

OUR SHARED FOREST

Savernake Forest Land Management Plan

Spring 2023



Forestry England



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OUR VISION



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.

INTRODUCTION



OUR PAST AND PRESENT

Savernake Forest is a national treasure of ancient trees and wood pasture. Its historic, cultural, and ecological significance is rivalled by few other wooded landscapes anywhere in the country.

Savernake is one of the most important remnants of wood pasture in Great Britain. Its high density of veteran trees dating from before 1750AD compares with only a handful of other sites across the country. The unique plant and invertebrate assemblages associated with these trees are equally interesting and important. The over-arching purpose of this plan is to recognise the historical, landscape, and biological diversity of Savernake and to enhance these values where possible.

Layers of historic influence and management define Savernake's character and unique qualities. The Forest has played a significant role in history, with records of its existence beginning in the Saxon period. By medieval times, the whole landscape was managed for hunting, and providing venison and revenues for the king. The Forest then passed into private ownership. It was heavily managed, emparked in the 16th century, and designed to complement the large estate and buildings; particularly Tottenham House, which was first constructed in the late 16th century. In 1939, the Forestry Commission leased Savernake Forest from the Savernake Estate on a 999-year agreement. Significant areas of the "the Old Forest" were planted with beech, oak, and conifers.

This lease still stands today, and Forestry England (an agency of the Forestry Commission) continues to manage the trees and forestry within Savernake. The sporting (shooting) rights are let to a third party by the Savernake Estate and there are several private access agreements for residential properties within the Forest. There are also sections within the lease agreement that relate to Forestry England's responsibility for management of the land and property.

Today, Savernake Forest is cherished by local residents and woodland experts alike. The Forest is a haven for quiet and informal recreation, with numerous tracks and paths through the Forest. The Forest's natural capital is exceptional and growing. However, the Forest's extraordinary scenic, designed, and natural beauty is often overlooked.

THE FUTURE

In 100 years, the trees and woodlands of Savernake Forest will be ancient, alive, and vibrant. 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 are highly valued.

The world, the climate, and society are changing. They always have. But the pace of change is speeding up, and the impacts on Savernake Forest over the next generation of trees and people will be profound.

This Our Shared Forest Land Management Plan sets out a direction to guide what the Forest will look like, feel like, and be like in 100 years. This plan is guided by a vision that is supported by six land management principles:

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

From this Land Management Plan, Forestry England will create more detailed, shorter term Forest Plans that will direct operational activity decade by decade.

Several key national principles and strategies have helped to set the context for this Our Shared Forest Land Management Plan:

- European Landscape Convention: guidelines for managing landscapes
- Making Space for Nature 2010 (The Lawton Report)
- A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment
- Forestry England's strategy 'Growing the future'
- North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan
- North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment.



YOUR VIEWS

To develop this Land Management Plan, we sought views from a wide cross section of individuals and organisations.

Consultation process:

Phase 1 (January 2021)

An online public survey explored people's interests in, understanding of, and vision for Savernake Forest.

Phase 2 (March 2021)

Survey responses were analysed. The vision and land management commitments were drafted in response to survey findings.

Phase 3 (October 2021)

Expert stakeholder organisations and groups took part in a workshop to provide detailed feedback on the draft vision and land management commitments.

Phase 4 (Spring 2022)

The amended vision and land management commitments were published for further public feedback via online survey.

Phase 5 (Spring 2023)

The final Land Management Plan was published.

TREES AND WOODLANDS



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Savernake Forest is a truly ancient forest.

When Savernake Forest's veteran and ancient trees were surveyed between 2014-2018, over 4,000 trees of significance were surveyed, scored, and mapped. This work showed that large numbers of the oak, beech, and sweet chestnut were associated with rides and plantation dating from the 18th century. The veteran trees provide habitat for a diverse range of plants and animals, including an outstanding assemblage of lichens and fungi, many of which are deadwood specialists. These trees also provide summer roosts for a number of bat species.

The traditional land use over much of Savernake would have been extensive grazing in wood pasture. Individual trees would have been pollarded, while areas of woodland and coppice would have been periodically enclosed to establish trees and provide timber, firewood, and shelter for deer. Other areas were emparked to provide habitat for deer. This long history of management has shaped Savernake's particular diversity.

The veteran tree survey found scattered older oak trees much more frequently to the west of the Grand Avenue. These had often been pollarded, indicating a long history of wood pasture. To the east of the Grand Avenue, pollards were much less frequent. In particular, Birch Copse had few old pollards but high numbers of hazel. This may indicate its longer history as an ungrazed area of ancient woodland rather than a wooded common.

The decline of open woodland, park, and clearings – associated with the rise of the mid-20th century plantations – has had an impact on the Forest's associated flora and fauna. The maturing plantations have reduced the amount of light and air circulation for the lichen communities. Increased shade from the closing canopy has lowered the average air temperature in the Forest; reducing periods of warm soil and air temperature for fungi and invertebrates. The decline of open woodland bird species has been well documented. For example, 41 Redstart territories were recorded in 1939; 8 territories in 1991; and the Redstart is believed to be locally extinct today.



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



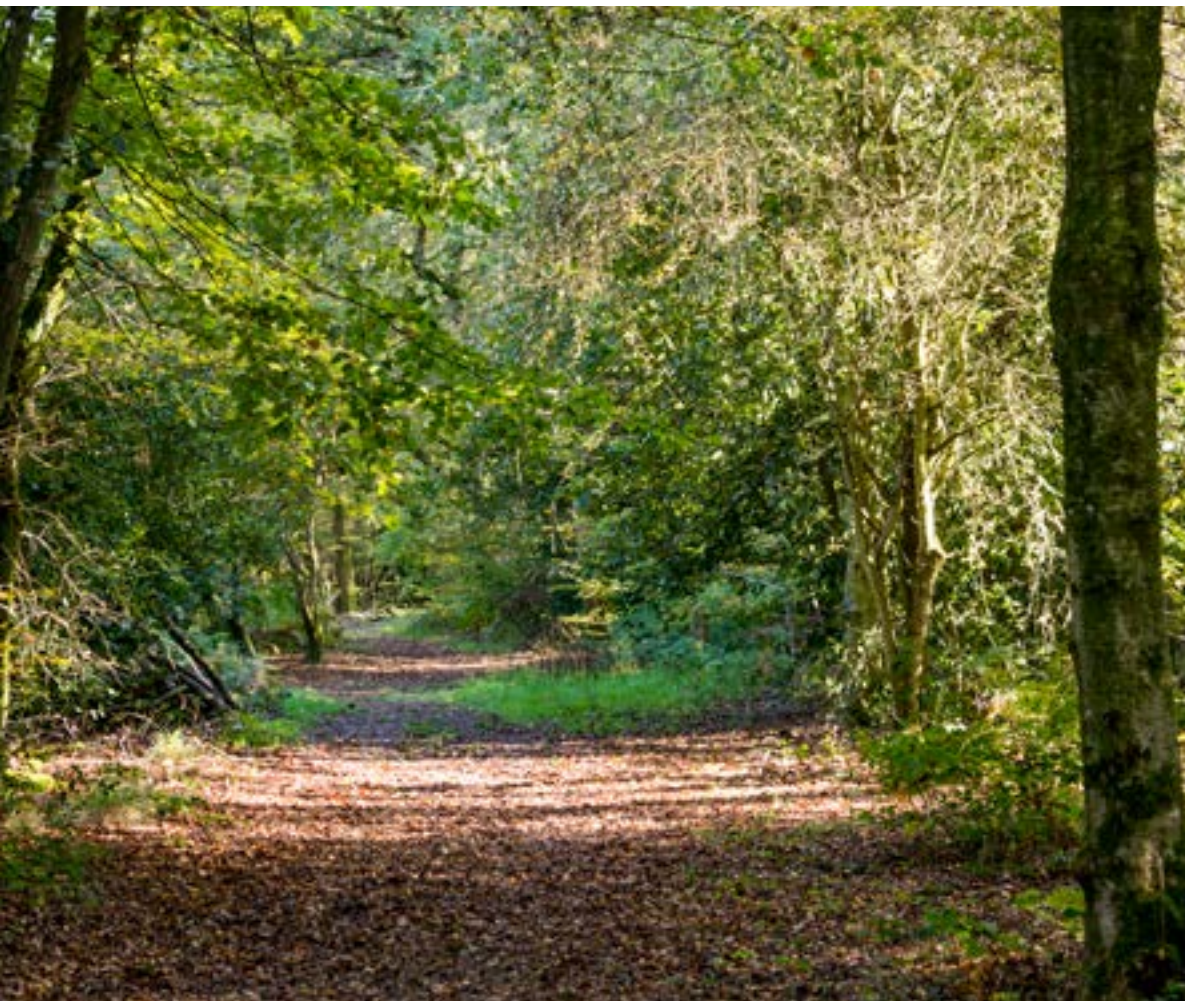
WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

We will be maintaining a more open forest structure with woodland glades.

Areas of Savernake Forest will be thinned from high density, closed canopy plantation to more open woodland. We will create structural diversity and space for future, open crowned veteran trees.

Open woodland areas and associated grassland and heathland clearings will be maintained either by mowing or grazing livestock.

The trees, soils, and woodland ecosystem will be valued as a major carbon store, which can be protected and improved in balance with the Forest's other special qualities. Carbon stores above and below ground will be protected and enhanced through care of the soils, root protection areas, dead and decaying wood, and standing living trees.





Cathedral Oak

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Our commitments:

1 Protect our ancient trees and identify and support future veteran trees.

2 Increase the range, structure, and genetic diversity of our trees and forest, to maximise resilience to pests, disease, and climate change.

3 Make site-by-site decisions to develop and care for our woodlands.

4 Reduce the impact of pests and diseases on our existing and new trees.

5 Tell the story of sustainable forest management.

1 Protect our ancient trees and identify and support future veteran trees.

We will continue to monitor and halo thin around tree crowns and protect roots by placing exclusion zones for machinery. We will explore and apply new learning around veteran tree management. We will continue to boost the number of ancient trees with a programme to identify, nurture, and 'veteranise' the next generation of trees. We will continue to restore woodland pasture habitats by reducing the density of trees, so that they are more widely spaced.

2 Increase the range, structure, and genetic diversity of our trees and forest, to maximise resilience to pests, disease, and climate change.

While we recognise and support the importance of local 'native' species, the climate pressures on Savernake Forest mean that relying on native species and the current genetic resource alone will be a high-risk strategy. We plan to increase the Forest's native character and structural diversity over time, but we will also continue to introduce a greater variety of tree species and genetic diversity through evidence-based planting. Our blended approach will harness natural regeneration of site-suitable genotypes, supplemented by carefully planned planting of climate resilient species of suitable origin. We will establish a continuously covered forest by moving away from clearfelling blocks of trees towards lower impact silvicultural systems. The success of this approach will rely on deer and rabbit control, and fencing. We will consider how we protect and enhance minor tree species and understory species, including scrub, in the open habitats and wood pasture areas to ensure they contribute to a fully functioning ecosystem.



3 Make site-by-site decision to develop and care for our woodlands.

Savernake has the potential to support a diverse range of woodland habitats. We will create a richer, healthier forest for future generations by diversifying stand structure, understanding that a forest is not just about the trees, and taking a site-by-site and tree-by-tree approach. This flexible management considers the role and value of individual trees, habitat, and historic relevance. This includes enriching areas suitable for wilding, areas designed to support saproxylic (deadwood) ecosystems, areas for grazing, coppice woodlands, wetlands, and areas more meticulously managed to provide the space for certain specimens to flourish.

4 Reduce the impact of pests and diseases on our existing and new trees.

We must take steps to reduce the impact of growing threats to our internationally important ancient and veteran tree population.

We will improve our active management to address the effect of pathogens, pests, and diseases on standing trees and regeneration success. This will include better controls on grey squirrel and insect pests. We will ensure that the way we plant helps avoid or slow the spread of threats. We will work with partners and neighbours to deal with pests and diseases at a landscape scale, through effective mammal monitoring and management.

5 Tell the story of sustainable forest management.

We commit to being open and improving our communication around forestry at Savernake. We will improve understanding of the role of sustainable forest management in maintaining a rich and healthy environment. We will better advise woodland users, neighbours, and other stakeholders when we plan and implement forestry works. We will explain the purpose of forestry operations and their role in delivering our commitments. We will be ready to adapt and modify plans in response to new site knowledge.

WILDLIFE AND WILD SPACES



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The landscape and diverse blend of habitats of Savernake Forest are the result of its long history of continuous management.

The continuity of this management was disrupted in the mid-late 20th century, and the effects of this are still felt today.

The reintroduction of grazing regimes and sympathetic management of the veteran trees began many years ago. However, the pace of forestry working with nature is necessarily slow. The process of restoring favourable conditions will continue for decades to come.

Savernake's remnant ancient wood pasture and mature broadleaved plantations are nationally important for biodiversity. The mosaic of habitats supports an outstanding assemblage of wildlife, including species with nationally restricted distributions.

The Forest's exceptional assembly of ancient and veteran trees, plant rich grasslands, and standing and fallen deadwood support numerous specialist species. These include over 100 species of lichen and over 1,000¹ species of fungi. The high density of deadwood is particularly important for the numerous recorded invertebrate species, many with nationally restricted distributions.

The variety of habitats, flora, and invertebrates within Savernake Forest in turn supports diverse bird, amphibian, and mammal species.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

The habitats within Savernake Forest will be sustained through management guided by natural processes to sustain a productive and robust landscape.

The positive management practices that shaped Savernake Forest will have been re-established, promoting a dynamic and cyclical mixture of habitats that provide niches for a broad range of specialist species. This will include continuity in ancient and veteran trees. We will carefully manage successor trees to become the future keystones of Savernake Forest as our current ancient trees gracefully decline.

Our understanding of the species present within Savernake Forest will be highly detailed, guided by expert and dedicated survey work. This will underpin our management practices, ensuring that rare and declining species will thrive.

¹ Knowles, C., October 2021, A review of the fungi of Savernake Forest: A study for Buglife – Back from the Brink. 9 Pilrig Heights, Edinburgh, EH7 4PP

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Our commitments:

1 Identify habitats of current and potential conservation importance to ensure they are made bigger, better, and more joined up.

2 Improve monitoring and reporting of resident and visiting species.

3 Utilise open spaces and wood pasture habitats for nature conservation.

4 Continue to engage experts on species sensitive felling.

1 Identify habitats of current and potential conservation importance to ensure they are made bigger, better, and more joined up.

Contrary to popular belief, improving opportunities for wildlife and wild spaces is not best done by leaving nature to take its course. Savernake's current rich biodiversity is the result of historic layers of active management that shaped the Forest as it is today. With considered management, we may significantly enhance its ecological significance.

Savernake's current and historic bird assemblage is noteworthy, with species such as Spotted Flycatcher, Wood Warbler, and Nightingale, the diversity and abundance has been in decline for some years but this trend can be reversed.

We are increasing our focus on supporting veteran trees, wood pasture restoration, and standing deadwood. We will continue to 'veteranise' younger trees to encourage more cavity-nesting species, like the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and the Barbastelle bat. We are re-establishing the rich forest fauna of deadwood and wetland insects by reintroducing more saproxylic (decaying wood) ecosystems and maintaining existing ponds. These habitats are an essential lifeline to numerous species of particular importance, including the rarest cranefly (*Ctenophora flaveolata*); rare and uncommon lichen flora; at least 25 butterfly types, including the purple emperor; bats; and an exceptionally diverse collection of fungi. We will continue to re-establish the wood pasture, hawthorn scrub, and grassland ecosystems that play such an important part in retaining and reintroducing many other important species.

2 Improve monitoring and reporting of resident and visiting species.

We already know that Savernake has become a stronghold for several rare and uncommon species. We will enrich our knowledge, and the data we collect, by creating opportunities for more sharing of species recording. Mapping the ecological make-up of the Forest requires communication between all interested parties. We are keen to understand what monitoring is happening, what data is collected, what it tells us, and how we can supplement this with further monitoring and targeted research. We aspire to create a network and study group to formalise links with organisations and individuals who survey Savernake. Through this network, we can share data that can help determine how we manage the Forest to benefit wildlife and wild spaces.

3 Utilise open spaces and wood pasture habitats for nature conservation.

Historically, Savernake had long encouraged grazing amongst the open spaces and widely spaced trees. We are proud to have reintroduced wood pasture (silvopasture) systems within the Forest. We plan to gradually reduce the density of trees within existing grazing units, and will explore extending the grazed pasture and open forest to help restore the ecosystem and landscape. The wood pasture system has benefits for biodiversity under dense tree cover for species such as flora, fungi, and lichens, and in more open areas for species such as invertebrates. Wood pasture also has potential to slow the spread of diseases between trees and encourage wildflowers, bees, insects, and birds back to the area. Fencing is currently the only practical solution to restore how the Forest was historically managed, but we intend to encourage unfenced solutions for Savernake as they become increasingly viable.

4 Continue to engage experts on species-sensitive felling.

We will always take a considerate approach to felling. We never willfully disrupt nesting animals, such as the Goshawk or dormice. Each stand of trees is reviewed by our ecologists before any activity takes place. If we are advised that an important species will be unnecessarily disrupted, we will delay felling in that area until a more appropriate time. We can only continue to work the Forest sensitively with the support and co-operation of experts. We will integrate site-specific species information from third parties into our ongoing management decisions. We will learn lessons to better manage forestry operations when working in proximity to ancient and veteran trees.



GEOLOGY AND SOILS



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The distinctive landscape of Savernake Forest is inextricably linked to the rocks that lie beneath the surface and the processes that formed them.

Savernake sits on a plateau in the North Wessex Downs. The landform is gently undulating and falls away to the north towards the town of Marlborough. Most of the plateau is chalk geology overlain with clay and flints, which has formed the mildly undulant landscape. 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.

Soil formation can be incredibly complex. It is directly linked to the underlying geology because soil is formed from rock, as well as organic matter. The underlying geology affects the chemical and physical nature of the developing soil and the habitats and vegetation types it supports. In turn, the nature of the vegetation, cycles of vegetation decay, and activity of earthworms and fungi enrich and improve soil fertility and structure.

As trees grow, they take carbon from the atmosphere and fix it into their structures. Over very long timescales, much of the forest carbon store accumulates in the soil. Centuries of leaf litter mix as organic matter into the mineral earth. In this way, Savernake's soil is a significantly larger carbon store than the trees growing within it. We must progress carefully with the process of restoring wood pasture to avoid disturbing soils rich in organic matter, which would risk releasing stored carbon into the atmosphere.

The soils host a multitude of significant fungi and flora species associated with the neutral soil conditions. There are roughly 15,000 types of wild fungi in the UK. Savernake has an exceptional diversity of examples, with over 1,000 recorded species. Many of these are present because of the historic management and landscape which defines the Forest. As machines get bigger and forestry operation working windows become more constrained, the potential risk to soil and the life it supports increases.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

As a result of large accumulations of deadwood, soils will be holding more organic matter so that the forest ecosystem is functioning more fully.

This will create conditions for flora and fungi species, as well as microscopic mycorrhizal organisms, to partner with the root systems of trees and livestock dung and create more fungal networks below the ground.

We will better understand the complex structures and interconnectivity of the mycorrhizal layer and fungi interactions in the Forest, so that we make better decisions.

We will be working with and learning from experts how we can nurture the soils and their properties to support a thriving forest in the future.

We will have reduced soil damage from compaction, erosion, or pollution to an absolute minimum through good site management and more use of permanent extraction and access routes.





WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Our commitments:

1 Protect the forest floor at sensitive sites from the impact of management.

2 Move away from felling blocks of trees to reduce the impact on soil qualities.

3 Develop what we know about our fungi species and how that should affect our management.

1 Protect the forest floor at sensitive sites from the impact of management.

We will build our understanding of soil structure, moisture regimes, and nutrient recycling, and develop a more sensitive approach to forestry operations and public recreation and access. We are aware of the potential damage that can be caused by soil compaction and cutting through the matrix of the mycelial soil horizon. Where there are dangers associated with handling dead or brittle diseased trees, there will still be a need for heavy machinery, but use of machinery can be managed. We can limit damage by scheduling work for drier periods, identifying and protecting specific extraction routes, and exploring alternatives to heavy machinery in wetter periods. We will minimise, and eliminate where possible, the use of pesticides in managing vegetation.

2 Move away from felling blocks of trees to reduce the impact on soil qualities.

We will continue to evolve our approach away from the plantation system of clearfell/ restock towards continuous cover systems. Retaining woodland cover will have multiple benefits for landscape, conservation, climate change, historic environment, soils, fungi, and lichen by reducing disturbance and maintaining forest microclimates. It will also reduce the negative impact of large-scale clearances on ecosystem functioning and soil processes, such as soil moisture regimes and micro-organisms, and the potential need for pesticides. Our management will create a forest that is diverse in species and structure, and which will better intercept water.

3 Develop what we know about our fungi species and how that should affect our management.

The success of Savernake's fungi is due to the continuity of the beech canopy cover, the presence of unimproved grassland areas, and the abundance of decaying wood. The fungi's symbiosis with these ecosystems shows that we must consider how we handle certain sites with sensitive operations and monitoring. The reintroduction of livestock grazing has helped return one of the missing ecosystem functions to benefit invertebrate and fungi assemblage and abundance. We will work with experts to better monitor and understand the role Savernake plays for fungi.



WATER



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Savernake is a 'dry forest', meaning there are no perennial watercourses within the bounds of the Forest.

However, there are a number of scattered historic ponds with associated wetland and wet woodland habitats. In the past, these would have been important sources of water for grazing animals, such as cattle and horses. Over recent decades, many have become clogged and dried out during later phases of woodland development.

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 riparian habitats with great wildlife value. These sites are now positively contributing to the overall ecological quality of the Forest.

The removal of trees from hollows and valley bottoms over recent decades has allowed wetland and wetter grassland habitats to re-establish in these areas, and benefitted numerous invertebrate and bat species.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

Savernake will hold more water in the drier and warmer climate of the future.

More restored and new ponds will form a network of steppingstone wet habitats, some connected by old hollows, which will be wetter and less treed. These areas will be bathed in sunlight during parts of the day and dappled shade at others. The ponds will no longer be disturbed by dogs and will support a multitude of aquatic and water-loving species which would otherwise be absent from the forest. The areas around the ponds will be havens for biodiversity.

We will know more about the health and condition of the wet habitats in Savernake to inform our management decisions and priorities. We will better understand what inhabits these areas and in what abundance by using eDNA and other assessment tools.

Natural processes will have taken charge and will define the watery habitats and functions in the Forest. Water and its associated habitats will be allowed to develop as and where it finds its way, without significant intervention or management, so that its influence can be felt organically.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Our commitments:

1 Restore historic ponds.

2 Monitor the health and progress of wet woodland habitats.

3 Restore the unwooded hollows and bottoms which cross the Forest.

1 Restore historic ponds.

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. We have already done a significant amount of work to re-establish some old ponds by removing trees and vegetation to allow light to reach them. We will continue this process, which has considerably benefited the variety and number of species in these areas. To extend these benefits, we will look to create new ponds in the right places where opportunities arise.

2 Monitor the health and progress of wet woodland habitats.

We have worked with graziers to ensure the grazing woodland cattle are not treated with chemicals that could affect our riparian habitats. We must explore new ways to secure these vital wetland ecosystems to stop the loss of active, visiting, and potential new species to Savernake. We will encourage wet areas to remain wet in the drier months to enhance amphibian populations. We will embrace emerging technology, such as eDNA, to help inform our managed improvement of wetland habitats. We will use this information to monitor and identify trends in habitat and water quality so that we can tailor our management to how habitat develops.

3 Restore the unwooded hollows and bottoms which cross the Forest.

Building on work over recent decades, we will continue to remove dense tree cover from the lower lying hollows and bottoms which run from west to east across the Forest. We will encourage natural process-led restoration of these habitats by felling trees and defining areas where we will encourage regeneration. These areas will become a mosaic of grassland and reeds, regenerating scrub, and dappled shade created by mature trees. These bottoms will act as highways for wet woodland habitat-loving species and create a network with the historic ponds and other suitable habitats.



CULTURAL AND BUILT HERITAGE



FOREST.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Savernake Forest is one of the oldest forests in England, first referenced in a 934AD charter. Starting life as a royal hunting forest, Savernake today offers a glimpse into English history from the Bronze Age to the Second World War.

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.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

We will honour Savernake's past and how it has moulded the Forest into the nationally significant site that we see today.

Veteran trees, unique habitats, flora and fauna, landscapes, and varying land use practices have all been created or influenced by past human activities. We will maintain all known significant sites and design landscapes found within the Forest.

We will undertake research and practical work to better understand the known and unknown sites and histories of Savernake. We will use this knowledge to inform future management decisions and tell the Forest's stories to engage and educate existing and new audiences.

We will support and encourage historic grazing of woodland pasture that is sympathetic and complementary to the site's history, while preserving Savernake's status as a living working forest.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Our commitments:

- 1** Maintain historic monuments.
- 2** Redefine and maintain significant landscape design.
- 3** Unearth features of Savernake Forest's past.
- 4** Support and encourage the historic grazing of woodland pasture.
- 5** Preserve Savernake's status as a living working forest.

1 Maintain historic monuments.

Savernake Forest is a Grade II* registered park and garden and has a statutory designation, as well as numerous scheduled monuments dating from as far back as the Neolithic-Bronze Age period. These monuments and features have been surveyed and we will preserve them by keeping them free of scrub and tree cover. We will ensure that any developments of the Forest are in keeping with or enhance its cultural heritage and historic environment designations. There are also remnants of an important Roman Road and kilns, with the ware being locally specific to Savernake and Wiltshire. We will learn more about these sites and other features of cultural and historical significance so that we can tell others about them, better maintain their condition, and enhance their setting within the rich cultural landscape. We will work with local experts to undertake surveys and condition assessments, to ensure that the features and significance of these monuments are properly recorded for future reference.

2 Redefine and maintain significant landscape design.

There are many features and designed rides and views – several of which are listed – associated with the layers of landscape design and redesign of Tottenham House and Park. These include the main gates into the Forest, the ride and walk layouts, monuments, and columns. The Capability Brown-designed Grand Avenue is one of the most notable landscaped features and requires constant maintenance. We will restore and maintain some of the key rides, drives, avenues, roundel, and individual trees, as well as the designed and historic vistas within the Forest and out into the surrounding landscape. We will work with partners and neighbours to restore the landscape to its former glory, in keeping with its historical context, helping to support and influence other parties that can improve its risk status. We will explore how we can better protect features, such as the Grand Avenue, from wear and tear.



3 Unearth features of Savernake Forest's past.

First recorded as 'Safernoc' in a 934AD Saxon Charter by King Athelstan, Savernake has played a long and evident role in history. From unique Roman pottery ware to the association with Henry VIII, Jane Seymour, and Wolfhall, the Forest has plenty of stories to tell. Many of these could be better understood. We will use key periods in time, such as pre-history, Roman, medieval, and World War Two to frame our research into – and interpretation of – Savernake's past. This information will help inform management decisions and tell a story to engage with people.

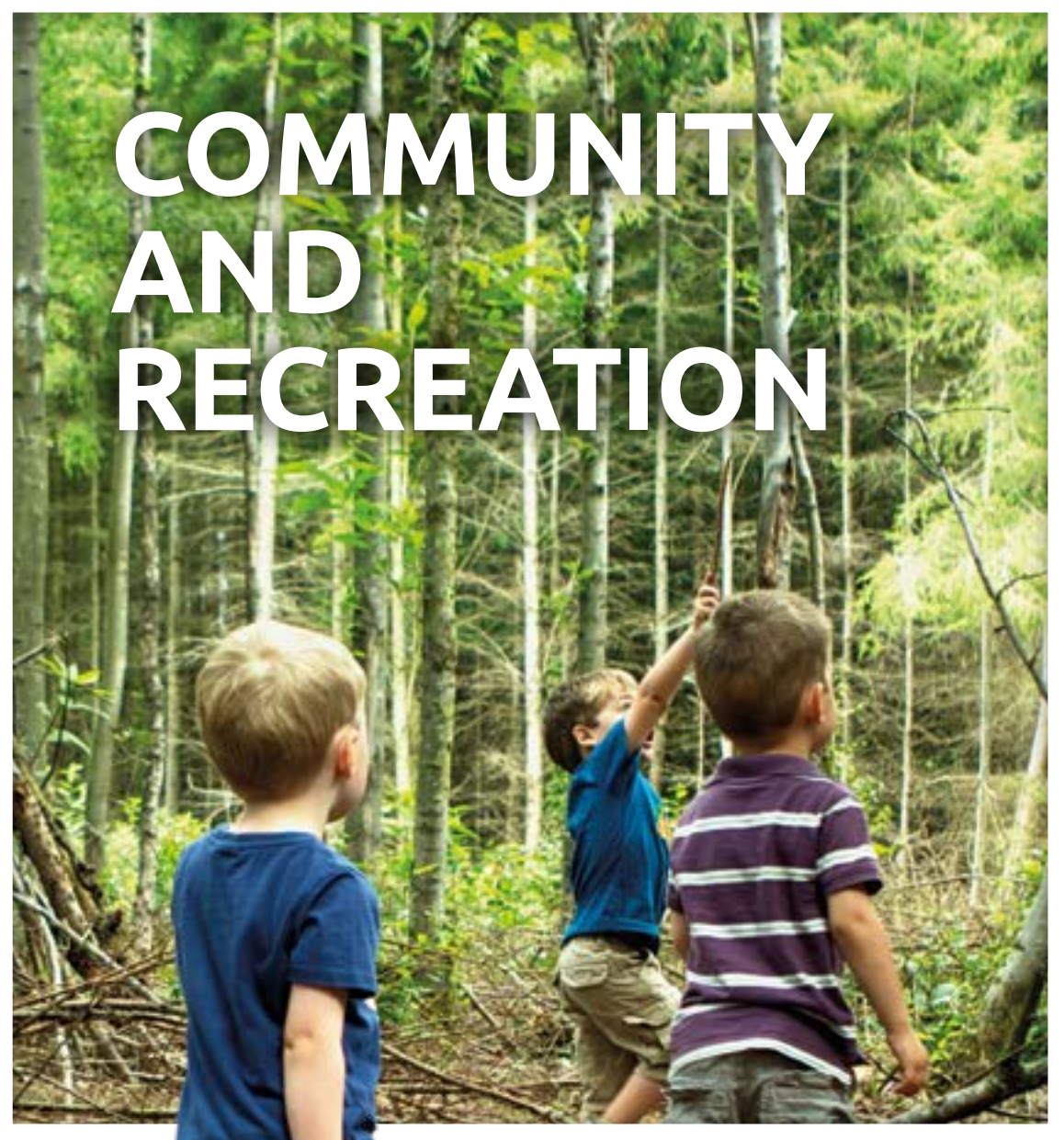
4 Support and encourage the historic grazing of woodland pasture.

Working with graziers, we will continue to reinstate the ancient practice of grazing in Savernake. Reintroducing grazing will bring back an element of natural process as large ungulate grazing would have been a part of the Forest's history for centuries, if not millennia. We will closely monitor the impact of herds on each site, moving them as required. In the process, we hope to increase appreciation and understanding of the role grazing animals play in maintaining and improving the ecology and beauty of the Forest. We will work with leading experts in wood pasture to ensure the density of grazing and tree cover has the right effect to benefit flora, fungi, and invertebrates.

5 Preserve Savernake's status as a living working forest.

Savernake Forest as we know it is the result of a centuries-long association between people and trees. These traditions, interactions, and interventions throughout history, from hunting to agriculture and silviculture, are the reason we have this unique slice of ancient woodland to secure for the future. Savernake was a royal hunting ground in the 12th century; a practice that shaped the Forest we know today. Hunting has been a constant in the Forest through all the generations since, not simply as a private tradition for a privileged few, but as essential management to reduce the negative effects of the deer population on trees and the ecosystem. Our ongoing management of historic features, cultural heritage, and historic practices will support natural capital through better land management and protecting Savernake as an ancient working forest.

COMMUNITY AND RECREATION



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Those who enjoy Savernake Forest are exceptionally passionate about it. But the level of understanding of the Forest varies significantly between individuals.

The Forest is well used by visitors to the area and on a daily or weekly basis by local people for walking, dog exercising, and cycling. There is a variety of surfaced and non-surfaced paths and tracks within the Forest, and a car park and seasonal toilet facilities at Postern Hill.

We have hosted several volunteers to deliver meaningful and rewarding opportunities that support the maintenance and enhancement of the Forest. These opportunities provide an important mechanism to aid social cohesion and grow community capacity¹, as well as deliver direct benefits to those engaged with them.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

Communities will be using the Forest as individuals or groups for a diverse range of purposes that collectively support active and healthy lifestyles, and build community capacity, cohesion, and inclusiveness.

The facilities provided will be well maintained and of a quality that meets the expectations of our diverse visitor base. They will support and encourage healthy lifestyles as people enjoy a variety of activities.

The Forest will be a place where a person can immerse themselves in nature. Wild areas will thrive within layers of rich history and management, while formal rides and avenues remain evident.

¹ OECD/Noya A. Clarence E., "Community capacity building: fostering economic and social resilience. Project outline and proposed methodology", 26-27 November 2009, working document, CFE/LEED, OECD, www.oecd.org/dataoecd/54/10/44681969.pdf?contentId=44681970

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Our commitments:

- 1** Maintain and enhance key access points and pathways.
- 2** Work with local groups on meaningful and sustainable projects.
- 3** Provide structured opportunities for volunteering that deliver mutual benefit.
- 4** Promote responsible use of the Forest by all visitors, increasing their understanding and respect for other woodland users and local wildlife.
- 5** Tell Savernake's story to celebrate what is special about its unique history and ecology.
- 6** Review opportunities to enhance visitor facilities.

1 Maintain and enhance key access points and pathways.

We will identify key access points and pathways to help manage public access for recreation and protect the natural environment. Interpretation at key access points will explain why Savernake is so special, showcasing its history and rare wildlife. We will improve the visual and physical qualities of these points to ensure they are accessible for all visitors. We will recruit a network of volunteers to help maintain those accesses and pathways, and report on condition so maintenance can be scheduled.

2 Work with local groups on meaningful and sustainable projects.

The Forest presents a myriad of opportunities for community-based projects. These are an important mechanism to aid social cohesion and deliver direct benefits to people engaged with them. We will work with the local community to focus on projects that support healthy lifestyles and active engagement with the Forest's cultural, built, and natural heritage.

3 Provide structured opportunities for volunteering that deliver mutual benefit.

We will engage with a growing number of volunteers on meaningful and rewarding opportunities. We will provide volunteering that supports the individual to live a healthy and rewarding life, and contributes to the maintenance and enhancement of the Forest.

4 Promote responsible use of the Forest by all visitors, increasing their understanding and respect for other woodland users and local wildlife.

We will promote responsible use of the Forest by encouraging all visitors to better understand and respect other woodland users and the needs of local wildlife, particularly in sensitive locations.

5 Tell Savernake's story to celebrate what is special about its unique history and ecology.

We know that most visitors to Savernake are exceptionally passionate about the Forest. But understanding of the Forest varies significantly between individuals. We will develop a new communications strategy to raise awareness of the importance of the water, geology, soils, built heritage and archaeology, cultural heritage, wildlife and wild spaces, and trees and woodlands in shaping the landscape. We will expand our communication channels for the benefit of the local community, schools, and visitors.

6 Review opportunities to enhance visitor facilities.

We will seek discussion with partners and the Savernake Estate to review visitor facilities in the Forest. This review will focus on improving facilities to meet the needs of the forest and the people that love it. The forest will not become a manicured theme park. Wild areas will thrive within layers of rich history and management, while formal rides and avenues remain evident. The Forest must always be a place where a person can immerse themselves and be at one with nature.









Forestry England

www.forestryengland.uk/savernakeoursharedforest