

Part 1: Introduction and the Fifty Year Vision for the Wyre Forest



View across the Wyre Forest: Phil Rudlin

The Wyre Forest is England's largest contiguous ancient woodland, stretching across the Shropshire - Worcestershire border in the Severn Valley. This management plan represents a new episode in the story of the forest, bringing together the land managed by the Forestry Commission and Natural England for the first time in a single comprehensive management plan.

The plan seeks to bring together the best elements of the Forest Design, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserve (NNR) management planning processes to create a plan which details both the forestry and conservation management of the forest.

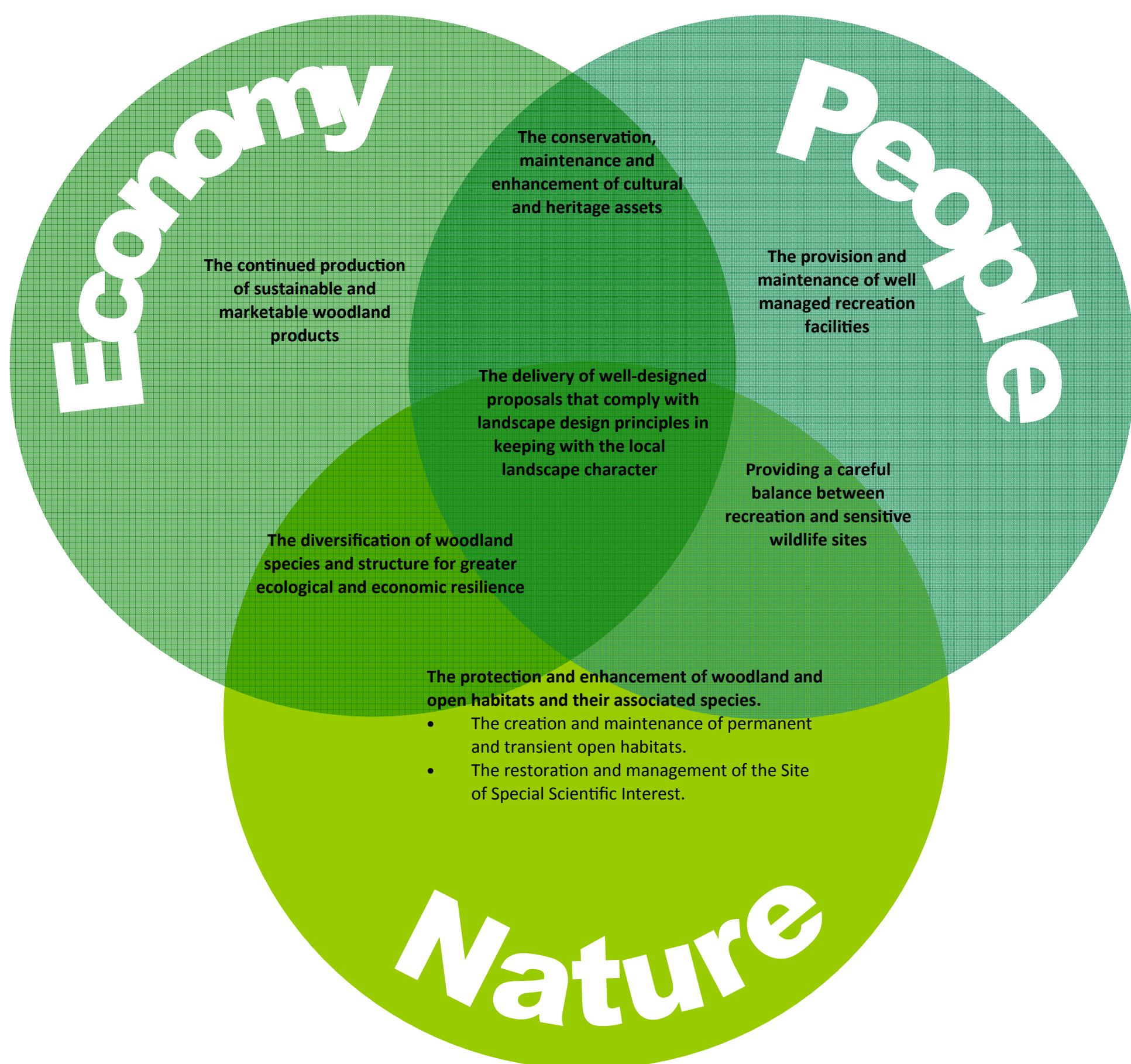
The Plan has been supported and influenced by the Wyre Forest Landscape Partnership (WFLP), a body representing a number of local partners committed to creating a sustainable landscape for everyone to enjoy, and responsible for developing the 50 year vision for the Wyre Forest.

This management plan covers the first ten years of that 50 year period and sets a new direction for the Wyre Forest.

The plan will be supported by a formal agreement between the Forestry Commission and Natural England which will provide a framework for joint working between the two organisations and their staff teams in the Wyre Forest on the delivery of this management plan.

The plan will be further supported by the re-declaration of the Wyre Forest National Nature Reserve to cover the full extent of the forest covered by this plan, creating England's largest woodland NNR.

1.1 Wyre Forest NNR and Forest Plan - Objectives



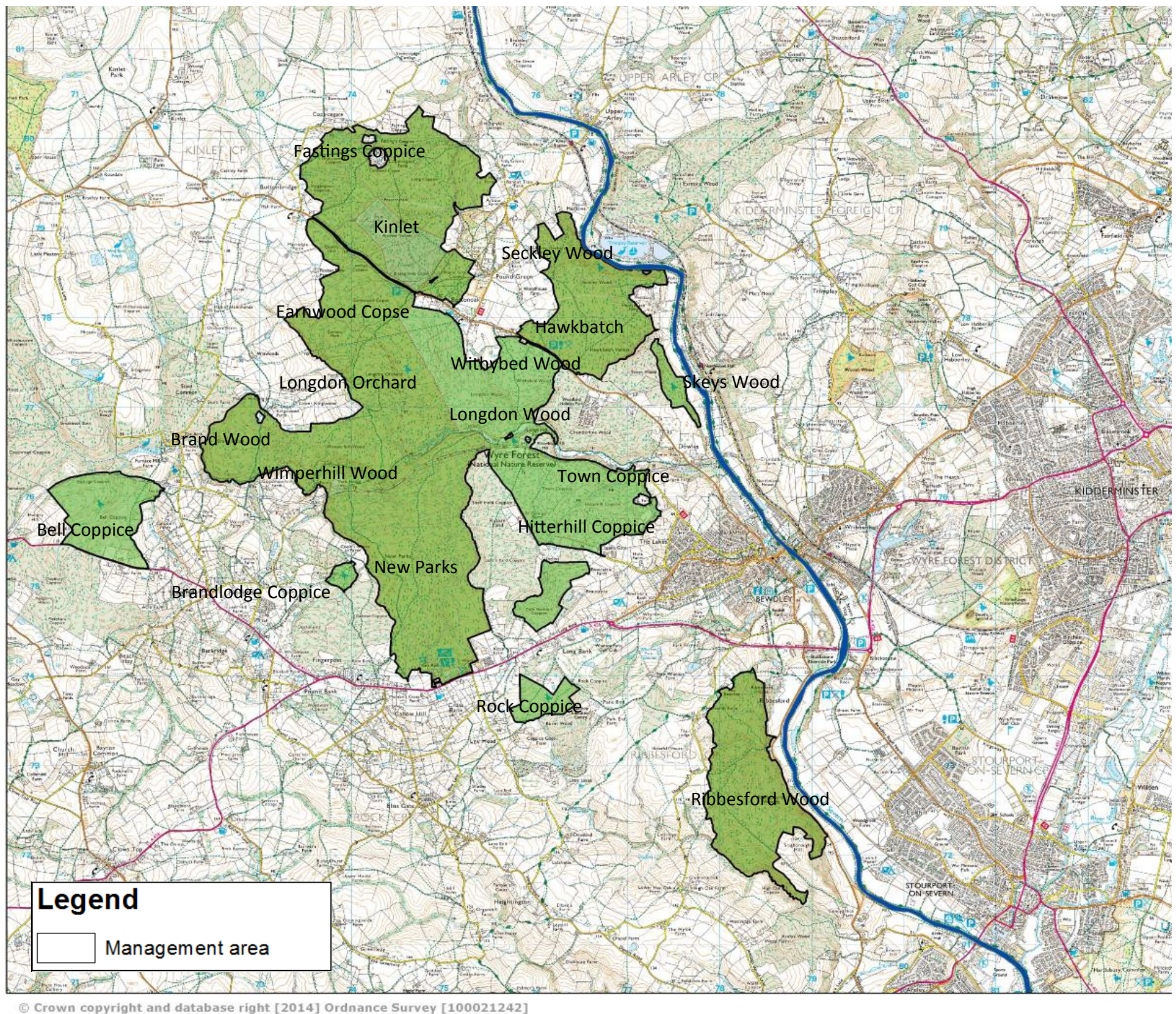
The objectives of this management plan will help to deliver the Natural England Regional Delivery Plan, which prioritises the Wyre Forest as a landscape scale focus area. It will also help to deliver the Forestry Commission West England Forest District Strategic Plan (2013a) and the National Strategic Plan for the Public Forest Estate in England (2013b).

The actions within this management plan will also contribute towards the England Biodiversity Strategy priority habitat and SSSI targets.

Sustainable management of the woodland will be to the standards required to maintain Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification) accreditation and therefore must deliver economic, environmental and social objectives.

The meeting and monitoring of these objectives is outlined in Appendix 5.

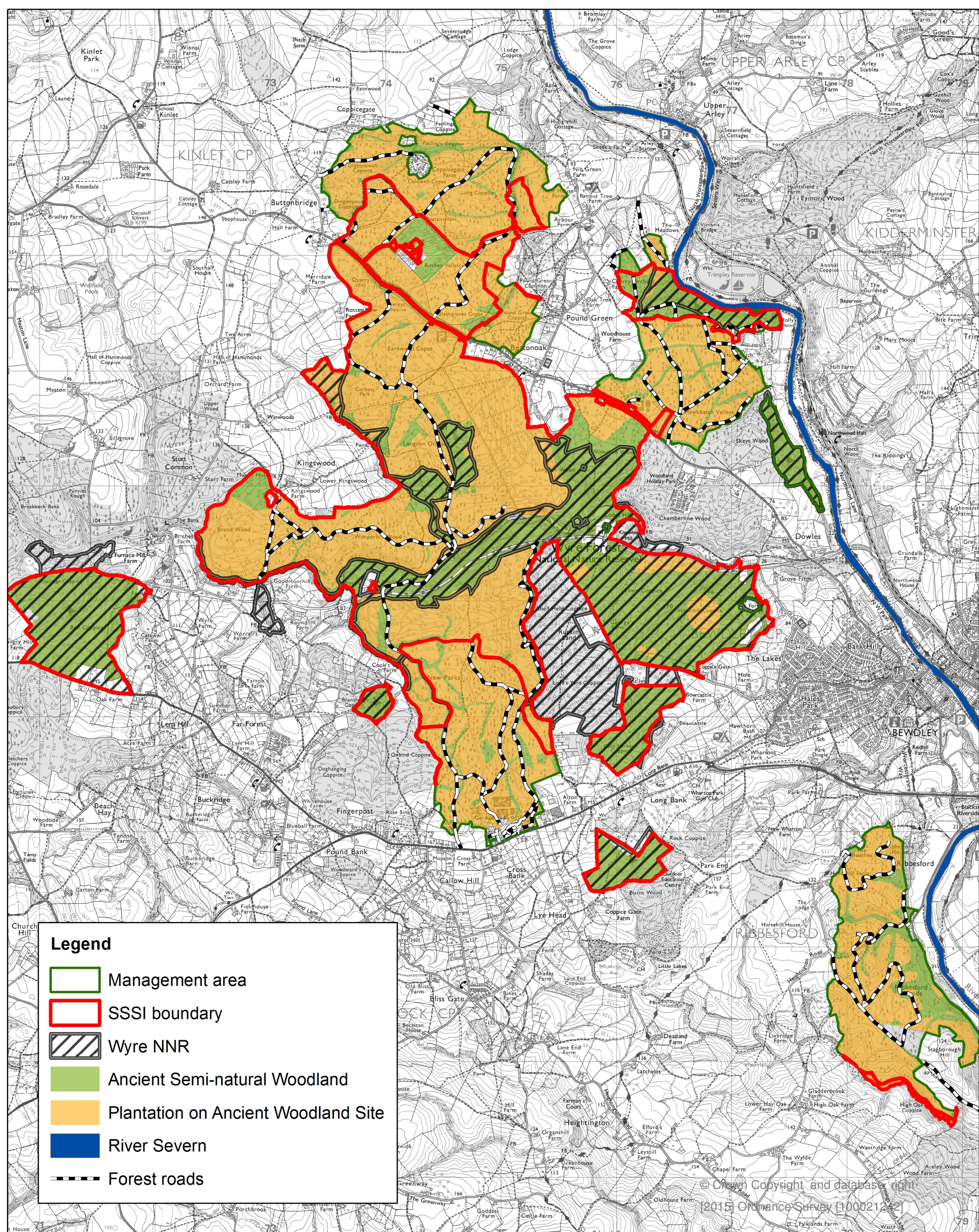
1.2 Wyre Management Area: Location and Context



The Wyre Forest is located to the west of the town of Bewdley on the Shropshire and Worcestershire border in the West Midlands. National Grid Reference SO744765.

The 10 year management plan covers a total of 1654 hectares of land, all currently managed by Natural England and Forestry Commission England under both freehold and leasehold arrangements (see Appendix 1—Tenure and Management Agreements).

1.3 Wyre Forest Designations and Ancient Woodland Status



1.4 Fifty Year Vision for the Wyre Forest

“The Wyre Forest is mostly ancient woodland: 2400 hectares of it – the largest contiguous forest of that kind in the whole of England. Though there were trees here before there were human beings, the forest we know today is the product of our history. Landscapes change, particularly when people manage them. We will manage this one by caring for wildlife in all its diversity and encouraging a flourishing woodland economy. The forest of the future will be nourished by its past; it will weave together a range of communities and different sorts of landscape. We want it to be, in the words of John Ruskin, ‘beautiful, peaceful, and fruitful’. We want it to generate wealth, serve the needs of visitors seeking refreshment, and resonate in human memory.

The Forest will have been recognised as one of England’s most important ancient woodlands. The Wyre will have adapted structurally to a changing climate within an inspirational 21st-century woodland landscape meeting society’s needs and carbon targets.

Wyre will evoke a powerful sense of place and this will be celebrated by the communities and people of the Forest, and shared by visitors who value the special qualities. There will be a recognition that the landscape of Wyre Forest and its setting is highly distinctive, diverse and culturally complex. The story of Wyre will be ingrained in its landscape and will be written by the generations to come.

The forest will have a more natural woodland landscape, managed to increase the diversity of tree species characteristic of the ancient woodland of Wyre with a varied age structure from young saplings to aging veterans

A rich mosaic of woodland and well-connected open habitats will have been developed, incorporating meadows and orchards, patches of heathland and a network of ‘rides’ through the forest.

Populations of key woodland species will have been secured. Habitat management and species introductions will have allowed for species migration in response to changes in climate. Re-introductions of key species will have contributed to the natural processes of the woodland.

The people and communities of the Wyre Forest will understand, recognise and celebrate the national significance and value of the Forest and will have opportunities to become involved in its maintenance and development. It will be a core part of their quality of life, enhancing health and wellbeing.

A vibrant woodland enterprise culture will support and complement Wyre’s landscape, turning its timber into a diverse range of products needed and valued by society.

The Wyre Forest will be an excellent place to visit, with great facilities and activities designed for its core family audience. Interactive and stimulating information about the Forest, its landscape and wildlife will be easily accessible.

The Wyre Forest will be widely known as a distinctive destination complementing Cleobury Country and the Severn Valley. Wyre will have a national reputation for high quality tourism, food and local products derived from the woodland and surrounding landscapes.

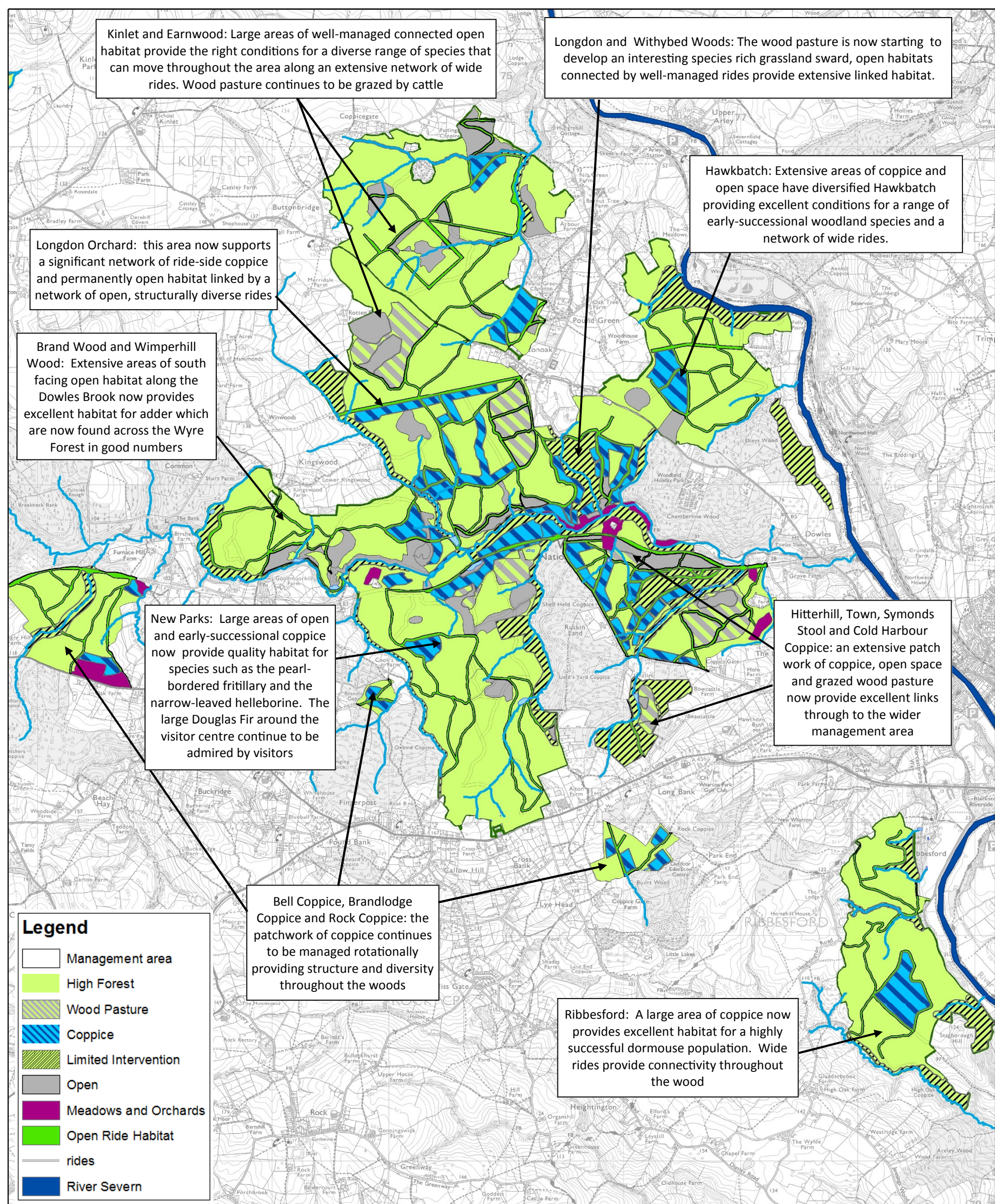
The Wyre Forest will be recognised as a significant national centre for woodland learning, research and monitoring, supporting formal and informal learning and skills development in all its forms, underpinned by a deep evidence base”.

Achieving this fifty year vision will depend on carefully planned and implemented woodland management to bring about gradual changes to the structure and composition of the Wyre Forest. The following maps illustrate the result of this woodland management and provide an understanding of how the forest will look in 2066.

The first map shows the diverse range of well-connected habitats that will be present within the Wyre Forest in 2066 - a mixture of high forest interspersed with extensive areas of more open habitat including lowland heathland and wood pasture connected by a network of species-rich open rides, railways and rotational coppice.

The second map illustrates the composition of the forest in 2066 showing the significant increases in native ancient semi-natural woodland that will have taken place through the gradual felling of non-native species such as beech and conifer since 2016 and the start of this 10 year management plan.

1.4.1 Fifty Year Vision for the Wyre: Habitats



1.4.2 Fifty Year Vision for the Wyre: Woodland Composition

