

Dartmoor Forest Plan

2016-2026

West England Forest District

Ben Robinson

FCE File Ref: OP10/82
(Old PE69, 70, 71, 71/1)



The mark of
responsible forestry

Forestry Commission
woodlands have
been certified in
accordance with the
rules of the Forest
Stewardship Council.



Declaration by FC as an Operator.

**All timber arising from the Forest Enterprise estate
represents a negligible risk under EUTR (No 995/210)**

Application for Forest Plan Approval

Forest District:	West England FD	
Woodland or property name	Fernworthy, Soussons, Bellever, Brimpts	
Nearest town, village or locality:	Chagford, Postbridge and Bellever	
OS Grid reference:	SX 656 771	(Bellever Car Park)
Local Authority District/Unitary Authority:	Fernworthy Bellever Brimpts Soussons	} West Devon District Teignbridge District

Plan Area:	1388 ha
Conifer Felling:	230 ha
Broadleaved Felling:	0 ha

1. I apply for Forest Plan approval for the property described above 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 the FC 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 *HGS*

Date *21st April 2016*

Signed 
 Area Director



Forestry Commission woodlands have been certified in accordance with the rules of the Forest Stewardship Council.



Date of approval... 31st October 2016

Date approval ends... 31st October 2026



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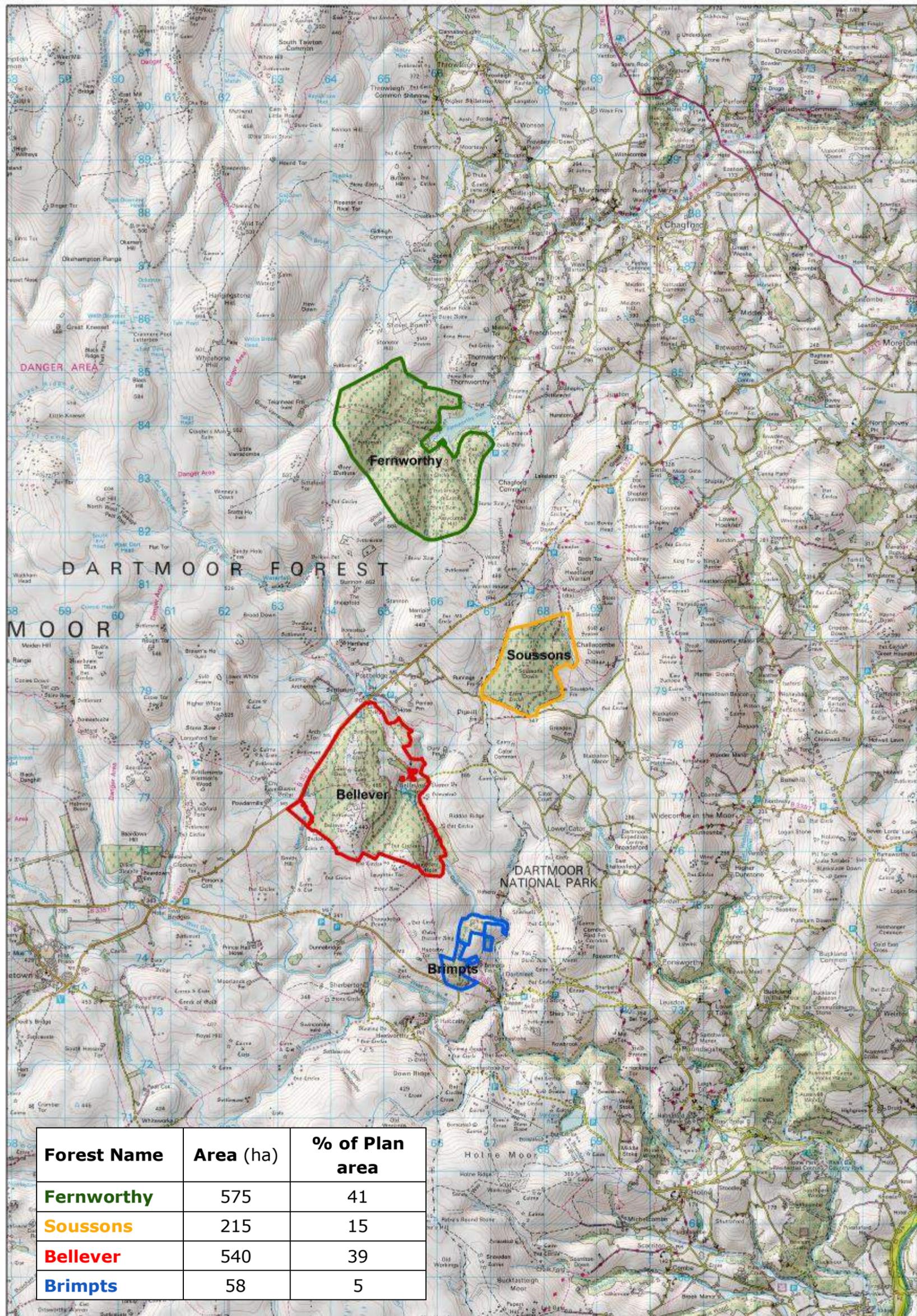
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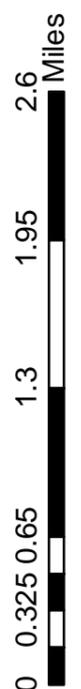
APPENDIX 5: Site of Special Scientific Interest

SSSI Plan	***
SM Plan	***

Location



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Ordnance Survey [100021242]



The Dartmoor Forest Plan area lies within the county of Devon and makes up around 1.5% of the **Dartmoor National Park**. The Plan area is made up of the four separate forest blocks of **Fernworthy**, **Bellever**, **Soussons** and **Brimpts** totalling 1388ha. The forests are close to the settlements of Chagford, Postbridge and Bellever.

The Plan area sits within a moorland landscape and provides both a visual feature and recreational attraction for the surrounding area. The majority of the land is at 300-400m above sea level (asl), but ranges between 250m and 500m asl. The climate is warm and fairly moist with an average annual rainfall of 1430–2030mm. The soils are developed over the Dartmoor granite intrusion series and are typically moist and moderately fertile. They are primarily acidic and of the peaty podzolic type with a tendency to form an ironpan and gley. Brimpts is slightly different in character with fairly fertile and free draining upland brown earths which are underlaid by a stony scree substrate.



Summary

About

The Dartmoor Forest Plan area is made up of 4 separate forest blocks totalling 1388 hectares in Devon. The forests lie within the Dartmoor National Park. As distinct individual forest blocks set within the distinctive moorland they have very high natural and landscape diversity and value.

The forests managed as part of the public forest estate stretch from Fernworthy in the north, 3 miles west of Chagford, through Soussons and Bellever close to the village of Bellever to Brimpts in the south which is 3 miles from.

The public forest here is a predominantly conifer having been planted after the First World War to address the national timber shortage by the Duchy of Cornwall. The area is known to produce exceptionally large and high quality Sitka spruce which makes up the vast majority of the trees here. Most of the areas are actively managed to provide timber for local and national businesses, and to improve the quality of the remaining tree crop.

The Plan area contains three Scheduled Monuments within Fernworthy, Bellever and Soussons. These are made up of numerous archaeological features from farmsteads, enclosures and settlements to mines, cairns and stone circles. The majority of these sites are free of tree cover.

The Plan area is a rich for ecology and includes a Site of Special Scientific Interest within Bellever forest at Laughter Quarry. The forests are important for a number of nationally important birds, including Red-backed shrike and nightjar.

The vast majority of the Plan area is Open Access, confirmed by the Countryside Rights of Way Act. The exception is Soussons which is de facto Open Access due to it being leased from another landowner. Bellever is the main focus of recreational activity and is a particularly nice place to picnic, walk, run or ride thanks to the river side setting, good path network and very large trees here.

Objectives

The core aim of the plan is to produce woodlands with increased conservation and landscape benefits whilst maintaining a viable timber output. The long term aims of management here are to continue the substantial timber product while increasing resilience to climate, pest and disease risks, and to deliver the forest for people and nature.

The social, economic and environmental objectives of management here are to:

- The continued production of sustainable and marketable woodland products.
- To conserve, maintain and enhance cultural and heritage assets, their setting and the historical environment.
- The provision and maintenance of recreation facilities.
- The diversification of woodland species and structure for greater ecological and economic resilience.
- Protect and enhance woodland and open habitats and their associated species.
- The delivery of well-designed proposals in keeping with the National Park character.

What we'll do

The current plan outlines management proposals including felling and restocking over several decades, with felling licence approval for operations up until 2026.

Crops in more exposed positions will continue to be managed primarily for conifer timber production under a clearfell and restock scheme. Crops in less exposed positions will be managed to continuous cover forestry prescriptions so as to create a diverse and resilient forest structure.

The Plan makes provision to remove trees required and improve the setting of heritage sites so as to enhance the rich historic environment of Dartmoor.

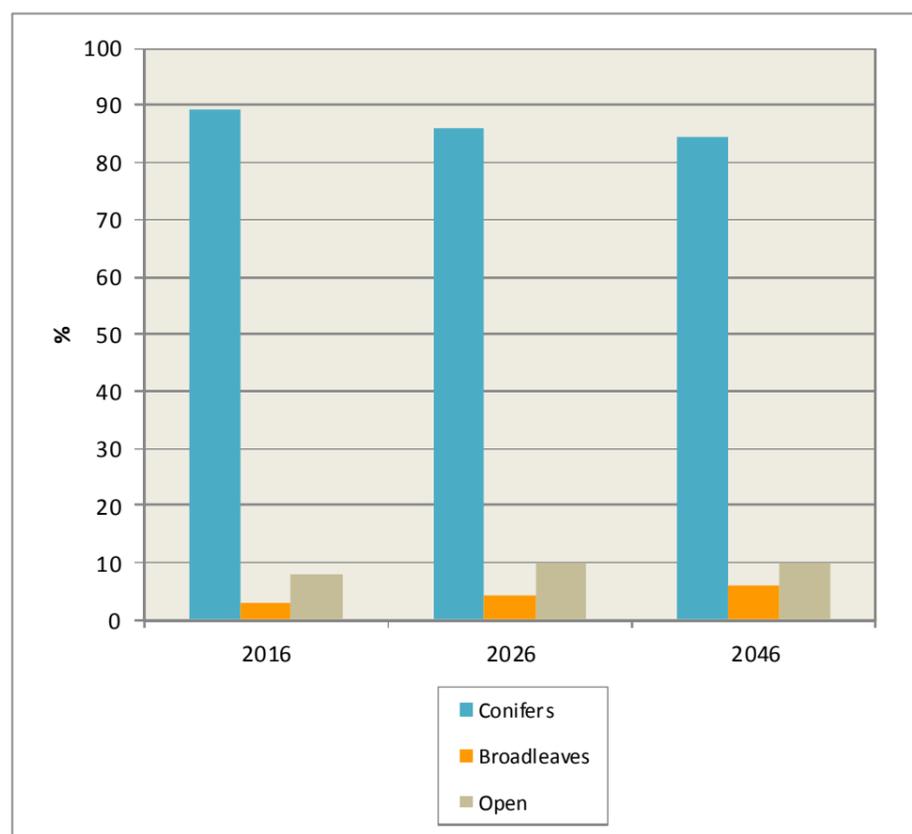
Implementation and maintenance of an environmental corridor system will continue to increase diversity of habitat and internal landscaping. Those on highly visible external edges will be restocked sympathetically to create a graded edge between high moor and high forest.

The planned areas of clearfelling, restocking and permanent open space creation during the ten years to 2026 are summarised in the chart below.

HECTARES	Conifers	Broadleaves	Open space
Clearfelling	230	0	-
Restocking/Regeneration	194	15	21

In addition to these defined operations, ongoing thinning and selective felling of both conifers and broadleaves will be carried out in the plan area at five to ten year intervals.

The proportions of conifer and broadleaved woodland and open space at the beginning of the plan period are shown in the bar chart. The increase in native broadleaves and open space expected within the plan period and over time is indicated in the middle and right hand columns of the chart.





History

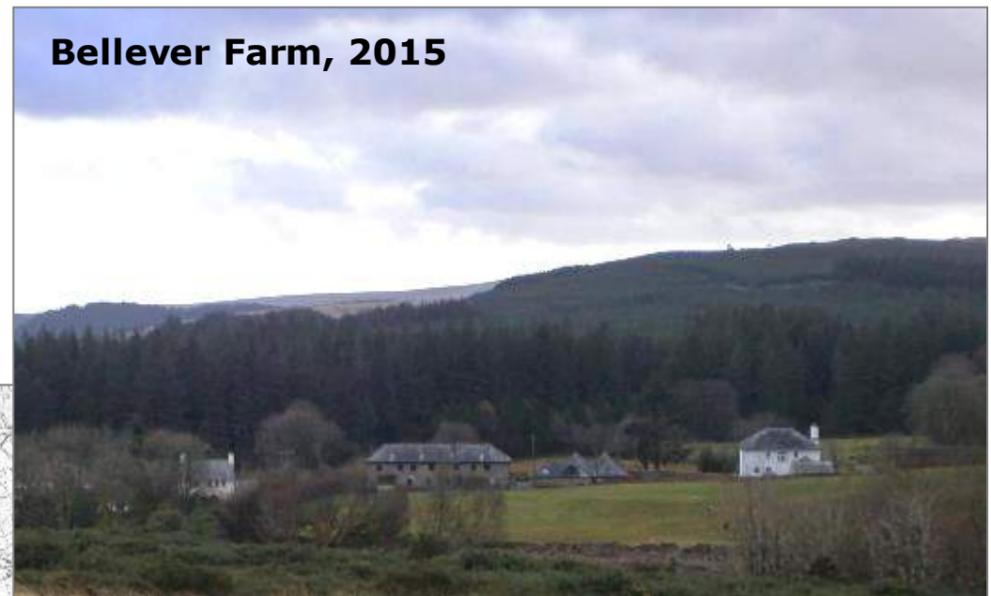
Trees have long been associated with Dartmoor with the 'Dartmoor Forest' area first recorded in 1204. The first serious tree-planting began in the nineteenth century with Scots pine, Norway spruce and European larch as well as oak, beech and sycamore planted predominantly to provide shelter from the inhospitable environment. The Duchy of Cornwall extended the plantations on the moor by establishing a conifer plantation at Brimpts in 1862.

The First World War acted as an impetus for the next major development in order to replenish the depleted timber reserves and alleviate the post-war unemployment in Plymouth. The Prince of Wales and his advisors conceived the scheme of planting 5000 acres (2000ha) of the moor. By 1930, 500 hectares had been established, mainly in Fernworthy but with smaller woods at Bear Down, Brimpts and Bellever.

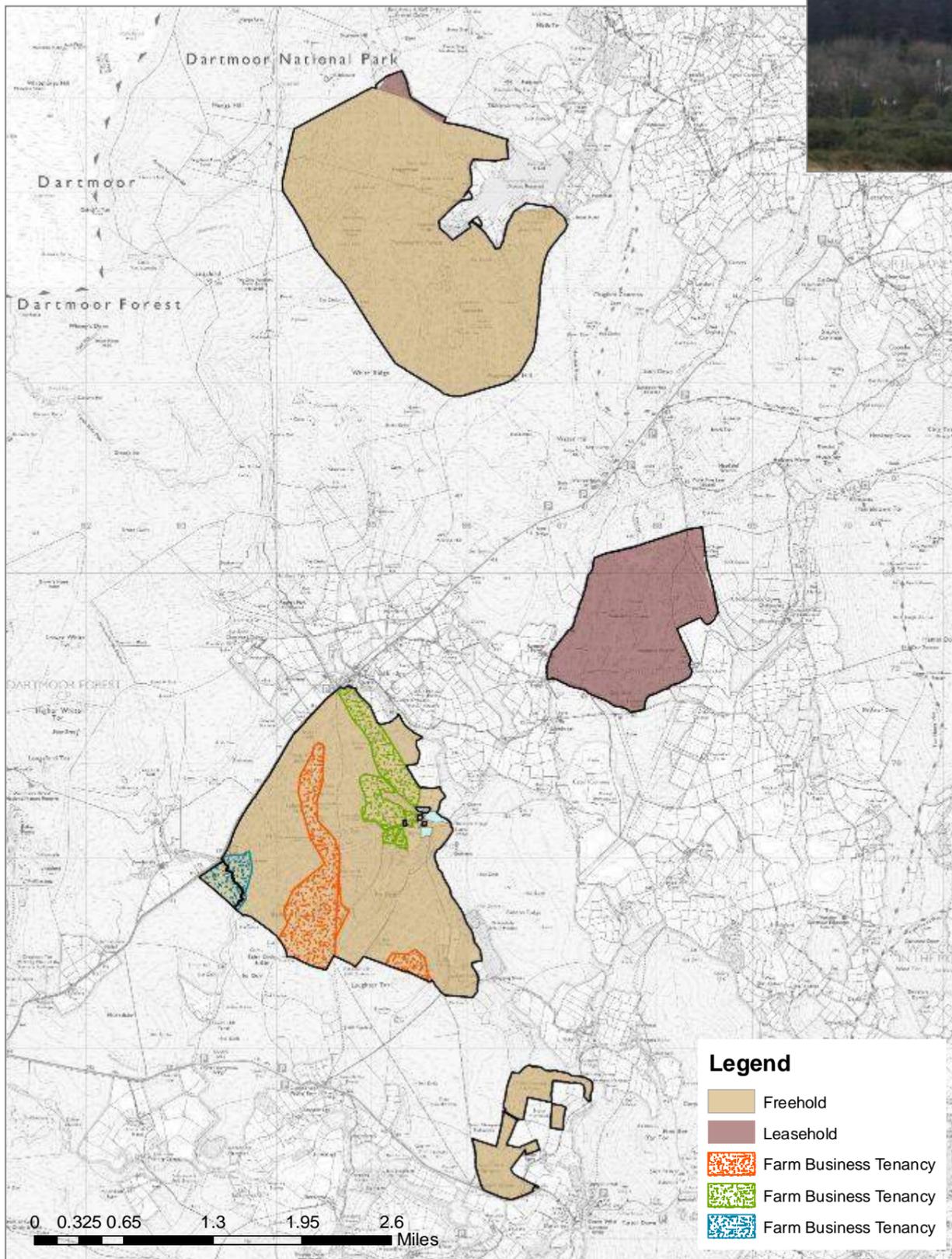
By 1935 the remainder of Bellever Tor and Lakehead Hill had been completed with western slopes planted between 1940-43. Soussons was planted between 1947 and 1949 and finally in 1950 with the heavier mechanical equipment for ploughing and improved planting techniques the exposed tops above 450m were planted with Sitka spruce. This virtually completed the planting of all the areas available to the Forestry Commission, a total of 1,300ha and 800ha short of the target set by the Prince of Wales (Rouse, 1964). The lease for Bear Down from the Duchy of Cornwall was disposed of in 2011.



Bellever Farm, 1964



Bellever Farm, 2015



Tenure & Management Agreements

Bellever, Brimpts and the majority of Fernworthy are held under freehold acquired from the Duchy of Cornwall in the 1930, an area totalling 1157 ha. A small area in the north of Fernworthy and the entirety of Soussons is leased from the Duchy of Cornwall.

Areas of open space at Bellever are managed under three separate farm business tenancies. The majority of these are managed through low intensity grazing and annual cutting with the aim of grassland and meadow improvement for the benefit of associated species.

Within the Plan area numerous other long-term repeat and single agreements and permits are provided for economic, recreation and ecological activities.

The Plan area plays host to a number of small schemes as part of the 'Moor than meets the eye' HLF Project. This is a landscape partnership project which is 'helping people to explore Dartmoor's past, conserve its wildlife, improve understanding of this rich landscape and develop and share the skills to look after it for generations to come'. The schemes in the Plan area are based around improving access to the forest at Bellever and enhancing the setting of some of the numerous heritage features



WEST ENGLAND FOREST DISTRICT

**PROTECTING AND EXPANDING ENGLANDS FORESTS
AND WOODLANDS AND INCREASING THEIR VALUE TO
SOCIETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT.**

Declaration by FC as an Operator.

**All timber arising from the Forest Enterprise estate
represents a negligible risk under EUTR (No 995/210)**



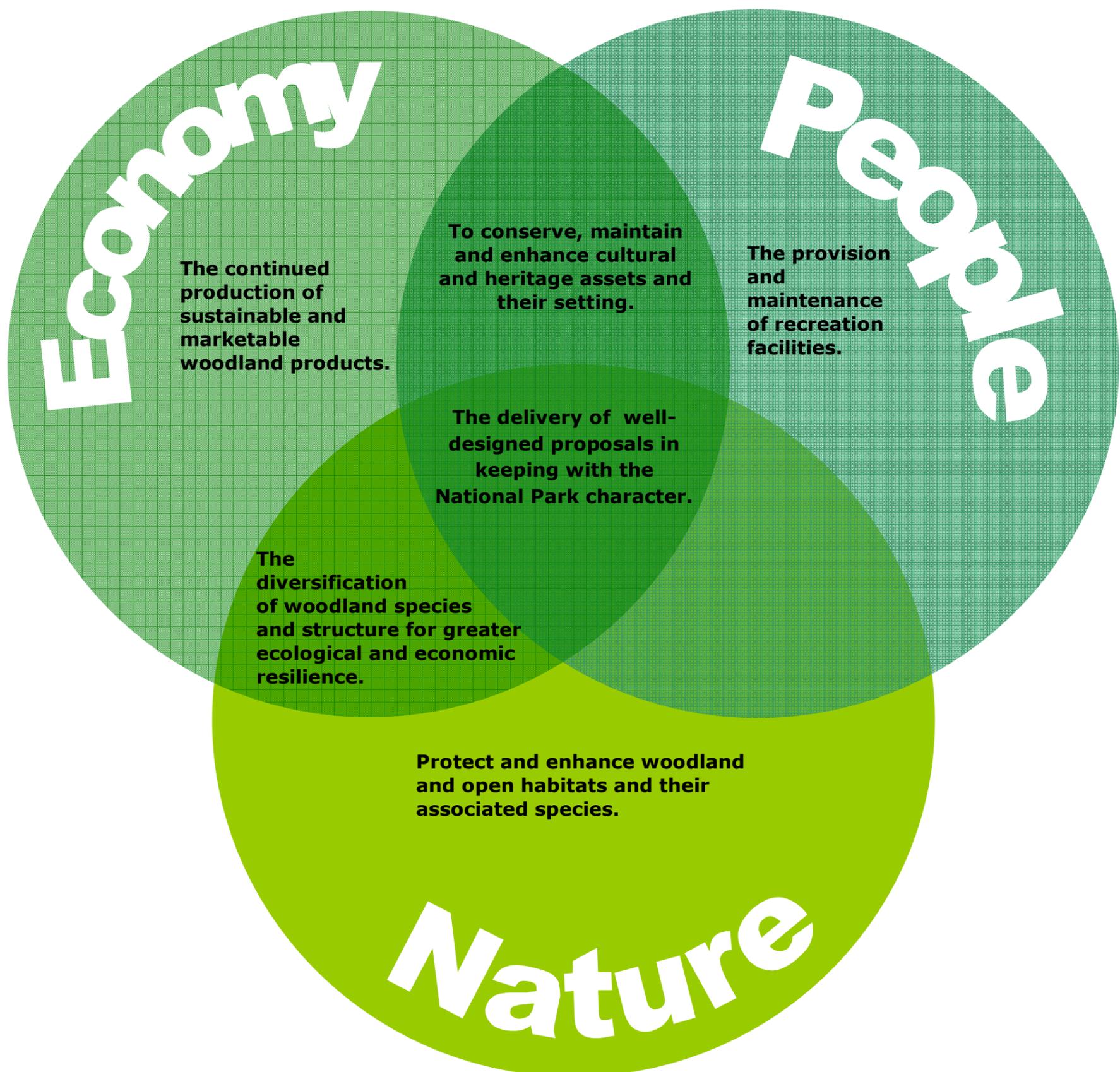
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The objectives of this Plan will, in part, deliver the *West England Forest District Strategic Plan (2013a)* and the national *Strategic Plan for the Public Forest Estate in England (2013b)*.

Sustainable management of the woodland will be to the standards required to maintain FSC and PEFC accreditation and therefore must deliver economic, environmental and social objectives.

The meeting and monitoring of these objectives is outlined on the following page.





Objective

Meeting Objective

Monitoring

The continued production of sustainable and marketable woodland products.

The majority of the Plan area will remain productive through thinning yield.
Some clearfell timber production will occur, majority from the conifers.

Comparison of average annual production forecast yield (20,000m³ (2021) and 33,000m³ (by 2026)) with actual production at the Forest Plan (FP) five and ten-year review.

To conserve, maintain and enhance cultural and heritage assets, their setting and the historical environment.

Create, link and maintain areas as open around significant and scheduled features.
Manage to relevant SM management plans during the planning of operations.
Liaise with National Park Authority and/or Historic England prior to the commencement of works.

Complete 6.97ha of heritage improvement felling by 2026
Operational site planning of harvesting and restocking operations will help monitor the effect of management.
Feature condition monitored through Review process and records updated.

The provision and maintenance of recreation facilities.

Management of existing facilities will be maintained by the Beat team.
Visitor numbers will be maintained.
Road and ride corridor and car park aesthetics enhanced and maintained.

Beat team will monitor usage and ensure the up keep of the signage.
Current figures (5000 paid visits to Bellever per year) compared at FP review.
Condition monitored through Review process and Moor than meets the eye project monitoring.

The diversification of woodland species and structure for greater ecological and economic resilience.

Use of multiple silvicultural approaches to deliver numerous simple and complex structures.
Use of natural regeneration and replanting of site appropriate diverse and novel range of species.

Condition of CCF, clearfell and restock sites all monitored through Review and OGB4 process and records updated.
CCF trial area monitoring through FCIN 14 to analyse the quality of regeneration and growing stock.

Protect and enhance woodland and open habitats and their associated species.

Felling together with a delayed restock program will continue to diversify stand and age structure.
Operational site planning should highlight opportunities where conservation benefits can be delivered.
Appropriate reinstatement works will be carried out once operations have been concluded.
Creation of >10% transitory and permanent open space
Protection and enhancement of water supplies and soil quality through sensitive implementation of operations and improved restocking practices.

Monitored via Review process, through local records and updated sightings.
Analysis and comparison of SCDB open space 10% through the Forest Plan review process.
Operational site planning of harvesting and restocking operations will help monitor the effect of management
Creation and/or maintenance of 67ha open space and 25ha diffuse/transient open space
Ongoing monitoring of soil and water quality pre and post harvesting with input from outside stakeholders.

The delivery of well-designed proposals in keeping with the National Park character.

Implementation of proposals will soften and better integrate the woodland with the surrounding landscape

Creation and/or maintenance of 25ha diffuse/transient open space
Fixed point photography analysis at Forest Plan review stage