

The Forest Plan proposals will go through two stages of consultation:

Stage 1: Stakeholder Consultation

Environment Agency
Natural England
English Heritage
Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB
Dorset AONB

Wiltshire County Council
Dorset County Council

West Dorset District Council

Butterfly Conservation
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
Dorset Wildlife Trust
RSPB
Woodland Trust
Bat Conservation Trust
Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

Parish Councils:

Barford St. Martin
Dinton Parish Council
Burcombe Without
Wilton
Bishopstone
Broad Chalke
Bowerchalke
Ebbesborne Wake
Ansty
Donhead St. Andrew
Ashmore
Stourpaine
Pimperne
Bryanstone
Durweston
Shillingstone
Winterborne Strickland
Winterborne Clenston
Winterborne Whitechurch
Milton Abbass
Hilton

Milton Abbey and School
Dorset Coppice Group
Bryanston School

Dorset Cycle Network
Dorset Roughriders

BSW (sawmill)

From: xxxxx
Sent: 17 February 2016 07:19
To: Stride, John
Subject: accessibility Blandford Milton Abbas forestry

Hi John

I have looked at the document online regarding the forestry areas that I live nearby. I am unclear what this means because it doesn't clearly say what you are doing with the woods. I am a dog walker horse rider also carriage driver from Winterborne Stickland so this will affect me as all the local forests are having work done. The trees over the last few years have been felled in all of these areas and paths cleared. Please could you explain what work will be happening. Does this mean more work will be happening and I will not be able to enjoy the bridleways for a long while?

I understand that work has to be done to manage the forests. How do I know where you are working within the woods?

Thank you

Regards

Xxxxxx

Dear xxxxx,

The Forest Plan details the strategic way in which the woodlands will be managed over the next 10 years to progress towards our longer term vision for the woodlands.

The work detailed in the Plan includes thinning of the woodlands to encourage regrowth of under-storey and new generations of trees as well as allowing the remaining trees to increase in size. We are also proposing some coppicing in some areas and some management of open space for the benefit of insects such as butterflies.

In terms of when and where we will be working specifically within this time frame, the Plan does not detail that.

We plan to 'work' our woodlands on a 5 year rotation. This means we would look to go into a particular woodland once every 5 years to thin out or fell any trees that are planned. Sometimes, because of how our contractors work, or because of weather or other unplanned changes, this 5 year rotation is disrupted though. When we do go in to work the woodlands, information signs, health and safety warning signs and Forestry Commission staff that you see on site will be able to let you know what is going on and how to avoid the work areas.

Some of our work, such as the coppicing, or keeping the ride and track network usable and in good conservation condition, requires more regularity. So you may see people in working at any time on a particular aspect of the woodland. We do plan our worksites to minimise disruption to the public and you will find our staff are able to help you to answer any questions you have but I must be clear that you should not approach any live worksites and follow the diversion and warning signs in place.

I hope that helps. Please let me know if you would like any further information.

Best wishes

John

John Stride
Planning & Environment Manager

In addition, responses were received from Dorset Wildlife Trust and a joint response from Dorset AONB and Cranborne Chase AONB. These can be found on the following pages (separate documents when reading electronically).

29 February 2016

John Stride
 Planning Manager – South Forest District
 (By email)



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Dear Mr Stride,

Re Cranborne Chase & North Dorset Woodlands Forest Plan

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on The Cranborne Chase and North Dorset Forest Plan. We were very interested to see the plan as it covers 12 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and has the potential to substantially increase the wildlife interest of these sites.

We welcome the objectives as set out in the plan particularly

- To maintain and increase the native composition of ancient semi-natural woodland
- To restore planted ancient woodland sites to native woodland
- To take opportunities to increase the nature conservation value of other existing habitats
- To diversify the age structure and species mix.

We do however have concerns over the planting/ restoring of planted ancient woodland sites to 'honorary' native woodlands as we understand this could include the planting of Beech, Hornbeam, Sweet Chestnut, Sycamore and Holm Oak which may have an impact on the historical seed bank and a detrimental effect on the ground flora. We would therefore favour restoring ancient woodlands to a native mix.

The proposal seeks to restore woodlands in accordance with the guidance document 'Managing Ancient and Native Woodlands in England' (FC, 2007). The principal method of woodland regeneration will be through natural regeneration, therefore the species mix currently on site would naturally be adopted as opposed to 'introducing' any honorary natives.

We are happy to see that the long-term vision includes the provision of a well-developed under-storey; areas of coppice; the incorporation of some permanent open space; and a network of widened, scalloped rides and tracks, all of which constitute valuable wildlife features.

It would however be useful to know if and how the permanent open space will be maintained and managed along with a rough idea of the extent of this habitat, with a distinction made between the open space awaiting re-stocking and permanent open space. It is difficult to assess the amount from the small scale maps and thus how this compares with the minimum 10% provision recommended in the UK Forestry Standard, also if any sizeable glades are included. We certainly have concerns over



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the future of some of the open space within the SNCI's – see below - where there is considerable grassland interest. It would also be desirable to see more open space and coppice incorporated into those woodlands close to Bryanston as this is an important foraging area for Greater Horseshoe Bat, which breeds here - a UK BAP and Section 41 species and one of Britain's rarest animals with only 14 populations remaining and the only one in Dorset. According to Natural England the feeding area within a 4km radius of a maternity roost is especially important for ensuring the long-term survival of the species and should include managed woodland glades of at least 10 to 15m across, grassy rides and small coppice coupes that maximise the woodland edge habitat.

The open space will be maintained using methods applicable at the time, such as mechanical cutting. Once open, we would work to maintain as open to ensure continuity of this habitat into the future.

The proposal identifies areas of coppice management which take advantage of current rotations and those that could be brought back into rotation. However, it is not proposed to convert high forest to coppice systems.

Your point about the extent of ride opening is noted.

Further there are areas of existing coppice in the SNCI's that it would be highly desirable to see brought back into a rotational coppice system if possible.

See above.

It would also be useful to know the envisaged composition of the under-storey.

Native shrub and tree species.

It is clear that invasive non-natives are to be monitored to prevent their establishment but shrubs including Holly can be detrimental to the ground flora and the lichen interest on older trees where it forms dense growth and although we welcome natural regeneration being accepted as the preferred method of regeneration, it is hoped that there will be some control of young growth of Sycamore and Beech, which can also become dense and shade out the ground flora

The proposal would see the development of native woodlands and woodlands with a diverse structure.

We would also like to see some mention of the provision of standing and fallen deadwood habitat, especially in areas of wildlife interest, together with the retention of, and management for, veteran trees, with measures to ensure there is continuity of these features through leaving some dead or damaged trees when thinning or felling and leaving some trees to grow to senescence in the vicinity of existing veterans.

The Plan references the UK Forestry Standard and Keepers in Time, both of which give guidance for and require due consideration of deadwood and veteran tree habitats within woodlands.

Comments on individual Sites of Nature Conservation Interest in Dorset affected by the Plan

NB Dorset Notable plant species (DNs) are important as indicators of the age (i.e. ancient woodland indicators), community type and conservation importance of a woodland habitat, and of agriculturally unimproved habitats of high wildlife value and are thus often in local or national decline.

1. Ashmore Wood.

Ashmore Wood forms part of ST91/012 Stubhampton Bottom SSSI, of interest for its areas of unimproved chalk grassland as well as the woodland. Although it is exciting to see areas of mixed woodland being returned to native woodland on this ancient woodland site with some substantial areas of coppice being included in the plan, it is important that any existing areas of open calcareous grassland remain open. There seems to be a discrepancy between records we hold of grassland glades along and off the south-western track (which tally with the 2009 aerial photograph) – see below - and the Forest Plan, which depicts some of these areas as woodland. We are particularly concerned with the long term vision for the glade to the north, which, according to the plan, is to be managed as coppice woodland.

Noted. The Plan now includes wording which ensures due regard will be taken for SSSI priorities during operational planning and activity.

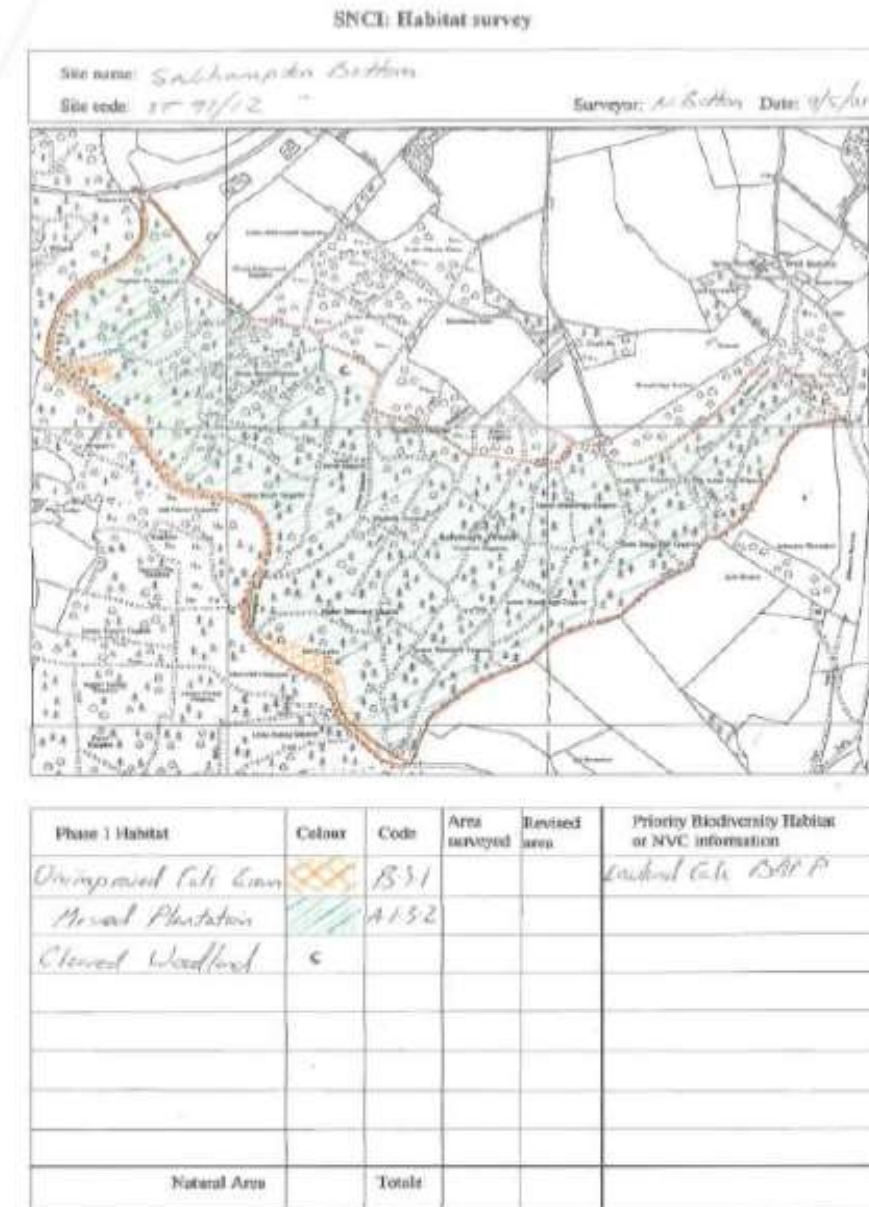
Although we would welcome the provision of valuable transitional wildlife habitat in the form of a scalloped, coppiced, woodland edge, we would ask that this is not created at the expense of the calcareous grassland, which according to our records supports 12 Dorset notable species including Pyramidal Orchid and Rock Rose (with Herb Paris on the woodland edge) and which holds historical records for a wide diversity of butterflies including White-letter Hairstreak, High-brown Fritillary, Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, Green Hairstreak, Brown Argus, Duke of Burgundy and Pearl-bordered Fritillary. If there has been planting or scrubbing up of this area since the last SSSI survey in 2001 then restoring it would be ideal and in line with your objective 'to increase the nature conservation value of other existing habitats' and the UK Forestry Standard 'to restore open habitats where their value could be reinstated and sustained'. If there is scope to expand this habitat through perhaps glades incorporated along the network of rides especially where these would be sunlit and wind sheltered, this would provide further valuable wildlife habitat.

Noted. The Plan now includes wording which ensures due regard will be taken for SSSI priorities during operational planning and activity.

Please note that there are 2001 records for good colonies of two Section 41/BAP priority species in this woodland, the Nationally Scarce moths;

- The Argent and Sable (*Rheumaptera hastata*), a moth of open or partially cleared or coppiced broadleaved woodland, its larval food plant being low regrowth (<40cm) of Downy and Silver Birch in full sunshine.
- The Drab Looper (*Minois murinata*), a moth of sunny but sheltered open woodland, its larval food plant being Wood Spurge.

Noted. The woodland is regarded as a priority site through our partnership with Butterfly Conservation.



Map produced by the Dorset Wildlife Trust ©Crown copyright and database right 2012. Ordnance survey LA100019790

2. Blandford Forest.

- *Ruins Plantation/Melmoths Hill – compartment 1 of ST70/065 Monmouth Hill/ Littledown Plantation SNCI (ST793019).*

A survey in 2008 recorded an open area of rich unimproved neutral to calcareous grassland in the northern section of this compartment with active Hazel coppice and a pond at its edges. 11 grassland notables including Dropwort, Betony, Devil's-bit Scabious and Hairy Violet were recorded here whilst Spurge Laurel and Greater Butterfly Orchid have been found in the coppice. It is very important in terms of protecting the wildlife interest of the site that this area be maintained as open grassland and worked Hazel coppice. The Habitat Restoration and Felling map shows this area as open space yet the Current Structure and Long Term Vision maps show it as native woodland. It is clearly open on the 2009 aerial photograph (though not so obvious on the 2014 aerial photograph). If this area has been replanted or has scrubbed up since the 2008 survey, then removing the trees and/or scrub in order to restore the grassland would be a conservation priority here and, as for Ashmore Wood, be in line with the objectives for other habitats as set out in both the Plan and the UK Forestry Standard.

Noted. The Plan now includes wording which ensures due regard will be taken for SSSI priorities during operational planning and activity.

- *Milton Park Wood/ Whatcombe Wood and the adjoining woodlands – ST 80/038 Milton Park Woods SSSI (ST822025)*

A survey here recorded a rich flora with an impressive 24 Dorset notable plants however it was noted that there are areas, particularly under the conifers and Beech, where a dense canopy and build-up of litter has resulted in a poor flora, the notables being scattered at best. With a return to native woodland and a less dense canopy, there is great potential for these notable plants to spread and for there to be a rich and diverse flora across the wood.

There appears to be very little open space provision in the Plan yet the 'Current Structure' map depicts a large area of open space in the south-western part of the wood. If some of this area could be maintained as permanent open space and linked to the rides, this could substantially enhance the wildlife value and provide an important refuge for notable grassland plants that occur here, 5 of which have been recorded.

Noted. The Plan now includes wording which ensures due regard will be taken for SSSI priorities during operational planning and activity.

- *Weston's Wood – ST80/034 Weston's Wood SSSI (ST828010).*

At the time of the last survey in June 2006 the surveyor commented that the site would benefit from thinning to encourage a more diverse ground flora and the spread of notable species that are present throughout the wood but sparsely distributed because of the dense canopy. It was also recommended that deadwood be left on site and that the old Hazel coppice be brought back into the coppice cycle.

The proposals support this. As mentioned before, we manage deadwood habitat in accordance with UKWAS.

- *Haydon Plantation, Blagdon Copse Pidgeon House and Coombe plantations - ST 80/023 Haydon/ Blagdon Plantation SSSI (ST801034).*

According to our records there is a sparse flora beneath the conifers, which becomes continuous in the deciduous areas and includes a thin scattering of Dorset Notables (eleven in total). A return to native woodland and a more open canopy should encourage the spread of these notable species and the development of a shrub layer. It is good to see the incorporation of some permanent open space but this only appears in the medium term structure, being depicted as mixed woodland in the long term vision.

Over time, transitional open space will be maintained as a result of the low-impact silvicultural systems we propose, which will also increase the structural diversity of the woodlands.

- *Thomas's Hill Plantation - ST70/067 Thomas's Hill Plantation SSSI (ST793028).*

Described in our records as having a straggly Hazel under-storey but a rich flora with 8 Dorset Notables. The long-term vision for a native wood with a well-developed understorey and the incorporation of some transitional and permanent open space should enhance the interest.

- *Strip of woodland between Blackfern/Morgan's Wood and the Hanging - ST80/036 Travellers Rest SSSI (ST848068).*

According to our records there is a good ground flora here with 7 Dorset notables including Herb Paris but a straggly Hazel understorey. The site will therefore benefit from the canopy being thinned and the woodland managed as coppice with standards, the long-term vision for the wood. Herb Paris tends to flourish in the open stages of a coppice cycle.

- *Field Grove - ST80/041 Field Grove SSSI (ST835069).*

Although there are 8 Dorset Notables in the ground flora these are patchily distributed therefore a return to native woodland and a more open canopy together with a wildlife corridor should encourage the spread of these species. Again it will be beneficial if the currently poor under-storey of occasional Holly and Hazel is to develop into a well-structured under-storey under the plan.

- *Bonsley Common - ST80/037 Bonsley Common SSSI (ST822084)*

The SSSI covers the southern third of this wood. According to our records it comprises a wooded bridle path with a rich ancient woodland ground flora that includes 9 Dorset notable plants adjacent to which are areas of broad-leaved and coniferous plantation with locally frequent Hazel and Holly and a ground flora that includes 10 Dorset notables and, in the conifer plantation, Heather and Tormentil - possibly indicating the potential for heathy glades to develop. It is therefore good to see some open space being retained adjacent to the bridle path, at least in the medium term - although it appears as though it is to be open woodland or scrub in the long term - along with some scalloped rides, a well-developed understorey and a move from conifer to mixed woodland.

- *Hillcombe Coppice - ST80/025 Hillcombe Coppice SSSI (ST835088)*

The SSCI covers the area of Hillcombe Coppice that is to be managed as coppice with standards in the long-term. Our records show that there are 5 Dorset notable higher plants but the wood is also important for its mosses, liverworts (6 Dorset Notables) and lichens (4 Dorset Notables and 2 Nationally Scarce species; *Strigula taylorii* on Ash and *Eopyrenula grandicula* on the Hazel). The recorder noted that the bryophytes are an important part of the flora in the flint dominated areas. When thinning, it would be worthwhile identifying those areas that would benefit from the retention of some cover and humidity for these bryophytes as opposed to those areas with lichen interest that would benefit from being opened out. Also care needs to be taken that trees with a rich lichen flora, particularly Ash, are not removed. Overall, managed coppice and a thinned canopy will provide valuable wildlife habitat.

Our operational planning process will take account of native features of interest and look to ensure activities take opportunities to enhance these at a site scale.

- *Norton Wood - ST80/033 Norton Wood SSCI (ST848088)*

Only part of Norton Wood is an SSCI, the two areas of semi-natural woodland together with part of the Beech plantation that separates them. At the time of the last survey in June 2001 the broad-leaved woodland was being actively coppiced and included 10 Dorset Notables the notables continuing under the Beech plantation. This included species often associated with coppice coupes and the woodland edge where there is more available light, such as Early Purple Orchid, Wood Anemone and Wood Spurge. It would be highly desirable therefore to see the semi-natural woodland here continue to be coppiced.

Coppice management has been proposed where rotational management has been maintained. This will still be dependent on resources due to the nature of the economics of the work involved but it is our aspiration.

- *Eastcombe Wood - ST80/039 Eastcombe Wood (ST833096)*

The SSCI only covers the area of Eastcombe Wood that is ancient woodland i.e. the northern half. According to our records this comprises largely Beech plantation with areas of self-sown Sycamore over a patchy ground flora with 7 Dorset Notable higher plants. The bryophyte flora includes three minute moss species on chalk pebbles including the nationally scarce *Tortella inflexa* whilst the old trees on the boundary bank support several interesting lichens including the Nationally Scarce *Strigula taylorii*. The long-term vision is for a return to predominantly native species. It is hoped the future species mix will include the native species as found on the boundary bank to ensure there is a continuity of good lichen habitat.

The central ride through this area supports grassland species including the Dorset notables; Ploughman's Spikenard, Rough Hawkbit and Mouse-ear Hawkweed. It is therefore important for the wildlife interest of the site that this ride be kept open and treated as a wildlife corridor, ideally with scalloped edges, and linked to that to the south.

I hope you find this information useful. Please contact us if you have any queries about the sites or would like further information.

Yours sincerely,



Amanda Marler
(SSCI Survey and Monitoring Officer)

FC responses are within the green boxes.

Following an initial response from the Dorset AONB and Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB (found as a separate document to this due to its size), it was agreed to insert the following phrase into the Landscape section of relevant documents.

'During operational planning, reference will be made to current AONB projects which may be supported by the operation.'