

Consultation Record

Stakeholder Name	Comment	FC Response
Somerset CC	No response	-
Sedgemoor DC	No response	-
Taunton Deane DC	No response	-
West Somerset DC	No response Overall the AONB Service is pleased to see the provision of open space and the proposed increase in native broadleaf cover (and the increase in the continuous cover approach to management). We appreciate the	-
	approach taken in general to help mitigate the visual impacts of Quantock Forest (both in terms of planting and management). Thank you for responding to some of the points raised in our previous consultation. There are a number of points we wish to raise again and these are outlined below: Wind Down	
	We cannot see that our earlier comments (regarding the possibility of a permanent viewshed looking across the lower lying farmland to the Severn Estuary) have been addressed.	Viewpoints will be created as and when the suitability for them arises following felling operations.
	We also wish to seek a response regarding linking the access tracks within the wood for recreational value - specifically the two tracks at the east of the wood that come to a dead end and do not allow for a circular route.	The connection of these two tracks can only be achieved with outside funding due to the complexity of the proposition and priority within Forest
	Goathurst We raised the question of potential forest/woodland connectivity between Goathurst and King's Cliff. Is this something that might be	Enterprise. This is something which Forest Services
Quantock Hills AONB	viable/considered? St Audries/Deer Park	would consider not Forest Enterprise, (speak to Dick Gossling)
	Whilst we recognise that the forest edge is now less prominent (due to the removal of conifer on the skyline where clear felling has occurred adjacent to the open heathland), can you please indicate how the newly exposed forest edges will be treated where they about the heathland. We note that the visual benefits of broadleaf planting along forest edges are recognised in other parts of the Quantock Forest plan and wonder if a similar edge treatment could be used here? (This really reiterates item 2 in our previous comments related to St Audries).	A feathered edge of up to 20% naturally regenerated cover will be accepted to created a graded edge between high forest and heathland. Without funding and agreement broadleaf planting will not occur.
	Great Wood Item 4 of our previous comments in respect of Great Wood does not appear to have been addressed. This related to the opportunity to utilise the forest rides/track edges to extend and connect the heathland through Great Wood. Of all the points raised here, this is one we would prioritise (along with the access tracks at Wind Down).	Now an aspiration to be delivered through Environment Corridors Strategy See page 28
	Hopefully these comments are useful. We look forward to your response in due course.	
	Would like to see more emphasis on dwarf shrub restoration especially where the wood has existent dwarf shrub (bilberry, heather, western gorse) present or borders dwarf shrub.	Better stipulation of edge and corridor habitat treatment together with the creation of heathland linkages in Great Wood and the acknowledgement of key
	Would like to see more replacement of conifer with native broadleaves where no dwarf shrub restoration.	species and pest control have all provided a clearer direction for conservation treatments (See pages 28
	Would like to see focus of open ground creation in valley bottoms and/or south facing slopes especially if wood ant present.	and 29)
Natural England	Any specific management for nightjar? bats?	
	Rhododendron control not really mentioned. Should focus on areas adjoining SSSI as priority to prevent seeding in. Holly can cause a similar problem in terms of invasion of heather or broadleaved wood, and a max 10% cover is advised in the shrub layer.	
	Retention and haloing of native veteran trees could be mentioned.	
Environment Agency	Deer control could be mentioned. Do the FC have a target max deer number? No response	_
Forest Services	No response	-
Historic England	Regarding the Quantock Forest Plan Consultation received 03/06/2015, and discussed through informal comments submitted earlier as preconsultation. It is a positive step that the expired FDP will be updated and that the new Forest Plan includes consideration of the three large Scheduled Monuments within the FC estates in the woodlands. Historic England is regretfully minded to object to the proposed plan because of significant reservations, in particular we are concerned that the FP does not appear to include suitable management improvements for Ruborough Camp which is a high risk Scheduled Monument. The Quantock Forest plan	If the site were not scheduled FC would probably accept the windthrow, clear it when economic and look to restock the site through natural regeneration. I am very keen to explore with you what the HE vision for this site is to enable it to remain "risk free" into the future as FC would like to address the
	is a significant document which will be central to the future management of three extensive Nationally Important Scheduled Monuments, two of	risks that the Scheduled Monument is exposed to, rather than an exercise of



	which are at risk and declining and the third is in a declining vulnerable condition. The plan doesn't provide clear enough guidance, strategies or timely outcomes with regard to the SMs and it would be impossible to endorse this plan without seeing the detail of the underpinning individual SM management plans. I have sent forward by email to Ben Robinson my detailed thoughts on the three SMs that fall within the proposed Quantocks FP, and also my further thoughts on the concerns that we discussed previously. Historic England does recognise that there is a long term cost implication of managing SM's but we are also clear that there is a requirement upon the Forestry Commission, with regard to designated Nationally Important heritage assets upon Government Estates, to follow best practice and make suitable arrangements for the management of these Scheduled Monuments, in particular to reduce the risk and reverse the condition trend at the two high risk, declining sites. Please refer to my detailed advice emailed separately with regard to the three SMs. Overall I find the layout and presentation of the plan engaging and userfriendly. It manages to convey quite complex information in a clear and succinct manner. My own interest relates primarily to 'Goathurst' a.k.a. The Thickets, part of Halswell, a landscape that is included at grade II on our Register of Parks and Gardens.	creating a particular vision for the future. Having said that on the basis of the perceived future windthrow risk we may be keen to explore the option of a grant on the basis that we think that the removal of the standing crop is the only viable solution for managing the site & minimising the threat to the site so that it can be removed from the "at risk" register. The FC has taken its lead from Historic England with regard future management and HE will be consulted before operation commencement. The Plan acknowledges the At Risk status and makes an aspiration to contribute
	As the Plan notes, The Thickets forms the backdrop to Halswell House and the setting of various listed buildings including the evocatively named Robin Hood's Hut. The Thickets was also part of a designed circuit which visitors, notably Arthur Young, used in order to explore and experience the designed landscape. With this in mind, I wonder if it might be possible to pursue a more nuanced approach in order to re-establish the diversity of woodland character areas that were formerly present in The Thickets?	to its removal from the Register. In doing so the Plan outlines a proposal to reinstate the Woodland Riding overtime, in-conjunction with programmed forestry operations. It also makes provision for the maintenance of the dark backdrop to Robins Wood Hut, this will continue in
	To begin with, can the plan acknowledge the existence of the historic ride and include an aspiration to reinstate it? Secondly, my understanding is that one was meant to approach Robin Hood's Hut through a dark thicket (the clue is in then name!) pressing right up against the building to counterpoint the extensive and airy view of the vale on the other side of it. Could this too be an aspiration of the plan? The third point is that one part of The Thickets was known as New Plantation and this was a mix of conifers and broadleaves; in the interest of the character diversity mentioned above, it would be desirable to perpetuate and reinforce the character of this sub-compartment.	the context of normal forest operations, i.e. periodic clearfelling with retention of edge trees (See pages 12 and 27 for more detail)
	It's a long time since I read the management plan produced in the 1990s but that document ought to contain detail which might usefully be incorporated into the plan for The Thickets (or 'Goathurst'). There are more than 440 registered parks and gardens in my patch and my memory of/familiarity with Halswell is not as great as I would like. I'd therefore recommend obtaining copy of the 1990s plan if you can (it was produced by a firm called Nicholas Pearson Associates) and cross referencing the emerging plan for The Thickets with the prescriptions contained in the NPA plan.	
	One final point: Halswell's registered park and garden is included on our Heritage at Risk Register in its own right. I think this should be acknowledged in the Quantock Forest Plan. It would also be good to see somewhere in the plan a statement of how the proposals address the significance of the designed landscape and how they will (hopefully) contribute to reducing its 'at riskness'.	
West Quantoxhead CP Over Stowey CP	No response No response	-
Goathurst CP	Goathurst Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Quantock Forest Plan and wishes to support and endorse the comments submitted by Halswell Park, specifically regarding The Thickets.	The FC has taken its lead from Historic England with regard future management and HE will be consulted before operation commencement. The Plan acknowledges the At Risk status and makes an aspiration to contribute to its removal from the Register (see pages 12 and 27 for more detail)
Enmore CP	No response	<u>-</u>
Broomfield CP	No response	
North Petherton CP RSPB	No response The last national nightjar survey (2004) identified 10 nightjar territories within Great Wood, and 9-10 territories in and immediately around St Audries, representing a substantial proportion of the Quantocks' internationally important nightjar population (which qualify the area for Special Protection Area status). This importance doesn't appear to be recognised anywhere in the plan (for instance, it isn't identified or considered on page 35 Habitat Corridors), and it is not apparent that any planned management is targeted at conserving and enhancing this important population.	Now accounted for see page 29
	Whilst we support the FDP's direction of travel in planning increased areas of open habitats, the scale of change from the current 6% open and 4%	



unplanted/felled, to 9% and 4% respectively by 2026 and 11% and 2% respectively by 2050, is in our view inadequate. UKWAS minimum compliance requirement for open space is 10% (UKWAS 3.3.2), but in our view the area merits substantially more than the minimum required open habitat provision: it supports over 1% of the national nightjar population and a proportion of the FDP blocks are likely to have been planted on heathland/moorland (see below). These factors should in our view drive a more ambitious open habitat target.

Great Wood's value as a woodland in a heathland landscape means that it allows alternative habitat and recreation provision and therefore 10% is sufficient.

The FDP identifies the area's PAWS but it fails to identify plantations that have been planted on priority open habitats. It is not possible to determine whether the FDP is compliant with UKWAS Requirement 6.1.3, which requires that valuable semi-natural habitats (e.g. moorland and heathland) which have been planted or incorporated into plantations but which have retained their ecological characteristics (or have a high potential to be restored) must be identified and restored or treated in a manner that does not lead to further loss of biodiversity. Given the location of this forest area, and the lack of open habitat ambition, the FDP's compliance with UKWAS 6.1.3 seems questionable.

The Plan has been written in accordance with the FC's Open Habitats Policy and given that no known planting has occurred on priority open habitats (as identified by NE) this was not considered necessary.

Continuous cover forestry, which appears to be planned increasingly across the FDP, is unlikely to provide the open and young growth stage coupes that a clearfell system provides, and on which nightjars that use forestry largely depend on. This presents an additional risk to the area's internationally important nightjar population.

Whilst there is a move to CCF clearfells and open space provision is still occurring through group selection and clearfelling on secondary woodland, providing habitat for nightjar.

We welcome and support the intention to develop Great Wood towards native broadleaved dominated woodland, given that most of it has PAWS status. However the rate of change in the FDP is disappointing. It is not clear why, given the intent expressed on page 7 'to continue to manage these [Douglas fir] stands to economic maturity, favouring broadleaf regeneration where possible', the largest component of the forest appears (page 15) to be 'Conifer dominated shelterwoods, under which thinning with the objective of developing sufficient conifer regeneration ... so that when the overstorey is removed the forest canopy remains continuous'. This plan does however overlay the entire wood with PAWS CCF, so its actual intent is unclear. Clarification is needed.

PAWS restoration through CCF, achieved by maintaining canopy cover and ecosystem functioning, is widely recognised as the most ecologically and economically effective approach. A miss-reading of the keys has led to a misunderstanding of the shelterwood applications. The main silvicultural approach in Great Wood is PAWS shelterwood, the key has been made clearer.

Page 11 shows that the current habitat balance is 56% evergreen conifer and 28% native and naturalized broadleaves. Pages 24 and 25, Indicative Future Species in 2026 and 2050, plan for 49% evergreen conifer and 34% native and naturalised broadleaved species in 2026 and 50% evergreen conifer and 35% native and naturalised broadleaved species in 2050. We assume that this is across the whole FDP area. The 2050 plan for Great Wood still shows substantial evergreen conifer, which is in our view an unacceptably slow level of progress over the next 35 years for a state-owned PAWS woodland over which PAWS CCF is planned. Given the extent of PAWS across the FDP and the drivers for increased open habitats, the lack of increase in areas of native woodland and open habitats planned between 2026 and 2050 is extremely disappointing.

The restoration of Ancient Woodland Sites to native species cover will be achieved through a gradual process to best ensure the retention of ecosystem functioning and economic productivity. This practice is now the common approach for PAWS restoration by the FC.

The FDP considers Recreation and Access at page 36, but it is not clear whether it is FC's intent to increase Great Wood's already strong recreational use. There is no recognition that ecological value and recreational use can, unless very well designed and managed, come into conflict, and again it is unclear how the FDP plans to avoid such conflict arising.

Now accounted for see page 30

Across the entire FDP area, ecological benefit would be substantially enhanced by seeking graded, scrubby edges to forestry coupes, but the FDP doesn't appear to plan for this.

Now accounted for see page 28

USERS

Friends of Quantock	No response	-
Goathurst Shoot	No response	-
Commoners Association	No response	-
Husky Permit Holders	No response	-
Quantock Orienteers	No response	-
Great Wood MTBs	No response	-
Kilve Court Education	No response	-
Great Wood Trust	No response	-

NEIGHBOURS

Landmark Trust	No response	-
National Trust	No response	-
Quantock Lodge	There is a growing and detrimental increase in mountain bike activity, trail building and users having a noticeable impact on the ecology and structure of the forest. The "unmanaged" trail building has serious public safety issues - constant trail building of new routes, cutting down trees and clearing scrub, with increasing conflict with walkers, horse riders, dog walkers is developing into a conflict area. The increase in bikers, including the unmanaged "uplift business" is reducing the "local" pleasure of Great Wood. The car parks are full on weekends with biker vehicles, reducing space for locals. Quite simply, the mountain biking has to be brought under control and reduced to a more acceptable level.	The Forest Plan is not written to lay out recreation management, merely acknowledge influence in managing the land and the trees. The conversation around mountain bike management is being dealt with by the Beat Team.

	The local red deer population is culturally important. Deer management by shooting in such a high public access wood - Great Wood, is unsafe and levels of shooting should be reduced.	
	The increasing open space is a potential area of discussion, with large areas of heathland around Great Wood we should be growing more timber, to be flailing flat good access areas such as Lower Slades, makes no sense when this should be a good timber area, as illustrated by the thick and strong regeneration	
	As a local 12yr old horse rider I am unhappy not to be able to horse ride my local routes around Cockercombe due to the number of mountain bikers. They come down quickly and quietly and scare my pony. It means we now have to ride on the roads which is dangerous because of the cars. Can you reduce the mountain bike numbers please	
Member of Public	No response	-
Member of Public	No response	-
Member of Public	Far too much emphasis on mountain bikes. They are causing problems to walkers and horse riders. Approaching walkers from behind at great speed with no warning. Coming off poste on to bridleways causing accidents with horses. Surely there is a health and safety issue here.	The Forest Plan is not written to lay out recreation management, merely acknowledge influence in managing the land and the trees. The conversation around mountain bike management is
Member of Public	Please refer to Cockercombe FC meeting Wednesday 1 July	being dealt with by the Beat Team.
Member of Public	No response No response	- -
Member of Public	No response	-
Member of Public	No response	-
Member of Public	No response	-
Member of Public Member of Public	No response No response	-
Member of Public	No response	-
Member of Public	Although very impressed by the Quantock Forest Plan in general, I am specifically concerned with the forest called The Thickets, at Goathurst, which is my neighbour at Halswell, and which used to be an integral part of the historic park landscape. My negative comments above are purely in reference to The Thickets.	The FC has taken its lead from Historic England with regard future management and HE will be consulted before operation commencement. The Plan acknowledges the At Risk status and makes an aspiration to contribute
	I am the new owner at Halswell House, and am embarking on a 5-10 year plan of restoration on this very important house and the parkland and gardens under my ownership. It would be a great opportunity if The Thickets could also be a part of this plan. I would be prepared to purchase The Thickets if that was an option.	to its removal from the Register (see pages 12 and 27 for more detail)
	Simon Bonvoisin of Nicholas Pearson Partnership, has a deep knowledge of the landscape, having produced for various heritage bodies a Landscape Management Plan in 1995, which included The Thickets. He has made several comments, which have been forwarded to this consultation, and I would like to express my support for his comments, and hope that they will be taken on board, so that The Thickets becomes once more an integral part of one of Britain's great historic landscapes.	
Member of Public	 Increasing public access damages the forestry and environment Mountain cyclists have become a menace 	Mountain bike usage being managed at a Beat level,
Member of Public	I would like more information on the plans for access for mountain bikers and their interaction with walkers and horse riders. I feel that this has to be carefully monitored as the volume of mountain bikers is rising rapidly and does not always mix safely with walkers and horse riders. Do the bikers need insurance to ride on the hill? The managing and planting of more broadleaf trees will be very good for	The Forest Plan is not written to lay out recreation management, merely acknowledge influence in managing the land and the trees. The conversation around mountain bike management is being dealt with by the Beat Team.
Member of Public	the hills. As a local horse rider, I feel very unhappy and concerned about the increasing and un-managed mountain bike use of great wood.	The Forest Plan is not written to lay out recreation management, merely
	As a family we regularly ride out with the children on their ponies in the forest and more times than not meet bikers coming at high speeds down the smaller tracks and scaring the horses which I'm sure one day is going to cause a serious accident.	acknowledge influence in managing the land and the trees. The conversation around mountain bike management is being dealt with by the Beat Team.
Member of Public	Concern about increasing use of Great Wood by uncontrolled mountain bikers. Local and family bikers are no trouble at all. It is the "ferried-in" competitive mountain bikers that are causing a dangerous situation. They create steep downhill tracks that they traverse very fast. They seem unwilling or unable to stop before they emerge onto paths where they encounter other users e.g. hikers, children, dog walkers and horse riders. They seem to have no knowledge that they are about to crash out of the wood onto a footpath or bridlepath. There needs to be some sort of control system for these bikers (I assume they are not all part of one club who could monitor them) before there is a nasty accident. Near misses are common. Transporting bikers and their bikes back to the "top" with a trailer system is just encouraging them.	The Forest Plan is not written to lay out recreation management, merely acknowledge influence in managing the land and the trees. The conversation around mountain bike management is being dealt with by the Beat Team.
Member of Public	Pleased to see you take seriously the protection of Scheduled monuments. You could be even more serious about these as well as minor, non-scheduled sites. what are you going to do where there is nothing left to protect, like where you bulldozed through Dead Woman's Ditch?	See Page 29 for reference to rhododendron



2016-2026 Don't see the control for Rhododendron mentioned anywhere. could be a real obstacle to diversity. We don't want any more pay and display car parks, designated nature trails, inane signage about fairy keys, interpretation panels etc. This doesn't need to resemble an urban park. But really, really good to see a long term plan to reinstate native woodland. Hooray! I fully endorse the below attached points for consideration, so excellently The FC has taken its lead from Historic expressed by Simon Bonvoisin. I would like to record that my personal England with regard future response is in full agreement with these suggestions for the management management and HE will be consulted of the Thickets woodland, which is a historic constituent of the Grade 1 before operation commencement. The listed Halswell Park and historic landscape which is on the 'At Risk' Plan acknowledges the At Risk status Register. It is only by restoring the historic paths, access routes and and makes an aspiration to contribute to its removal from the Register (see planting plan that the management of this important area will be successful and deliver the social, economic and environmental diversity pages 12 and 27 for more detail) benefits that this 'At Risk' landscape desperately requires. 1. The Forestry Commission should be commended on the clarity and presentation of the Quantock Forest Plan consultation. It was quick and easy to read, given the complexity of the information. 2. Our comments relate only to The Thickets, forming part of the registered park and garden at Halswell, Goathurst but also the setting to the wider estate landscape and as the setting to the collection of highlyrated listed buildings within the park. 3. The objectives note the presence of scheduled monuments on the 'at risk' register, and also scheduled monument management plans, but fail to note that Halswell Park is also on the 'at risk' register, and has had a management plan since 1995, albeit not recently updated. There is a specific section in the plan covering The Thickets, referring to the aim to restore the woodland riding, designed viewpoints and dark backdrop to Robin Hood's Hut. 4. The analysis and concept plans do not address the significance nor the designed character of The Thickets, including: • the need for a dense, dark backdrop to Robin Hood's Hut, including yew; • the need to reinstate the riding circuit; access to and considered management of the viewpoints; • the character of the 1754 new plantation, which has been mixed conifer and broadleaves since this initial planting the original ancient pasture woodland character of Huntstile Bottom, brought into the park in 1761, and now comprising a strip of PAWS. Halswell Park Trust 5. The assessment of the plan is, we consider, harmed by this flawed and limited understanding of the historic landscape. Previous clearfelling has not maintained the landscape value of The Thickets as a result of: • removing the dark enclosure behind Robin Hood's Hut; it is now easy to see through the plantation; • public access is not encouraged to follow historic circuits to the designed • predominant ash regeneration has rendered the woodland at high risk of further loss through ash dieback. 6. The proposed clearfell at the western end will repeat this breach to the wooded skyline, and the indicated game management risks exacerbating the squirrel damaged which ruined the long term component (beech) of the 1956 plantings. As a result, we consider that the plan makes no significant steps to remove Halswell Park from the Historic England 'At Risk' Register. 7. We would like to see the following incorporated into the plan: • a short description of the importance of The Thickets to Halswell Park in the analysis; prior consultation with Somerset Gardens Trust, the Halswell Park Trust and Historic England on how to achieve some progress in removing woodland management as a reason for the 'At Risk' designation; • progressive reversion of Huntstile Bottom to ancient semi-natural oak pasture woodland, densely wooded on the steeper slopes; • active re-establishment of mixed, robust woodland in cleared areas including sweet chestnut, Scots pine (as planted in 1754), beech, oak, hornbeam, with yew underplanting close to the rear elevation of Robin

Hood's Hut;

• control of invasive vegetation;

retaining a key designed character;

• retention of a conifer component, however modest, in most of The Thickets, established as a mixed plantation in 1754, to help achieve a viable continuous cover woodland, avoiding clearfelled gaps in the skyline,

reopening and active management of the historic 1771 riding including

	designed viewpoints, and defined long term retention areas around each of the structures and viewpoints.	
	These steps could, we consider, remove The Thickets from any contribution toward the 'at risk' status of Halswell Park within ten years, and ensure that the Quantock Forest Plan complies with the Forestry Commission's own Forest Practice Advice Note 3, Woodlands in Designed Landscapes.	
Halswell Park Trust	* Halswell Park Trust was formed in 1996 to 'preserve, restore and maintain for the benefit of the people of Somerset in particular and the public in general certain land, garden and other buildings so as to educate the public in aesthetic and historic values'. HPT's interest in and comments upon The Quantock Forest Plan are therefore restricted to the area of Halswell Park and the Thickets at Goathurst. * These draft plans do not address the historic significance of Halswell Park or the issue of public access, both of which form the main concerns of HPT. Trustees would like the re-establishment of mixed woodland including conifers at the back of Robin Hood's Hut and full consideration given to the aesthetics of the skyline. Viewpoints and the traditional ridings should also be written in to the plan. * Trustees are anxious to see Halswell Park removed from the 'at risk' register. The appearance and management of the woodland around the park is one of the keys to this becoming reality.	The FC has taken its lead from Historic England with regard future management and HE will be consulted before operation commencement. The Plan acknowledges the At Risk status and makes an aspiration to contribute to its removal from the Register (see pages 12 and 27 for more detail)
	HPT therefore urges the Commission to take these issues into account and include them in the final decisions.	
Member of Public	In relation to the consultation our comments are based on the area of The Thickets and an understanding of the issues of the Plan against those raised by Simon Bonvoisin in relation to the Grade 1 Listed Historic Landscape at Halswell Park (copied below for clarity). Acknowledging that this has been raised by other interested parties, as professionals working in the Heritage Arena, we would also like to particularly endorse the further consideration of the historical and cultural heritage aspects of this particular aspect of the landscape within the Management Plan see ***	The FC has taken its lead from Historic England with regard future management and HE will be consulted before operation commencement. The Plan acknowledges the At Risk status and makes an aspiration to contribute to its removal from the Register (see pages 12 and 27 for more detail)
Somerset Building Preservation Trust	These comments relate only to the Thickets at Goathurst. The Somerset Building Preservation Trust has a long term ongoing involvement at the Halswell Estate situated in Goathurst and Broomfield. The Trust instigated and delivered the restoration of the Temple of Harmony (now managed by the Halswell Park Trust) and the Robin Hood Hut (now leased to the Landmark Trust) in the 1990s and is currently working alongside the new owner of Halswell House, Mr Edward Strachan, to help remove the registered historic park from the 'At Risk Register'. The SBPT have reviewed the FC proposals for the Thickets alongside Mr Strachan and would be grateful if the following comments could be considered see ***	The FC has taken its lead from Historic England with regard future management and HE will be consulted before operation commencement. The Plan acknowledges the At Risk status and makes an aspiration to contribute to its removal from the Register (see pages 12 and 27 for more detail)