House on the other side.

In 1939, the Forestry Commission leased Savernake Forest from the Savernake Estate on a 999-year agreement. Large areas of the forest were planted with beech and oak plantations, as well as non-native conifers. During the Second World War, Savernake was used as a military ammunition depot, chosen for its good transport links and the natural cover provided by the broadleaf trees. Iron Gates Camp was an area of accommodation within the forest used by troops stationed at the depot. Remnants of concrete from the camp's buildings can still be seen in the forest today, as can the remains of ammunition stores. Whilst the war was happening, the Forestry Commission employed women from the Women's Land Army ("Land Girls") in the forest to plant and tend young trees within Thornhill Nursery.

*Lennon, B (2011) "Burlington, Brown And Bill: The Landscaping Of Tottenham Park And Savernake Forest In The Eighteenth Century", *Garden History*, 39 (1), pp. 3-33





Far left: Charcoal kilns in Little Frith, Savernake, 1949. Photo by John Wildash. Charcoal burning was historically a significant traditional industry in Savernake, with charcoal having been an important resource for various industries and crucial for rural economies. Charcoal Burners Road within Savernake Forest was named to commemorate this once thriving craft.

Left: The remains of a Second World War ammunition storage building, as seen today within Savernake.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs)

The Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area contains 6 scheduled monuments, which are nationally important heritage sites selected by Historic England for protection. These monuments are:

- **East Croft Coppice Earthwork** *(Historic England List Entry: 1003251)*
- **Linear Earthwork in Savernake Forest, South of Great Lodge Bottom** *(Historic England List Entry: 1004705)*
- **Savernake Romano-British Kilns** *(Historic England List Entry: 1004704)*
- **Five bowl barrows 600m north-east of Brimslade Farm Cottages** *(Historic England List Entry: 1013332)*
- **Bowl barrow 400m south-east of Cadley Vicarage** (Historic England List Entry: 1013099)
- **Two bowl barrows 400m East of Cadley Vicarage** *(Historic England List Entry: 1012188)*

Each of these scheduled monuments has its own management plan, detailing the current condition of each monument, and actions that we will take over a ten-year period to maintain and improve this condition. Examples of management actions include regular removal of vegetation such as bracken and regenerating trees, control of burrowing animals, removal of diseased or damaged mature trees in the vicinity, regular inspections, and ensuring the monuments are protected during planned forestry operations.



East Croft Coppice Earthwork, Savernake Forest

Tottenham House and Savernake Forest Grade II* Registered Park and Garden

The majority of Savernake Forest falls within the designated Tottenham House and Savernake Forest Grade II* Registered Park and Garden, listed in 1987. The Registered Park and Garden designation recognises and celebrates designed landscapes, and encourages their protection. The designated area encapsulates a large portion of the ancient forest and its landscaped avenues and rides, with design influence from Lord Burlington and Capability Brown in the 1700s. Highlights of the area include Tottenham House itself, the gardens and pleasure grounds surrounding the mansion, The Ailesbury Column, Eight Walks, and the numerous landscaped avenues such as Grand Avenue, which runs in a straight line through the forest.

Below left: Ailesbury Column, located at the junction of Three Oak Hill Drive and Column Ride

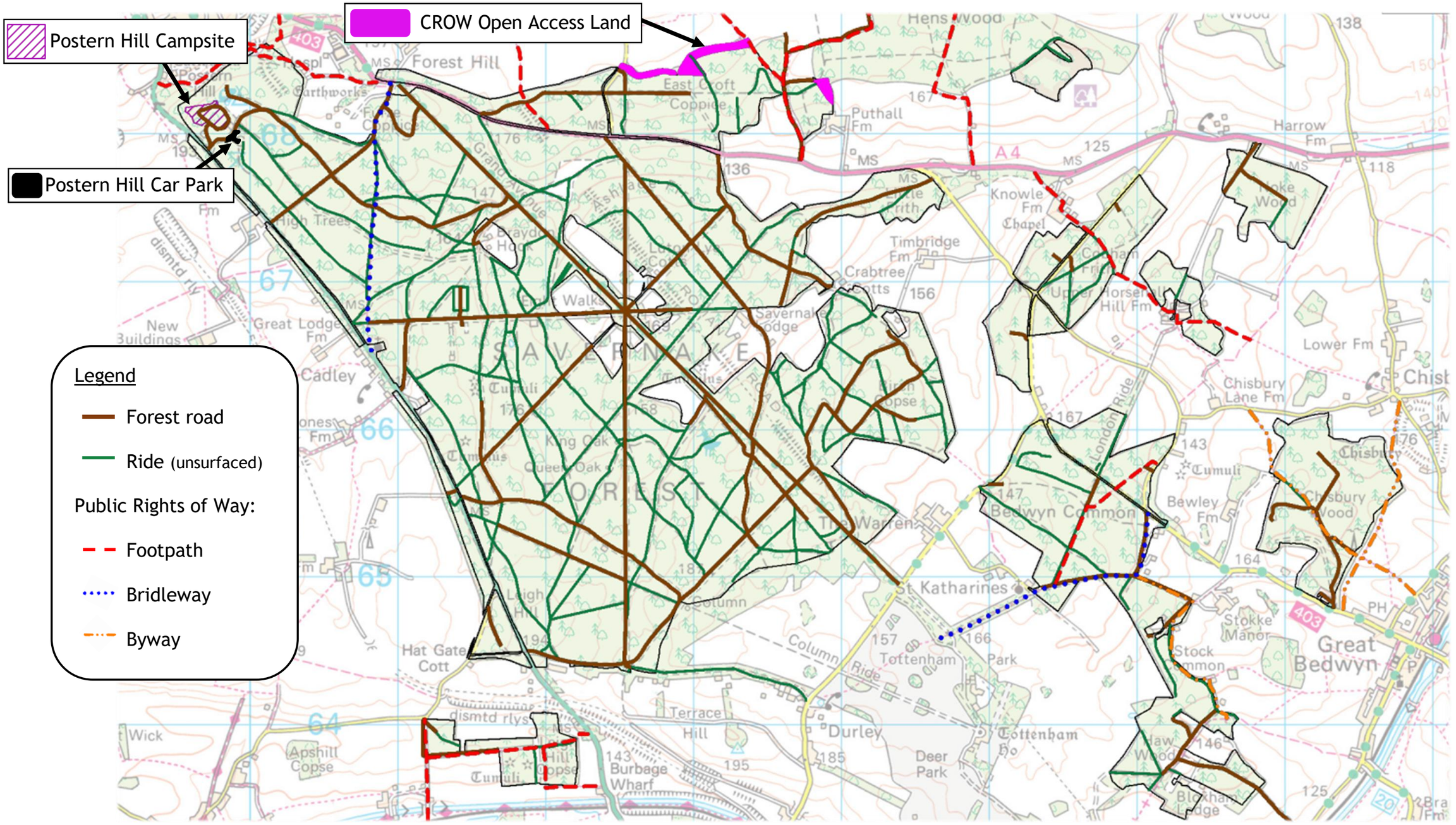
Below Right: Grand Avenue, lined with beech trees





Forestry England

Community and Recreation: Access and Recreation in Savernake & Bedwyn



Forestry England

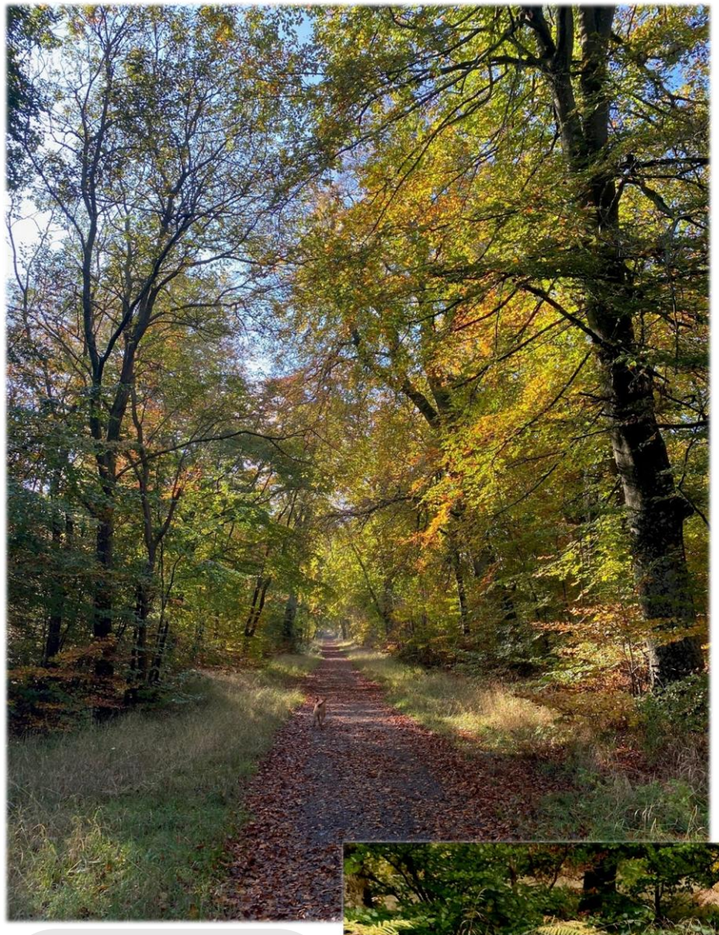
Savernake Forest serves as an important space for recreation and wellbeing for the local community. The largely ancient woodland is highly valued for its tranquillity and naturalness, and visitors seek its relaxed simplicity. Walkers enjoy exploring miles of surfaced forest road tracks and grassy rides, and the various named ancient and veteran trees provide features of interest to find. A parking and picnic area at Postern Hill, in the north-west corner of Savernake, offers seasonal toilet facilities, a map board showing the locations of the main roads and rides in the forest as well as well-known veteran trees, and a large open grassy area with several picnic tables. The forest contains one bridleway for horse riders and cyclists, and cyclists can also utilise all of the surfaced forest roads.

Postern Hill is the only car park within Savernake Forest, however, informal parking along Grand Avenue and around Eight Walks is common.

Interpretation boards at various points throughout Savernake provide visitors with information about the management of the forest, including the grazing scheme and upcoming harvesting operations.

Outside of Savernake Forest, the other woodlands in the Forest Plan area provide further opportunities for informal recreation. The woodlands are generally quiet, due to their lack of formal parking facilities. There are a greater number of Public Rights of Way found within these woodlands than within Savernake Forest itself. A bridleway crosses Bedwyn Common, there are footpaths in Leigh Hill Copse, Bedwyn Common, Heron's Point and Cobham Frith, and byways within Chisbury Wood and Bedwyn Common. Walkers can also enjoy the network of forest roads and unsurfaced rides, as in Savernake.

Autumn is a particularly popular time to visit the woodlands across the Forest Plan area, due to the impressive display of autumn colours seen throughout the broadleaved areas of the woodlands.





Above: Three Oak Hill Drive, one of the many surfaced forest roads popular with walkers and cyclists in Savernake Forest

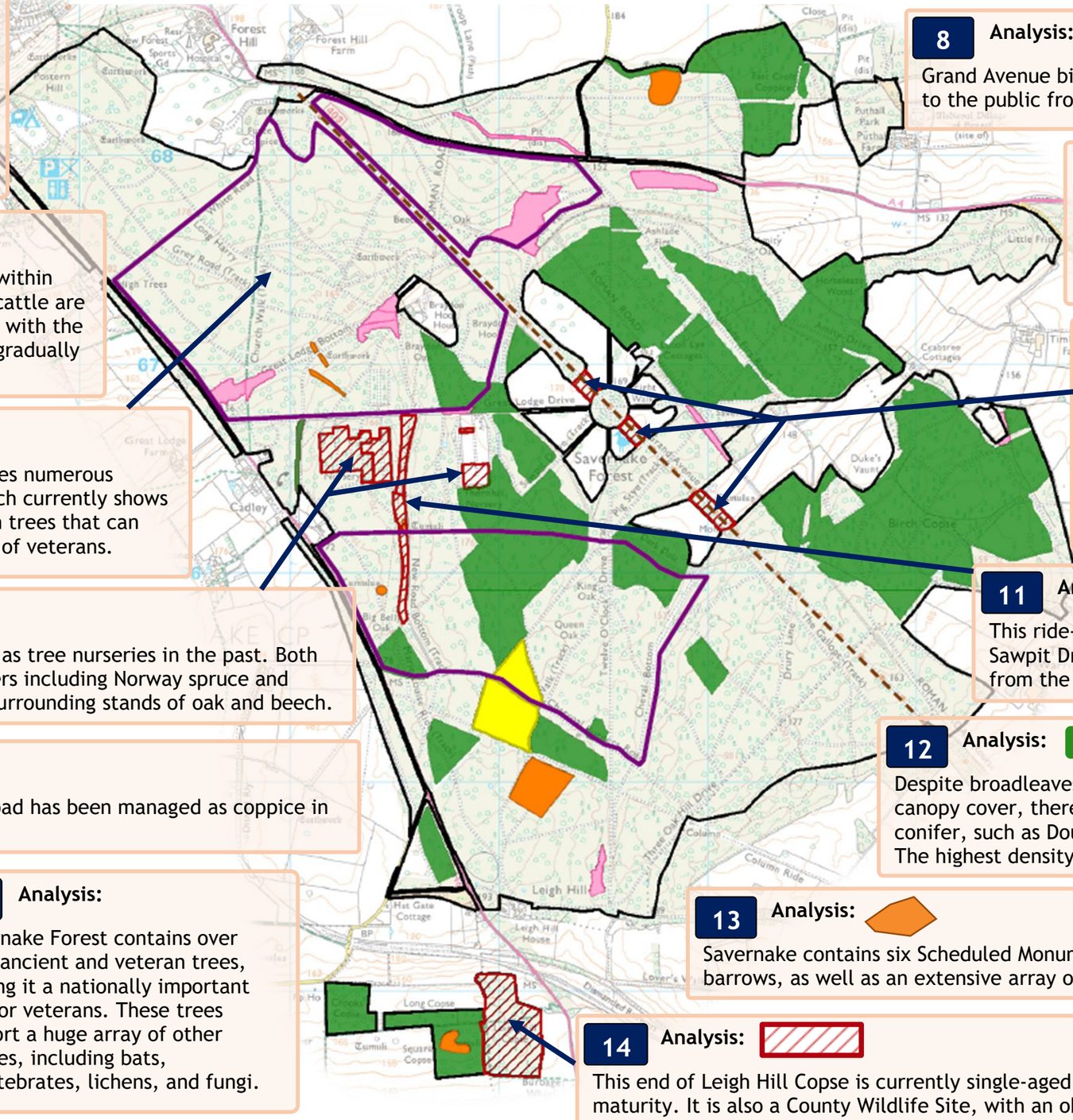


Right: Interpretation board in Savernake Forest providing visitors with information on the wood pasture restoration grazing scheme

Above: Picnic area near Postern Hill car park, Savernake Forest

Forestry England

Analysis and Concept: Savernake Main Block and Leigh Hill Copse



1 **Analysis:**

Numerous open areas can be found within the forest, often along valley bottoms. They consist of open grass sward, bracken and areas of scrub. These areas provide valuable open habitat for woodland birds, invertebrates, small mammals and plants.

2 **Analysis:**

There are three fenced grazing enclosures within the forest, and a herd of grazing Hereford cattle are periodically moved between the enclosures with the aim of restoring wood pasture habitat and gradually reducing canopy cover over time.

3 **Analysis:**

This area north of Great Lodge Drive features numerous stands of uniform-aged plantation oak, which currently shows little potential for producing future veteran trees that can take the place of Savernake's current suite of veterans.

4 **Analysis:**

These two areas have previously been used as tree nurseries in the past. Both contain uniform stands of non-native conifers including Norway spruce and Corsican pine, which are at odds with the surrounding stands of oak and beech.

5 **Analysis:**

This area either side of Charcoal Burners Road has been managed as coppice in recent decades for biodiversity benefit.

6 **Analysis:**

The broadleaf stands within Savernake are largely a mix of some older oak and beech (dating from the 1700s), and more recent plantations of these species and other broadleaves dating from the 1940s onwards.

7 **Analysis:**

Savernake Forest contains over 4000 ancient and veteran trees, making it a nationally important site for veterans. These trees support a huge array of other species, including bats, invertebrates, lichens, and fungi.

8 **Analysis:**

Grand Avenue bisects the woodland, providing easy access to the public from both directions.

9 **Analysis:**

Across the Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area, there are several ponds which offer valuable aquatic habitat for numerous invertebrate, amphibian and floral species.

10 **Analysis:**

Eight Walks (or "Ludens Lye") forms the intersection of Grand Avenue and the other axial rides. Originally designed to be in open land and surrounded by platoons of beech trees, more recently infilled beech has resulted in this open structure having been lost.

11 **Analysis:**

This ride-side strip connecting Great Lodge Drive and Sawpit Drive contains a mixture of broadleaves dating from the 1940s-1960s, including birch and oak.

12 **Analysis:**

Despite broadleaves making up the majority of Savernake's canopy cover, there remain significant stands of non-native conifer, such as Douglas fir, Norway spruce and European larch. The highest density of these conifers is found in Birch Copse.

13 **Analysis:**

Savernake contains six Scheduled Monuments, including earthworks and bowl barrows, as well as an extensive array of unscheduled heritage features.

14 **Analysis:**

This end of Leigh Hill Copse is currently single-aged Norway spruce, which has reached economic maturity. It is also a County Wildlife Site, with an objective of restoring broadleaf cover.

Concept:

1	We will maintain these areas as open through a programme of mechanical vegetation cutting, to ensure these valuable spaces don't infill with regenerating trees and other vegetation.
2	We will continue to work closely with the Savernake Estate Trust's grazier and Natural England to ensure the cattle are grazing sufficiently across the three grazing enclosures. Within the enclosures, as with elsewhere in the forest, we will thin heavily to reduce canopy cover. This will help to gradually restore these areas to wood pasture.
3	A number of actions are planned for this area, to diversify the stand structure and introduce the ecological niches associated with veteran trees. Subject to funding availability, we propose a pollarding trial where we will use conservation-focussed contractors to pollard a number of the plantation oaks in this area, plus an area of unproductive beech further south near Charcoal Burners Road. Although these trees have already reached a mature age and therefore wouldn't traditionally be considered good candidates for pollarding, we want to see how a small number of trees would respond to such cutting, and whether it could encourage new lateral branch growth. In short, we want to learn whether pollarding at this age could result in a tree shape that mimics a more open-grown tree, with the potential to become veterans of the future. Another impact of this work will be an increase in light levels reaching surrounding trees, as removing the crowns of the selected trial trees will create open gaps in the canopy. As well as this trial, we intend to carry out some ring-barking within the plantation stands, i.e. intentionally mortally wounding a small number of trees. These trees will slowly decline, and in doing so they will develop splits, cracks and other deadwood features of ecological importance which are associated with veteran trees, and which are missing from the uniform plantation stands. When these trees eventually die, they will create further gaps in the stand allowing light to reach the forest floor, and will also be a source of valuable deadwood.
4	The non-native conifers in these old nurseries will be felled during this Forest Plan period, with the long term aim of restoring these areas to broadleaf cover. The nurseries are surrounded by ancient woodland and Savernake Forest SSSI and, in contrast to the surrounding woodland, they are densely planted and dark, with no understorey. These small clearfells will have little landscape impact on the regularly used rides and footpaths nearby, being well shielded by other stands of trees. Care will be taken during the operation to minimise soil compaction, by instructing operators to stick to designated extraction routes.
5	Coppicing on a regular cycle will continue here, for the benefit of a wide range of wildlife, particularly invertebrates.
6	In general, broadleaved stands across Savernake will largely be managed under a group shelterwood management system. Small group fellings (of approximately 0.25ha in area) will be incorporated into thinning operations to create gaps in the stand and reduce canopy cover. These resulting open pockets will be allowed to naturally regenerate, resulting in an increasingly diverse age structure within the stands. This will be beneficial for wildlife as well as ensuring we are increasing the resilience of the woodland to future challenges.
7	We will take a practical approach to surveying and haloing our veteran trees, ensuring that we are addressing the vast majority of veterans that need management work in a regular cycle. Further details of our planned approach to veteran management can be seen on page 15, under Savernake Forest SSSI.
8	We will continue to maintain Grand Avenue as part of our regular resurfacing programme, to ensure the public continue to enjoy access to and through the forest.
9	In this Forest Plan period, we will continue to monitor all ponds and take action to improve, restore, and protect habitat from disturbance when required. Working with our ecologists, we will explore opportunities to create new ponds in suitable locations when opportunities arise.
10	During this Plan period, we will undertake three small-scale felling operations around Eight Walks, to remove small areas of beech which have filled in since the 1950s, and restore the open vistas surrounding Eight Walks which were originally intended.
11	In the first half of this Plan period, we will clearfell the majority of trees within this strip, retaining a maximum of 20% tree cover. This work will create a valuable open corridor alongside an existing forest ride, providing opportunities for wildlife movement and woodland flora growth. Any oaks with interesting form will be retained as potential future veterans. During the operation, we will deliberately retain and damage some birch trees to create standing deadwood, as this may benefit species like lesser spotted woodpecker over time.
12	Conifer stands will be managed under Low Impact Silvicultural Systems, such as group shelterwoods or irregular shelterwoods. Given that the vast majority of Savernake is ancient woodland, we have a commitment to move these non-native stands towards a more native broadleaf composition. When thinning or felling within these stands, any broadleaves present will be favoured, and over time the proportion of conifers present will reduce. By using low impact systems, we are protecting the vital forest soils and also ensuring continuity of habitat for wildlife. Species such as Schedule 1 birds of prey utilise conifers for nesting, so by not clearfelling, we are making sure those nesting opportunities won't suddenly vanish.
13	Scheduled Monuments will be protected, and their condition enhanced where possible through the actions detailed in each monument's management plan. Contractors will be made aware of scheduled and unscheduled heritage features, and we will continue to implement buffer zones around monuments and other protective restrictions to avoid damage occurring during forestry operations.
14	This stand will be clearfelled during this Forest Plan period, in order to produce sustainable timber and accelerate the stand's reversion to a broadleaf composition. Natural regeneration from surrounding broadleaves will be the primary source of restocking, however the site will be assessed at five years post felling, and cluster planting of native broadleaf species will be carried out if deemed beneficial.

Forestry England

Analysis & Concept – Knowle Hens Wood, Noke Wood, Cobham Frith, Chisbury, Withy Copse, Heron's Point, Bedwyn Common & Bloxham Copse

1 **Analysis:**

Knowle Hens Wood contains an open area which breaks up the continuous canopy of mostly larch and beech trees. The area provides valuable open habitat for woodland birds, invertebrates, small mammals and plants.

2 **Analysis:**

At the northern end of Cobham Frith, stands of uniform-aged beech show little structural diversity, creating a dark understorey.

3 **Analysis:**

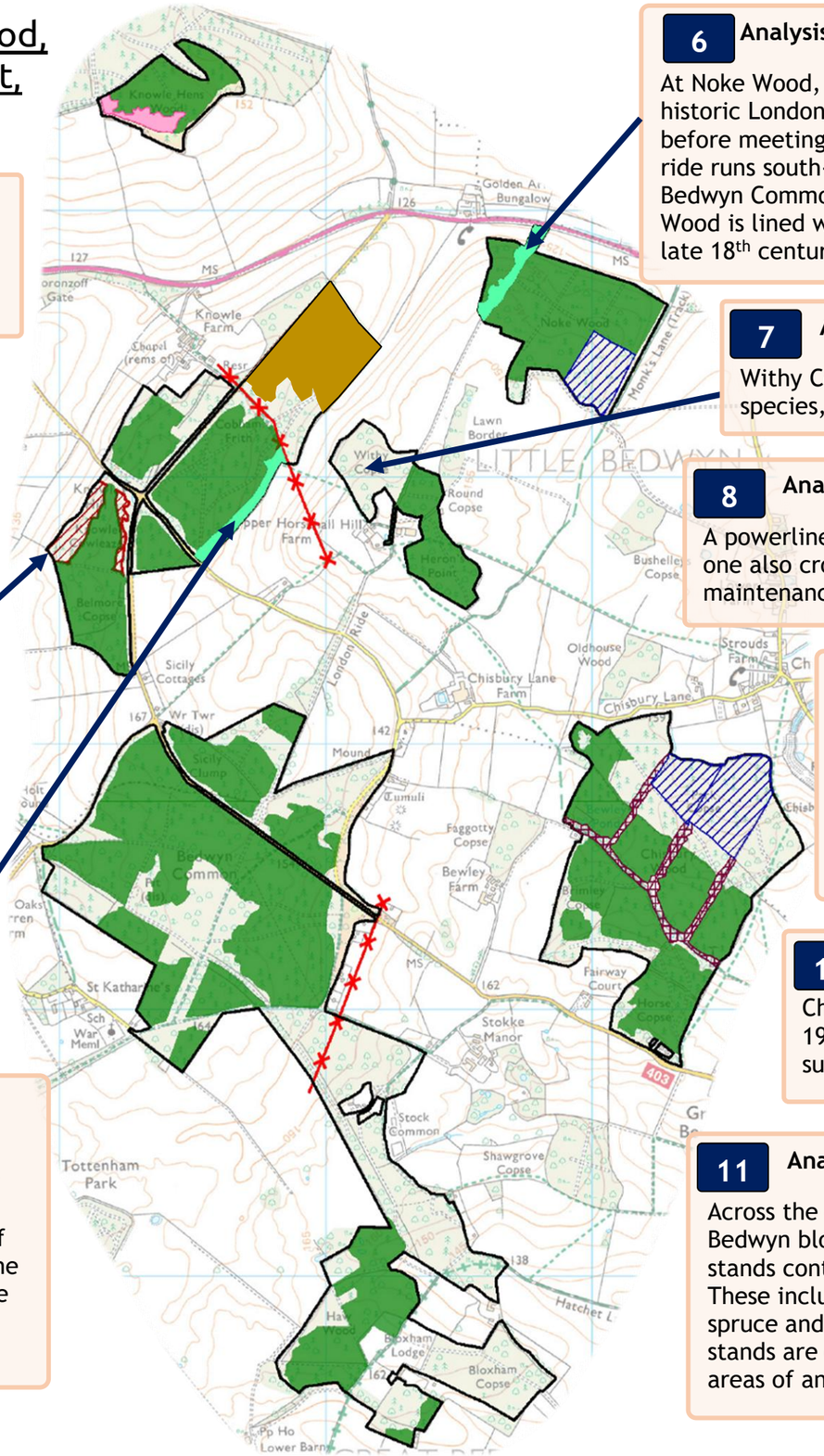
In the west of Cobham Frith, a stand of 1960s Norway spruce has reached economic maturity. This area is secondary (i.e. not ancient) woodland.

4 **Analysis:**

This strip of Scots pine on the edge of Cobham Frith provides significant landscape value to the woodland, creating an aesthetically appealing edge when approaching from a south-eastern direction. This stand also provides valuable nesting habitat for birds of prey.

5 **Analysis:**

The majority of Bedwyn Common and Bloxham Copse is thought to be secondary woodland, established in the 19th century. However, ancient woodland indicator plants have been found in this woodland, suggesting parts of it could have been woodland much further back in the past. The woodland contains a diverse mix of conifer and broadleaf species, with natural regeneration evident throughout some stands. Mature common lime trees line the southern end of London Ride, and the woodland contains a significant number of veteran trees dating from the 18th century, which were associated with the landscaping of Tottenham Park.



6 **Analysis:**

At Noke Wood, the most northerly stretch of the historic London Ride passes through the woodland before meeting the A4. Approximately 3.5km long, this ride runs south-westwards through Withy Copse and Bedwyn Common. The section running through Noke Wood is lined with mature beech trees dating from the late 18th century, and is a significant landscape feature.

7 **Analysis:**

Withy Copse contains a diverse mix of broadleaf species, including oak dating from 1825.

8 **Analysis:**

A powerline runs through Cobham Frith, and one also crosses Bedwyn, necessitating the maintenance of open ground beneath.

9 **Analysis:**

In both Noke Wood and Chisbury Wood, stands of Corsican pine planted in the 1970s and 1980s have become infected with the fungal disease Dothistroma needle blight and consequently are of poor quality.

10 **Analysis:**

Chisbury Wood contains several belts of 1940s beech, which break up the surrounding stands of conifer.

11 **Analysis:**

Across the outlying woodlands in the Savernake & Bedwyn block, plantations of conifer, or mixed stands containing conifer species are prevalent. These include species such as Douglas fir, Norway spruce and European/Japanese larch. Whilst some stands are on secondary woodland, others are on areas of ancient woodland, making them PAWS.

Concept:

1	We will maintain this area as open through a regular programme of mechanical vegetation cutting, to ensure this valuable space doesn't infill with regenerating trees and other vegetation.
2	These uniform beech stands will be managed under a group shelterwood system, meaning that small (approximately 0.25ha) areas will be felled during regular thinning operations, to create gaps in the stand. These resulting open pockets will be allowed to naturally regenerate, resulting in an increasingly diverse age structure within the stands. This will be beneficial for wildlife as well as ensuring we are increasing the resilience of the woodland to future challenges. Hopefully, with other broadleaf species nearby, we will see different species regenerating in the gaps, increasing species diversity, wildlife value, and stand resilience.
3	This stand of Norway spruce will be felled during this Plan period. As it is a PAWS site, our intention here is to restock with broadleaves, primarily utilising natural regeneration. For a period of 5 years after felling, the coupe will be left to naturally regenerate and will be assessed for regeneration at the end of the 5-year period. At this point, we will consider how successful natural regeneration has been, and make a decision on whether supplementary planting is necessary to help the area achieve the desired mixed broadleaf composition. Any regeneration of Norway spruce will need removal.
4	This is PAWS woodland, and Scots pine is not considered a native species here (it is considered "near native", see glossary for definition). We will manage this stand under a uniform shelterwood system, thinning evenly across the stand to reduce the proportion of Scots pine in the canopy, whilst creating small pockets for broadleaf natural regeneration to fill in. We will not eliminate Scots pine from the stand entirely, and will retain a minor component for its aesthetic and ecological value.
5	This woodland will be managed under Low Impact Silviculture Systems. Where stands are very uniform in their species or age composition, group fells will be used to open up small pockets in these stands to allow space and light for natural regeneration. Where there are mixed stands with multiple species present, we will manage these under an irregular shelterwood system which allows particular species or age classes to be favoured or targeted for removal, with the aim of achieving diverse and varied stands. In the areas that are PAWS, conifers will be targeted for removal and broadleaves favoured. When carrying out thinning operations, we will look to favour veteran trees by removing nearby competitors.
6	The historic beech avenue in Noke Wood will be retained into the future. These veteran trees will be kept clear of any younger, competing trees which may pose a threat to the space, light and nutrient supply the veterans need.
7	Withy Copse will be managed under a single tree selection system, with individual veteran trees being managed for seed and for long term conservation benefits.
8	The open ground beneath the powerlines will continue to be maintained mechanically. These open areas are ecologically beneficial features of these woodlands due to their potential use by wildlife as corridors.
9	These Corsican pine stands will be heavily thinned in order to increase airflow around the remaining trees and reduce the impact of Dothistroma needle blight. Both Noke Wood and Chisbury Wood are ancient woodland sites, so as with any PAWS areas, the long term aim is to revert conifer stands to broadleaf cover. Heavy thinning of the Corsican pine will hopefully provide opportunities for broadleaf natural regeneration to seed in the gaps opened up in the stand, helping to push the stand composition towards a greater proportion of broadleaves.
10	The beech belts will be maintained and thinned on a regular cycle to encourage large, open crowns.
11	The majority of conifer stands will be managed under Low Impact Silvicultural Systems, such as group shelterwoods or irregular shelterwoods. Given that a significant portion of the outlying woodlands are ancient woodland, we have a commitment to move these non-native stands towards a more native broadleaf composition. When thinning or felling within these stands, any broadleaves present will be favoured, and over time, the proportion of conifers present will reduce. By using low impact systems, we are protecting the vital forest soils and also ensuring continuity of habitat for wildlife. Species such as Schedule 1 birds of prey utilise conifers for nesting, so by not clearfelling, we are making sure those nesting opportunities won't suddenly vanish.

Forestry England

Silviculture

Clearfell coupes will be managed by cutting and removing all identified trees. Where the aim is to restore areas of PAWS to native broadleaf cover, natural regeneration will be the primary method of restocking. The establishment of a diverse natural stand will take time, and natural regeneration will be assessed at 5 and 10 years post-felling, to determine whether any supplementary planting is required to increase stocking density and/or species diversity. In non-PAWS areas, diverse and climate-resilient conifer mixes may be replanted to provide a future supply of timber. Where the objective of a clearfell is to create or restore open space, no restocking will take place.

Group shelterwood fellings will be integrated into thinning operations to diversify woodland composition and structure. Small (≤0.25ha) fells will be undertaken, focussing on locations where natural regeneration is already present. The gaps created will be left to naturally regenerate, and in PAWS areas any conifer regeneration will be removed. Supplementary planting of desirable species may be carried out later in the plan period where opportunities arise.

Uniform shelterwoods will be used in both broadleaf and conifer stands, enabling an understorey of next generation trees to establish via natural regeneration beneath the canopy throughout the stand. This will be achieved through the application of appropriate thinning intensity to open up gaps uniformly across the stand for natural regeneration.

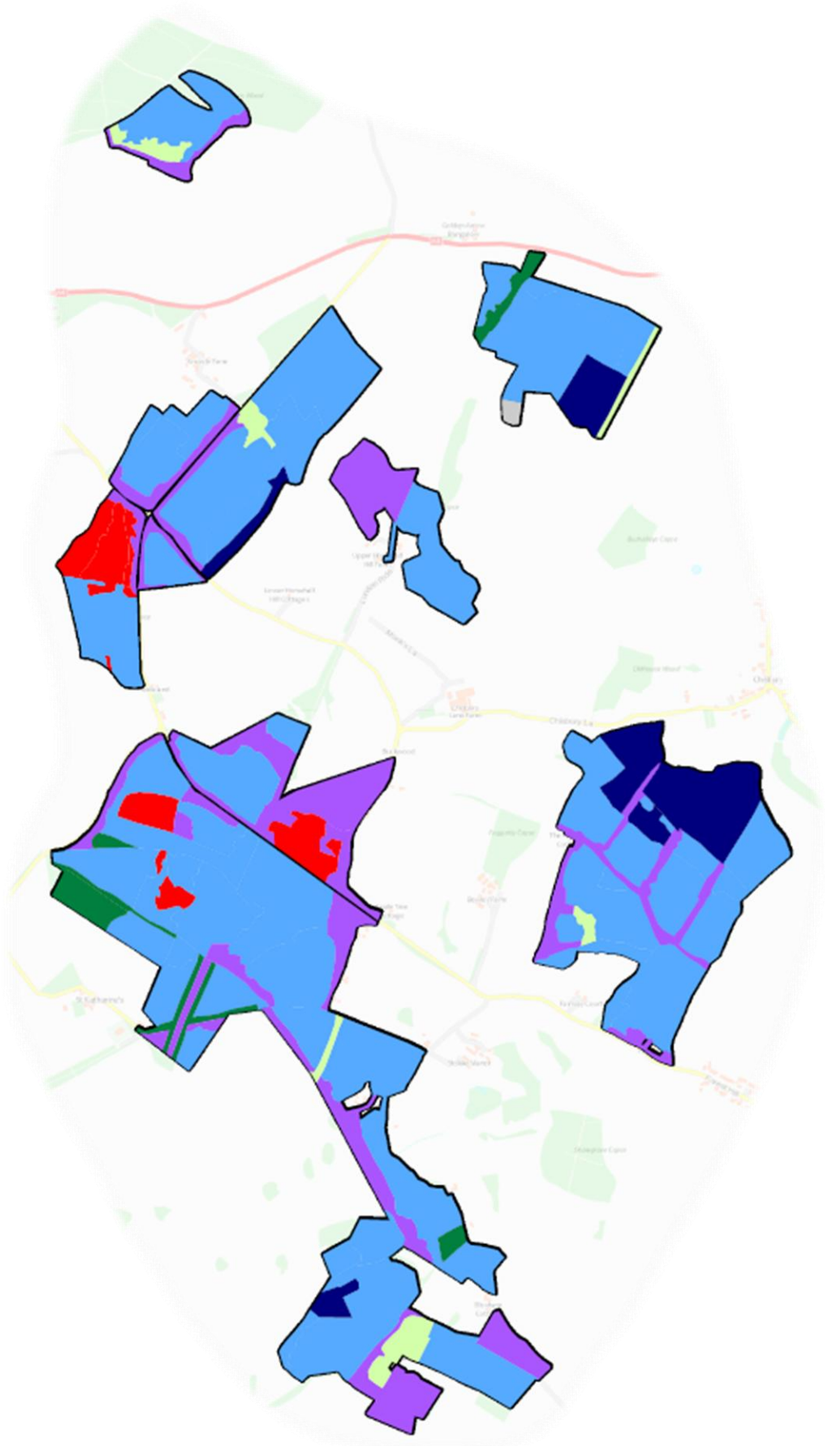
Long term retention coupes contain broadleaf or conifer stands which are providing ecological benefit in terms of nesting sites for birds (particularly Schedule 1 species), or aesthetic/landscape value within the woodland. These stands will be retained into the future beyond the age they would typically be felled, to prolong these benefits.

Single tree selection is used in mature habitat with high ecological value where timber production is not the priority. Careful selection of individual trees for removal will enhance the conditions for valuable veteran trees.

Open space will be maintained as valuable habitat for wildlife, adding to the diversity of the overall woodland structure. A regular vegetation management regime is in place to ensure forest cover in open areas remains less than 2m in height.

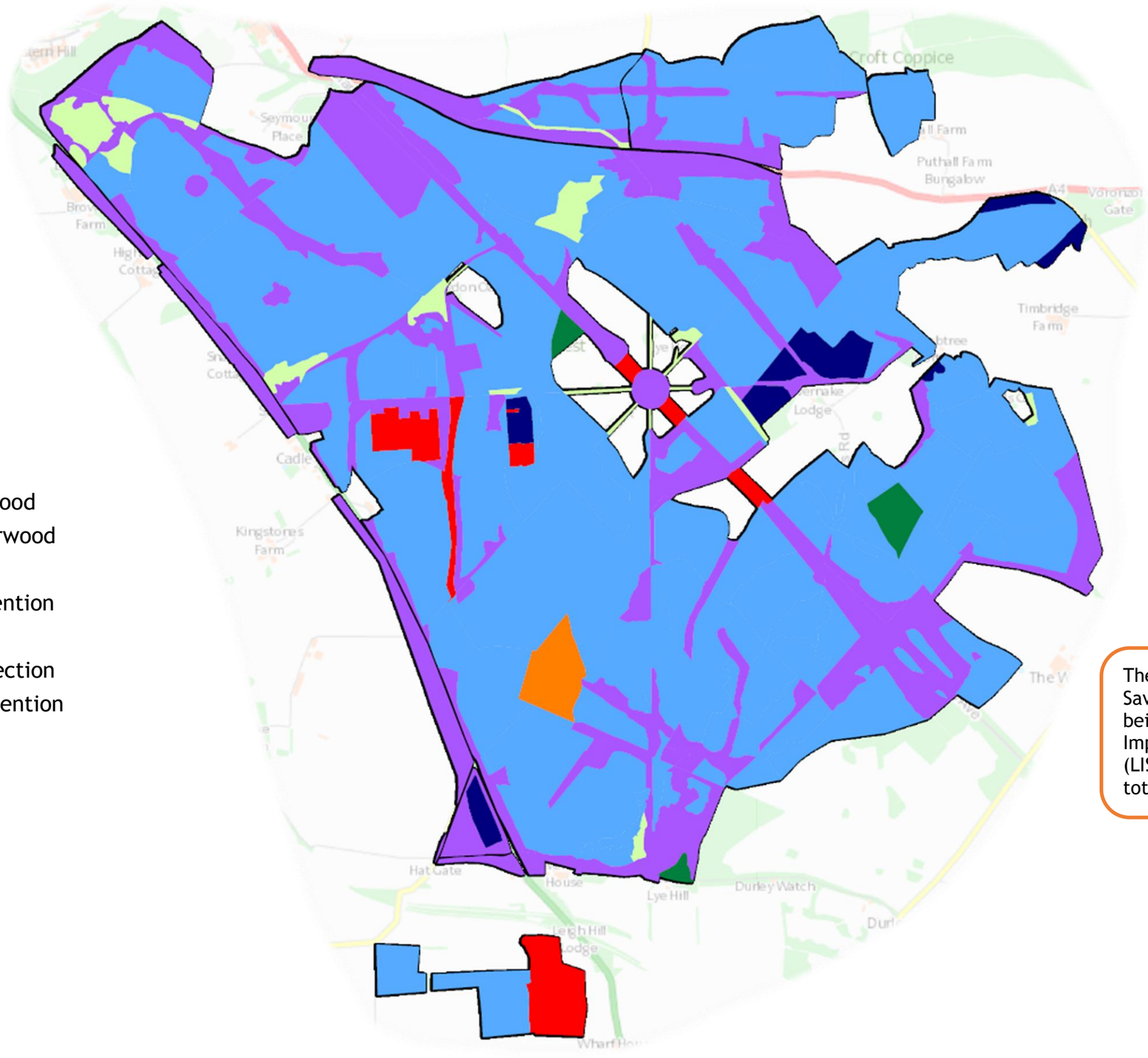
Coppicing will be carried out in an area of Savernake where it has been previously undertaken, with mature coppice stools being re-cut back down to the stump, to encourage new growth from the stool.
This ancient form of management creates valuable habitat for a range of woodland species, including dormice, woodland birds, woodland flora, and invertebrates such butterflies.

Minimum intervention areas are places where no systematic felling or planting of trees takes place. This management approach will be implemented in an isolated area of birch on the southern tip of Noke Wood.



Forestry England

Silviculture



Legend

- Clearfell
- Group Shelterwood
- Uniform Shelterwood
- Coppice
- Long Term Retention
- Open/Other
- Single Tree Selection
- Minimum Intervention

The total area in the Savernake & Bedwyn block being managed under Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS) is **1449.6ha** (out of a total block area of 1540.1ha).

Felling and Restocking 2027 – 2037: Savernake Forest

Legend

Fell 2027 – 2031

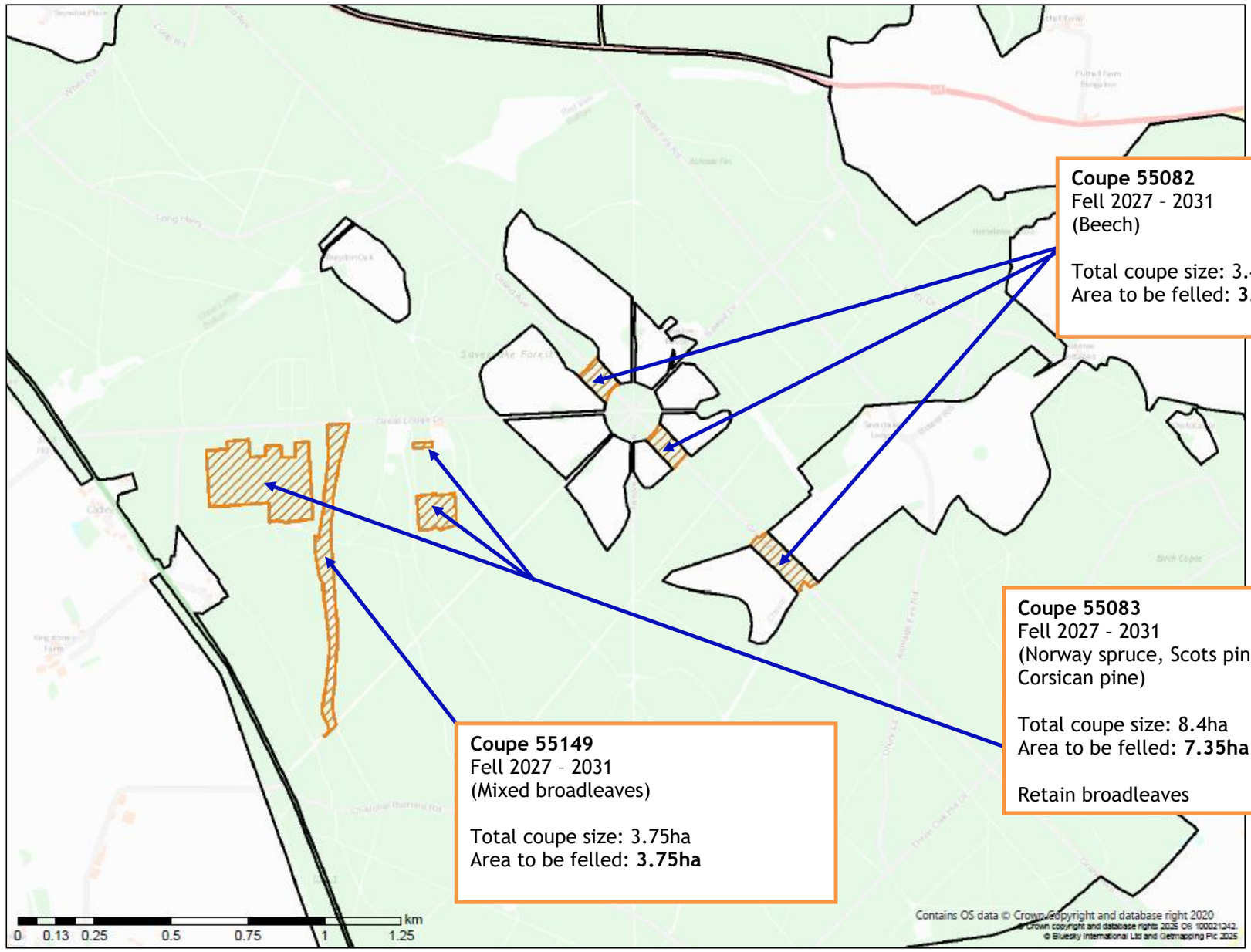
Fell 2032 - 2037

Restocking

The clearfells around Eight Walks (coupe 55082) will not be restocked, as the intention here is to open up historical views around the radial dial of Eight Walks.

The old nursery clearfells (coupe 55083) will also not be restocked, and will instead be allowed to regenerate with native shrub species for the benefit of woodland birds. Once established, this shrub layer will be managed as part of an ongoing vegetation maintenance regime to ensure it is held at thicket stage, and is not permitted to develop into closed canopy woodland. Any conifer regeneration will need to be removed.

Coupe 55149 will also not be restocked, as the intention here is to reinstate a more open, wood pasture habitat structure.



All timber arising from the Forestry England estate represents a negligible risk under the Timber and Timber Products Placing on the Market Regulations (UKTR) and UK FLEGT Regulations

Forestry England

Felling and Restocking 2027 – 2037: **Leigh Hill Copse and Cobham Frith**

Legend

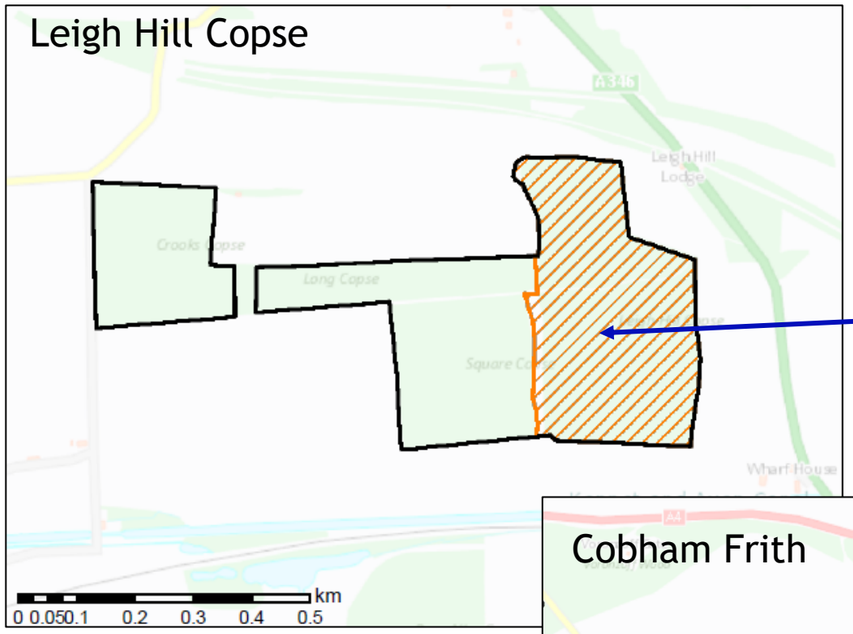
Fell 2027 - 2031

Fell 2032 - 2036

Restocking

At Leigh Hill Copse and Cobham Frith (both PAWS areas), restocking will primarily utilise broadleaf natural regeneration. For a period of 5 years after felling, the coupes will be left to naturally regenerate and will be assessed for regeneration at the end of the 5-year period. At this point, we will consider how successful natural regeneration has been, and make a decision on whether supplementary planting is necessary to help the area achieve the desired mixed broadleaf composition, and desired minimum stocking density of 1100 stems per hectare. If planting is proposed, the broadleaf species selected will be carefully considered to take into account local soil conditions and the projected future temperature and moisture regime for this geographical area. Clusters of planted trees will be scatted throughout the clearfelled areas, with the remaining cleared space being left to infill with natural regeneration. Any regeneration of Norway spruce will need removal.

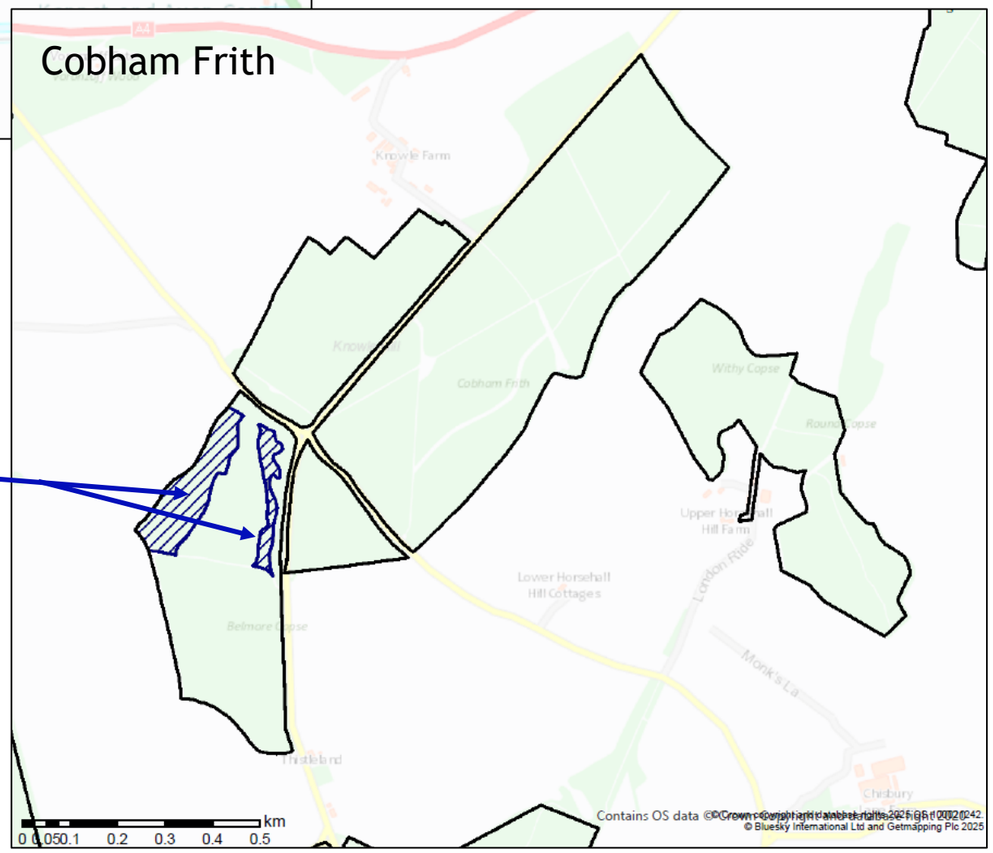
We will utilise Forest Development Types (FDTs), a management tool developed by Forest Research which helps to set the long-term vision for a stand and increase its future resilience. It provides guidance on different species mixtures, the required site conditions, and advice on management.



Coupe 55042
Fell 2027 - 2031
(Norway spruce)

Total coupe size: 11.71ha
Area to be felled: **11.71ha**

Retain any intruded broadleaves



Coupe 55024
Fell 2032 - 2036
(Norway spruce)

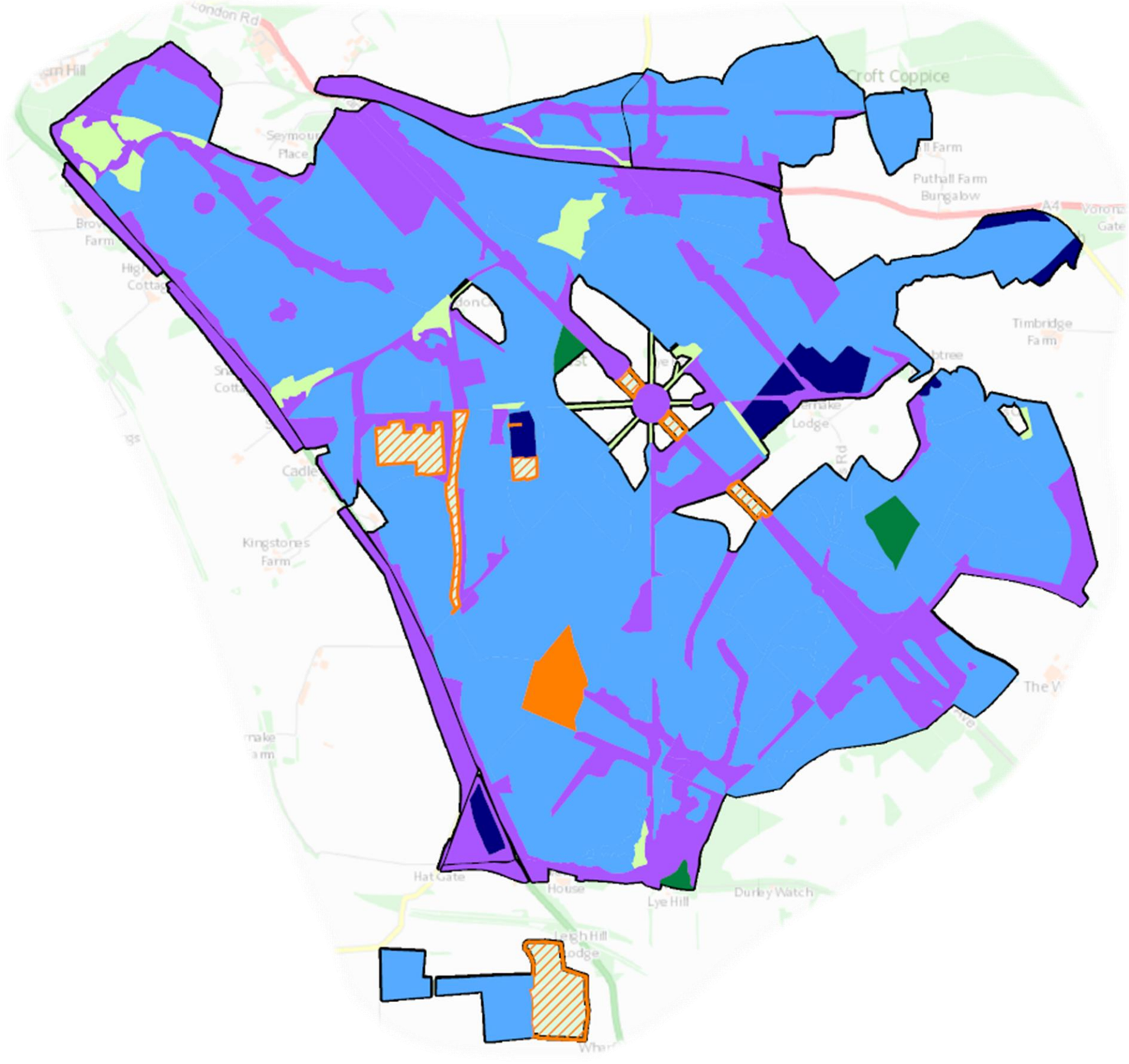
Total coupe size: 3.19ha
Area to be felled: **2.39ha**

Retain any intruded broadleaves

All timber arising from the Forestry England estate represents a negligible risk under the Timber and Timber Products Placing on the Market Regulations (UKTR) and UK FLEGT Regulations

Forestry England

Management Prescriptions 2027 – 2051

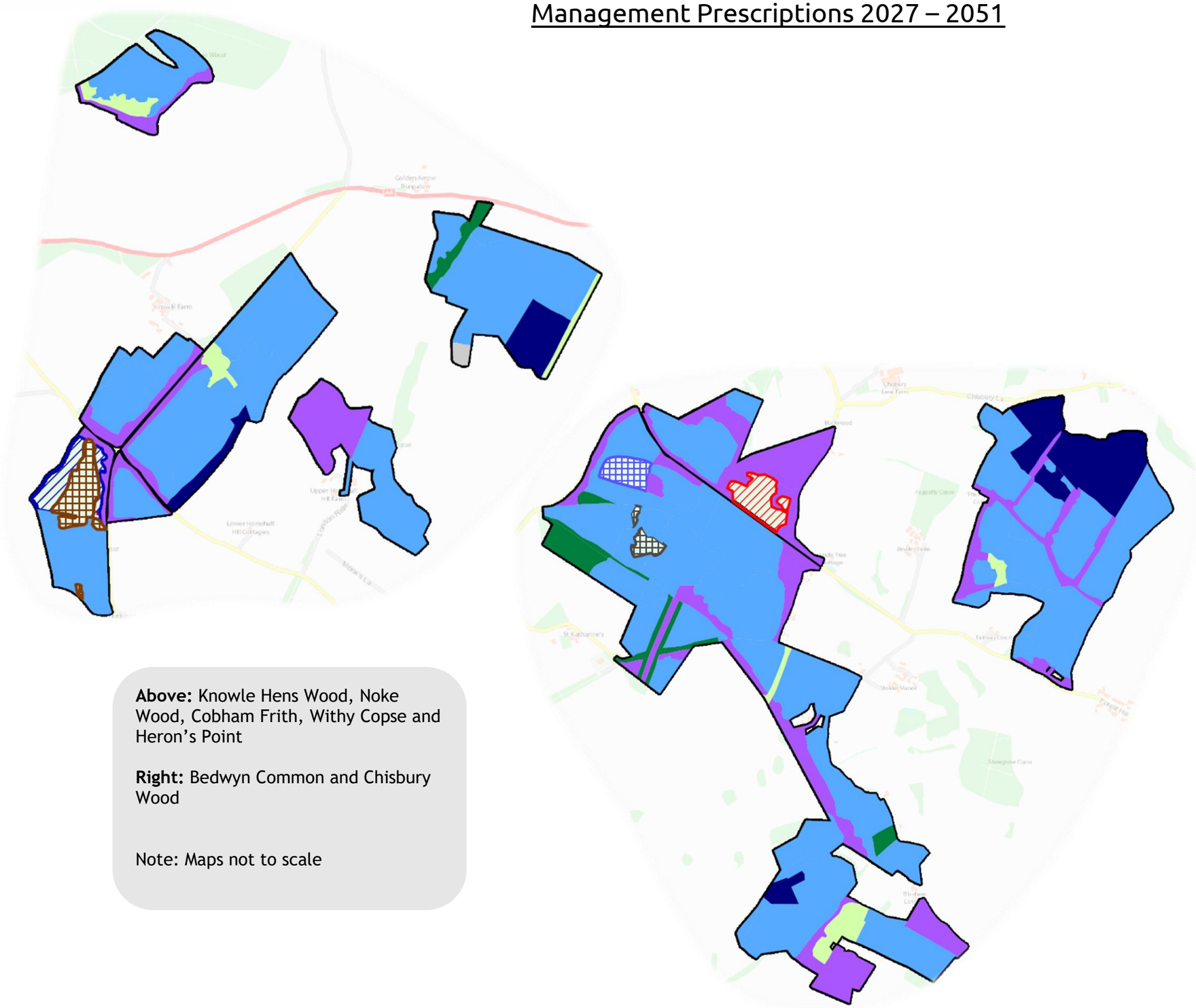


Legend

- Fell 2027 - 2031
- Fell 2032 - 2036
- Fell 2037 - 2041
- Fell 2042 - 2046
- Fell 2047 - 2051
- Fell beyond 2051
- Group Shelterwood
- Uniform Shelterwood
- Coppice with Standards
- Long Term Retention
- Single Tree Selection
- Open/Other
- Minimum Intervention

Forestry England

Management Prescriptions 2027 – 2051



Legend

- Fell 2027 - 2031
- Fell 2032 - 2036
- Fell 2037 - 2041
- Fell 2042 - 2046
- Fell 2047 - 2051
- Fell beyond 2051
- Group Shelterwood
- Uniform Shelterwood
- Coppice with Standards
- Long Term Retention
- Single Tree Selection
- Open/Other
- Minimum Intervention

Above: Knowle Hens Wood, Noke Wood, Cobham Frith, Withy Copse and Heron's Point

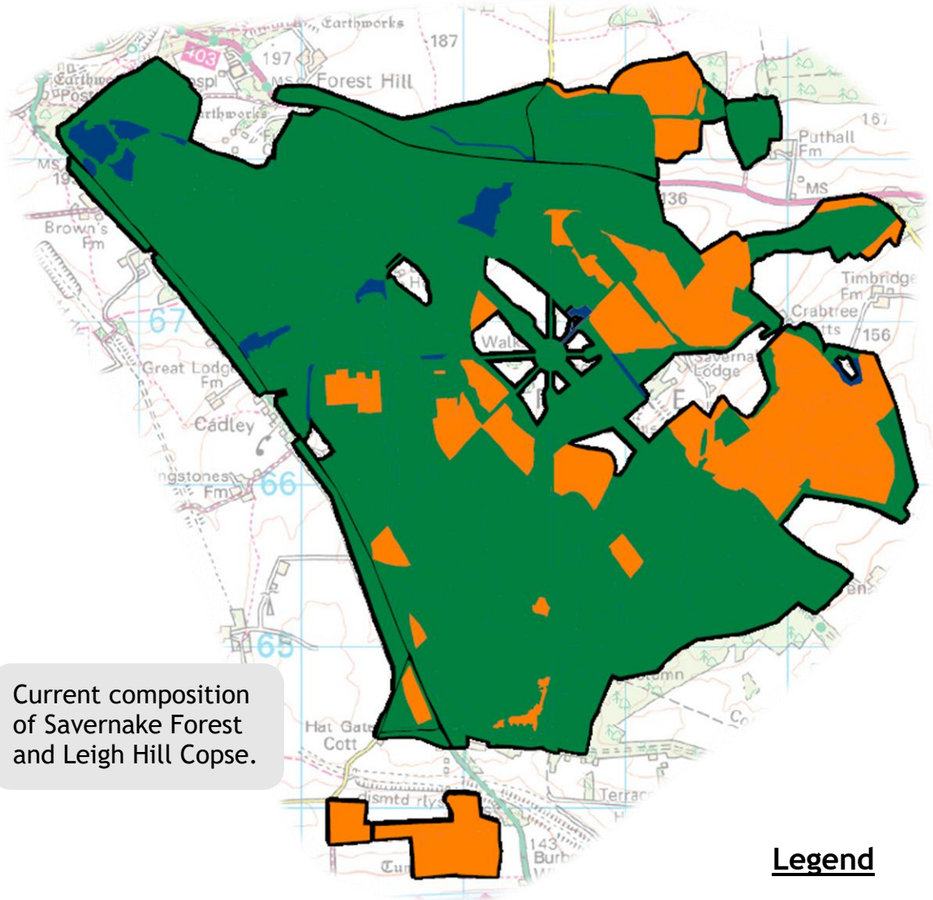
Right: Bedwyn Common and Chisbury Wood

Note: Maps not to scale

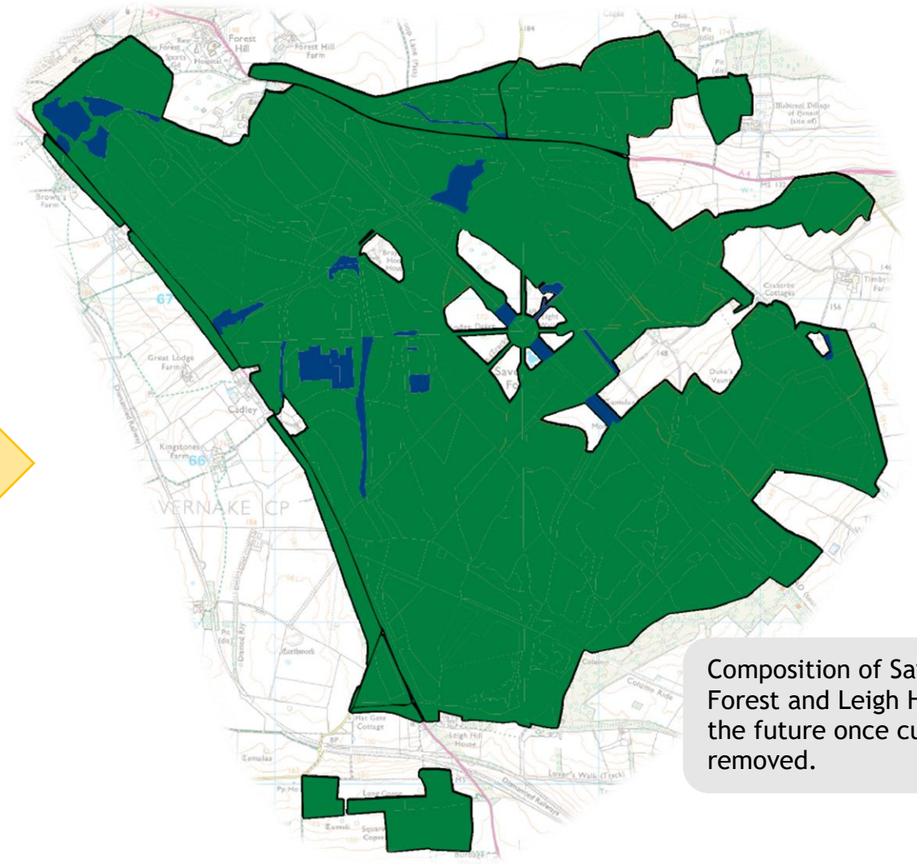
Forestry England

Future Habitats and Species

Over time, in parts of the Savernake & Bedwyn Forest Plan area where our key objective is PAWS restoration, our planned thinning and felling operations will gradually transform currently conifer-dominated areas of the block to broadleaf-dominated stands. Once the entire rotation of all conifer stands is complete over the coming decades (i.e. all conifers have been felled), the intention is that the majority of woodland in this Forest Plan area will have become broadleaf-dominated, with some open areas. The exception will be areas that are not categorised as ancient woodland, where timber production is the primary objective. In areas where our key aim is wood pasture restoration, as well as removing any conifers present, we will also be focussing on achieving a lower stocking density to allow for more open grown tree forms and greater spacing between trees.



Current composition of Savernake Forest and Leigh Hill Copse.



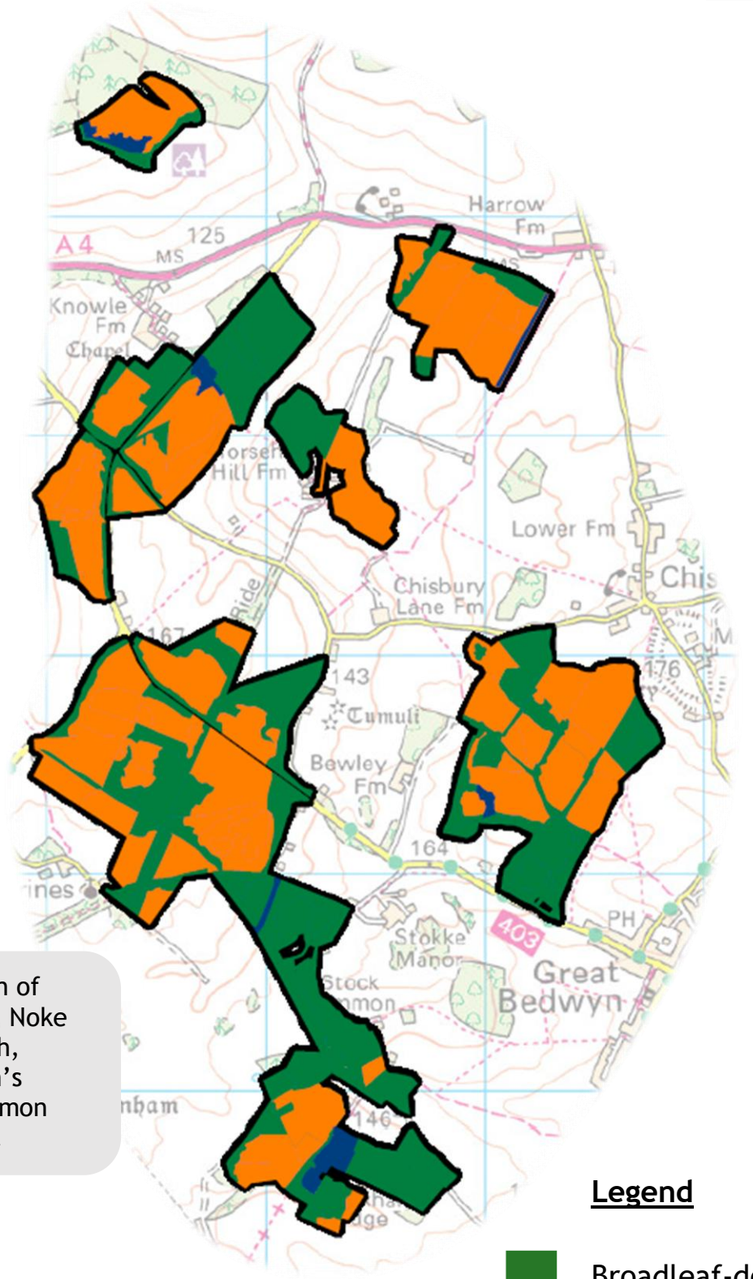
Composition of Savernake Forest and Leigh Hill Copse in the future once current stock removed.

Legend

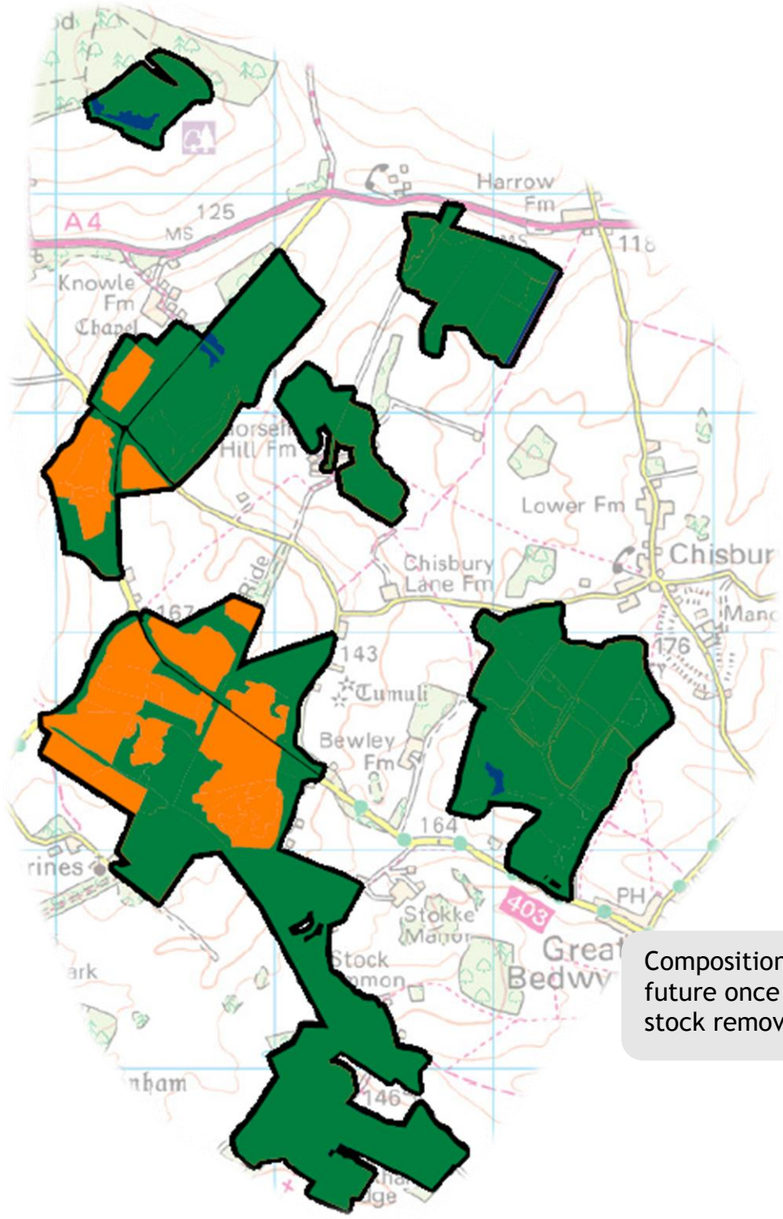
- Broadleaf-dominated woodland or wood pasture habitat
- Conifer-dominated woodland
- Open/other

Forestry England

Future Habitats and Species



Current composition of Knowle Hens Wood, Noke Wood, Cobham Frith, Withy Copse, Heron's Point, Bedwyn Common and Chisbury Wood.



Composition in the future once current stock removed.

Legend

- Broadleaf-dominated woodland or wood pasture habitat
- Conifer-dominated woodland
- Open/other

Forestry England

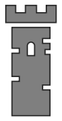
Our Shared Forest: Making Progress Towards Our Commitments

What are some of the actions will we take in this Forest Plan period to help us achieve the commitments we made in Savernake's Our Shared Forest Management Plan (2023)?

The table below shows a selection of the commitments we made in Our Shared Forest under six land management principles, and the actions we will take in this Forest Plan period (2027 – 2037) to help achieve these aims. Please note, not all commitments have been highlighted in the table below. Full details of all commitments found in Our Shared Forest can be found here.

Our Shared Forest Land Management Principle	Commitments we've made in Our Shared Forest	What action we will take towards this commitment in this Forest Plan period (2027 – 2037)
Trees and Woodlands	Protect our ancient trees and identify and support future veteran trees	We are introducing a pragmatic and systematic approach to the haloing work we do to protect veteran trees, which will be tied in with planned thinning operations. When a compartment of the forest is due to be thinned, we will undertake a haloing assessment, individually checking the majority of ancient and veteran trees to assess their need for haloing. When we're conducting our thinning operations, we will look for younger trees showing good lateral growth and we will give these individuals more space and light to thrive by felling other trees in their nearby vicinity. We also plan to implement two small-scale pollarding trials, which we hope will not only encourage the pollarded trees to develop veteran features (i.e. increasing the prevalence of trees with the potential to become future veterans), but also reduce canopy coverage in the stand, increasing light levels and giving nearby trees the opportunity to increase lateral growth.
	Increase the range, structure, and genetic diversity of our trees and forest, to maximise resilience to pests, disease, and climate change	By moving away from clearfelling stands of trees towards more continuous cover systems, we are embracing natural regeneration of trees as the future generation that will eventually replace the current canopy. The advantage of utilising natural regeneration is that the trees which thrive the most are those that are adapted to the specific site conditions, which adds resilience to the stand. Managing the forest largely under continuous cover / low impact systems also means that the structure of the forest should gradually become more diverse over time, with multiple age classes of trees within single stands as young regenerated trees germinate and are recruited into the stand. Where there are opportunities to plant new trees, and increase species diversity, we will carefully select species to plant based on future climatic predictions for this area, and the ecological needs of the key wildlife features (e.g. lichens) in the area.
	Make site-by-site decisions to develop and care for our woodlands	This Forest Plan area contains a range of woodlands of varying structures, species compositions, physical characteristics and management priorities. We will make site-specific decisions on the management of stands, taking into account the aims and objectives for a particular woodland and its key characteristics. While in some parts of the Forest Plan area,

		wood pasture restoration and ancient woodland restoration will be our primary objective, in other parts we will continue to manage stands of non-native conifer to supply sustainable UK-grown timber.
	Tell the story of sustainable forest management	We will continue to be proactive in our communications around our sustainable forest management, providing information on our website, social media platforms, and on-site signage when we are planning forestry works. We will ensure we thoroughly explain the purpose behind our planned actions, and how they will help to deliver our commitments. Through our messaging, we aim to improve understanding of sustainable forest management and how it contributes to a healthy forest environment.
Wildlife and Wild Spaces	Identify habitats of current and potential conservation importance to ensure they are made bigger, better, and more joined up	This Forest Plan period will see a renewed focus on wood pasture restoration, and veteran tree management. We will be increasing the quality of aquatic habitats by continuing our pond restoration work, whilst exploring opportunities to create new ponds. We will also ensure the open areas within the Plan are maintained, so that bracken, scrub, and regenerating trees don't start to fill in and reduce the area of valuable open space.
	Utilise open spaces and wood pasture habitats for nature conservation	Through our grazing and wood pasture restoration work, we aim to gradually reduce canopy cover within Savernake Forest, focussing mostly on the grazing enclosure areas but also throughout the wider forest through heavy thinning. Where we have existing open areas within the forest, we will maintain regular vegetation management to keep these areas open.
	Continue to engage experts on species sensitive felling	Before any felling activity takes place, we will always consult our ecologists who review the stand of trees in question before any work proceeds. If the ecologist advises that an important species will be unnecessarily disturbed by our planned operations, we will delay felling in that area until a more appropriate time. We never wilfully or intentionally disrupt nesting/roosting animals, such as goshawk, bats or dormice. Where external ecological advice is required, we will utilise third-party expertise in our management decisions.
Geology and Soils	Protect the forest floor at sensitive sites from the impact of management	We will schedule forestry operations for drier periods to help limit the damage to the forest floor caused by heavy machinery. Identifying and protecting specific extraction routes for machinery to stick to, and exploring alternatives to heavy machinery in wetter periods will also help to protect the forest floor.
	Move away from felling blocks of trees to reduce the impact on soil qualities	We are moving away from clearfelling blocks of trees, particularly within the SSSI. Although a small number of clearfells will take place in this Forest Plan period to achieve particular objectives, the vast majority of the Forest Plan area will be managed under continuous cover systems, also known as Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS). Retaining woodland cover in the long term has many benefits, including reducing the negative impact of large-scale felling on ecosystem functioning and soil processes, such as soil moisture regimes and micro-organisms.

Water 	Restore historic ponds	Targeted pond restoration work has been carried out across a number of ponds within Savernake over the past five years, including sediment excavation and the installation of fencing to prevent dogs from entering and disturbing the wildlife. We will continue this work within the new Forest Plan period. Working with our ecologists, we will also explore opportunities to create new ponds in suitable locations when opportunities arise.
Cultural and Built Heritage 	Maintain historic monuments	Each scheduled monument in the Forest Plan area has its own management plan, detailing the current condition of each monument, and actions that we will take over a ten-year period to maintain and improve this condition. We will ensure that each monument receives a regular inspection, and that prescribed actions to preserve and enhance the condition of the monuments are carried out as planned.
	Redefine and maintain significant landscape design	The Grand Avenue is one of the most notable landscaped features in Savernake Forest and requires constant maintenance. We have a regular work programme in place to address this. During this Forest Plan period, we will also be undertaking three small-scale felling operations around Eight Walks, in order to remove small areas of beech which have filled in since the 1950s, and restore the open vistas surrounding Eight Walks which were originally intended.
	Support and encourage the historic grazing of woodland pasture	We work closely with Natural England and the Savernake Estate Trust on the woodland grazing scheme in Savernake Forest. We will continue to work collaboratively to ensure that the herd of Hereford cattle are used as effectively as possible to drive forward wood pasture restoration in the forest.
Community and Recreation 	Maintain and enhance key access points and pathways	We will ensure we are inspecting key access points and pathways on a regular basis, and that we act promptly when informed of any obstructions on high use routes. We have a work schedule for the maintenance and resurfacing of Grand Avenue, to ensure it remains accessible for vehicle use.
	Provide structured opportunities for volunteering that deliver mutual benefit	During this Forest Plan period, we will explore opportunities for volunteers to take part in important conservation work within Savernake Forest. Examples of upcoming tasks include birch clearance around the ponds, haloing work, and vegetation planting for butterflies.
	Promote responsible use of the Forest by all visitors, increasing their understanding and respect for other woodland users and local wildlife	We use a variety of platforms to communicate to our visitors, including our website, social media platforms, and on-site signage. We will continue to be proactive in our communications, taking opportunities to highlight ways in which our visitors can make sure they are visiting responsibly, and using our various platforms to educate visitors about the unique and highly important assemblage of wildlife found within Savernake Forest and its surrounding woodlands.

Landscape Analysis

Cobham Frith Clearfell



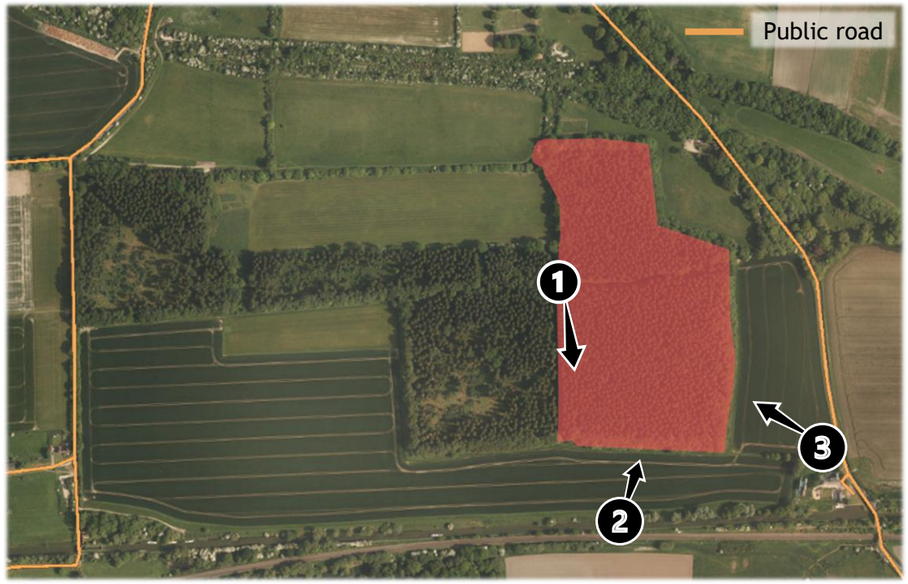


At Cobham Frith, **3.2ha of Norway spruce** will be clearfelled during this Forest Plan period. The clearfell area consists of two linear sections, one of which runs along the western edge of the woodland. A minor public road which dissects the southern half of the woodland in a northwest to southeast direction provides a view of the clearfell area across an agricultural field (see viewpoint 1 on the aerial map). Although there is a clear view of the woodland edge from this road, the planned clearfell is unlikely to have a significant aesthetic impact on the landscape, due to an established buffer of broadleaved trees along the outermost edge of the woodland, separating the Norway spruce stand from the field. As can be seen in the photograph above which was taken from viewpoint 1, the strip of broadleaves almost completely obscures the Norway spruce behind, with only the angular tips of the spruce visible on the skyline behind the broadleaves. Therefore, once the spruce has been felled, the broadleaf strip will significantly hide the newly felled area behind it and will prevent a dramatic change in the view towards the woodland from this road.

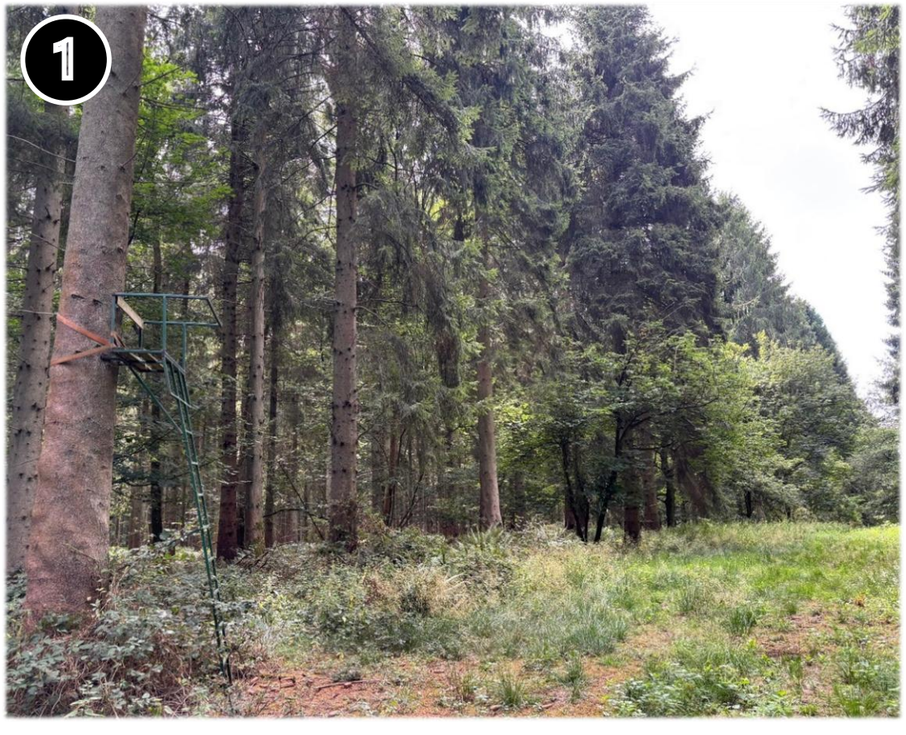
Internal views of the clearfell area are blocked by a buffer of broadleaf trees along the road edges. There are no public rights of way in the vicinity of the clearfell which would provide a view of the felled area to walkers, cyclists, or horse riders.

Forestry England

Leigh Hill Copse Clearfell









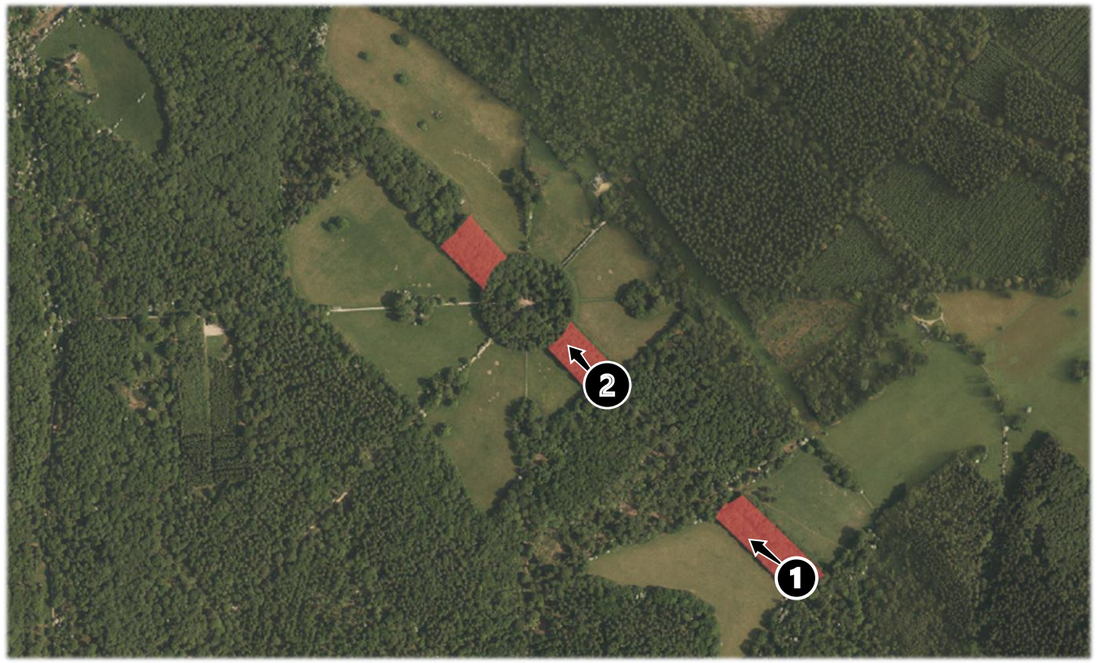
At Leigh Hill Copse, **11.6ha of Norway spruce** will be felled early in the Forest Plan period.

The aerial photograph (top left) shows three potential viewpoints of the planned clearfell area. Viewpoint 1 is an internal view of the clearfell (see photograph 1) taken from the public right of way which passes through the woodland. Viewpoint 2 shows the view towards the clearfell area from the south, where there is a canal footpath which runs alongside a field, parallel with the edge of the woodland. Viewpoint 3 looks towards the eastern edge of the clearfell area. Photograph 3 has been taken just inside the field boundary, with a relatively busy A-road being the other side of the hedge.

Despite the size of this planned clearfell, and there being multiple lines of sight towards the woodland from nearby roads and footpaths, the clearfell itself will be largely shielded from external view by the mature belts of established broadleaves bordering the woodland on the eastern and southern sides. These broadleaf buffers will prevent a dramatic change in landscape following the clearfell when the woodland is viewed from nearby roads or footpaths. Within the woodland, users of the public right of way will notice a significant visual change after the felling work. However, subsequent natural regeneration and potential cluster planting will mean this sudden change will be a short-lived phase.

Forestry England

Grand Avenue Clearfells, Savernake







On Grand Avenue in Savernake Forest, three small-scale clearfells totalling **3.5ha of 1950s beech** will restore previously open sections of the Avenue that have filled in during recent decades. Following the felling work, those travelling along Grand Avenue will be able to see out at these spots across the agricultural fields and parkland either side of the Avenue, and will have a view of Eight Walks surrounded by open land as it was historically designed to be.

Photographs 1 and 2 on this page (taken from viewpoints 1 and 2 shown on the aerial photograph, top left) show what these sections of Grand Avenue currently look like, with established stands of beech trees either side of the Avenue. These stands will be felled, with the resulting areas maintained going forwards as open space, to restore the open vistas that were originally incorporated into the landscape design of the Forest.

As well as restoring these sections of Grand Avenue to their original design, these small clearfells will increase aesthetic diversity along the Avenue by breaking up the uniform nature of the forested habitat currently present either side.

Forestry England

Nursery Clearfells, Savernake



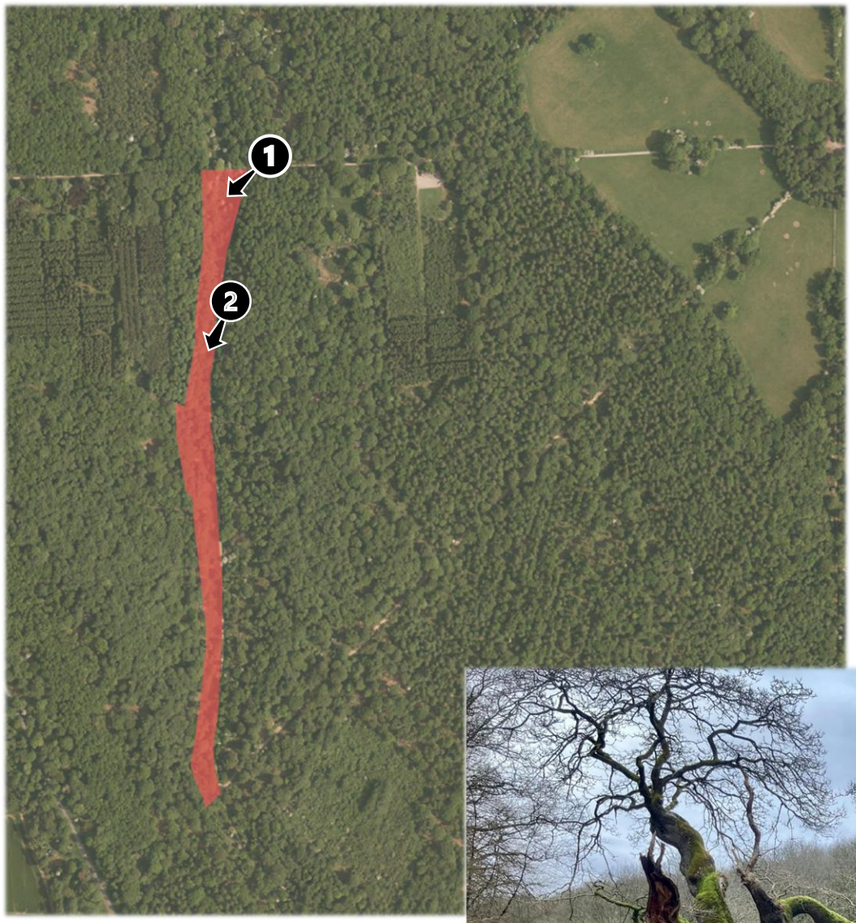


South of Great Lodge Drive in Savernake Forest, **6.1ha of Norway spruce and Corsican pine** will be felled in two former nurseries. Surrounded by ancient woodland and Savernake Forest SSSI, felling these conifers and allowing the area to naturally regenerate into a thicket of native broadleaf species will provide valuable habitat for woodland birds.

As one of the main rides in the forest, Great Lodge Drive is a popular route for the public to walk along. Despite the close proximity to this ride, the areas of clearfell are unlikely to have a significant visual impact on the views as seen from Great Lodge Drive, or on the internal landscape of the forest in general. This is because a dense and mature strip of broadleaved trees lines both sides of the ride, obscuring any view of the conifer stands behind. Photograph 1 shows the current view looking west along Great Lodge Drive, facing slightly south towards the clearfell area. The broadleaf strip blocks any views of the conifer area behind, and the tops of the conifers are not visible on the skyline.

Forestry England

Ride-side Clearfell, Savernake



South of Great Lodge Drive in Savernake Forest, sandwiched between the nursery clearfells, an area measuring **3.75ha containing mixed broadleaves** will be felled early in the Forest Plan period.

This strip already contains significant pockets of open space, and the density of trees varies considerably along the length of this coupe, as demonstrated by photos 1 and 2 (below). The aerial photograph (left) shows two potential viewpoints of the planned clearfell. Viewpoint 1 shows the top edge of the coupe, taken from the junction of Great Lodge Drive and the north-south ride which runs alongside this coupe. Viewpoint 2 shows the view of the clearfell from the adjacent ride.

Given this coupe already contains sizeable areas of open space, felling will be quite light-touch, with the aim of restoring more of an open wood pasture habitat structure, and retaining any veteran trees or those mature trees that are showing interesting physical features or forms (with the hope that these individuals will have the opportunity to develop into veterans in the future). Given the low intensity of felling required to open up this strip, and the fact that surrounding stands of mature trees will minimise lines of sight towards the clearfell, the visual impact on the forest landscape is expected to be minimal. Users of the adjacent ride bordering the coupe will notice a visual change, however, the change will be minor and this strip will hopefully quickly develop into an area of increased visual and ecological interest.





Forestry England

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

Term	Abbreviation	Description
Acute oak decline	AOD	Acute oak decline is a complex syndrome in which several damaging agents interact and cause a serious decline in tree condition, and can kill oak trees within four to six years of the onset of symptoms. The agents can be abiotic or biotic; the latter often include insects and fungi which are not capable of invading healthy trees but which can be very destructive to stressed oaks. Symptoms include characteristic weeping cankers/lesions in the bark.
Ancient woodland	AW	Areas of semi-natural native woodland that have had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600. They are particularly rich in biodiversity and this is often notable in their characteristic ground flora.
Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)		Ash dieback (also known as Chalara ash dieback) is a highly destructive fungus killing native ash trees across the UK. Young and coppiced trees will die quickly once infected, more mature ash may survive for a number of years once infected. Causes the timber to lose strength, become brittle and trees to start dropping limbs.
Aspect		The direction a slope faces. This can have a strong influence on the microclimate, ground vegetation, soils and hydrology.
Canopy		The mass of foliage and branches formed collectively by the crowns of trees. The shade it casts has a strong influence on the plants, trees and shrubs beneath it.
Carr woodland		A wet woodland area, usually dominated by willow, birch and alder species.
Chronic oak decline		Chronic oak decline is a complex disorder of oak trees which several damaging agents interact either simultaneously or sequentially to bring about a serious, long term decline in tree health and condition. It differs from acute oak decline (above), which causes a much faster, and usually fatal, decline in tree health.
Clearfelling	CF or C/F	Cutting down of an area of woodland (if it is within a larger area of woodland, it is typically a felling greater than 0.25 ha). A scatter or small clumps of trees may be left standing within the felled area.
Climax species		Tree species that will eventually dominate the forest canopy, maximising their exposure to sunlight and out-competing other species.
Coppicing		Coppicing is a silvicultural system based on regeneration by regrowth from cut stumps (coppice stools). The same stool is used through several cycles of cutting and regrowth. Coppice can also refer to an area of woodland in which the trees or shrubs are periodically cut back to ground level to stimulate growth and provide wood products. 'Coppice with standards' refers to coppice with a scatter of trees grown on a long rotation to produce larger-sized timber and to regenerate new seedlings to replace worn out stools.
Coupes		Areas of forest that have been or will be managed together.
Dothistroma needle blight	DNB	DNB is a fungal disease affecting mainly pine species. The fungus affects the needles of the infected tree, which are eventually shed. This can continue year on year and gradually weaken the tree, significantly reducing timber yields. It can also eventually lead to tree death.
Ecological site classification	ESC	ESC is an online tool developed by Forest Research to help a forester choose tree species that are suited to a specific site. It models how well each species is likely to grow using information on climate and soil properties. It can also be used to forecast how climate change may impact suitability.
Ecosystem		An ecosystem is an interconnected network formed of all the living things in a given area (plants, animals, and organisms) and their interactions with each other and their non-living environments (eg: weather, earth, sun, soil, and climate).
Ecosystem services		Ecosystem services are the goods and services that people depend on that arise from ecosystems. They are usually categorised into Provisioning (eg: timber, water, food production), Regulating (eg: regulation of climate and diseases), Cultural (eg: recreational opportunities, aesthetic value) and Supporting services that underpin these (eg: crop pollination).
Forest development types	FDT	A management tool developed by Forest Research which helps to set the long-term vision for a stand and increase its future resilience. It provides guidance on various different species mixtures, the required site conditions for each mixture, and advice on management in order to achieve the desired stand transformation.
Forest plan	FP	A Forest Plan is primarily a landscape-scale felling and restocking plan. It provides a holistic, long-term approach to planning and forest design, detailing felling operations over a 10 year period for the purposes of licencing felling and outlining proposals over the next 50 years. Forest Plans are reviewed every 5 years and redrawn and approved every 10 years.
Forest Stewardship Council®	FSC®	An internationally recognised body promoting sustainable forest management to the forest industry and consumers.
Forestry England		Forestry England is the executive agency of the Forestry Commission that is responsible for managing the nation's forests in England.

Forests and water guidelines		One of seven sets of guidelines that support the United Kingdom Forestry Standard (UKFS). The UKFS guidelines outline the context for forestry in the UK; set out the UK Government's approach to sustainable forest management; define standards and requirements; and provide a basis for regulation and monitoring, including national and international reporting.
Group felling		A method of managing irregular stands in which regeneration is achieved by felling trees in small groups. Group selection involves felling groups of trees (generally <0.25 ha per group).
Hectare	Ha	Unit of area equating to 2.47 acres.
High forest		Stands of mature trees forming a closed canopy.
Historic environment		The physical remains of every period of human development starting from 450,000 years ago and including earthworks, buried remains, structures, and buildings.
Ips typographus (larger eight-toothed European spruce bark beetle)		Although the beetle prefers stressed or weakened trees, under the right environmental conditions its numbers can increase enough to result in attacks on healthy trees. If left uncontrolled, the beetle could cause significant damage to the United Kingdom's spruce-based forestry and timber industries.
Irregular structure		When a stand contains trees of a variety of ages, meaning there is a diversity of tree sizes and forms and the canopy is not uniform.
Landscape character		England is renowned for its rich, diverse, and beautiful landscapes which have their own distinct local characters. These have been shaped over many thousands of years by natural influences, such as soil and landform, and by generations of human activity.
Lepidoptera		An order of insects, including moths and butterflies.
Long term retention		Individual, stable stands and clumps of trees retained for environmental benefit significantly beyond their normal economic age or size.
Low impact silvicultural systems	LISS	Silvicultural systems including group selection, shelterwood or under-planting, small coupe felling, coppice or coppice with standards, minimum intervention, and single tree selection systems. LISS are generally compatible with windfirm conifer woodlands and most broadleaved woodlands.
Minimum intervention		Management with no systematic felling or planting of trees. Operations normally accepted are fencing, control of non-native plant species and vertebrate pests, maintenance of paths and rides, and safety work.
National Character Area	NCA	Broad divisions of landscape form the basic units of cohesive countryside character, on which strategies for both ecological and landscape issues can be based. There are 159 Character Areas, each of which is distinctive with a unique 'sense of place'.
Native		Native tree species colonised Britain without human assistance at the end of the last ice age, before the English Channel cut Britain off from mainland Europe.
National Nature Reserve	NNR	NNRs were established to protect some of our most important habitats, species, and geology, and to provide 'outdoor laboratories' for research. Most NNRs offer opportunities to the public to experience wildlife first hand and learn more about nature conservation.
Naturalness		The measure to show the percentage of site-native tree species in a given area.
Natural regeneration	Nat regen	The growth of new trees from seed found in the soil or cast from adjacent trees. Regeneration only occurs where suitable seed sources and conditions are present.
Natural reserve		Natural Reserves are areas which are predominantly wooded, usually mature and intended to reach biological maturity. They are permanently identified and in locations which are of particularly high wildlife interest or potential. They are managed by minimum intervention unless alternative interventions have higher conservation or biodiversity value.
Naturalised		Naturalised trees have colonised Britain since the land divide with mainland Europe and are growing and reproducing successfully within their natural climatic range without human intervention.
Near native / honorary native		In a changing climate, many tree species native to continental Europe will spread north. These species are classified as 'honorary/near-native': a species previously considered to be non-native, but whose climate envelope will expand over England as a result of climate change.
Nest planting		Trees planted in small groups which are distributed across the restock site with remaining unplanted areas left to naturally regenerate. A useful way to introduce new species or provenances to a site.
Notifiable disease		Some tree pests and diseases are notifiable, which means that, in England, they must be reported to the Forestry Commission or Animal & Plant Health Agency. Notifiable tree pests and diseases are typically those with the potential to cause greatest damage to our trees, woods, and forests.
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.
Open grown trees		Trees that have been given space to develop a large crown and natural shape. In comparison, trees planted closely in a plantation managed for timber or biomass tend to have a more uniform shape.
Open space		Areas within a forest without trees, such as glades, stream sides, grass or heathland, water bodies, rocky areas, roads and rides.

Operational plans		Detailed site plans prepared in advance of all major forest operations, providing guidance to Forestry England staff and contractors. They identify site constraints, opportunities, and areas requiring special treatment or protection.
Phytophthora ramorum	*P. ramorum*	P.ramorum is a very destructive pathogen affecting over 150 plant species, particularly larch trees. Some broadleaved plants (such as sweet chestnut and rhododendron) can also host P.ramorum.
Phytophthora pluvialis	*P. pluvialis*	P.pluvialis was first recorded in the UK in 2021 and affects a range of species including Douglas fir and western hemlock.
Plant and Seed Supply	PSS	Forestry England's Plant and Seed Supply unit, who facilitate the supply of high-quality tree seedlings for planting on Forestry England sites.
Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site	PAWS	Ancient woodland areas where semi-natural woodland has been cleared and replaced by plantation, often including non-native species. PAWS sites can include both broadleaved and conifer woods and often retain remnant ancient woodland features, like species-rich ground flora or undisturbed soils. Also known as Ancient Replanted Woodland.
Pollarding		A form of pruning where the upper branches of a tree are removed, promoting a dense head of foliage and branches. Cutting is usually around 2.4 metres above ground – the height that wild animals or domesticated stock could reach. Traditionally, trees were pollarded for fodder or for wood. Fodder pollards are generally pruned every two to six years. Wood pollards would be pruned at longer intervals, usually of eight to 15 years, to produce upright poles for eg: fence rails and posts.
Production forecast		The projected volume of biomass that the forest will produce each year. Calculations are based on species, age, net area, and yield class.
Public Right of Way	PROW	Access routes open to the public through legal designation. These include footpaths, by-ways, and bridleways.
Respacing		Thinning of dense natural regeneration at a young age (generally when trees are 2-5m tall) to produce a more consistent crop, focus available resources on the remaining trees, and promote good development.
Restocking		The establishment of trees where felling has taken place. Restocking may be achieved through natural regeneration, but it is more usually associated with replanting.
Ride		Forestry term for unsurfaced roads, paths, and tracks within a woodland which provide access for management and other activities.
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. Coppiced broadleaves are an exception, as rotation length can vary from 5 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 where woodland has been cleared and replanted.
Schedule 1 bird		While all wild birds are protected in the UK, certain species receive a higher level of legal protection whilst breeding. For the species listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb them while they're nesting, building a nest, in or near a nest that contains their young, or to disturb their dependent young.
Scheduled monument	SM	A scheduled monument is a site that is legally protected because of its historical importance.
Scrub		Vegetation dominated by low woody plants such as shrubs and bushes, which can be a successional/transitionary habitat between open or grassy habitat and woodland. Examples of scrub species include blackthorn, hawthorn, alder, and gorse.
Secondary woodland		Woodland that has been established on land formerly used for another purpose (eg: as pasture, arable fields, quarries, etc.). Unlike ancient woodland it has not been continuously wooded in the past.
Seed trees		Trees with good shape and growth rates chosen to produce seed for restocking. Seed trees need to be of an age and size where they produce fertile seeds in large quantities.
Selective felling (regeneration felling)		Where individual trees of varying sizes are selected and removed from a stand. The whole stand is worked and the aim is to maintain full stocking of all tree sizes and ages, from seedlings to mature trees, in any one area.
Semi-natural woodland		Those woodlands which are comprised mainly of locally native trees and shrubs, and have some structural characteristics of natural woodland.
Shade tolerant species		Trees that have adapted to lower light levels and will regenerate and establish freely under the shade of the surrounding tree canopy, as opposed to light demanding species which require full sun/high light levels to establish and grow.
Shelterwood		The shelterwood system involves felling a proportion of the mature trees within an area whilst leaving some trees as a seed source and shelter for natural regeneration. The seed trees are subsequently removed, which may involve several felling operations. Note that the term 'seed tree system' is often used to describe 'shelterwoods' with densities of <50 retained mature trees per hectare. The spatial arrangement of the retained trees can be uniform, in groups, or in strips, giving rise to the name of different shelterwood systems.
Silviculture		A term coined during late 19th century from the Latin *silva* meaning 'wood' and the French *culture* 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 objectives.

Silvicultural systems		Silviculture is the process of tending, harvesting, and regenerating a forest. Different patterns of felling and regeneration form distinct 'silvicultural systems'. Different systems may be suitable for different management objectives (eg: conservation in an ancient woodland vs timber production in a conifer plantation).
Site of Special Scientific Interest	SSSI	A SSSI is a conservation designation. Usually, it describes an area that is of particular interest to science due to the rare species of fauna or flora it contains - or even important geological or physiographical features that may lie in its boundaries.
Small coupe felling		A small-scale clearfelling system. The system is imprecisely defined but coupes are typically up to 2 ha in extent, with the larger coupes elongated in shape so the edge effect is still high.
Special Area of Conservation	SAC	SACs are protected areas in the UK designated under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in England and Wales. These areas form an internationally important network of high-quality conservation sites that make a significant contribution to conserving Annex I and Annex II habitats and species.
Special Protection Area	SPA	SPAs are protected areas selected to protect one or more rare, threatened, or vulnerable bird species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive, or specific regularly occurring migratory species. They form an internationally important network of high-quality conservation sites that make a significant contribution to conserving important habitats and species.
Stand		A group or area of trees that are more or less homogeneous with regard to species composition, density, size, and sometimes habitat.
Strategic plan		Forestry England's stated priorities which are to be delivered across an extensive landscape, such as a District or nation-wide, which then informs the vision and objectives of a Forest Plan at a more local scale.
Strip felling		Strip felling involves removing some trees in rows, leaving strips of mature trees in place rather than clearfelling a crop in one operation. This creates space between remaining trees suitable for planting new trees (especially species that require sheltered growing conditions) and maintains woodland cover while new trees are established. The width of strips may vary and multiple strips are removed from one stand at a time.
Sub-compartments		Areas of forest that form a homogeneous crop in terms of age, species composition, and condition. They may be split across several locations and their boundaries may change as the forest develops after felling and restocking.
The nation's forests		The woodlands managed by Forestry England. These include both freehold and leasehold land. (Previously referred to as the Public Forest Estate.)
Thinning		The removal of a proportion of trees in a forest after canopy closure, usually to promote growth and greater value in the remaining trees.
Tree of special interest	TSI	Trees that are of interest biologically, aesthetically or culturally because of their age, trees that are in the ancient stage of their life, or trees that are old relative to others of the same species. Also referred to as Veteran or Ancient trees.
UK Forestry Standard	UKFS	Outlines the Government's criteria and standards for the sustainable management of forests in the UK.
UK Woodland Assurance Standard	UKWAS	A voluntary scheme for the independent assessment of sustainable forest management in the UK. The Scheme has been developed by a partnership of forestry and environmental organisations in response to growing consumer demand for timber products from sustainably managed forests.
Underplanting		When shade-tolerant tree species are planted beneath an existing mature woodland canopy, for the purpose of diversifying the stand structure and facilitating the growth of the next generation of trees which will eventually replace the current canopy trees.
Understorey woodland species		Minor tree species that live under top canopy trees or are 'pioneer' species that arrive in clearings before climax species become established. Once the overstorey is established, understorey species are more common on woodland edges and clearings where light levels are higher.
Understorey		A layer of tree or shrub vegetation beneath the forest canopy.
Veteran tree		A tree of particular interest due to its significant age, size, history, and because it has characteristics which make it aesthetically, ecologically or culturally valuable. Although such trees may not be old enough to be classed as ancient, they have some "ancient" features that are valuable to wildlife such as deadwood, decay, hollows or fungi, and may have acquired these features through physical damage or stress.
Windblow		When trees are uprooted as a result of wind.
Windfirm		When trees are not at a high risk of windblow because they are securely rooted and are able to withstand strong winds.
Wood pasture		Areas of historical, cultural and ecological interest, where grazing may be/have been used in combination with a proportion of open tree canopy cover
Yield class	YC	Yield class is a measure of the growth rate of a tree crop on a given site. It describes the maximum average volume increase that a particular crop can achieve on 1 ha of land each year. For example, a crop capable of a maximum annual growth of 14 m3 per hectare has a yield class of 14. Yield Class varies depending on factors including the species, how it is managed, and local site conditions.