Setmurthy Forest Design Plan. August 2012

Forestry Commission England

North England Forest District

Planning context

This plan sets out the Forestry Commission's plans for Setmurthy Wood near Cockermouth. It replaces the previous plan approved in December 2002 and covers the period 2012 to 2021 in detail, and the following 25 years in outline. The previous plan also included another block, Big Wood, which has now been sold.

The plan proposes a series of management operations over a 35 year period. Forest Authority approval for felling and restocking extends to the first ten years of the plan, after which time the plan will be reassessed, amended as necessary and resubmitted for a further period of approval. There will be an interim review of the plan after five years in 2017.

Introduction

Setmurthy Wood is 158 ha in size and is located on either side of a low ridge 4 km to the east of Cockermouth, close to the northern end of Bassenthwaite Lake. It lies just inside the boundary of the Lake District National Park. Tenure is a mixture of freehold and leasehold, from Higham Estate and others.

The land was initially acquired and planted between 1928 and 1938. There has been an active programme of felling and restocking and a variety of age classes are now present.

Analysis of previous plan

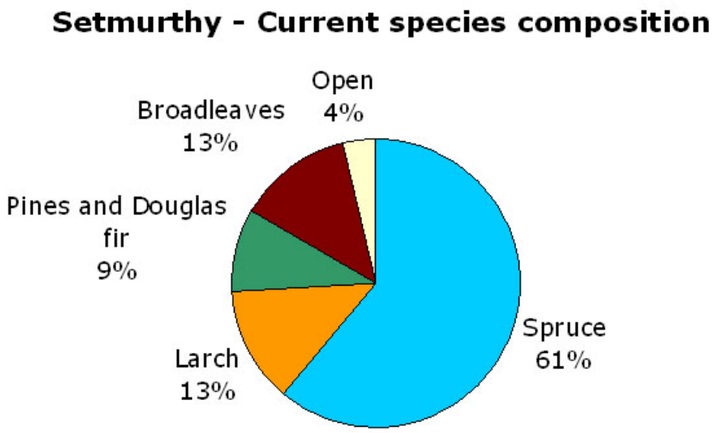
The previous plan included five main objectives. These are summarised in the table below, together with an assessment of how well these objectives were achieved..

Objective	Achieved?	Comment
Complete all work in accordance with the UKWAS, the England Forestry Strategy and the Forest District Strategic Plan	Yes	Harvesting and restocking have taken place in the last 5 years in accordance with the strategies and in accordance with UKWAS
Manage forest operations in sympathy with the environment with harvesting and restocking proposals, which improve the diversity of the woodland and reflect the scale and shape of the landform.	Yes	Achieved, recent clearfells and restock have been sympathetic to the wider environment and species diversity improved by planting Douglas fir
Investigate opportunities for discussing the management of the forest with the local community. Adopt partnership approaches and provide information as required.	Partially	Local user groups have been consulted with regard to recreation provision within the woodland, with limited success.
Improve the conservation value of the forest by widening out rides and watercourses and accepting a mosaic of natural regeneration of birch and other native broadleaves along with open space.	Yes	Ongoing work continues to achieve this objective
Bring to the market all the parcels of timber identified in the felling plan. Manage the areas of continuous cover so as to promote species diversity and natural regeneration. Maximise all opportunities for thinning in conjunction with the District strategy for thinning.	Partially	Two of the planned coupes for the 2007 – 2011 period were not felled. One of these was decided not to be a practical proposition in its current form, and the other, composed of mature Scots pine, was felt to be of high conservation and landscape benefit and its felling year was deferred.

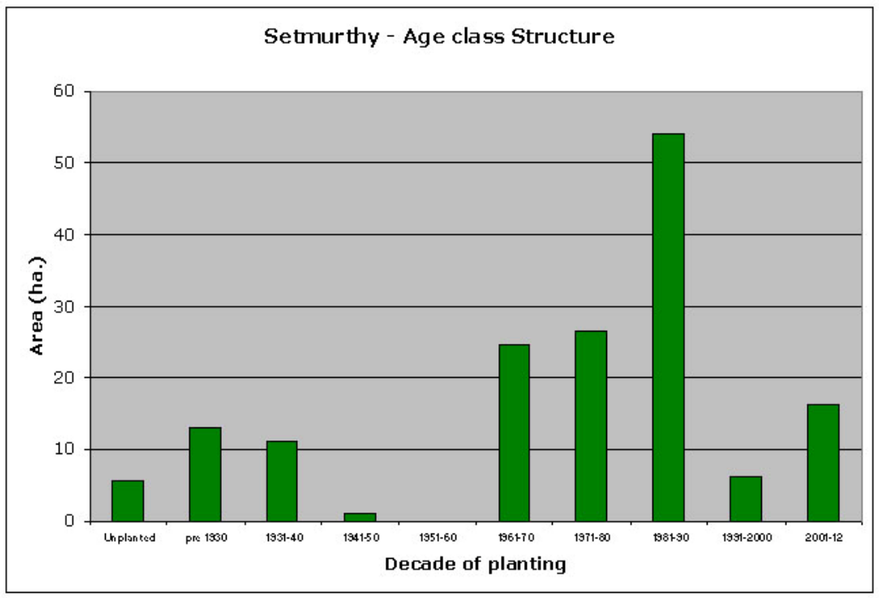
Of the two felling coupes that did take place, one was restocked with Sitka spruce and broadleaves, as indicated in the approved restocking plan. The other, initially due to be restocked with larch was planted with Douglas fir, due to concerns about *Phytophthora ramorum.*

Part 1. Background Information

Current Woodland composition



The main species in the woodland is Sitka spruce (58%), with 24% other conifers and 13% broadleaves, mainly beech and sycamore of plantation origin.



There is a reasonable spread of age classes, reflecting the ongoing history of felling and replanting. The 24.6 ha planted in the 1960s is now mature and ready for felling and most of the older stands have been retained for landscape or conservation objectives. The large percentage of the wood planted in the 1980s reflects a major programme of felling the first rotation forest in that decade.

Landscape

Setmurthy is not prominent in the landscape from any major viewpoint. As it occupies two sides of a low ridge, there is no point from where the whole forest can be seen, and all views are either partial or distant. The most obvious landscape issues are the external boundaries which are very angular. The surrounding landscape, however, is very diverse, with a patchwork of dry stone walls, grazing land and small woodlands the forest fits into this mix of land uses without causing a major landscape problem. Previous felling and restocking programmes have created a diversity of textures and shapes within the forest boundary including small patches of broadleaves and long term retentions of mature larch and Scots pine. The mature strip of Scots pine, European larch, beech and locally native broadleaves along the roadside is an important landscape feature.

In the consultation for the 2002 review, the skyline ridge was identified as a potential landscape issue. Since then, some felling has taken place in this area, with the restocking including more open space and more diversity of species.

Internal views from forest roads and paths are probably more important than the external views. The diverse age class structure, history of thinning, and species diversity make this an attractive woodland, with views changing and vistas opening up as the forest is walked through.

Biodiversity

The forest was surveyed for conservation interest in 1991 and 1995. At that time, no important sites or species were identified, with most of the biodiversity values coming from the regular cycle of felling and restocking; the diversity of tree species; the presence of small broadleaved patches and shrub species and the warm sunny rides. At that time a small wildlife pond had just been created, and this is now well established.

There are no major water-courses, although a series of small drains in the northern part of the wood flow into the river Isel which is part of the River Derwent and its tributaries SSSI and SAC. This river system is designated for the overall importance of its aquatic environments and specifically the presence of Atlantic salmon, lampreys (Sea, River and Brook), Marsh Fritillary butterflies and otters. A slightly bigger watercourse, part of the Bitter Beck runs through the roadside strip on the southern edge of the plantation and this, too, joins the Derwent in Cockermouth.

The forest has a population of red squirrels and there is an active programme of grey squirrel control.

Communities and recreation

The forest is well used, mainly by local people from Cockermouth and the surrounding area. There are two main user groups, walkers and mountain bikers. The walkers, including many dog-walkers, value the wood as a quiet low-key alternative to some of the better known and busier forests in the area, notably Whinlatter. The mountain bikers have developed an increasing number of informal and unauthorised downhill routes, including obstacles, jumps and banked turns. The Forestry Commission has had a policy of trying to engage with this group, to limit the amount of new route construction and to monitor the activity, principally to ensure the health and safety both of the bikers and other forest users.

Heritage

There are no known archaeological sites in Setmurthy.

Timber potential

The site grows good timber, with yield classes ranging from 12 to 20 for Sitka spruce. The fertile brown earth soils over much of the site are suited to growing a wide range of conifer species, including Douglas fir and larch, whilst the poorer gleyed soils to the north and west make these areas more suitable to Sitka spruce. The terrain presents few problems for harvesting, making this site a prime location for continued production of timber

Access and roading
Access to the forest is excellent, with no restrictions on vehicle size. A good road capable of taking timber wagons gives access to most areas, and this is supplemented by a network of internal rides and tracks.

Part 2. Analysis and Concept

The factors outlined in Part 1 present some opportunities and issues. These are summarised below.

Factor	Opportunities	Issues
Soils	Good potential for species diversity on brown earth sites	There is more limited potential for species diversity on surface water gley sites
Age class structure	Over most of the area, previous felling coupes have led the way to a succession of phased felling coupes over time.	The large area planted in the 1980s forms one single age class – opportunities for dividing this into a number of coupes are severely limited by the risk of windthrow.
Current species	The forest is already very diverse, with a good range of species, generally well suited to the site	
Windthrow hazard	Much of the forest falls into WHC 2 and 3, making thinning a practical proposition	Approximately half of the forest is in WHC 4, making thinning more difficult to manage without putting the crop at risk.
Infrastructure	The forest is well roaded, with good access, making timber production relatively straightforward	
Public use	Continued thinning, felling and restocking operations will maintain the diversity of internal views that are a feature of this forest. Following felling, there are opportunities to extend the path network.	Good liaison will be needed when harvesting operations begin in areas that include unauthorised mountain bike routes
Biodiversity	There are opportunities for extending the network of broadleaved trees, shrubs and open space following felling operations.	
Landscape	Well designed felling coupes that reduce the risk of windthrow will enhance the internal landscape. The roadside strip offers opportunities for either continuous cover management or conversion to native woodland.	The straight external boundaries remain the most obtrusive landscape element, but there is little or no opportunity for amelioration. In restocking, greater attention should be paid to creating diversity along the skyline ridge.

The analysis of the current structure shows a forest that is already very diverse and well advanced in the restructuring process. The previous plans, submitted in 1996 and 2002 have been adhered to quite closely, and the focus of this resubmission is on the felling coupes that are now at or approaching maturity. The previous plans included coupe shapes and a felling sequence that now require considerable revision if the threat of windblow is to be avoided. To this end, some of the coupe shapes proposed in the earlier plans have been simplified, some have been merged and the felling sequence has been re-addressed. The landscape implications of this are not considered to be great, because of the limited visibility of the wood, and the considerable diversity already present. As the internal views have been assessed as being of at least equal importance to the external ones, the benefit of reduced windthrow risk is considered to outweigh the landscape implications of simpler coupe shapes.

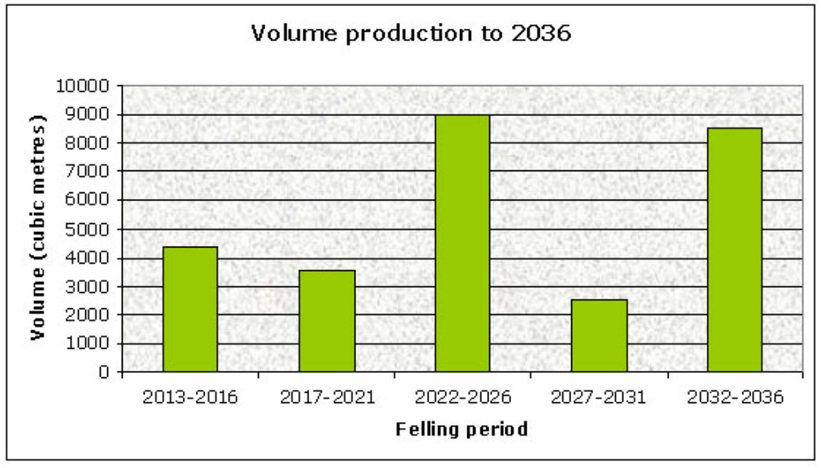
Part 3. Objectives

The following broad objectives have been identified for Setmurthy.

1. Commercial production of good quality timber, primarily of coniferous species
2. Provision of facilities for quiet informal enjoyment of the countryside
3. Enhancement of semi-natural features, particularly around the watercourses and existing patches of native woodland
4. Maintenance of the current diversity of age classes through a programme of phased felling and restocking
5. Diversification of the commercial species, matching species to site
6. Improvement of the landscape by diversifying the skyline ridge

Part 4. Proposals

Felling
Locations of the proposed felling are shown on the management map. The pattern of volume production over the next twenty-five years is shown below. This level of production is broadly similar to that of recent years, and is sustainable in the long term.



Two felling coupes, 6.5 ha and 6.4 ha in size are proposed for the first four years of the plan, one on either side of the central ridge. In the second phase, two further coupes of 12.2 and 10.4 ha are proposed.

Thinning
There will be a presumption in favour of thinning all areas of the wood unless there is evidence that windthrow is likely to occur. Areas of windthrow hazard class 4 will be carefully assessed for their thinning potential but not necessarily excluded from the thinning programme.

The areas marked as continuous cover along the southern boundary will be managed on a group shelter-wood basis, to encourage regeneration. The objective will be to gradually replace the conifer over-storey with a stand of native broadleaves whilst maintaining continuous tree cover.

Long term retentions

Two areas on the southern slope have been identified as long term retentions. These are a stand of mature Scots pine and a stand of beech and larch. They are being retained beyond their commercial felling age, primarily for their value to the internal landscape of the forest, but also for the biodiversity benefits associated with older trees. They have been selected to give a continuity of woodland cover in the most heavily used part of the forest, and to break up the expanse of young crops that result from clear-felling.

Minimal intervention

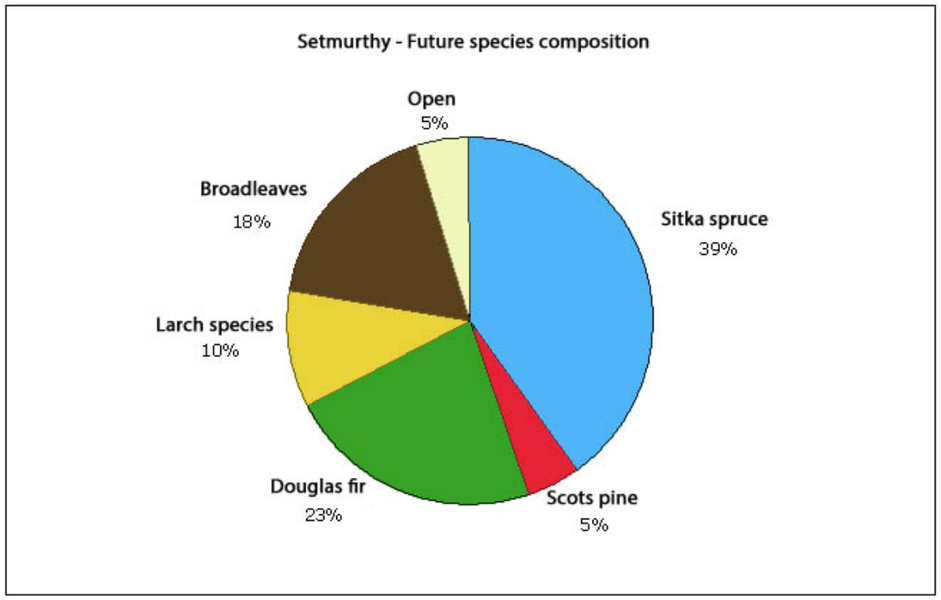
Some small sections have been designated as minimal intervention. This means that, as far as possible, no operations will take place here within the life of the plan, providing a continuity of undisturbed habitat.

Restocking

Restocking proposals can be seen on the future habitats map. The overall aims of the restocking proposals are as follows:

- To maintain the commercial coniferous element of the forest
- To diversify the range of productive conifers, where site conditions allow
- To extend existing areas of native broadleaved woodland, providing a network of wildlife habitat throughout the wood
- To design a sequence of wind-firm coupes that can be harvested sustainably over the following rotation without undue risk of windthrow.
- To break up the skyline ridge by introducing more open space, Scots pine and broadleaves, to replace the current straight edge of spruce

The chart below shows the long term intentions for Setmurthy, after all existing stands have been felled and restocked.



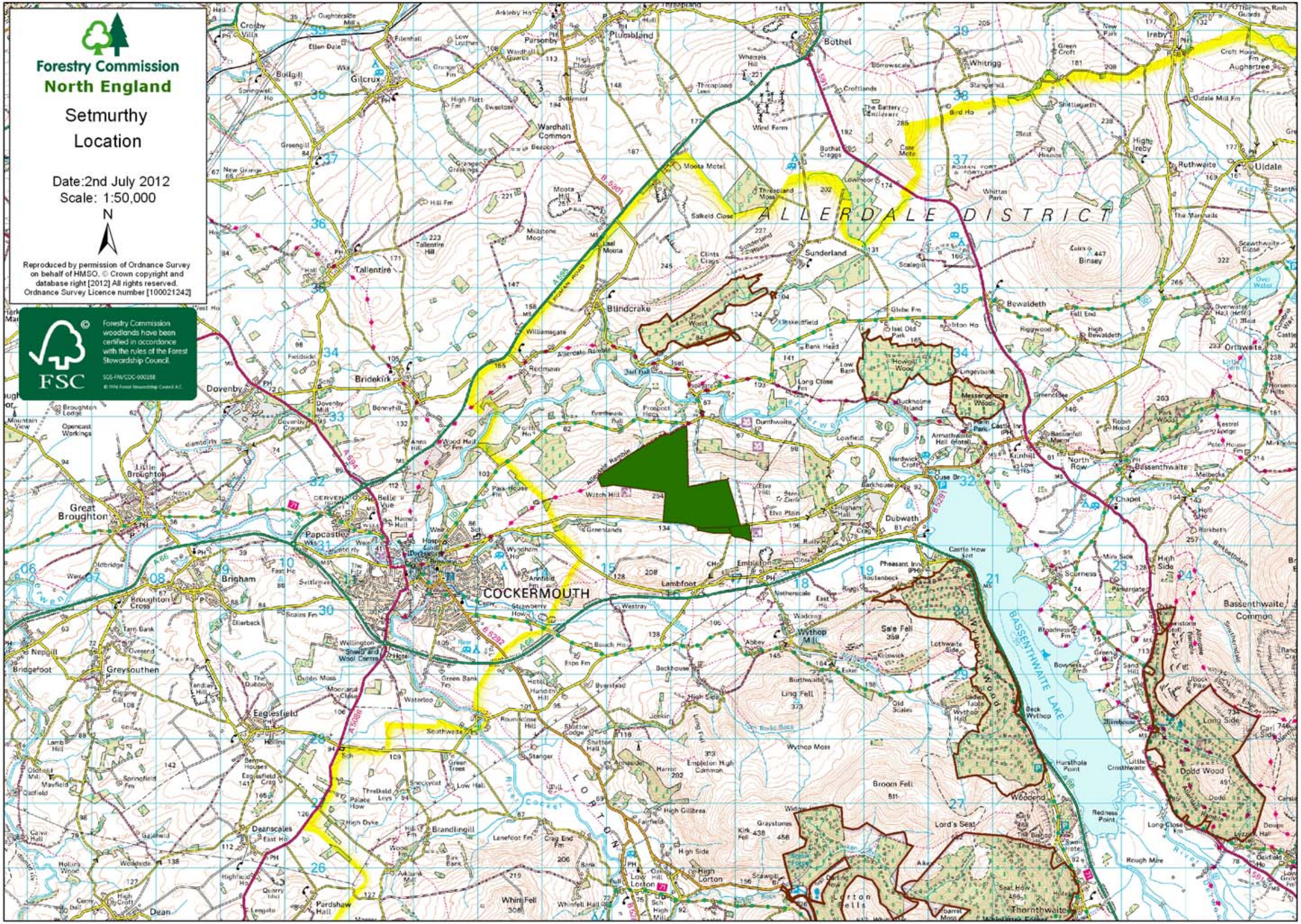
Points to note are:

- Continued presence of commercial conifers, at 77% of the area
- Small increase in the broadleaved area, from 13% to 15%
- Greater diversity of conifer species, with pine and Douglas fir up from 9% to 28%
- A corresponding reduction in the area of Sitka spruce

Part 5. Monitoring plan

The objectives identified in section 3 will be monitored in the following ways

Objective	Criteria for success	Assessment
Commercial production of good quality timber, primarily of coniferous species	Coupes are successfully planned, harvested and marketed. Thinning programme is successfully implemented	5 and 10 year reviews will show whether coupes have been felled in accordance with plan and whether thinning programme has been implemented
Provision of facilities for quiet informal enjoyment of the countryside	The forest continues to be used and enjoyed by walkers, runners, cyclists etc.	Site observations, conversations with forest users, feedback from local groups.
Enhancement of semi-natural features, particularly around the watercourses and existing patches of native woodland	Opportunities are taken following clear felling to widen rides, protect water-courses and expand semi-natural areas. Harvesting operations are managed so as to prevent physical damage and sedimentation of the small watercourses	Comparison of the sub-compartment database before and after restocking should show that this is taking place. Internal consultation on site plans provides a monitoring opportunity.
Maintenance of the current diversity of age classes through a programme of phased felling and restocking	Coupes are brought forward for felling and restocking at the right time. Restocking is carried out to the required standard, and protected from damage	5 and 10 year reviews. FMM4 surveys of restock sites
Diversification of the commercial species, matching species to site	Restocking is broadly in line with the approved map, and restocking contains a greater mix of commercial species including Douglas fir, Scots pine and larch species	Internal consultation on detailed restocking plans takes place, which provides an opportunity to monitor progress against these two objectives, as do the 5 and 10 year reviews.
Improvement of the landscape by diversifying the skyline ridge	Restocking of the upper margin consists of Scots pine, broadleaves and open space, rather than spruce	



Forestry Commission
North England
Setmurthy
Location
Date:2nd July 2012
Scale: 1:50,000
N
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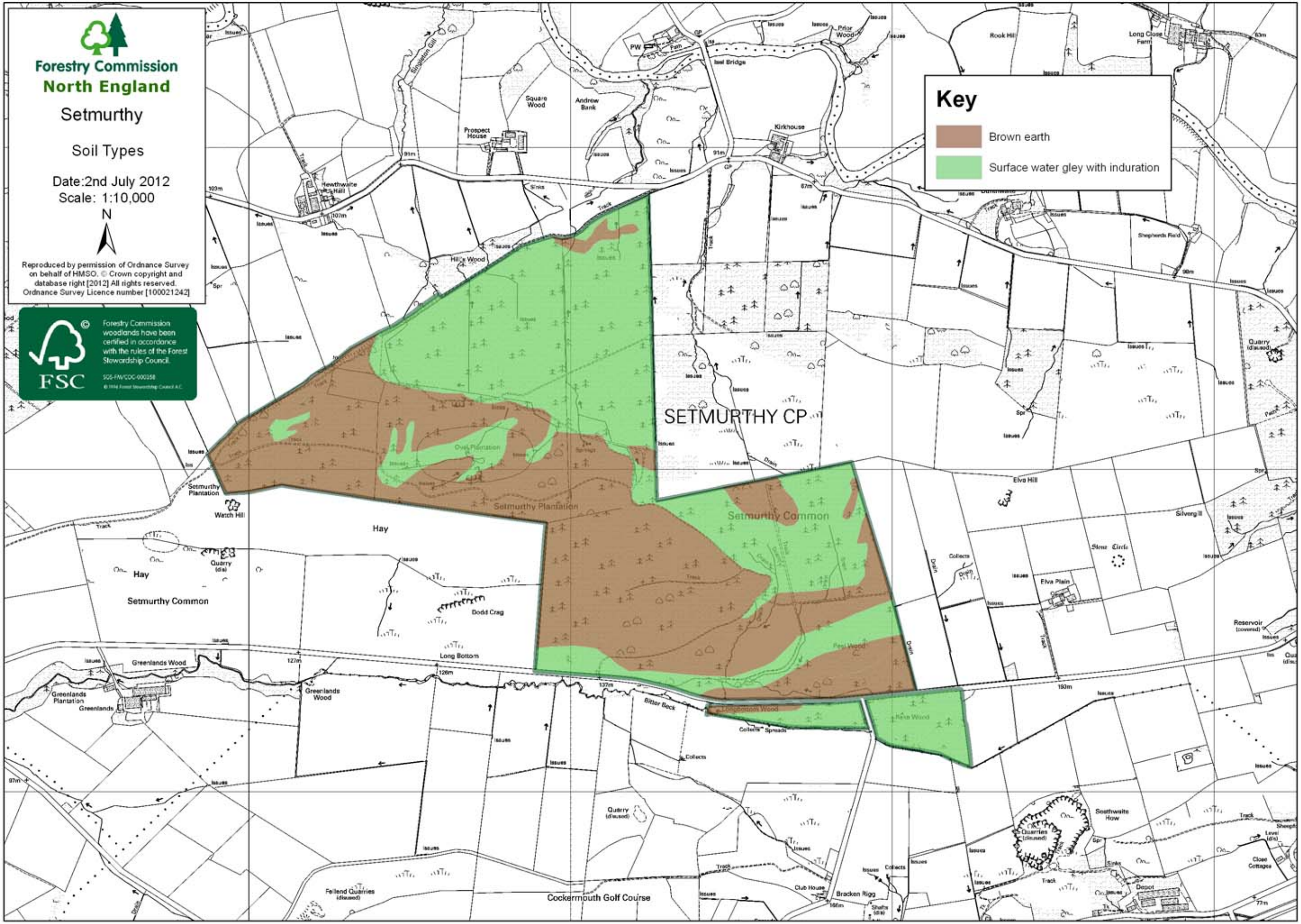
FSC
ALLERDALE DISTRICT
COCKERMOUTH
BASSENTHWAITE LAKE
Bothel
Plumbland
Gilcrux
Tallentire
Dovenby
Bridekirk
Blindcrake
Sunderland
Brigham
Great Broughton
Papcastle
Eaglesfield
Embleton
Dubwath
Bewaldeth
Ireby
Uldale
Binsey
Sale Fell
Ling Fell
Broom Fell
Lord's Seat
Dodd Wood
Long Side
Bassenthwaite Common
Wythop Woods
Lorton Fells
Whinlatter Forest
Whin Fell
Graystones
Lambfoot
Setmurthy



Forestry Commission
North England
Setmurthy
Soil Types
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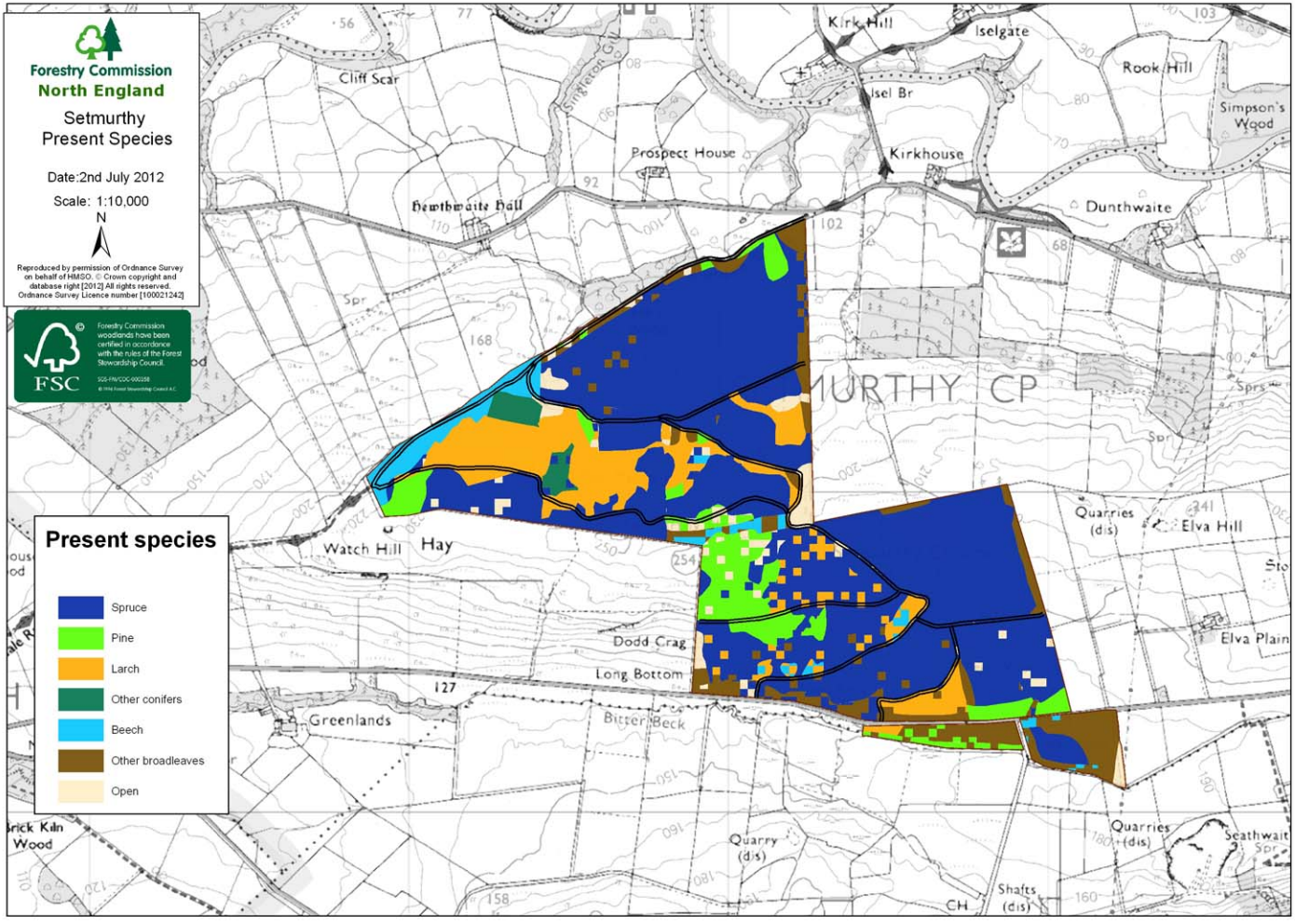
FSC
Key
Brown earth
Surface water gley with induration
SETMURTHY CP
Setmurthy Plantation
Setmurthy Common
Hay
Watch Hill
Dodd Crag
Long Bottom
Greenlands Wood
Greenlands
Elva Hill
Elva Plain
Silvergill
Kirkhouse
Isel Bridge
Prospect House
Square Wood
Andrew Bank
Hewthwaite Hall
Rook Hill
Long Close Farm
Cockermouth Golf Course
Fellend Quarries (disused)
Bracken Rigg
Club House
Bitter Beck
Setmurthy Plantation
Stone Circle


Forestry Commission
North England
Setmurthy
Present Species
Date:2nd July 2012
Scale: 1:10,000
N
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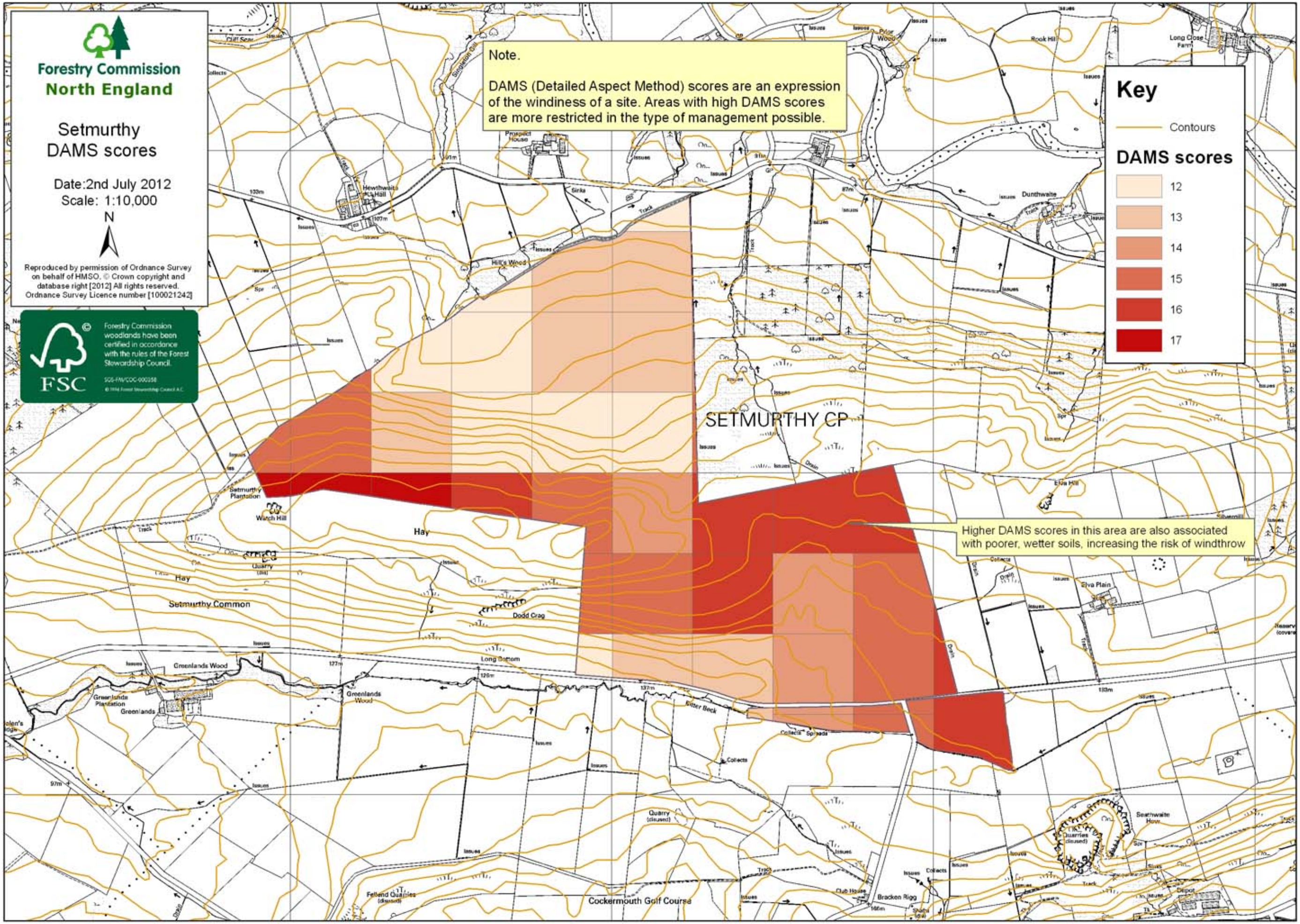
FSC
SGS-FM/COC-003358
Present species
Spruce
Pine
Larch
Other conifers
Beech
Other broadleaves
Open
Kirk Hill
Iselgate
Rook Hill
Simpson's Wood
Cliff Scar
Isel Br
Prospect House
Kirkhouse
Dunthwaite
Bewthwaite Hall
SETMURTHY CP
Watch Hill
Hay
Quarries (dis)
Elva Hill
Elva Plain
Dodd Crag
Long Bottom
Greenlands
Bitter Beck
Brick Kiln Wood
Quarry (dis)
Quarries (dis)
Scathwaite
Shafts (dis)
CH



Forestry Commission
North England
Setmurthy
DAMS scores
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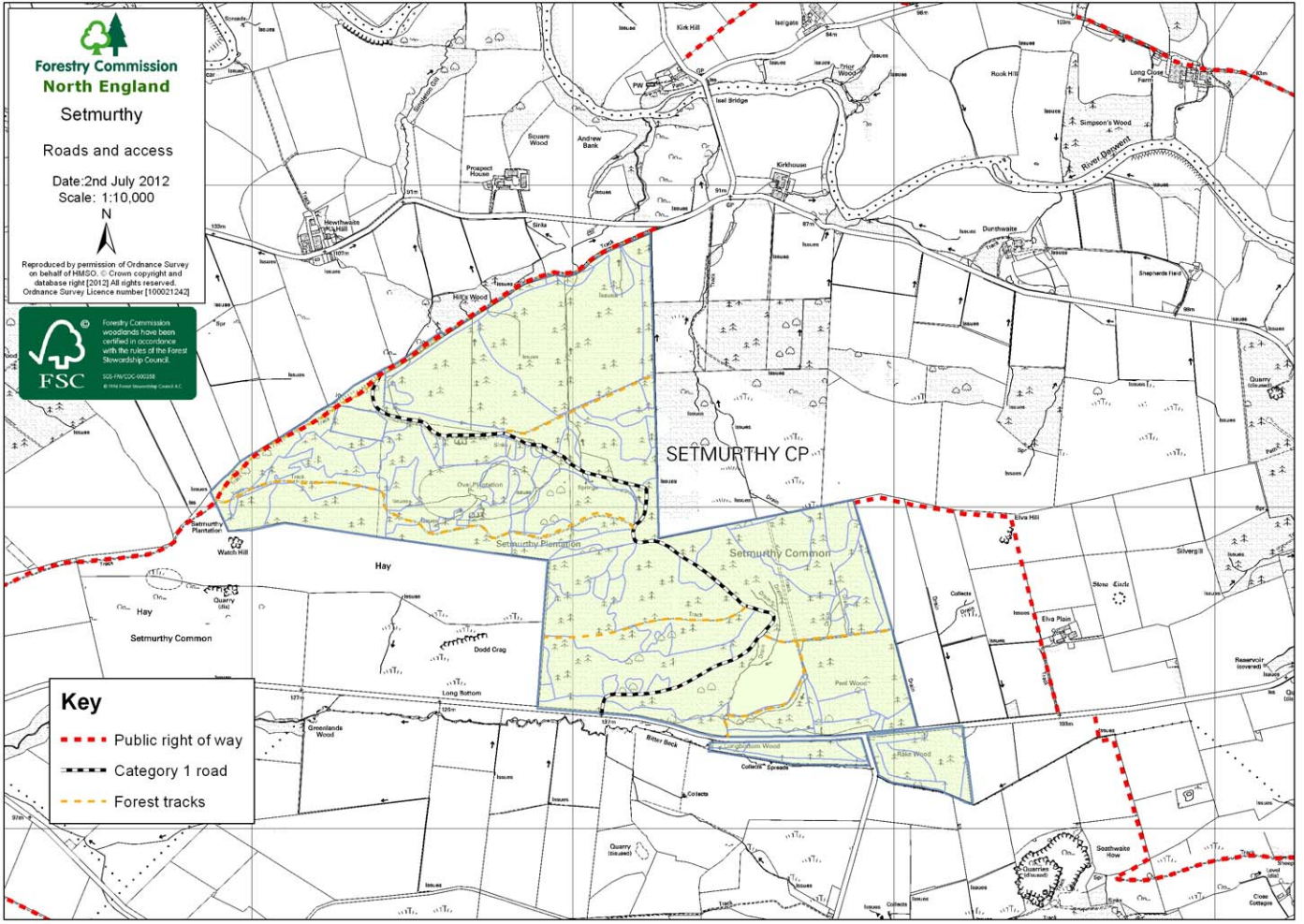
FSC
Note.
DAMS (Detailed Aspect Method) scores are an expression of the windiness of a site. Areas with high DAMS scores are more restricted in the type of management possible.
Key
Contours
DAMS scores
12
13
14
15
16
17
SETMURTHY CP
Higher DAMS scores in this area are also associated with poorer, wetter soils, increasing the risk of windthrow
Hewthwaite Hall
Hill's Wood
Prospect House
Dunthwaite
Rook Hill
Long Close Farm
Setmurthy Plantation
Watch Hill
Hay
Setmurthy Common
Dodd Crag
Long Bottom
Greenlands Wood
Greenlands
Elva Hill
Elva Plain
Cockermouth Golf Course
Bracken Rigg
Club House
Seathwaite How


Forestry Commission
North England
Setmurthy
Roads and access
Date:2nd July 2012
Scale: 1:10,000
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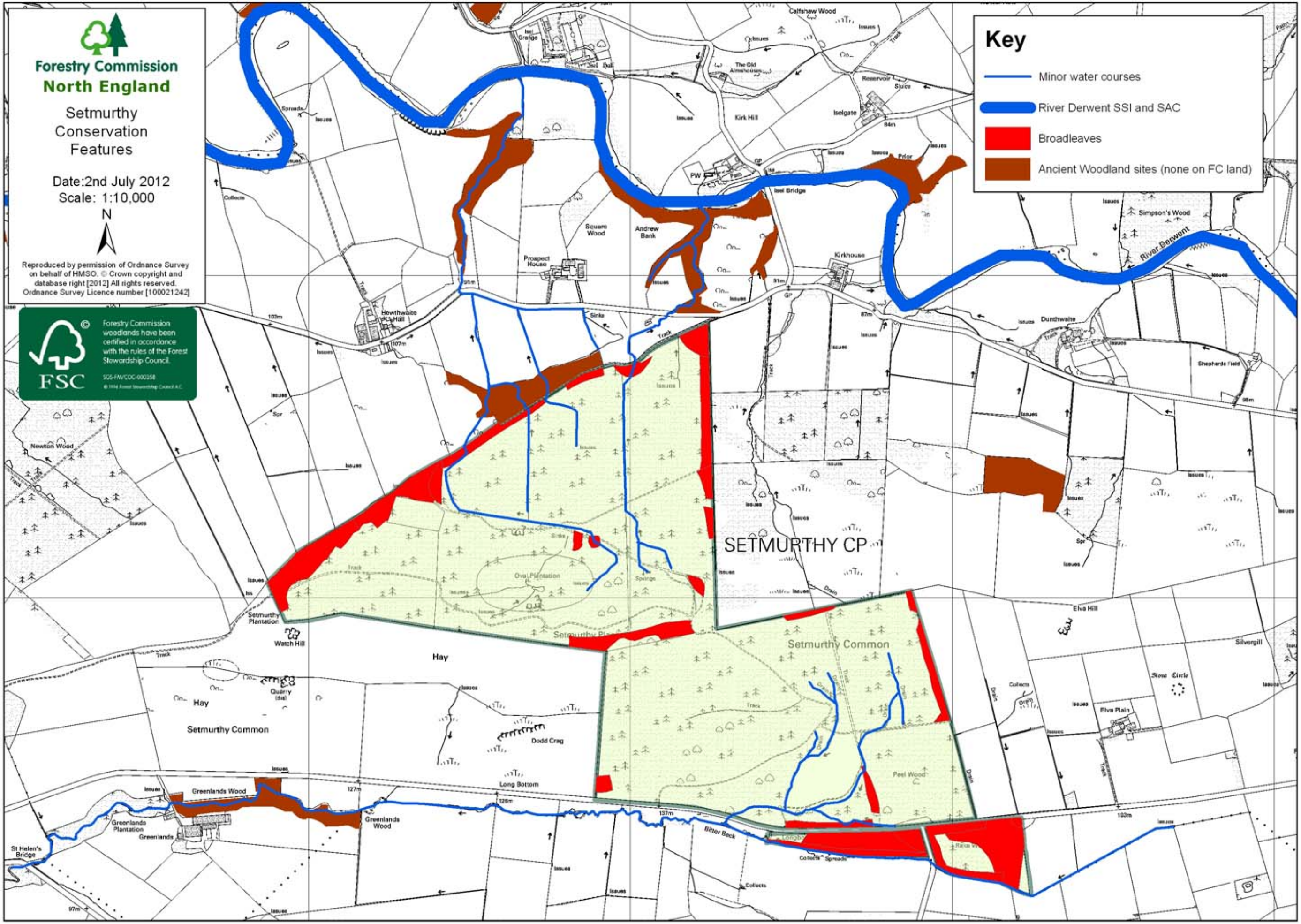
FSC
SETMURTHY CP
Setmurthy Plantation
Setmurthy Common
Key
Public right of way
Category 1 road
Forest tracks


Forestry Commission
North England
Setmurthy Conservation Features
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FSC
Key
Minor water courses
River Derwent SSI and SAC
Broadleaves
Ancient Woodland sites (none on FC land)
SETMURTHY CP
Setmurthy Common
Hay
Watch Hill
Setmurthy Plantation
Oval Plantation
Dodd Crag
Long Bottom
Greenlands Wood
Greenlands Plantation
Greenlands
St Helen's Bridge
Bitter Beck
Peel Wood
Newton Wood
Hewthwaite Hall
Prospect House
Square Wood
Andrew Bank
Kirk Hill
Kirkhouse
Isel Bridge
Iselgate
Reservoir
The Old Almshouses
Calfshaw Wood
Simpson's Wood
River Derwent
Dunthwaite
Shepherds Field
Elva Hill
Elva Plain
Stone Circle
Silvergill
Quarry (dis)


Forestry Commission
North England
Setmurthy
Aerial photograph
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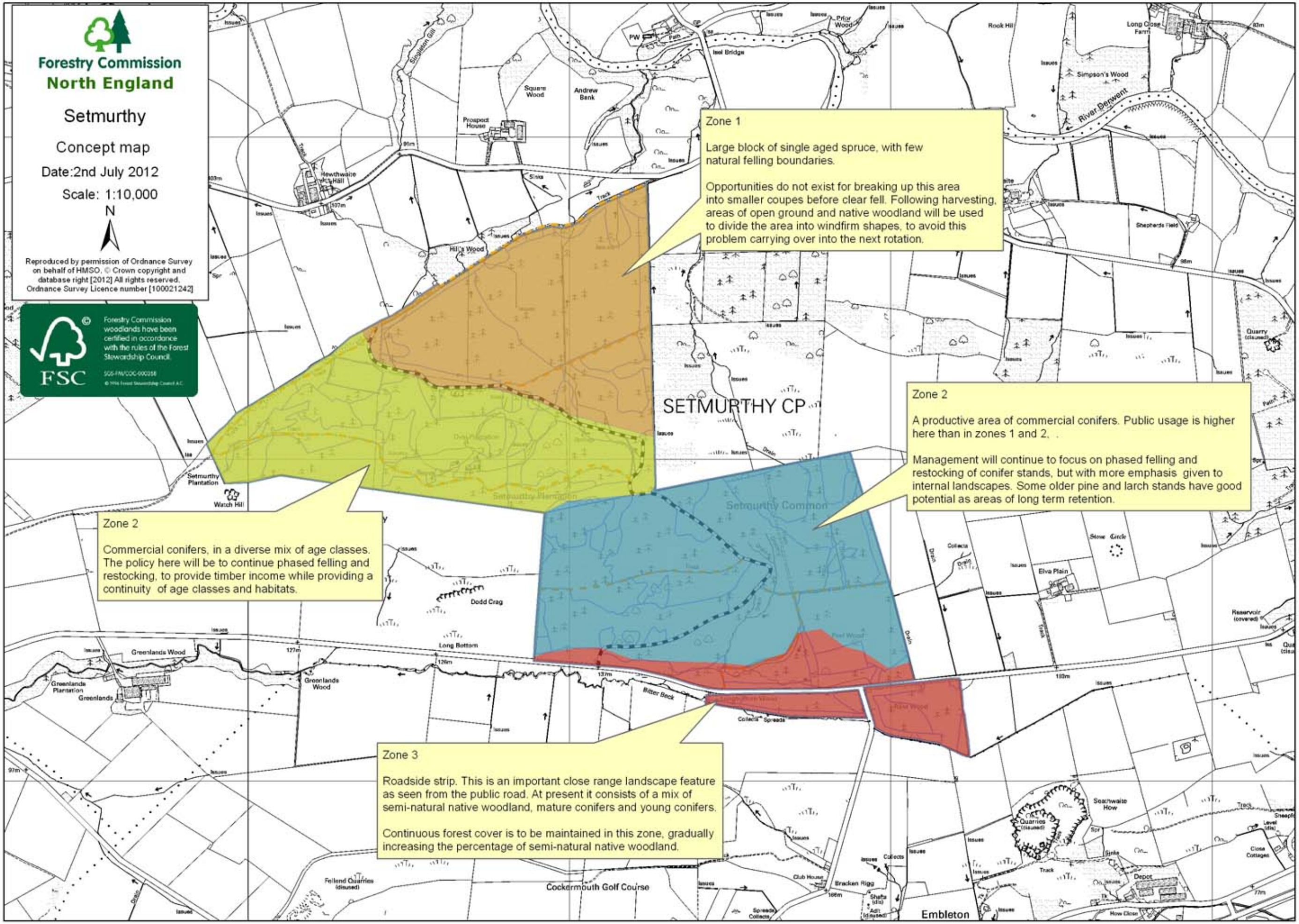
FSC


Forestry Commission
North England
Setmurthy
Concept map
Date:2nd July 2012
Scale: 1:10,000
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FSC
Forestry Commission woodlands have been certified in accordance with the rules of the Forest Stewardship Council.
Zone 1
Large block of single aged spruce, with few natural felling boundaries.
Opportunities do not exist for breaking up this area into smaller coupes before clear fell. Following harvesting, areas of open ground and native woodland will be used to divide the area into windfirm shapes, to avoid this problem carrying over into the next rotation.
Zone 2
A productive area of commercial conifers. Public usage is higher here than in zones 1 and 2, .
Management will continue to focus on phased felling and restocking of conifer stands, but with more emphasis given to internal landscapes. Some older pine and larch stands have good potential as areas of long term retention.
Zone 2
Commercial conifers, in a diverse mix of age classes. The policy here will be to continue phased felling and restocking, to provide timber income while providing a continuity of age classes and habitats.
Zone 3
Roadside strip. This is an important close range landscape feature as seen from the public road. At present it consists of a mix of semi-natural native woodland, mature conifers and young conifers.
Continuous forest cover is to be maintained in this zone, gradually increasing the percentage of semi-natural native woodland.
SETMURTHY CP
Setmurthy Common
Setmurthy Plantation
River Derwent
Isel Bridge
Square Wood
Andrew Bank
Prospect House
Hewthwaite Hall
Hill's Wood
Rook Hill
Long Close Farm
Simpson's Wood
Shepherds Field
Watch Hill
Dodd Crag
Long Bottom
Greenlands Wood
Greenlands Plantation
Greenlands
Bitter Beck
Elva Plain
Stone Circle
Seathwaite How
Cockermouth Golf Course
Fellend Quarries (disused)
Bracken Rigg
Club House
Embleton
Close Cottages
How Close
Depot

Forestry Commission
North England

Setmurthy

Management map

Date:2nd October 2012
Scale: 1:10,000

N

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

FSC

Key

Felling phase

- 2012-2016
- 2017-2021
- 2022-2026
- 2027-2031
- 2032-2036
- 2037-2041
- 2042 - 2046
- 2047 onwards
- Long term retention
- CCF/Min Int

SETMURTHY CP

Setmurthy Common

Hay

Setmurthy Plantation

Watch Hill

Quarry (dis)

Dodd Crag

Long Bottom

Greenlands Wood

Greenlands Plantation

Greenlands

St Helen's Bridge

Bitter Beck

Longbottom Wood

Fellend Quarries (disused)

Cockermouth Golf Course

Club House

Bracken Rigg

Embleton

Seathwaite How

Quarries (disused)

Depot

How Close

How End

Elva Hill

Silvergill

Stone Circle

Elva Plain

Feel Wood

Rake Wood

Square Wood

Andrew Bank

Prospect House

Hewthwaite Hall

Hill's Wood

Isel Bridge

Kirkhouse

Prior Wood

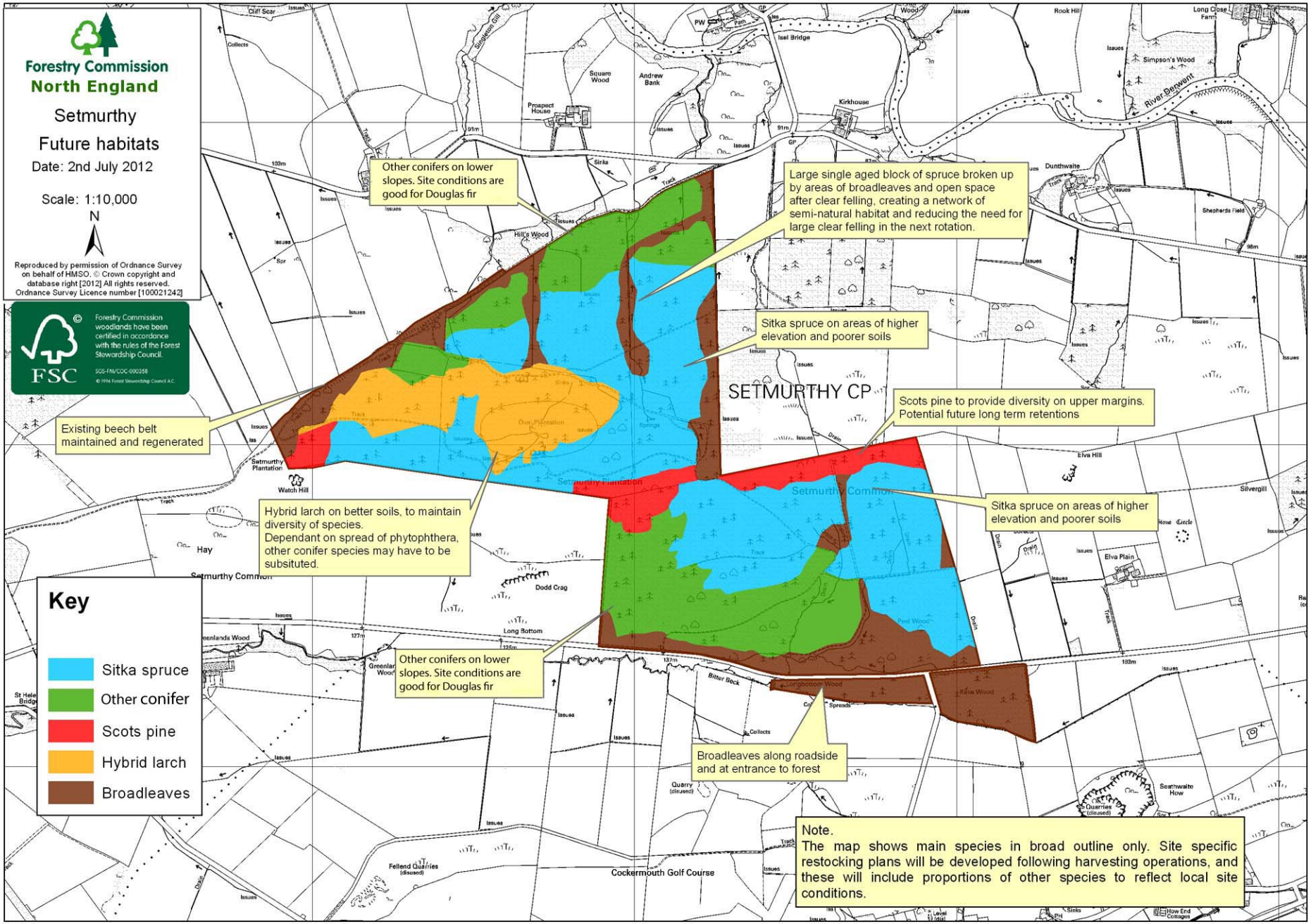
Rook Hill

Long Close Farm

Dunthwaite

Cliff Scar

Singleton Gill


Forestry Commission
North England
Setmurthy
Future habitats
Date: 2nd July 2012
Scale: 1:10,000
N
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SGS-FM/COC-000358
FSC
Other conifers on lower slopes. Site conditions are good for Douglas fir
Large single aged block of spruce broken up by areas of broadleaves and open space after clear felling, creating a network of semi-natural habitat and reducing the need for large clear felling in the next rotation.
Sitka spruce on areas of higher elevation and poorer soils
SETMURTHY CP
Scots pine to provide diversity on upper margins. Potential future long term retentions
Existing beech belt maintained and regenerated
Hybrid larch on better soils, to maintain diversity of species. Dependant on spread of phytophthera, other conifer species may have to be subsituted.
Sitka spruce on areas of higher elevation and poorer soils
Other conifers on lower slopes. Site conditions are good for Douglas fir
Broadleaves along roadside and at entrance to forest
Key
Sitka spruce
Other conifer
Scots pine
Hybrid larch
Broadleaves
Note.
The map shows main species in broad outline only. Site specific restocking plans will be developed following harvesting operations, and these will include proportions of other species to reflect local site conditions.
Cliff Scar
Singleton Gill
Isel Bridge
Square Wood
Andrew Bank
Prospect House
Kirkhouse
River Derwent
Simpson's Wood
Rook Hill
Long Close Farm
Dunthwaite
Shepherds Field
Hill's Wood
Sitka
Setmurthy Plantation
Watch Hill
Oval Plantation
Setmurthy Common
Elva Hill
Silvergill
Elva Plain
Hay
Dodd Crag
Long Bottom
Greenlands Wood
Bitter Beck
Longbottom Wood
Pool Wood
Quarry (disused)
Seathwaite How
Quarries (disused)
Fellend Quarries (disused)
Cockermouth Golf Course
How End Cottages

Consultation Record, Setmurthy Forest Design Plan Resubmission, 2012			
Consultee	**How and when consulted**	**Comments**	**FD response and action**
Marina Ramsden, Lake District National Park	Email, with PDF version of plan 16th August 2012 Requested confirmation of receipt 23rd August 2012	Confirmed receipt	
Jack Ellerby, Friends of the Lake District	Email, with PDF version of plan 16th August 2012	Mike The Plan looks fine. Adrian showed us around last year so I know the wood reasonably well. In 2002 Ian Brodie, who led on Forestry for FLD before myself, made the following comment in 2002: "We would like to see the design of the summit ridge given more attention. We would suggest that the ridge be left clear of trees whilst avoiding a straight top edge. This could be largely achieved based on no planting above the 230m contour." I'm not suggesting you follow this to the letter but it does highlight us thinking about the upper ridge from external views as the forest develops. Many thanks for consulting us. Best wishes. Jack	Agreed to look at this, to see how far this suggestion could be accommodated in the plan. The following text was added: Part 1. " In the consultation for the 2002 review, the skyline ridge was identified as a potential landscape issue. Since then, some felling has taken place in this area, with the restocking including more open space and more diversity of species." Objectives: Improvement of the landscape by diversifying the skyline ridge Part 4 (restocking): To break up the skyline ridge by introducing more open space, Scots pine and broadleaves, to replace the current straight edge of spruce
John Garner, Natural England	Email, with PDF version of plan. 17th August 2012	Hi Mike Many thanks for that. I may be at too early a stage but the only comment I'd make is that it could be good to mention something regarding the prevention of physical damage and/or sedimentation in the small watercourses. Please feel free to shoot me down! Cheers, John	Agreed to add this into the plan. The following text was added to the criteria for success in Part 5: "Harvesting operations are managed so as to prevent physical damage and sedimentation of the small watercourses"
Sheila Brown, Cockermouth Town Council	Email, with PDF version of plan 16th August 2012	Confirmed receipt	
D Smith, Embleton & District Parish Council	Email, with PDF version of plan 16th August 2012	No response	