Forestry Commission England

Purbeck Forest Design Plan

Phase F

South England Forest District

Contents

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1. Introduction & Background

1.1 Introduction

Forest Design Plans (FDPs) define the long term vision for a Forest Block and set out how this is going to be achieved on the ground and over what timescale (usually 50 to 100 years). The Purbeck Forest Design Plan covers a group of Dorset woodlands, 2972 hectares in area, which lie in Purbeck, to the south of the A35/A31 between Poole Harbour and Puddletown. The woodlands have their origins in the extensive post war planting and afforestation carried out to boost Britain's timber supplies. The woodlands are found predominantly on former heathland sites on geology known as the Barton, Bracklesham and Bagshot Beds. Soils deriving from this geology are generally acidic, freely draining and nutrient poor.

The Purbeck Forests lie within easy reach of the Bournemouth / Poole conurbation and the market towns of Wareham to the east and Dorchester to the west. Most are close to surrounding villages and isolated dwellings. Many of the woodlands are regularly and sometimes heavily used for informal recreation activities such as walking, dog walking and horse riding.

The Plan has been divided up into 5 FDP units:

- Purbeck Forest (Rempstone)
- Wareham Forest & Gore Heath
- Hethfelton
- Affpuddle & Moreton Forests
- Puddletown Forest

These plans represent the first major review of the Purbeck FDPs that were originally consulted upon and approved during 2003 and 2005. The revised FDPs have been prepared following a review of the original plans undertaken by FC staff, stakeholders and the public starting in 2010. As a result the FDPs have incorporated developments in policy and local initiatives that have occurred in the intervening years, particularly the Open Habitats Policy and the Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area (NIA) partnership.

1.2 Consultation & the FDP Review Process

Forest Design Plans define the long term vision for a Forest Block and set out how this is going to be achieved on the ground and over what timescale (usually 50 to 100 years). Approval of the Forest Design Plan is given by the regulatory arm of the Forestry Commission, recently re-named Forest Services. This regulatory approval grants a 10 year felling license. Although Forest Design Plans are valid for 10 years, they usually undergo a mid-term review to conform with the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS), to ensure that policies and objectives are still valid and that the Design Plan is working on the ground.

A mid-term review of the Purbeck FDP began in 2010 which revealed that over 101 ha of conifer restocking had not taken place in Purbeck Forest (Rempstone) due to political lobbying against re-stocking of conifers on former heathland sites. The FDP review also coincided with the development and launch of the Open Habitat Policy and as a result the Forestry Commission was able to make a commitment to restore extensive heathland with the focus at Rempstone. Consultation on the revised FDP proposals was carried out in July 2010 (Forest Design Plan Forum) and September 2010 (Public consultation).

Around the same time that feed-back was being received on the Purbeck FDP, the Forestry Commission was developing its own Open habitat strategy for the Forestry Commission Estate in England. The draft Strategy set out that "*the Dorset lowland heathlands are identified as the single National Priority Area where an extensive and ambitious programme of open habitat restoration from former woodland and forestry will take place to create a resilient and sustainable landscape of open heath, mires, pools and patches of scrub, woodland and forestry*"

The heathland restoration identified in the FDP has been proposed based upon the recommendations of the Open Habitat strategy, a review of local constraints and opportunities and stakeholder feedback from the 2010 FDP Forum and Public consultation and subsequent further discussions with key stakeholders.

1.2 Background to the proposed heathland restoration

The Dorset Heaths provide some of the best lowland heathland habitat in the UK, supporting a rich diversity of wildlife and providing a home for a wide range of rare and protected species. Heathland also provides a culturally important landscape. Since the late eighteenth century, more than 80% of the UK's heathland has been lost through development, agricultural improvement and forestry. Indeed, in Purbeck lowland heathland is a fragmented remnant of a once extensive landscape that extended from Dorchester to Poole. It is estimated that some 86% of Dorset's heathland has since been lost.

The Forestry Commission was set up in 1919 with the objective of planting enough forest to meet Britain's post war timber crisis and to provide a strategic reserve for future wars or national emergencies. In response to political will and Parliamentary targets in the years following the war, afforestation by the Forestry Commission took place on an unprecedented scale. A grant for 3.5 million pounds for the first ten years gave the Forestry Commission the opportunity to plant huge new forests with little or no regard for existing habitats. As mechanism and investment in timber increased, the 1950's, 60's and 70's saw a dramatic surge in forest expansion and output. The majority of Forest expansion in Purbeck can be attributed to this time with stock maps showing significant planting in the 50's and 60's. Thus large tracts of former Dorset Heathland disappeared under blankets of conifer.

Through the 1980's the Commission's management policies and lack of environmental awareness were receiving heavy criticism. However the Commission sought to address its critics and by the 1990's the balance had shifted towards multi-purpose forestry balancing the demands of commercial production, recreation and bio-diversity. The evidence of this shift can be seen on the ground throughout the Purbeck Forests. Since the early 1990's, Forest Design Plans have helped to start the process of restructuring the forest landscape, increasing the recreational enjoyment for woodland users, restoring open habitats and producing an interlinking mosaic of habitats.

The ability of the Forestry Commission to be able make an increased commitment to restore additional heathland, in addition to that already highlighted in approved Forest Design Plans took a step forward with the publication of the Government policy on the creation of open habitat from existing woods and plantation "When to convert woods and forest to open habitat in England". This policy was widely consulted upon in 2009 and endorsed in 2010 and aims to:

- generate bio-diverse landscapes of woodland and open habitat that evolve to provide benefits to people and wildlife in the long-term;
- make sure that converting woodland to open habitat results in more open habitat which makes a significant contribution to biodiversity objectives;
- minimise negative impacts on the ability of woodland and forestry to increasingly contribute towards a low-carbon economy.

In order to guide practical implementation of the Open Habitats Policy on Forestry Commission land, "A Draft Open Habitat Strategy for the Forestry Commission Estate in England" has been produced. However, due to the urgent operational requirement to get a revised Forest Design Plan in place, the recommendations of this strategy have been built into the Forest Design Plan revision, notably:

"Sites where the FC may support the conversion of woodland to open habitat include:

1. Extending or buffering high quality habitat*. When the new open habitat will extend or buffer areas of high quality existing open habitat, and there is evidence that fragmentation of the current habitat is having a detrimental impact on the wildlife in that habitat.*

2. Connecting high quality habitat. *When the new open habitat will form a viable wildlife link between areas of high quality open habitat (improving'connectivity') and there is evidence that lack of connectivity is having a significant detrimental impact on the wildlife in that habitat.*

3. Designated areas. *When the woodland is growing on a site with a national or international conservation designation, such as a site designated under the Habitats Directive for Annex 1 habitat types, as a Site of Special Scientific Interest or National Nature Reserve and the woodland adversely impacts on its open habitat characteristics.*

4. Grazing. *When the new open habitat will extend or link areas of open habitat to allow a practical grazing area to form, and there is evidence that conservation grazing will be established and maintained once the open habitat is created.*

5. Threshold sizes*. When the new open habitat will add to the current area of open habitat to form a patch of continuous or well-connected open habitat that is significantly more viable in the long-term.*

6. Opportunities for species of conservation concern. *When there is evidence that converting the woodland to open habitat presents significant opportunities to enhance species of conservation concern."*

1.4 Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area

In March 2012, the Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area (NIA) proposal was one of 12 successful NIA bids selected from a national competition. The Forestry Commission is a key partner in the Wild Purbeck NIA and the heathland restoration proposed in the Purbeck Forest Design Plan will contribute significantly to the large scale landscape reconnection and habitat restoration proposed in the bid. In addition the Wild Purbeck NIA will help with the delivery of the Forest Design Plan by:

- Providing capital to restore high quality heathland post clear fell over a three year period

- Producing a fire management plan to improve cross boundary, land ownership fire mapping
- Exploring technology and markets for heathland arisings
- Developing a large-scale grazing unit to help maintain heathland
- Look for opportunities for new woodland creation within Purbeck and the Frome/Piddle catchment to replace woodland lost as a result of heathland clearance.
- Provide a partnership approach in terms of community engagement and disseminating key messages.

1.5 Need for an Environmental Impact Assessment

Due to the significant amount of deforestation associated with the additional heathland restoration, the Forestry Commission (Forest Services) determined that an Environmental Impact Assessment was required under "The Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 [SI 1999/43], to cover the additional heathland restoration proposed that was in addition to open habitat proposals included in the 2003/2005 FDP.

Scoping of the Environmental Statement was carried out as part of the Forest Design Plan Forum consultation. Following the revision of the Forest Design Plan in response to consultation feedback and "A Draft Open Habitat Strategy for the Forestry Commission Estate in England", the Forestry Commission sought a further EIA determination and confirmation on whether the previous scoping and consultation was still appropriate and valid in terms of the revised proposal. It was confirmed that this was indeed the case as the revisions had come about as a result of the consultation process and that the scoping was still valid and relevant to the additional heathland restoration in the other Purbeck FDP forest blocks.

Land Use Consultants (in association with Mott Macdonald) were commissioned to produce the Environmental Statement.

2. Forest Design Plans

2.1 Forest Design Plan Objectives

Forest Design Plans set out the short, medium and long-term aims for forest management based upon a set of Forest Design Plan Objectives. These objectives take into account requirements from the policy framework (described in Chapter 3) and are further influenced by outcomes from stakeholder consultation and local issues.

2.2 Forest Design Plan Maps

Three maps are presented for each of the woodlands lying within the Purbeck FDP units.

The Design Concept Map

The Design Concept Map sets out the long-term structure of the woodlands and other habitats consistent with the FDP objectives. It also depicts other issues relevant to the plan such as the location of Sites of Special Scientific interest, archaeological sites, County boundaries and Rights of Ways. It sets no fixed time scales on how quickly the habitat transformations depicted in the plan may be achieved but in indicative terms it is expected that transformations can take anything from 10 to 100 years depending on the habitat objectives. The maps are fully annotated to describe issues on the site.

Felling and Habitat Management Map

The Felling and Habitat Management Map sets out the timing and shape of individual felling areas (coupes) that will either be replanted or restored to important non-woodland habitats. It also identifies areas not to be clear felled, but managed using natural regeneration or open habitat management techniques. Under this FDP, approval is sought for 10 years which would take in the first two phases of felling (Brown 2012-16 and Red stripped areas 2017-2021) and part of the 2022 to 2026 felling period (Orange stripped areas).

Tolerance thresholds for adjustments to felling coupe boundaries, timing of restocking, change of species, wind blow clearance and changes to road lines will be as per those recorded in Forestry Commission Countryside Services Memorandum 6 (See Appendix B).

Forest Design Plan Objectives for the Purbeck Forests

1. To develop woodlands that provide opportunities for informal and formal public recreation, especially in areas on the urban fringe aiming to divert pressure away from more sensitive habitats.

2. To develop woodlands that are more attractive and are sympathetic to their landscape context by:

   - Increasing the diversity of age structure through phased felling and replanting shaped in a way that is consistent with the scale and topography of the landform.
   - Encouraging natural regeneration of existing conifer species or broadleaves native to the site type where appropriate
   - Encouraging the transformation of some conifer plantations to mixed conifer and broadleaf woodlands by accepting natural regeneration of native broadleaves.
   - Retaining some areas beyond their usual felling age to become large, old trees.
   - Introducing a network of permanent and temporary open space that enhances the visual diversity of the woodlands.
   - Maintaining a continuous cover of woodlands where it is a prominent and sympathetic part of the landscape and especially where it screens urban areas.

3. To sustain and protect existing habitats of nature conservation interest by:

   - Maintaining designated habitats in improving or favourable condition.
   - Restoring Open Habitats on former heathland sites
   - Restoring native broadleaf woodland on sites of ancient woodland.
   - Developing a network of habitat links to reduce the vulnerability of fragmented sites.
   - Increasing the length of edge habitat by ride edge and streamside enhancement and by developing a mosaic of woodland types and open space.
   - Providing a succession of temporary open spaces suitable for key heathland bird species.
   - Providing buffers of non-plantation woodland adjacent to important non-plantation habitats.
   - Protecting any veteran tree and retaining standing or fallen deadwood where not a hazard to the public.

4. To provide a regular supply of quality timber to support local employment and local timber processing industries.

5. To protect all ancient monuments and features of woodland and cultural heritage.

6. To achieve an appropriate balance of objectives through consultation with local communities and representatives of organisation involved with the nature conservation, public recreation and timber industry.

Restocking Plan/Future habitat Map

The Restocking Plan Map shows the proposed replanting pattern and woodland structure resulting from the operations associated with the felling and habitat management that would lead to the progression of the Design Concept. At this map scale (1:10000), it is difficult to show detail of small-scale unplanted areas or retentions. A detailed restocking plan will be produced as part of an operational site assessment for each area nearer to the time of implementation. Some small groups or individual character trees may be retained at the time of felling, especially if they add to the amenity of the woodland or contribute to nature conservation value. Any veteran trees or standing dead trees will be retained and protected (except when a potential safety risk to the public).

Rides will become wider as a result of heathland ride treatments (depicted on Design Concept, Habitat Restoration and Restocking maps) and on all rides as tree margins are cleared back to varying degrees.

Habitat Structure and Age Structure Charts

Each plan is supported by charts showing how management proposals contained within the Forest Design Plans may affect the habitat structure and age structure of the woodlands over time.

3. FDP Policy Framework

The Purbeck Forest Design Plan has been influenced by various levels of key policy guidance including National, Regional and Local Policy as highlighted below.

3.1 Government Forestry and Woodlands Policy

The Government recognises that England's trees, woods and forests are a vital national asset providing multiple economic, social and environmental benefits. The key objectives of government policy, in priority order are:

- **Protecting** the nation's trees, woodlands and forests from increasing threats such as pests, diseases and climate change;
- **Improving** their resilience to these threats and their contribution to economic growth, people's lives and nature;
- **Expanding** them to increase further their economic, social and environmental value.

3.2 Open Habitat Policy

The Government policy on the creation of open habitat from existing woods and plantation, "When to convert woods and forest to open habitat in England" was widely consulted upon in 2009 and endorsed in 2010. It aims to:

- generate bio-diverse landscapes of woodland and open habitat that evolve to provide benefits to people and wildlife in the long-term;
- make sure that converting woodland to open habitat results in more open habitat which makes a significant contribution to biodiversity objectives;
- minimise negative impacts on the ability of woodland and forestry to increasingly contribute towards a low-carbon economy.

3.3 Draft Open Habitat Strategy for the Forestry Commission Estate in England

In order to guide Open Habitats Policy delivery on the Public Forest Estate and set out future priorities for development and management of open habitats across the Estate, "A Draft Open Habitat Strategy for the Forestry Commission Estate in England" has been produced. The Government Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement (January 2013) confirmed that the Strategy is due to be reviewed and published. However, due to the urgent operational requirement to get a revised Forest Design Plan in place, the recommendations of this strategy have been built into the Forest Design Plan revision, notably:

"Sites where the FC may support the conversion of woodland to open habitat include:

***1. Extending or buffering high quality habitat**. When the new open habitat will extend or buffer areas of high quality existing open habitat, and there is evidence that fragmentation of the current habitat is having a detrimental impact on the wildlife in that habitat.*

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3.4 Keepers of Time

'Keepers of Time' provides a statement of policy for England's ancient and native woodland and outlines the Governments commitment and 2020 vision for Ancient Woodland, notably that:

"Ancient woodlands, veteran trees and other native woodlands are adequately protected, sustainably managed in a wider landscape context, and are providing a wide range of social, environmental and economic benefits to society."

The document provides a number of key policies relating to the protection and management of Ancient Woodland.

3.5 United Kingdom Forestry Standard

The purpose of the UK Forestry Standard is to set out standards for the sustainable management of all forests and woodlands in the UK. It is the centrepiece of a system to guide and monitor forestry. The Standard is linked to the developing international protocols for sustainable forestry. It is used in the UK as a basis for the development of forest monitoring and is the basis from which the UK Woodland Assurance Standard was developed. It can also be used for assessing compliance with management certification standards such as ISO 14000 and EMAS. Forest Design Plans need to uphold the standards set for sustainable forestry.

3.6 UK Forest Guidelines

The UK Forest Guidelines help to link forest and woodland management with the UK Forestry Standard, and to improve the consistency of approach. The guidelines cover key areas relating to sustainable forest management including:

- Forests and Landscape
- Forests and Historic Environment
- Forests and Biodiversity
- Forests and Soil
- Forests and Climate Change
- Forests and People
- Forests and Water

3.7 UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS)

The international timber products market is increasingly demanding assurance about the quality and environmental impact of woodland management. The UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) is a certification standard which sets out the necessary requirements which woodland owners and managers and certification authorities can use to ensure that woodland management in the United Kingdom is being carried out responsibly. The Forestry Commission nationally has gained UKWAS certification and it a requirement of every Forest district to uphold UKWAS standards in order to maintain the accreditation. UKWAS addresses specific aspects of woodland management and types of operation, notably:

- Compliance with the law and conformance with the requirements of the certification standard
- Management planning
- Woodland design – creation, felling and replanting
- Operations
- Protection and maintenance
- Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity
- The community
- Forestry Workforce

It is necessary to take particular account of UKWAS standards when managing our FC woodlands and be able to demonstrate that the above aspects of woodland management are being adequately addressed.

3.8 Strategic Management Plan

The Strategic Management Plan is a District level document that informs local Forestry Commission staff on our management direction and the associated policies. The Forest Design Plans are a key mechanism for delivering policies on the ground.

3.9 Site of Special Scientific Interest and Scheduled Ancient Monument Management Plans

Five SSSIs lie within the Purbeck Forest Design Plan area (refer to Site Designations maps).

- Morden & Hyde Heath SSSI
- Rempstone Heaths SSSI
- Stokeford Heaths SSSI

- Oakers Bog SSSI
- Turnerspuddle Heath SSSI

To ensure appropriate liaison with Natural England over management of land within the SSSI boundary, the FC produce five-year SSSI management plans. The plans set out objectives for management to protect and enhance the interest for which the SSSI is designated. At the end of each plan period the existing plan will be reviewed and a new plan prepared for the following five years.

There are 35 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) within the Purbeck Forest Design Plan area. The FC maintain five year SAM management plans which are agree with English Heritage to ensure the protection and maintenance of our SAMs.

3.10 Dorset Recreation Plan

A key FDP objective for the Purbeck Forests is to develop opportunities for informal and formal public recreation, especially in areas on the urban fringe or doorstep woodlands. An additional aim is to try and divert pressure away from more sensitive habitats in other parts of the Estate. In order to progress this objective a Recreation Plan has been drawn up for Dorset which identifies the woodlands in terms of their importance for recreation and notes the key priorities for informal and formal recreational development (see Appendix C). This plan will be closely integrated with the relevant FDP for individual woodlands.

3.11 Plant Health

Plant health has been causing significant concern in recent years with the emergence and spread of new pests and diseases. Of particular concern at the present time in the Purbeck forests is the spread of Dothistroma (red band) Needle Blight and the potential threat from *Phytophthera ramorum, Phytophthera kernoviae* and *Chalara Fraxinea* (Ash Tree Disease). Guidance and action plans regarding plant health are constantly evolving to adapt to plant health threats. The sudden emergence of a disease can result in the need to clear fell a coupe earlier than planned or alter restocking plans. FE will continue to monitor for diseases as required and take any action required. Any changes to the Forest Design Plan will be notified or agreed with Forest Services in accordance with relevant guidance.

3.12 Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area

In March 2012, the Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area (NIA) proposal was one of 12 successful NIA bids selected from a national competition. The Forestry Commission is a partner in the Wild Purbeck NIA and the heathland restoration proposed in the Purbeck Forest Design Plan will contribute significantly to the large scale landscape reconnection and habitat restoration proposed in the bid.

3.13 Poole & Wareham Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy

A strategy has been developed since 2010 by the Environment Agency working in partnership with local maritime authorities. It is a summary of flood and coastal erosion risks and looks at the works necessary to manage those risks with rising sea levels over the next 100 years.

Higher sea levels lead to higher risks of flooding and erosion, particularly if combined with stormier conditions. Protecting people and property against flooding and erosion is achieved by replacing, extending and creating new defences where a sound economic case can be made to do so.

Inter-tidal areas such as mudflats, saltmarsh and sandbanks, which can now be seen at low tide, will be under water for more of the time as sea level rises. This will affect wildlife including breeding and feeding areas for birds in Poole Harbour which are designated as of international importance.

Other habitats designated for their plant species and important assemblages are also predicted to be lost to coastal squeeze around the harbour. These include *Molinia* meadows, scrub woodland, heathland, wooded heath, and broadleaf woodland.

The Agency cannot stop sea level rise but is held accountable by Government to compensate for the habitat loss caused by new and existing built flood defences, under the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive, by securing suitable areas for the provision of compensatory habitat as part of its Strategy. The Environment Agency expects up to 44 hectares of protected habitat to be lost to coastal squeeze by 2030 and 77hectares by 2060.

Through meetings and discussions in the formation of the Wild Purbeck NIA bid during 2012 it became apparent that there was opportunity for the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission to collaborate on the restoration of natural habitats on the Public Forest Estate within the Purbeck FDP area. This collaboration would enable the compensatory habitat targets for existing terrestrial habitats predicted to be lost to coastal squeeze to be recreated in a sustainable location over the life of the Forest Design Plan. As a result areas within Purbeck Forest and Affpuddle Forest have been identified to provide compensatory habitat.

South Forest District

Purbeck Forest Design Plan

Location

Purbeck Forest Design Plans

N

NEW107
Puddletown Forest

NEW101
Wareham Main Block

NEW101
Gore Heath

NEW106
Affpuddle and Moreton

NEW104
Hethfelton

NEW102
Purbeck Forest

POOLE

WEYMOUTH

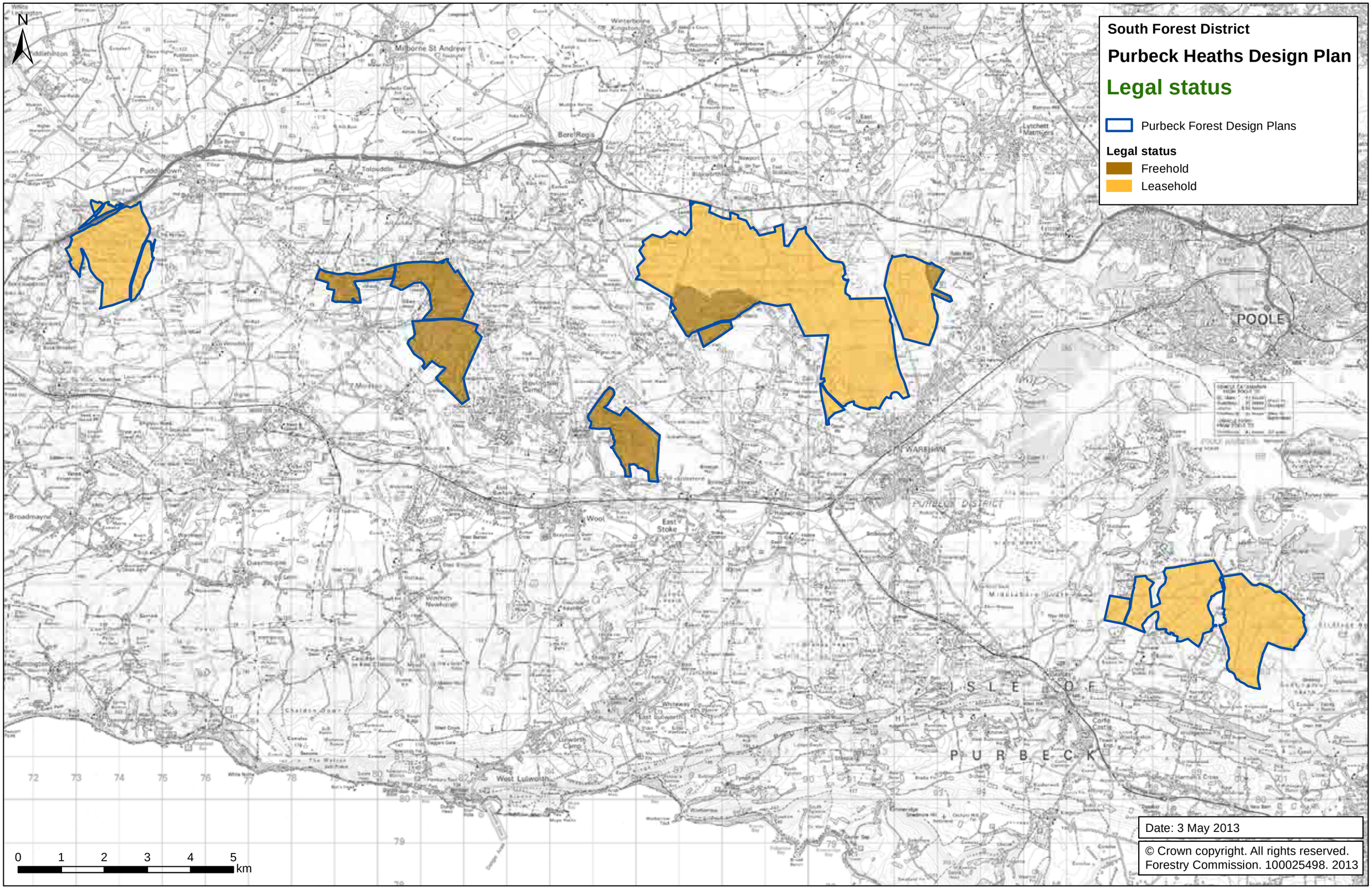
SWANAGE

I S L E O F

P U R B E C K

0 1 2 3 4 5
km

Date: 3 May 2013



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South Forest District

Purbeck Forest Design Plan

Site Designations

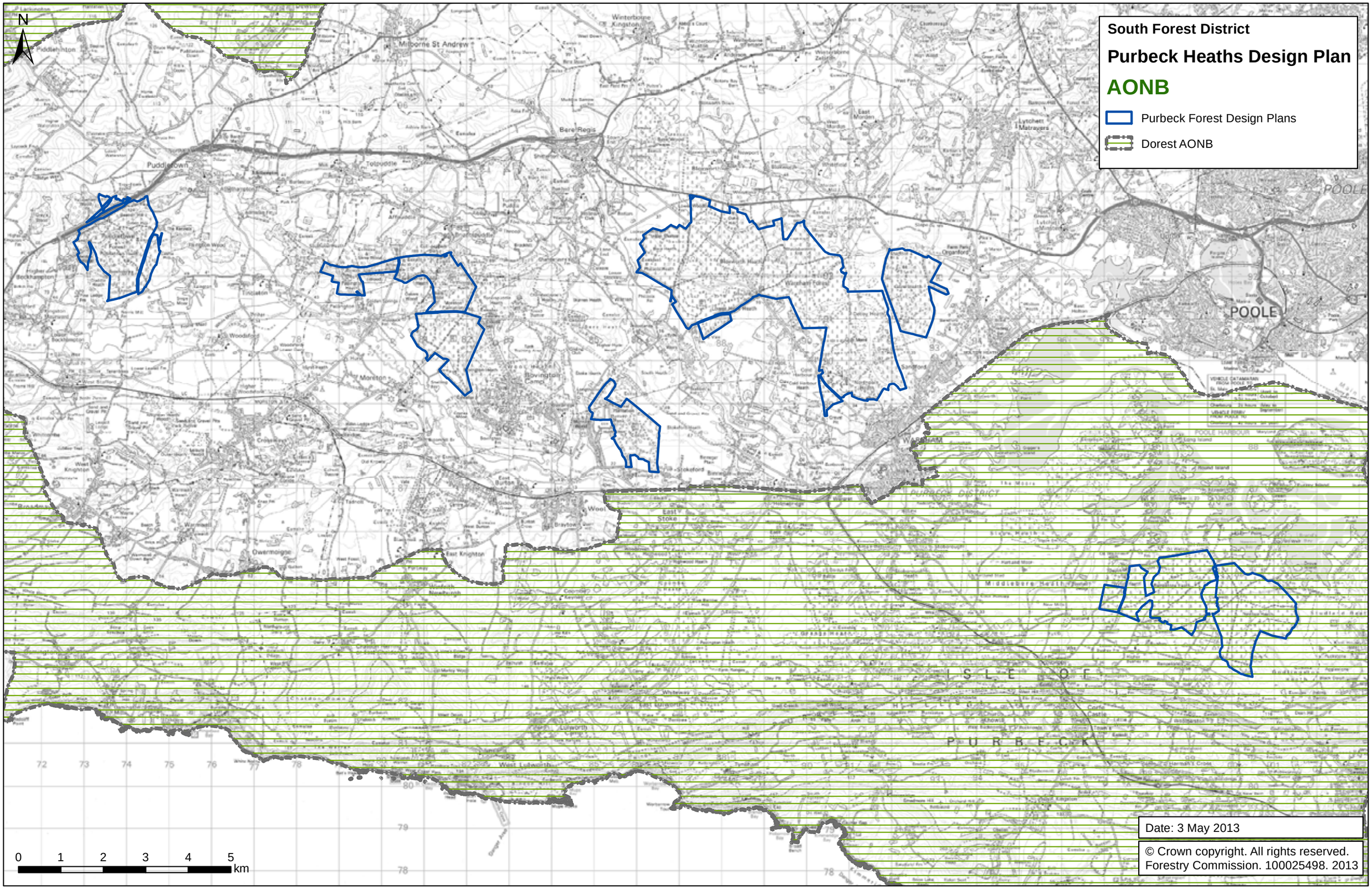
Legend

- Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Unscheduled Ancient Monument
- Purbeck Forest Design Plans
- NNR
- SSSI (labelled)
- SNCI
- Ancient Woodland Sites
- SAC

Black Hill Heath (SSSI)
East Coppice (SSSI)
Cull-Peppers Dish (SSSI)
Oakers Bog (SSSI)
Oakers Wood (SSSI)
Turners Puddle Heath (SSSI)
Bere Stream (SSSI)
Stokeford Heaths (SSSI)
River Frome (SSSI)
Morden Bog & Hyde Heath (SSSI)
Holton & Sandford Heaths (SSSI)
Ham Common (SSSI)
Winfrith Heath (SSSI)
Warmwell Heath (SSSI)
Wareham Common (SSSI)
Worgret Heath (SSSI)
Wareham Meadows (SSSI)
The Moors (SSSI)
Arne (SSSI)
Poole Harbour (SSSI)
Hartland Moor (SSSI)
Rempstone Heaths (SSSI)
Stoborough & Creech Heaths (SSSI)
Thrasher's Heath (SSSI)
Corfe Meadows (SSSI)
Povington & Grange Heaths (SSSI)
Brenscombe Heath (SSSI)
Blue Pool & Norden Heaths (SSSI)
Poxwell (SSSI)
Lulworth Park & Lake (SSSI)
Creech Grange (SSSI)
Purbeck Ridge (West) (SSSI)
Corfe Common (SSSI)
Blashenwell Farm Pit (SSSI)
South Dorset Coast (SSSI)

0 1 2 3 4 5 km

Date: 3 May 2013


N
South Forest District
Purbeck Heaths Design Plan
AONB
Purbeck Forest Design Plans
Dorest AONB
Piddlehinton
Milborne St Andrew
Winterborne Kingston
Bere Regis
Puddletown
Tolpuddle
Tincleton
Woodsford
Bockhampton
Affpuddle
Moreton
Bovington Camp
Wool
East Stoke
Stoke-sub-Hamdon
Owermoigne
East Knighton
Warmwell
Crossways
West Knighton
Broadmayne
Wareham Forest
Farm Park Organford
Lytchett Matravers
POOLE
WAREHAM
Middlebere Heath
ISLE OF PURBECK
East Lulworth
West Lulworth
Lulworth
0 1 2 3 4 5 km
Date: 3 May 2013
© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Forestry Commission. 100025498. 2013

Plan Name: Wareham Main Block & Gore Heath

FE Plan Reference Number: ***NEW 101***

FC Geographic Block No: **13**

Date of Commencement of Plan: ***1 August, 2013***

Approval Period: **1 August, 2013 to 31 July 2023 (10 Years)**

Summary of Activity within Approval Period:

All areas in hectares

Activity	*Conifers*	*Broadleaves*	*Other Open Space*	*Heathland Or Mire*	*Total Area*
Felling	196.2				**196.2**
Restocking	171.2				**171.2**
Other Habitat Restoration				25	**25.0**

Total Plan Area: 1541 Ha

FOREST ENTERPRISE Application for Forest Design Plan Approvals

Forest District: ***South England Forest District***

Woodland / Property Name: ***Wareham Main Block & Gore Heath***

FE Reference Number: ***NEW 204 and NEW 206***

Nearest town or village: ***Wareham***

OS Grid Reference: **Wareham Main Block SY 895 923 (Centre of Site)**
Gore Heath SY 924 916 (Centre of Site)

Local Authority: ***Purbeck District Council***

I apply for Forest Design Plan approval for the property described above and in the enclosed Forest Design Plan.

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

Signed:

Michael Seddon, Deputy Surveyor, South England FD

Date:

Approved: ..... Conservator

Conservancy:
.....

Date: .....

4. Wareham Main Block & Gore Heath NEW 101

Location (See Location Map)

The forest covers a total area of 1542 hectares and is located approximately 10 kilometres west of Poole Harbour between the town of Wareham and the village of Bere Regis. The A35 trunk road is located to the north of the forest and the minor Wareham to Bere Regis road bisects Wareham Main Block as it runs north west to south east. Gore Heath exists as a discreet forest block to the east of Wareham main block separated from it by the B3075 which is located on its western boundary. Outlying areas of the Poole/Bournemouth conurbation are located approximately five kilometres east of Gore Heath.

Landscape Context

Topography across the forest undulates gently from between about 10 to 40 metres above sea level. The land rises to 60 metres above sea level at Woolsbarrow Hillfort from where views across the forest and beyond are accessible. External views of the forest are generally seen as edges and glimpses into the forest from pubic roads but there are also prominent ridges at Gore Heath and Bloxworth Heath where attention to size and scale of felling is important. The forest area contains a large proportion of open space in the form of wet and dry heathland habitat and this plan proposes to expand the area of open space as poorly growing crops are removed to restore heathland and bog margins. The existence of extensive views across open habitats within the forest means that internal landscape issues are particularly significant and internal forest edges will require sensitive treatment. This is a factor which has been broadly addressed within this plan and which will also be addressed in a more detailed way at the Operational Site Assessment stage.

Current Woodland Structure (See Habitat Structure and Age Structure Charts)

Previous Forest Design Plans began the process of age class diversification and this is reflected in the fairly even distribution of woodland between 1 and 60 years of age. The relatively small proportion of woodland greater than sixty years of age reflects past practice in felling crops as they reached economic maturity. The inclusion in this plan of areas managed by continuous cover should increase the proportion of woodland reaching physical maturity. There is a large proportion of permanent open space (approximately 36% of the recorded forest area) existing predominantly as areas of bog and heathland. Ride widening carried out as part of the previous forest design plan has created a significant amount of linear open space within the forest block and there are a number of smaller scale open heathland areas which have been created and developed by local staff.

The forest is dominated on the podsolic soils by Corsican and Scots Pine which occupy approximately 81% of the woodland area. A further 16% of the wooded area is occupied by other pine species. Wetter areas adjacent to stream corridors have been planted with Norway Spruce in the past and it is proposed to remove this species to recreate a more natural riparian zone. Broadleaves account for less than 3% of the recorded woodland area and are generally limited to pockets of birch which have naturally regenerated amongst the pine. Some planted and naturally regenerated broadleaves are present in areas of more fertile soil along stream corridors and at the north western section of the forest block.

Conservation (See Site Designation Map)

Morden Bog and Hyde Heath SSSI occupy a large part of Wareham main block and are designated for their heathland and mire species communities. The area covered by Morden Bog and Hyde Heath SSSI is also designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA). Morden Bog at the eastern section of Wareham main block is designated as a National Nature Reserve.

Wareham Main Block and Gore Heath contain a further number of localised sites of nature conservation interest that have been developed and maintained predominantly by local staff. There are two sites that have been designated Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) by the Dorset Wildlife Trust and these relate to areas of heathland and riverine corridor interest. The areas designated SNCI are shown on the Site Designations map to provide context for future management proposals.

Recreation

The whole area is used informally for recreation and the eastern section of the forest is more heavily used with Northport Heath and Gore Heath being the most intensively walked areas particularly in the vicinity of the Sika Trail and Lawson Clump car park. Informal car parking occurs in gateways throughout the block and many local people use the forest for informal walking and dog walking. The area around the Sika Trail has been identified on the Design Concept to be managed primarily for public access and recreation objectives.

Archaeology (See Site Designation Map)

There are 9 Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the plan area. 8 are Bronze Age barrows (funerary monuments). The remaining Scheduled Ancient Monument is an Iron Age Hillfort known as Woolsbarrow. All of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments have current management plans approved by English Heritage.

Habitat & Age Structure Statistics

Wareham & Gore Heath

	Present Time (2013)	In 10 Years Time		In 20 Years Time	
Habitat Type	Area (ha)	Area (ha)	Change from Present	Area (ha)	Change from Present
Predominantly Conifer Woodland	1051	908	-143	844	-207
Predominantly Broadleaf Woodland	6	6	0	6	0
Heathland	470	490	20	502	32
Wooded Heath	0	123	123	175	175
Streamsides/Wet Woodland	11	11	0	11	0
Open Water Habitat	0	0	0	0	0
Other Open Space	3	3	0	3	0
Total Land Area	***1541***	***1541***	***0***	***1541***	***0***