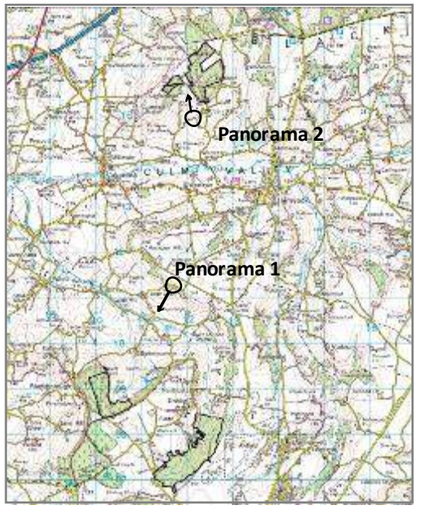
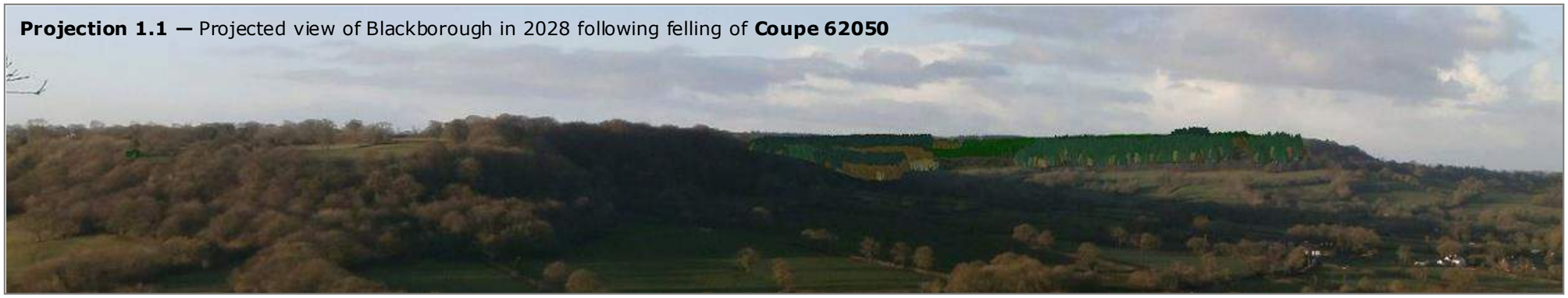
Landscape Analysis

The proposed felling and restocking of coupes has been analysed from a number of significant viewpoints. These viewpoints have been identified because of the amount of foot and vehicle traffic they experience and the influence the forest has at these locations. Given the nature of the landscape around the Plan area, there are minimal settlements from which the Forest Plan area can be seen. The majority landscape analyses have been done along highpoints of these roads.



Panorama 1— Current view of Blackborough in 2018 with model overlaid



Projection 1.1 — Projected view of Blackborough in 2028 following felling of **Coupe 62050**

Panorama 2— Current view of Culm Davy in 2018 with model overlaid

Projection 2.1 — Projected view of Culm Davy in 2019 following felling of **Coupe 62069**

Projection 2.2 — Projected view of Culm Davy in 2028 following felling of **Coupe 62063**

Landscape Analysis

Panorama 3— Current view of Buckland in 2018 with model overlaid

Projection 3.1 — Projected view of Buckland in 2028 following felling of **Coupe 62998**

Panorama 4— Current view of Priors Park in 2018 with model overlaid

Projection 4.1 — Projected view of Priors Park in 2028 following felling of **Coupe 62994**

Water & Riparian Management

Riparian Management

All watercourses and riverine areas will be management sensitively to protect and enhance water and soil quality in line with best practice. Riparian zones will be developed to create and maintain areas of up to 50% continuous forest cover through gradual regeneration or enrichment with site appropriate tree species, such as *Alnus, Salix* and *Ulmus* spp. A gradual change to this type of wet woodland habitat through coppicing at the time of intervention (usually clearfell), will create a environment of dappled shade with good light penetration and aeration as well as buffer the riverine systems from forestry operations.

Clearfells within the area have been designed and phased to minimise surface water runoff and soil erosion ensuring the riverine systems and SSSI are protected and improved into the future. All felling and restocking operations will work within the guidelines set out in UKFS, Forests and Water with the aim of developing further riparian areas at the time of intervention to stimulate native species regeneration.

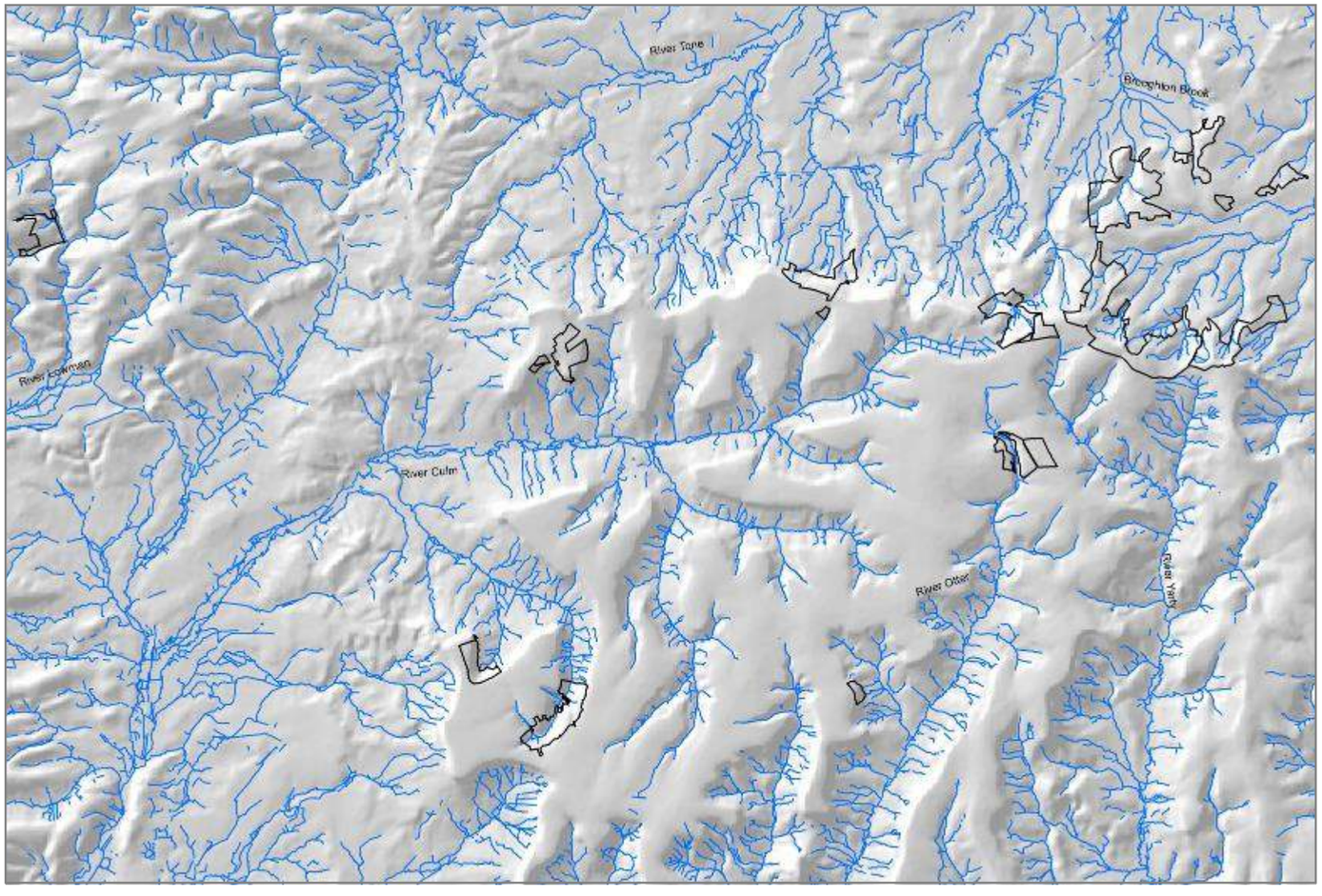
The Blackdown Hills Plan area is a positive component of rivers Culm, Otter and Tone catchments through soil stabilisation and surface runoff, retaining forest cover and a move towards continuous cover systems together with maintained drains and water storage will ensure this continues to slow down peak flows into the future. As such the Forestry Commission is an important stakeholder in the Somerset Catchment Partnership aimed at a sustainable approach to water and land use management that, wherever possible.

South West Catchment District

Just over 3 million people live in the South West River Basin District. The economy is dominated by the service sector, and each year millions of visitors to the district make a vital contribution to the economy. However, the resulting seasonal fluctuations in population bring challenges for protecting the water environment, especially in coastal areas.

The district has a huge network of internationally, nationally and locally recognised wildlife sites, from the uplands of Dartmoor and Exmoor and outstanding rivers such as the Camel and Hampshire Avon, to the fantastic estuaries and coastline. There are two national parks, and the Jurassic Coast in Devon and Dorset is the only natural world heritage site in England.

The farming and land management sector has a big role in looking after and improving the quality of the rural environment. Agriculture accounts for approximately three quarters of the land area in the South West River Basin District.



0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

East Devon Basin

This catchment is characterised by diverse habitats ranging from the moorland of Exmoor National Park at the headwaters of the River Exe, to the Exe Estuary at Exmouth, the gateway to the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

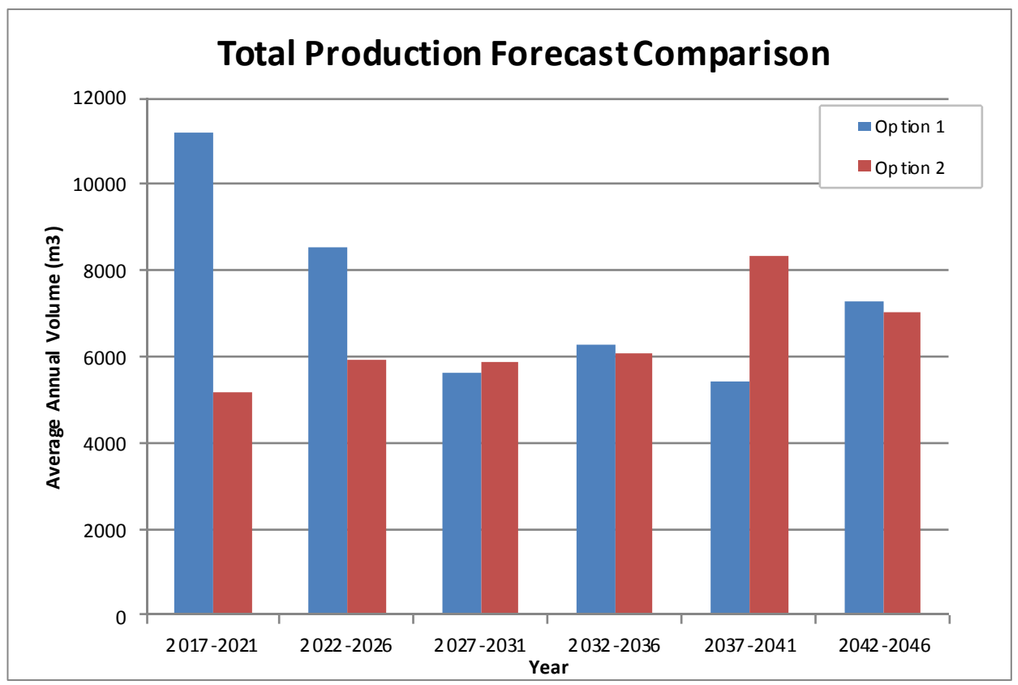
There are 103 river water bodies in the catchment, with a combined length of almost 1050 km, and four lakes. Currently, 27 per cent of surface waters (260 km or 25 per cent of river length and three or 75 per cent of the lakes) achieve good or better ecological status/potential. Waters at good status now include the Lowman, part of the Otter and large parts of the Exe catchment.

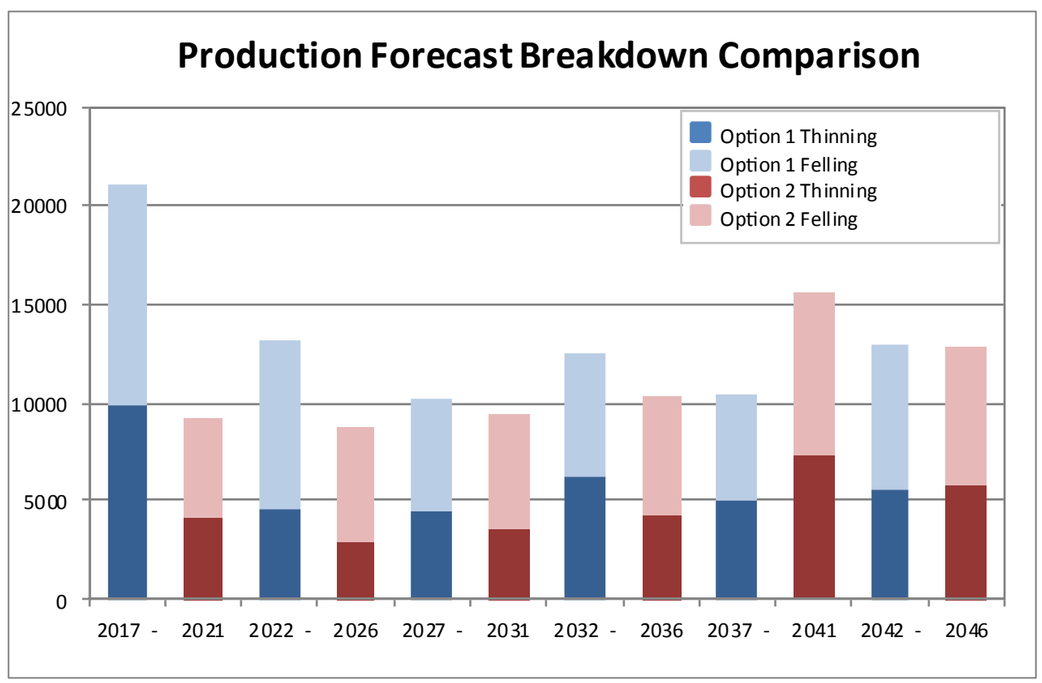
The main reasons for less than good status are, in order, impacted fish communities, high levels of phosphate, impacted diatom communities and physical modification. 33 per cent of waters assessed are at good or high biological status now.

APPENDIX 2 -

Option Testing

Option 1 – Current Forest Plan (Master)	Option 2 – Proposed Forest Plan (Scenario)
The protection and enhancement of woodland and open habitats and their associated species. **- The restoration and management of the Site of Special Scientific Interest.** **- To protect and enhance areas of Ancient Semi-natural Woodland and restore areas of PAWs in line with 'Keepers of Time'.**	
Acknowledgement is made of the need to restore ancient woodland and SSSI. Restoration would be achieved through a mixture of clear felling and restocking, and group selection through natural regeneration over a short period.	The Plan integrates SSSI and PAWS management. A clear strategy for PAWS restoration through thinning and felling of threats and native species enhancement will ensure a proactive restoration of the SSSI and ancient woodland will occur over time.
Deliver well-designed forests that both protect and enhance the internal and external landscape in keeping with the AONB and local landscape character.	
The proposals consider the landscape context but do not demonstrate delivery of high quality, well design forests both internally and externally.	The majority of stands have been moved to CCF and where appropriate these have been altered in an attempt to extend rotations and address wind issues. This has then been modelled to ensure proposals contribute to a high value landscape. Coppicing is a key component to retain high landscape value.
The continued production of sustainable and marketable woodland products.	
The production of timber is somewhat reliant on volume resulting from clearfelling. This felling programme experiences considerable peaks and troughs, not least in the next 5 years. This combines together to make a less sustainable production model for woodland products.	The Plan attempts to spread the production over a longer period by extending rotations and moving towards CCF where appropriate.
To conserve, maintain and enhance cultural and heritage assets.	
The Plan makes minimal reference to location and importance of cultural landscape and heritage assets.	The Plan looks to integrate scheduled and unscheduled heritage assets into management as well as considering the cultural significance of the landscape and forests role within this.
The provision and maintenance of recreation facilities.	
The Plan acknowledges the role of informal recreation and public rights of way.	The Plan acknowledges the role of informal and formal recreation and public rights of way as well as the role Neroche has to play in the social context given recent projects to engage with the community and its proximity to Taunton.





Coupe Prescriptions

Detailed coupe prescriptions as a result of felling and restocking 2018-28 as outlined on pages 23-28.

	Coupe	Area (ha)	Existing Crop	Rationale/Prescription	Restock	Area (ha)	Restock Proportion	Rationale/Prescription
Neorche	**62996**	2.91	Mixed AH, AR & HAZ	Coppice felling of hazel and ash as well as targeted removal of NS, particularly along ride and river sides will enhance the species and structural diversity of the woodland and **Prior's Park and Adcombe Wood SSSI.**	**62996a**	2.91	100% Native broadleaf	Coppice regrowth of hazel and ash will enhance the structural diversity of the woodland and provide additional habitat to the designated features with the anticipated affect of this will be to move the SSSI to 'favourable' condition.
	62995	1.63	Mixed AH, AR & HAZ	Coppice felling of hazel and ash as well as targeted removal of NS, particularly along ride and river sides will enhance the species and structural diversity of the woodland and **Prior's Park and Adcombe Wood SSSI.**	**62995a**	1.63	100% Native broadleaf	Coppice regrowth of hazel and ash will enhance the structural diversity of the woodland and provide additional habitat to the designated features with the anticipated affect of this will be to move the SSSI to 'favourable' condition.
	62994	9.3	p.64 SS	Stand is well thinned and nearing economic maturity. With the high road frontage, poor access and high landscape impact mean continued thinning to CCF is not feasible with clearfell the most appropriate form of felling with coupe design integral to success.	**69994a**	9.3	100% Evergreen conifer	Site is rich, wet and exposed. So restock design will need to be robust to enable efficient access and production but sympathetic to the sites complexities. Consider Scots pine, Leyland cypress, aspen and Sitka spruce.
	62988	10.6	p.68 NS	Spruce is underthinned, nearing terminal height and therefore at increasing risk of windblow. Gradual restoration to native woodland is not feasible.	**62988a**	10.6	100% Native broadleaf	Restocking should look to build on the structure and lessons of adjacent cluster planting from 2016. Using NVC type and site indicators as a guide native woodland restoration should be through a mixture of planting and natural regeneration. Consider planting oak, wild service and field maple.
Buckland	**62998**	1.7	p.69 WH	Western hemlock is seeding in ancient woodland threatening restoration potential into the future. Although not yet, if allowed to perpetuate this coupe could also seed into SAC and threaten conservation status. Therefore a buffer clearfell of the SAC is appropriate, with heavy thinning of remaining WH also advocated.	**62998a**	1.7	100% Native broadleaf	Using NVC type and site indicators as a guide native woodland restoration should be pursued through a mixture of planting and natural regeneration. Consider planting oak, wild service and field maple.
Culm Davy	**62069**	3.8	p.78 WH	Mature conifer crop is on the windward edge and seeding freely into the surrounding area. Continued thinning will only perpetuate further colonisation with hemlock. Retain broadleaves where viable.	**62069a**	3.8	80% Evergreen conifer 20% Native broadleaf	Ground is mildly richer and better drained when compared with surrounding areas. However soils remain thin and to create convergence between heath and wooded agricultural areas a mixture of pine and broadleaf species should be used. Consider Scots pine, aspen, oak or beech.
	62063	3.7	p.78 WH	Mature conifer crop is on the windward edge and seeding freely into the surrounding area. Continued thinning will only perpetuate further colonisation with hemlock. Retain broadleaves where viable.	**62063a**	3.7	80% Evergreen conifer 20% Native broadleaf	Soils remain thin and to create convergence between heath and wooded agricultural areas a mixture of pine and broadleaf species should be used. Consider Scots pine, aspen, oak or beech.
Sheldon & Blackborough	**62058**	4.0	p.79 HL	Stand is well thinned and nearing economic maturity. With the disease risk and poor access mean continued thinning to CCF is not feasible with clearfell is the most appropriate form of felling with coupe design integral to success.	**62058a**	4.0	100% Evergreen conifer	Site is fairly rich, wet and exposed. So restock design will need to be robust to enable efficient access and production but sympathetic to the sites complexities and high landscape profile. Consider Scots pine and Douglas fir.
	62062	5.3	p.68 JL p.69 NS p.79 LC	Stand is well thinned and at economic maturity. With poor access, wet site conditions and unsuitable species on site for the future continued thinning to CCF is not feasible. Adjacent crop is to be felled in previous period and will need to reach 2 metres in height prior to felling.	**62062a**	5.3	100% Evergreen conifer	Site is relatively acidic and wet with soils thin somewhat limiting conifer species choice. Consider Scots pine, Sitka spruce and Noble fir.
	62050	2.2	p.56 NS p.56 SS	Stand is well thinned and at economic maturity. With poor access and unsuitable species on site for the future, continued thinning to CCF is not feasible with clearfell is the most appropriate form of felling to aid thinning of the wider forest.	**62050a**	2.2	100% Evergreen conifer	Site is rich and well drained and continued conifer production should be pursued. Restock design will need to be sympathetic to the sites high landscape profile. Consider Scots pine, Sitka spruce and Douglas fir.
Otterford	**62171**	4.1	p.78 LP	Seed stand is now defunct and offers limited further yield due to previous management and *Dothistroma* needle blight infection.	**62171a**	4.1	100% Evergreen conifer	Site is relatively acidic and wet with soils thin somewhat limiting species choice. Consider Scots pine, Sitka spruce with aspen to soften edges.
	62999	3.2	p.78 LP	Seed stand is now defunct and offers limited further yield due to previous management and *Dothistroma* needle blight infection.	**62999a**	3.2	100% Evergreen conifer	Site is relatively acidic and wet with soils thin somewhat limiting species choice. Consider Scots pine, Sitka spruce with aspen to soften edges.
	62048	4.4	p.78 WH p.78 DF p.78 JL	Crop has now reach economic maturity and is not suitable for transformation to CCF due to limited access, thin and waterlogged soils and exposed edges.	**62048a**	4.4	100% Evergreen conifer	Site is relatively acidic and wet with soils thin somewhat limiting species choice. Consider Scots pine, Sitka spruce with aspen to soften edges.
Hunstham	**62070**	6.7	p.59 DF p.67 JL	Crop has now reach economic maturity and is not suitable for transformation to CCF due to limited access, thin and waterlogged soils and exposed edges.	**62070a**	6.7	100% Evergreen conifer	Site is rich and relatively wet so restock design will need to be robust to enable efficient access and production but sympathetic to the sites complexities . Consider Scots pine, Sitka spruce and Douglas fir.
	62005	7.3	p.59 DF	Crop has now reach economic maturity and is not suitable for transformation to CCF due to limited access and exposed edges.	**62005a**	7.3	100% Evergreen conifer	Site is rich and relatively wet and continued conifer production should be pursued. So restock design will need to be robust to enable efficient access and production but sympathetic to the sites complexities and high landscape profile. Consider Scots pine, Sitka spruce and Douglas fir.

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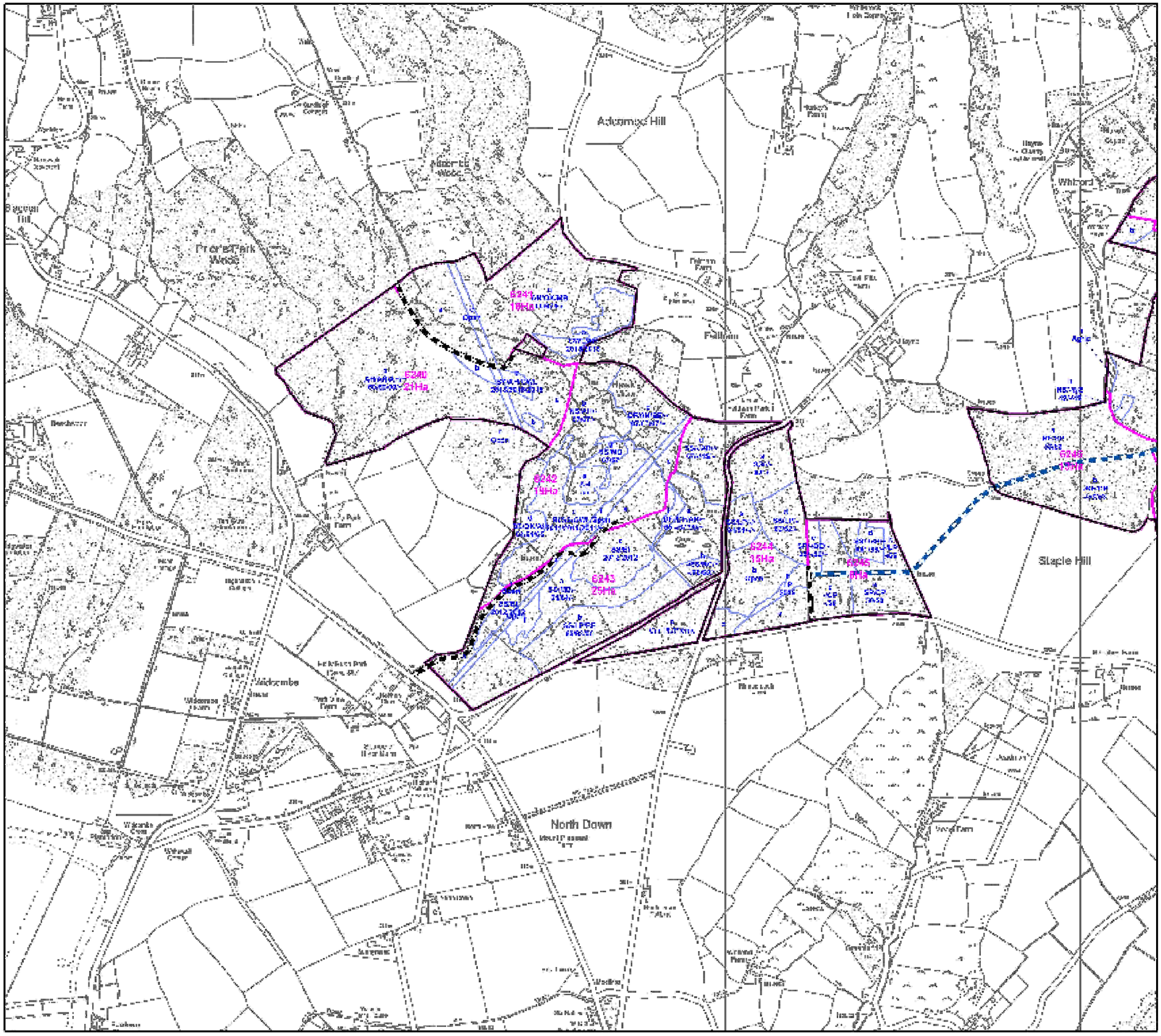
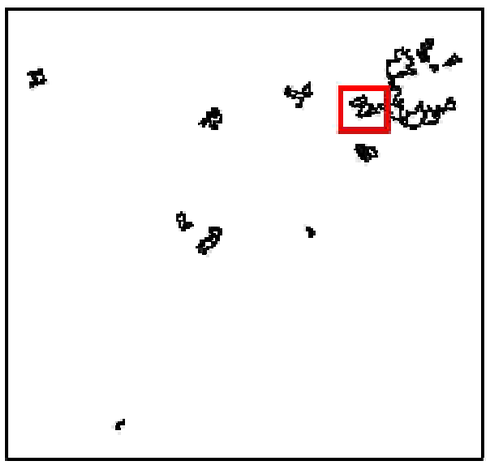
Prior Park





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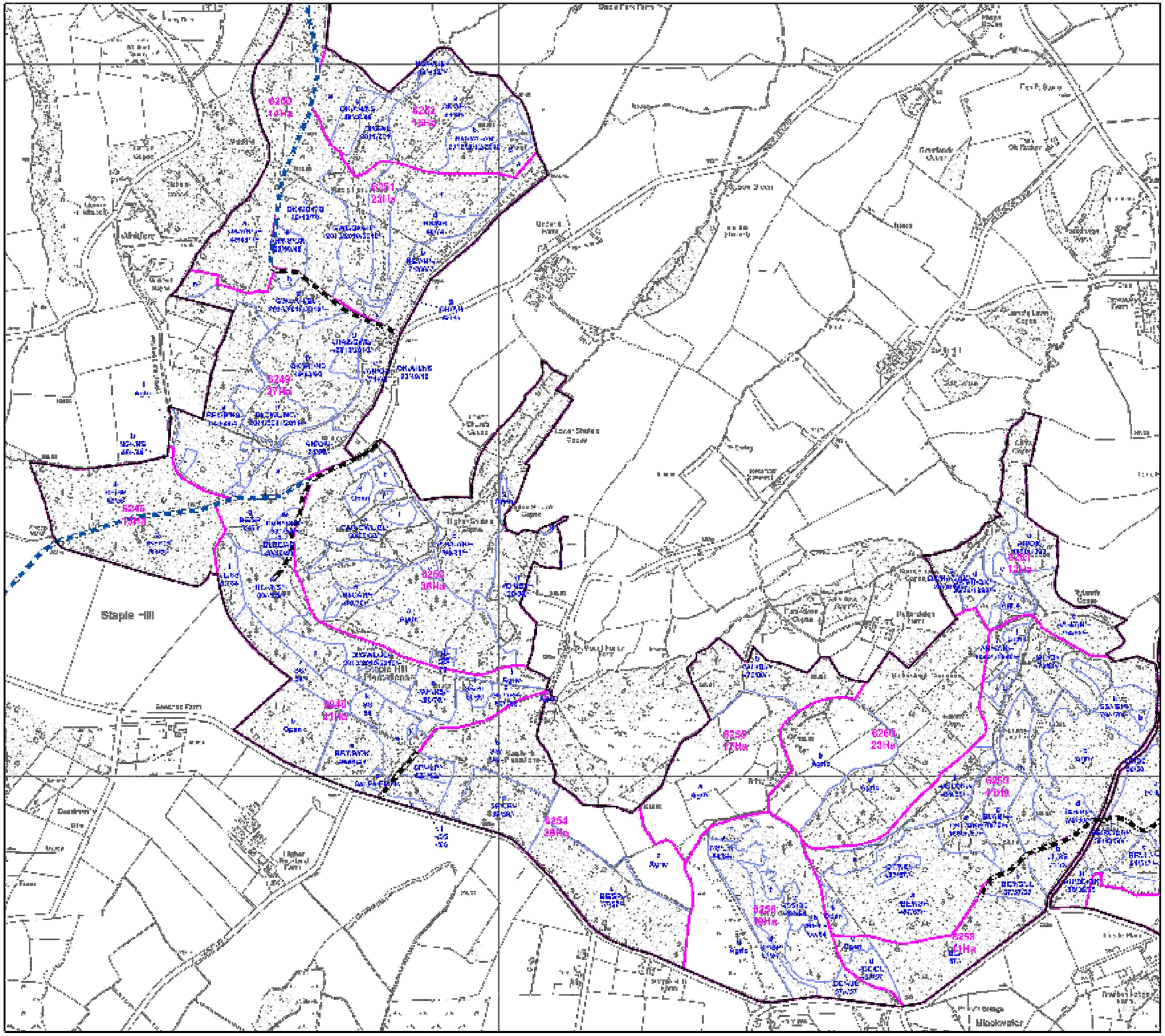
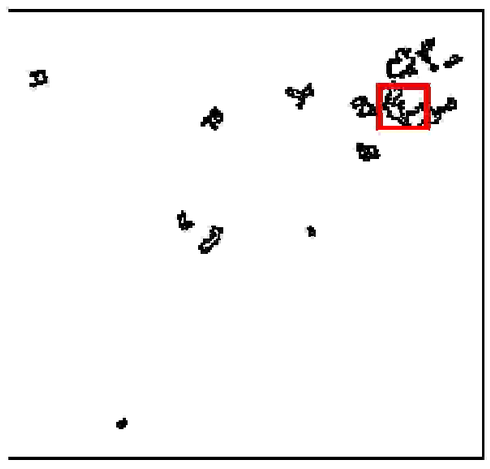
Neroche — West





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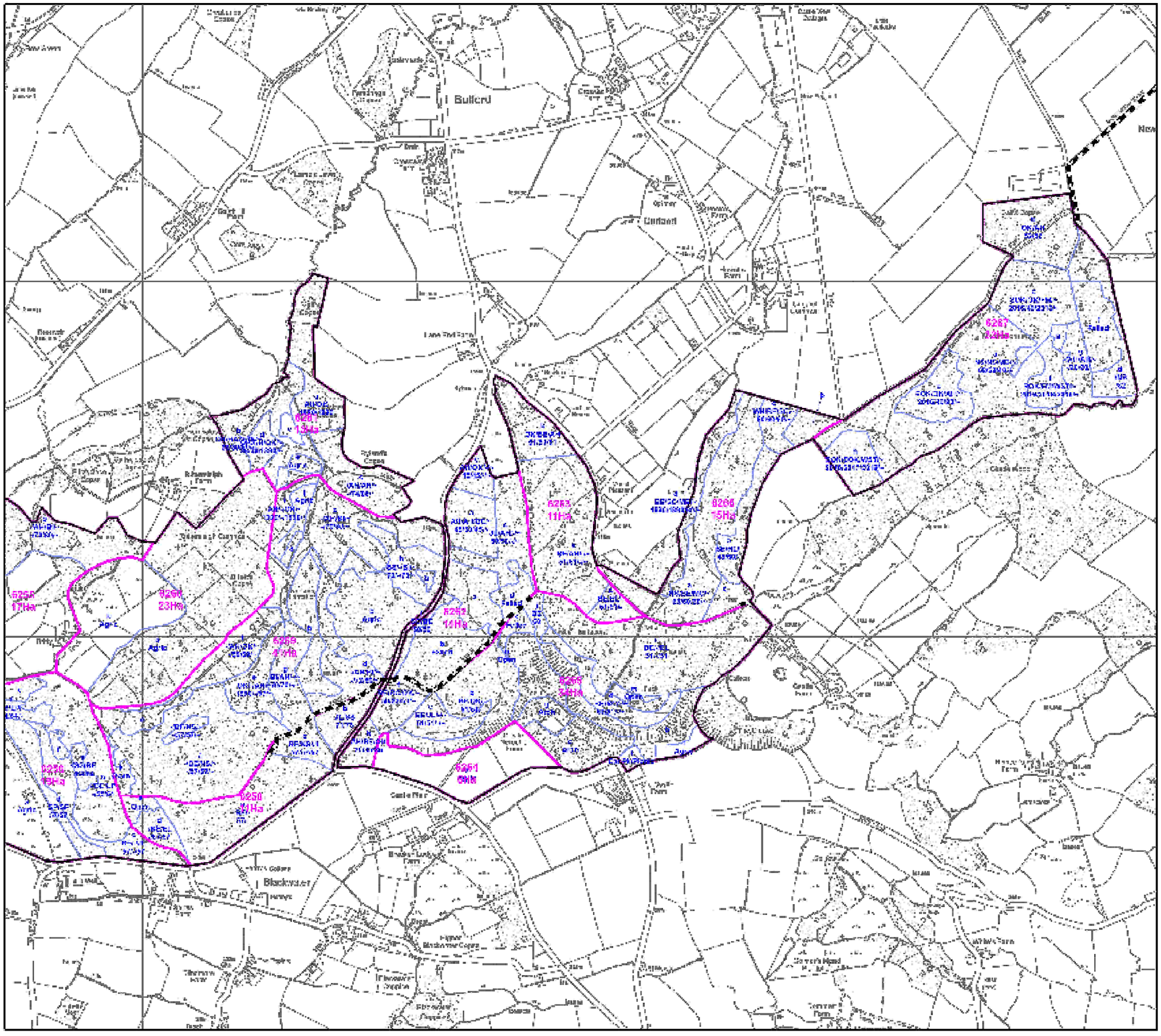

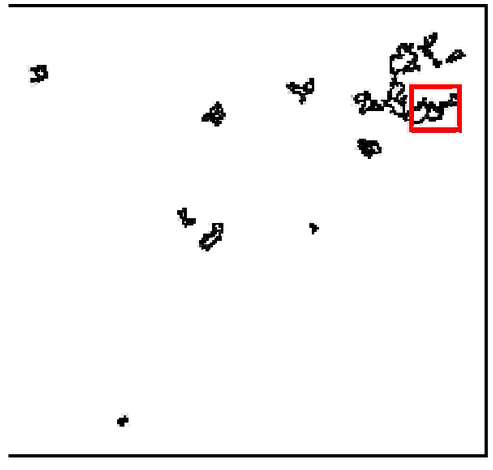

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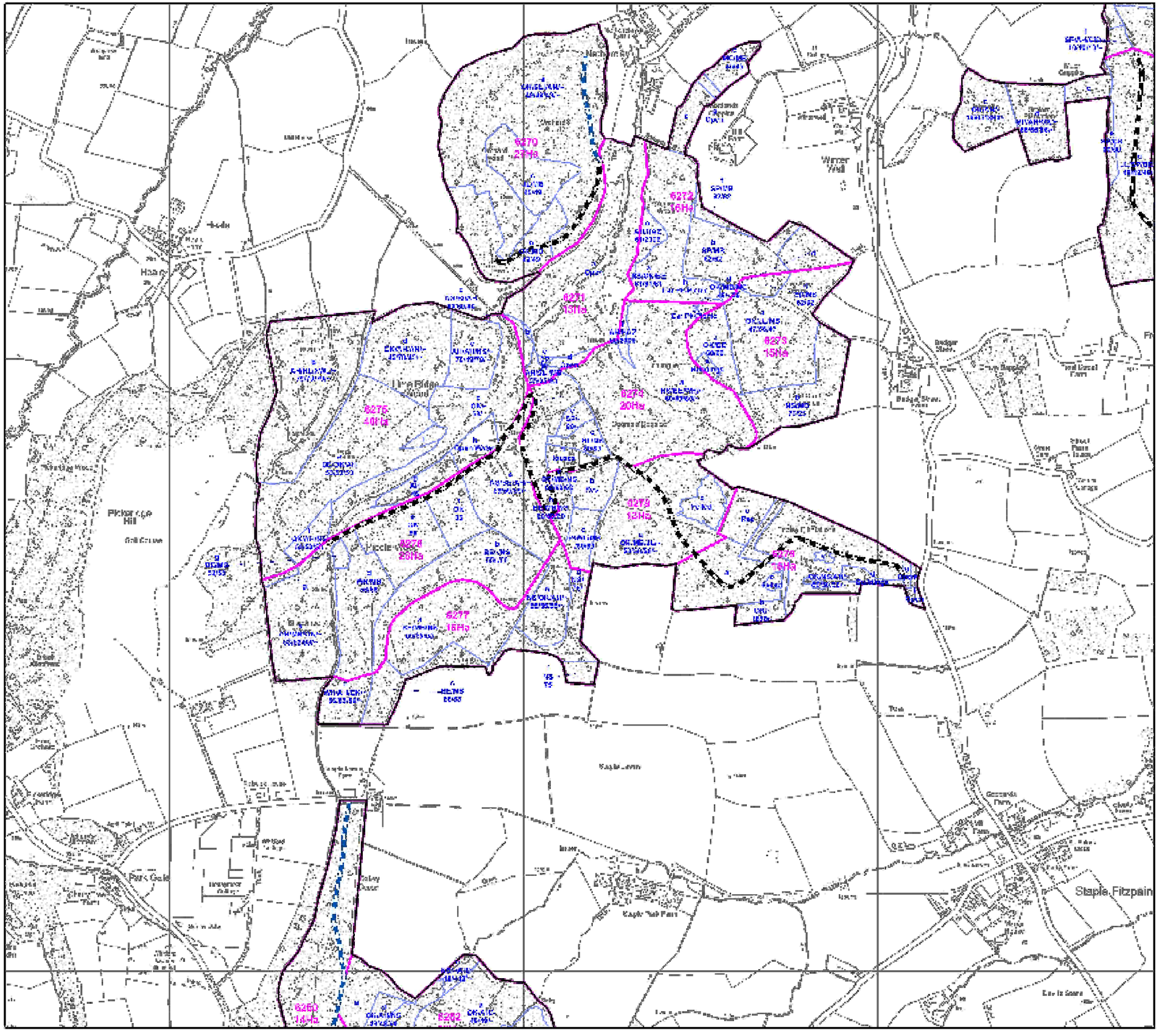

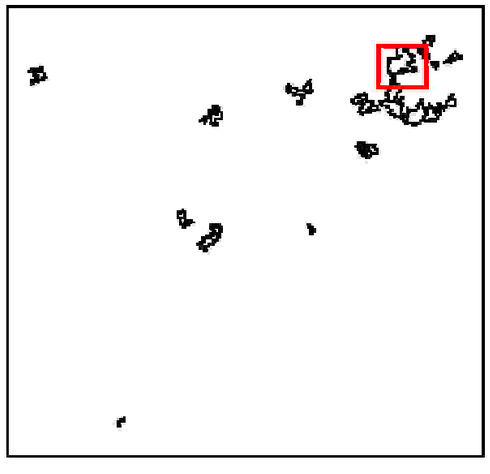

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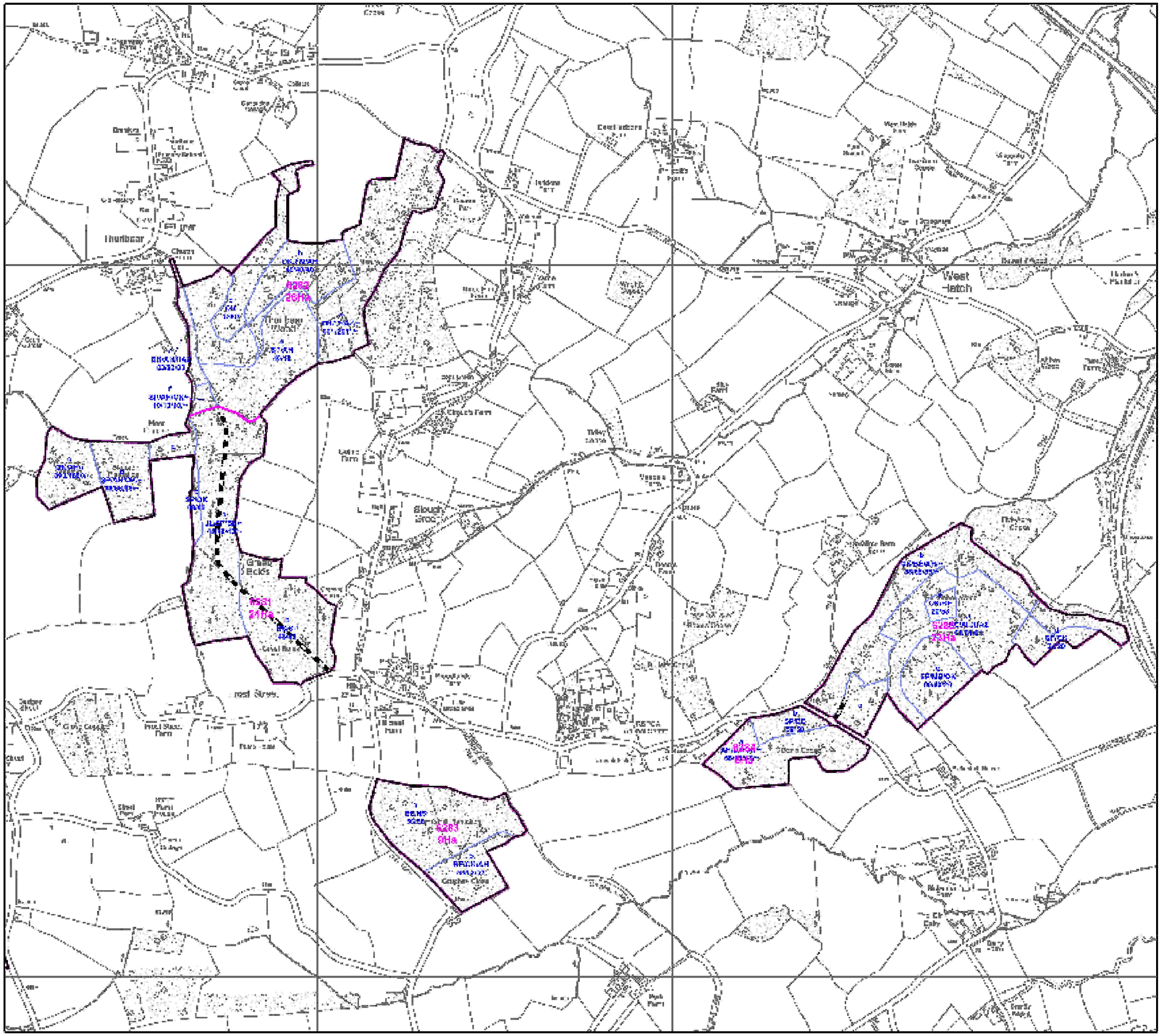

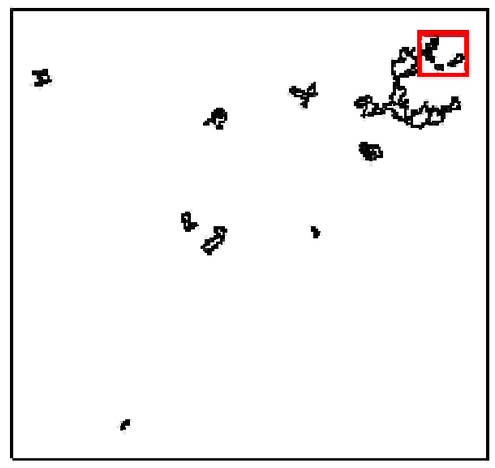

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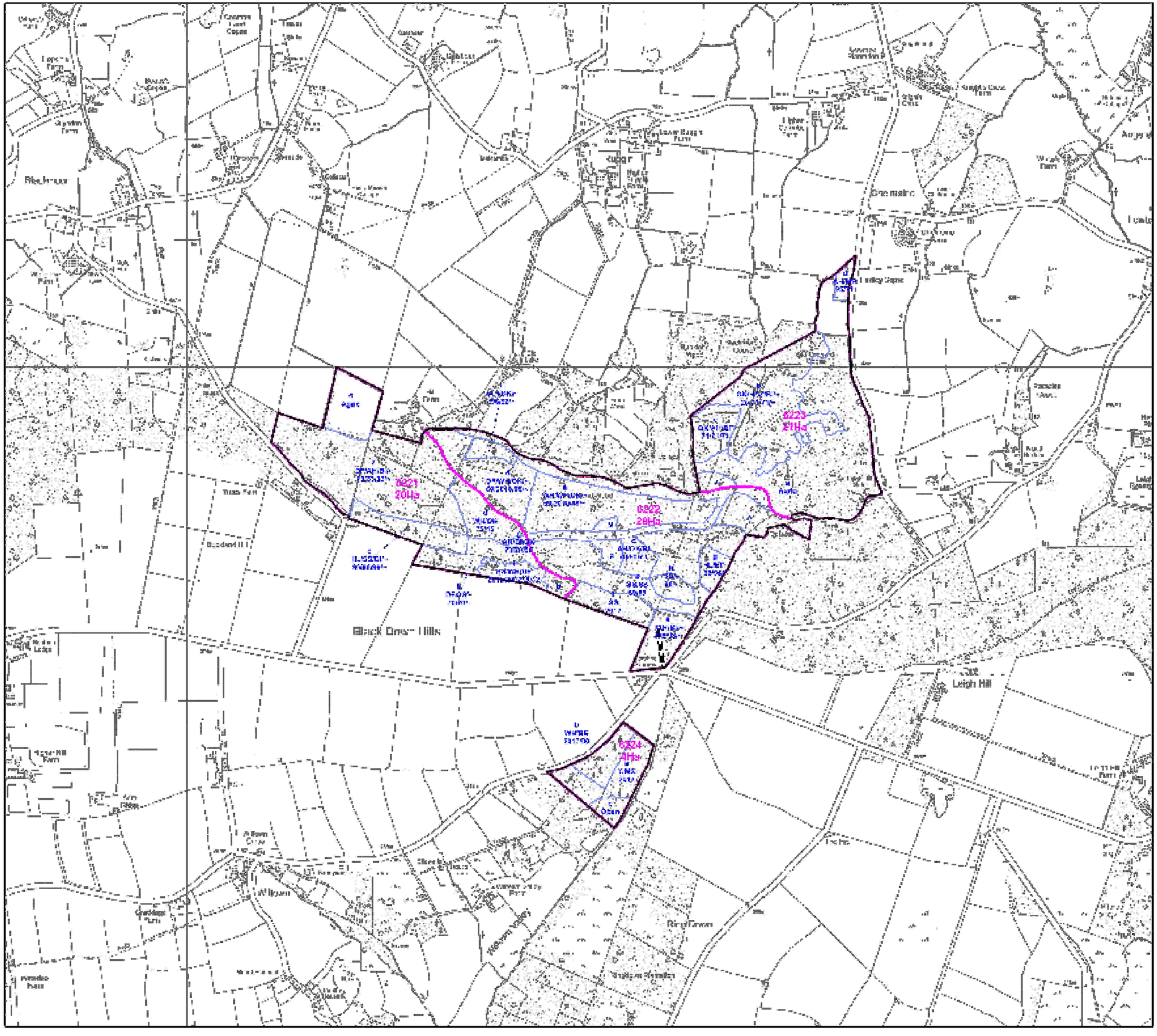
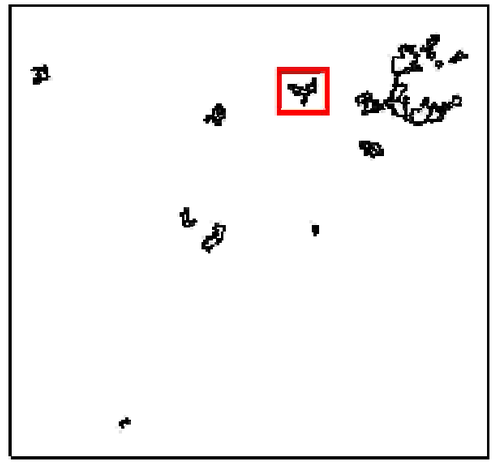
Buckland





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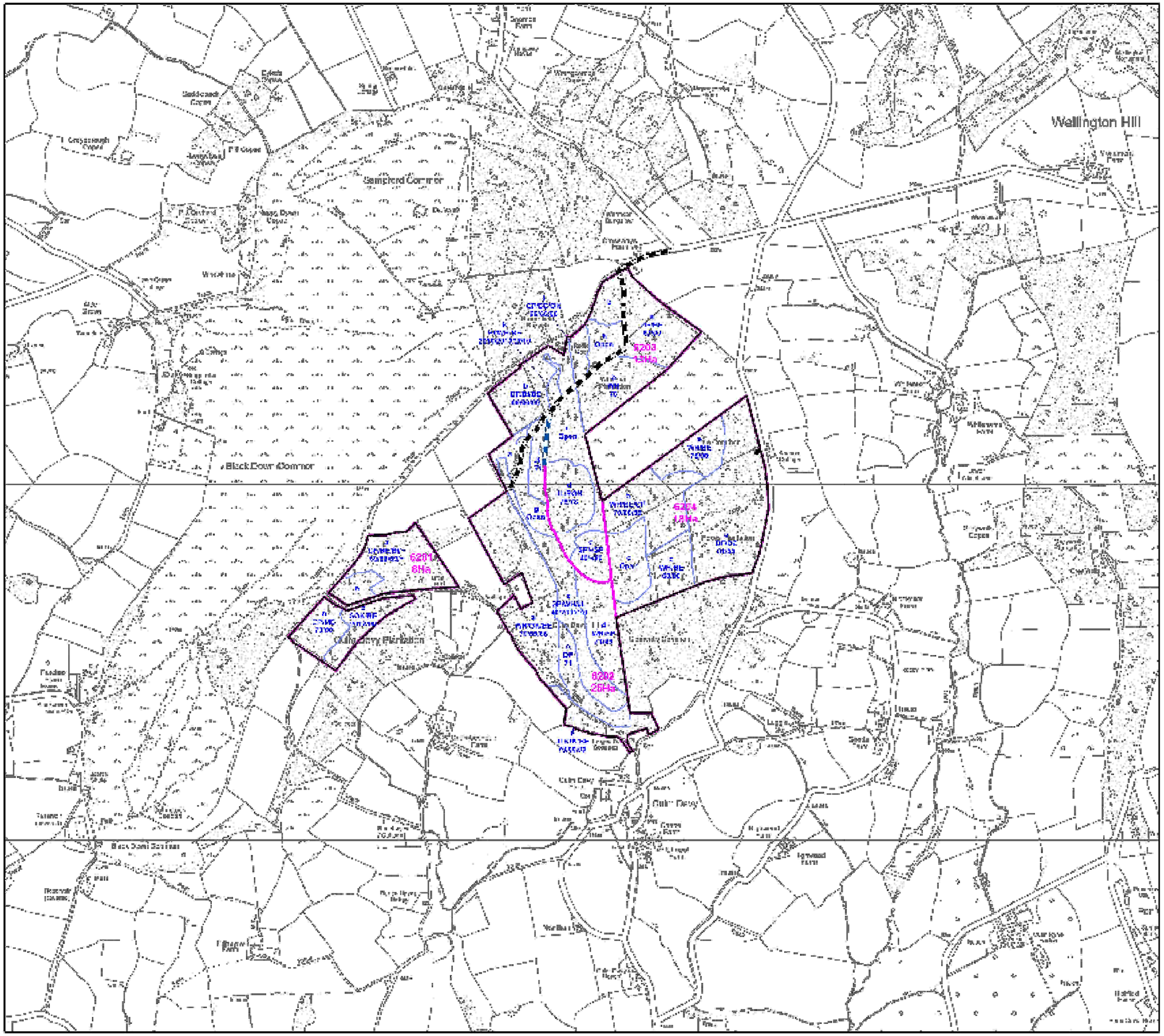
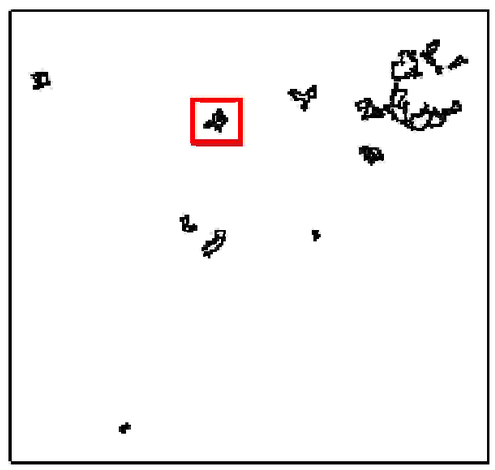
Culm Davey





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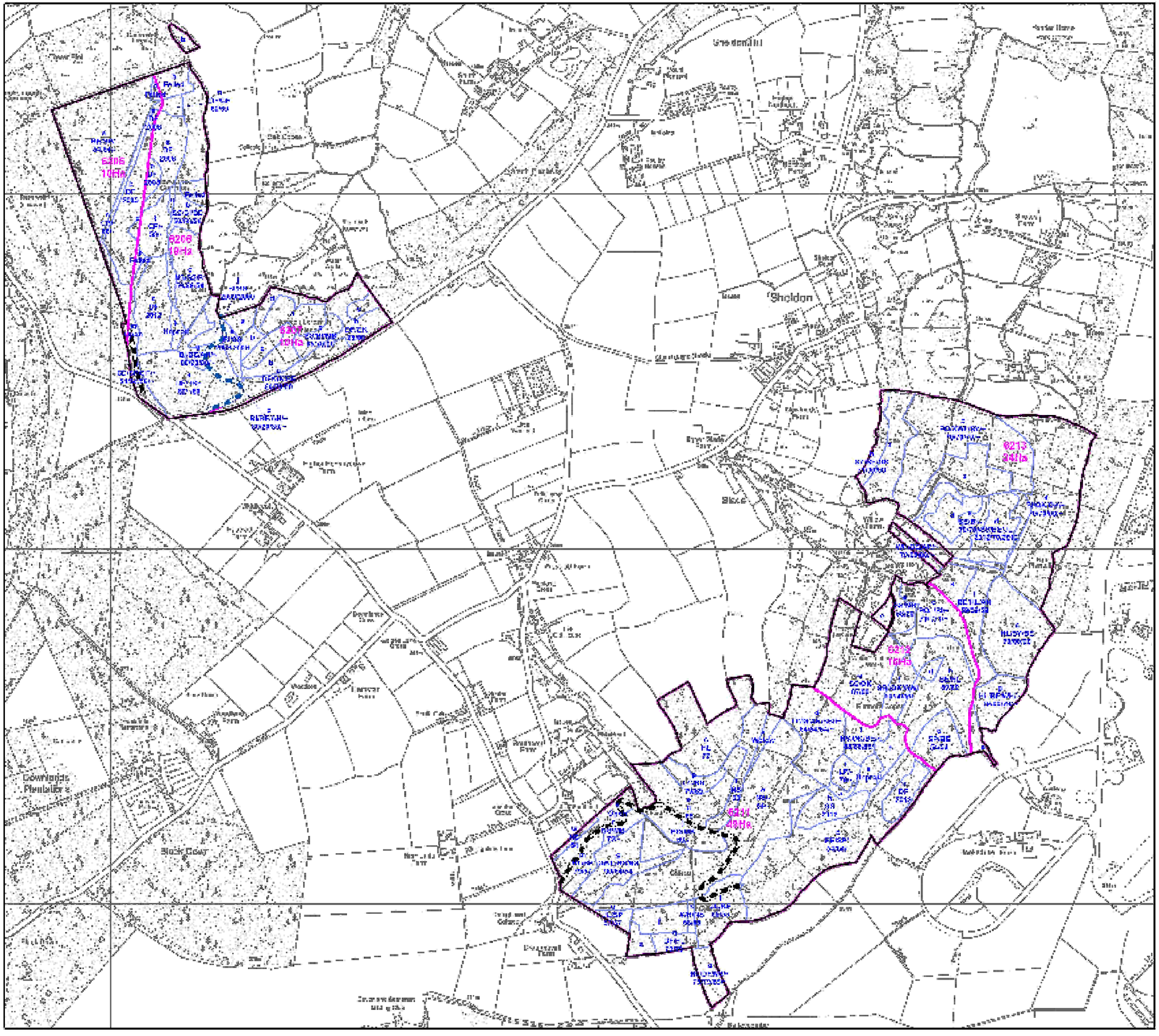
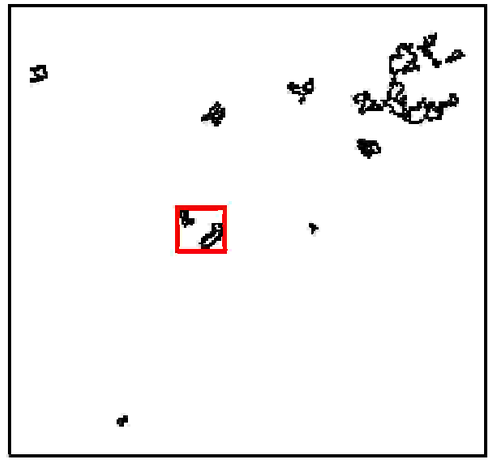
Sheldon & Blackborough





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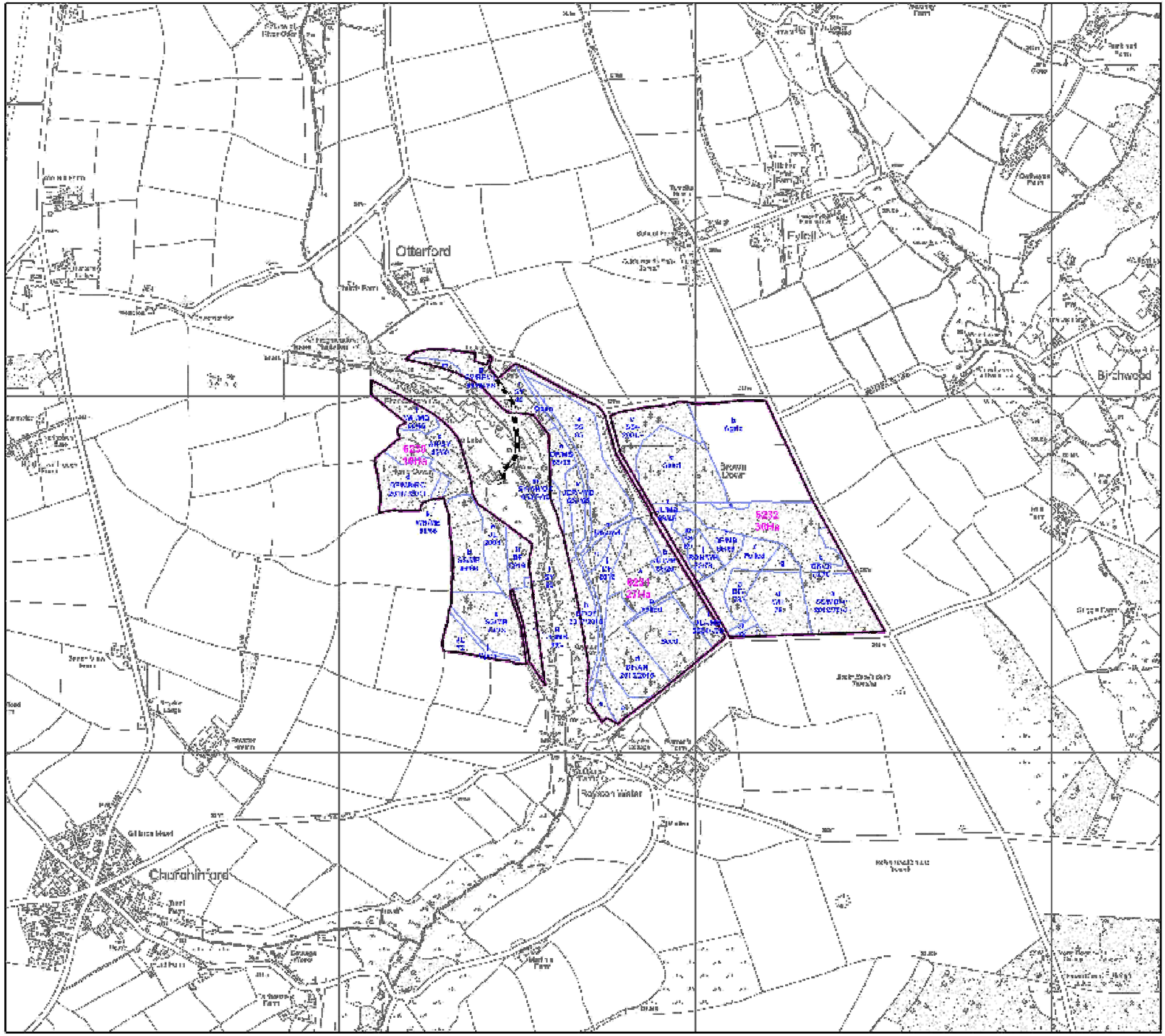

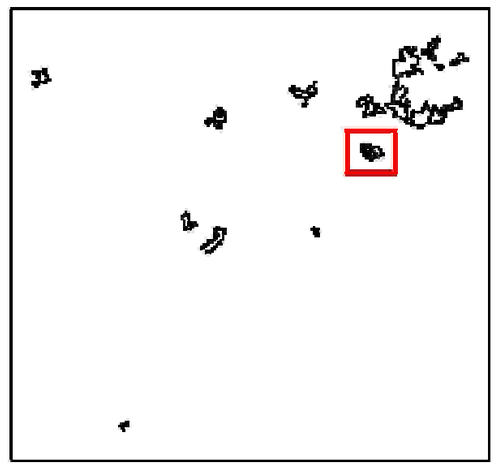

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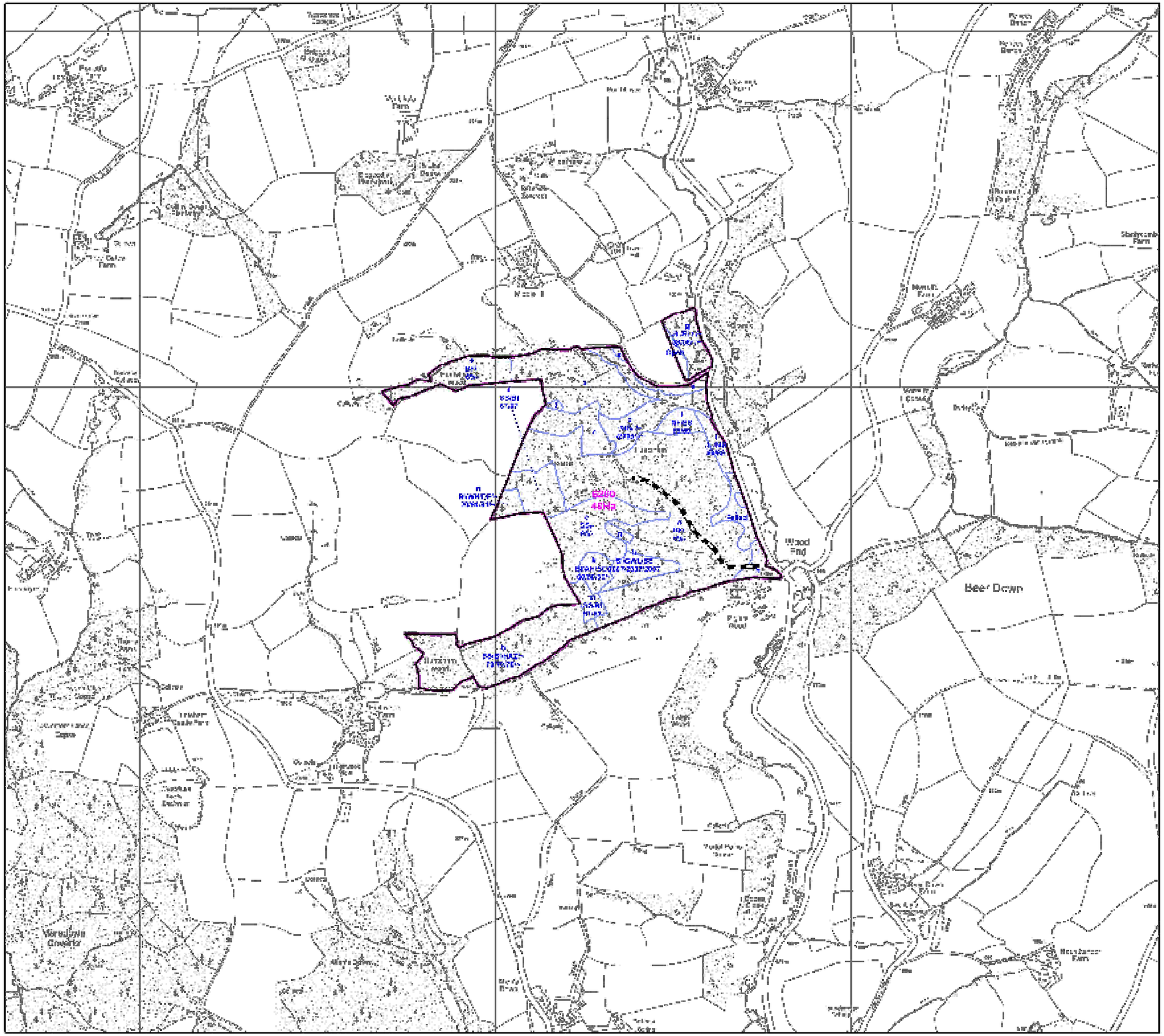

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South Cleave &
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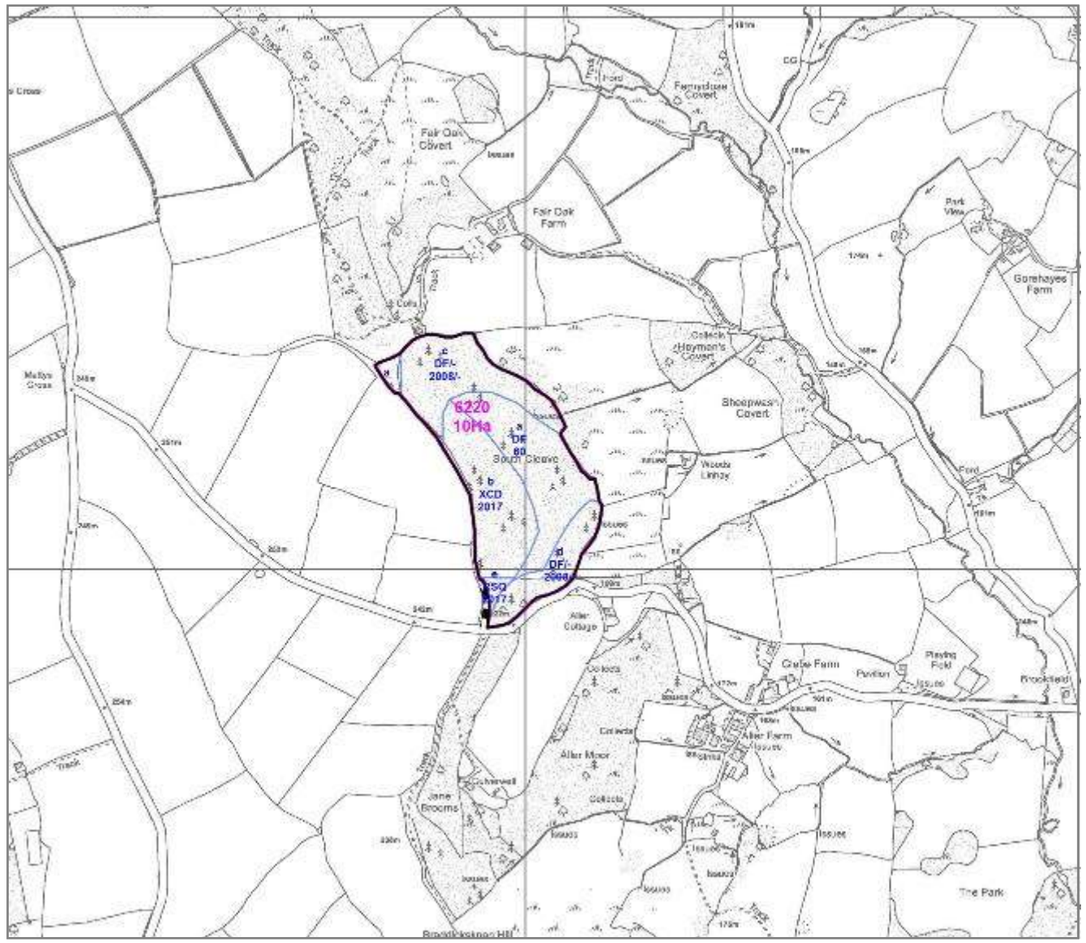
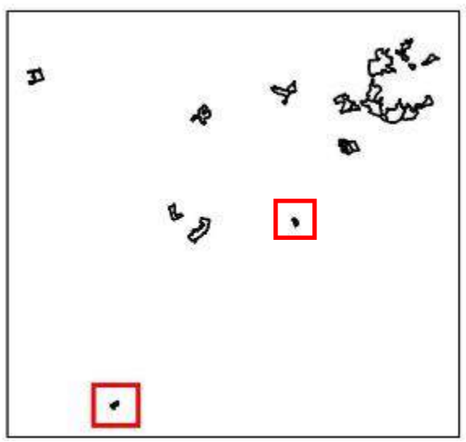
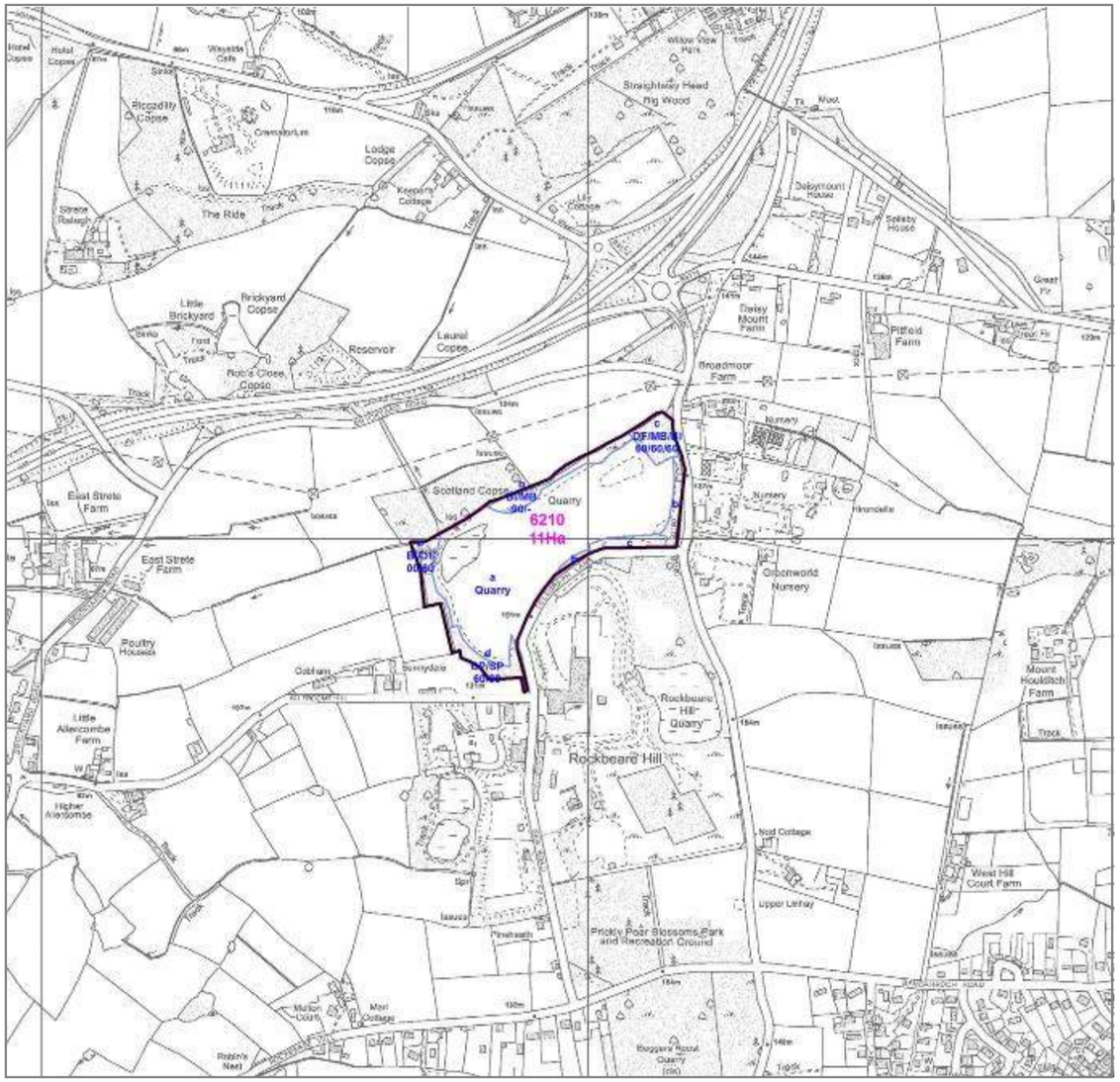






Pests & Diseases

Name: Dothistroma Needle Blight (DBN)

First appearance: mid 1990s

Attacks: Pine species

Often referred to as Red Band Needle Blight (RBN) and can reduce growth rates by between 70 and 90%. Effects of RBN are managed through thinning the wood more heavily than you would normally to introduce higher levels of air flow through the remaining crop.

Name: *Phytophthora ramorum* (PR)

First appearance: 2009

Attacks: Larches

P. ramorum was first found in the UK in 2002 and until 2009 in the woodland environment had largely been associated with rhododendron species acting as a host from which spores are produced. In August 2009 P. ramorum was found on a small number of dead and dying Japanese Larch in South West England, causing particular concern since some affected trees were not close to infected rhododendron and showing a significant change in the dynamics of the disease than experienced previously. Following this testing in Devon and west Somerset confirmed the presence of PR in mature Japanese larch as well as species in its under-storey, including sweet chestnut, beech, birch, oak, Douglas fir and Western hemlock. On some sites there is little or no rhododendron present. It is now known that Japanese larch can produce very high quantities of disease-carrying spores when actively growing in spring and summer, at much higher levels than those produced by rhododendron. These can be spread significant distances in moist air. PR is a notifiable disease dealt with by felling the infected area under a statutory plant health notice (SPHN) issued through FERA and the Forestry Commission.

Name: *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*

First appearance: currently N/A

Attacks: Ash

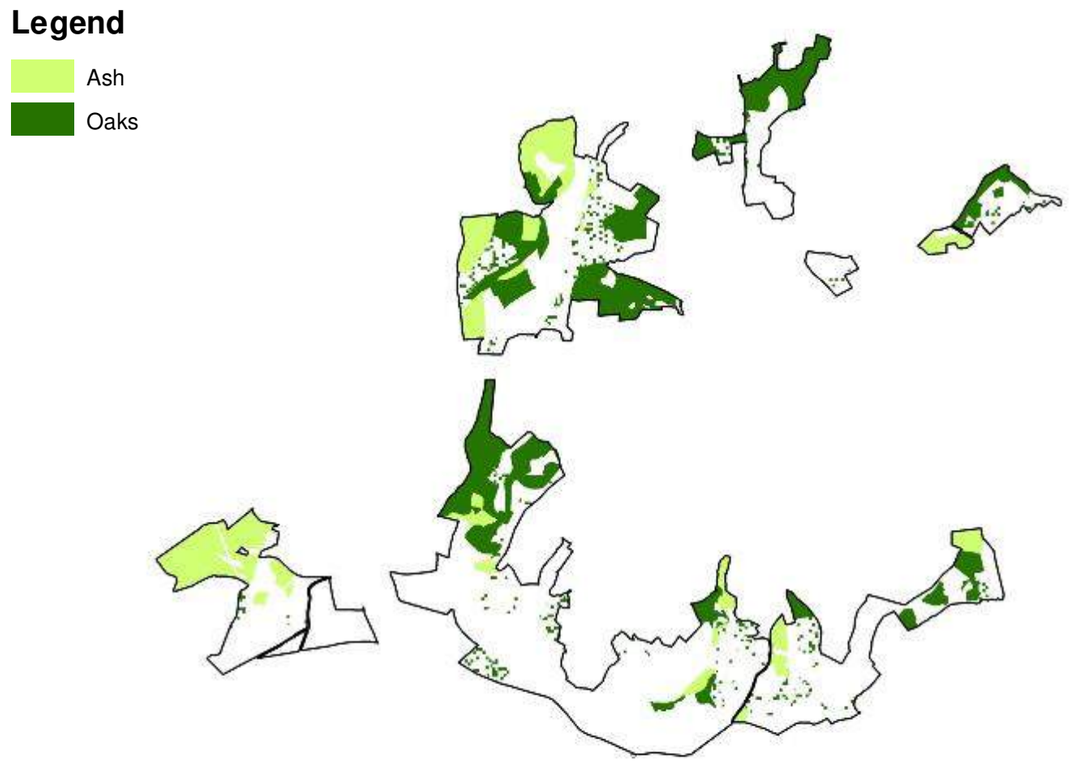
First confirmed in Britain in 2012, Chalara dieback of ash, also known as 'Chalara', ash dieback or Chalara ash dieback, is a disease of ash trees caused by a fungus called *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus.* The disease is now widespread throughout England and poses a threat to areas of the Plan area dominated by Ash, e.g. NVC type W8, particularly within Neroche.

Name: Oak 'dieback' or 'decline'

First appearance: unknown

Affects: Oak

Oak 'dieback' or 'decline' is the name used to describe poor health in oak trees and can be split into Chronic decline and Acute decline. Chronic decline is protracted taking effect on the Oak over a number of decades whilst Acute decline is much swifter acting over much shorter periods usually five years or so. Symptoms can be caused by a range of living agents e.g. insect and fungal attack, or non-living factors, e.g. poor soil and drought. Factors causing decline can vary between sites, as can the effects of the factors through time. Oak decline is not new; oak trees in Britain have been affected for the most part of the past century. Both native species of oak are affected, but Pedunculate oak (Quercus robur) more so than Sessile oak (Quercus petraea). This disease poses a significant risk to the Plan area given the proportion of oak found within it, paerticularly within Neroche. The areas of SSSI designation where native oak woodland are cited will be used as a gauge of the progress of any decline, whilst the rest of the Plan area will be also monitored closely.



APPENDIX 3

Glossary

Term	Abbreviation	Description
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland	ASNW	An ancient woodland site, where trees and other plant species appear to of established naturally rather than having been planted. Predominantly these sites will contain 80% or over of site native species or species native to the surrounding area.
Alternatives to Clearfell	ATC	Alternative to Clearfell is similar to CCF and refers to management systems where stands are regenerated without clearfelling.
Ancient Woodland Site	AWS	A site that has technically been wooded since 1600AD and is unlikely to have been converted to farmland in the last few centuries.
Continuous Cover Forestry	CCF	Continuous Cover Forestry is an approach to forest management that enables an owner of woodland to manage the woodland without the need for clearfelling. This enables tree cover to be maintained, usually with one or more levels and can be applied to both conifer or broadleaf stands. With Conifer it is possible to regenerate the crop a lot faster than in broadleaf crops, where the canopy is generally removed a lot slower and over a much longer time span. A decision to use CCF must be driven by management objectives and will have long-term vision often aimed at creating a more diverse forest, both structurally and in terms of species composition. There are no standard prescriptions meaning CCF is very flexible in ensuring opportunities can be taken advantage of as they arise. This development of a more diverse forest is a sensible way to reduce the risks posed by future changes in the climate and biotic threats.
Clearfell	C/F or CF	To cut and remove all trees from a certain area of woodland.
Crop		A stand of trees. Often associated with stands completely or partially managed for its timber. Just as farmers manage crops so does forestry the only difference is a farmers' rotation is shorter and often realised in 1 year. Trees are a much longer term crop with rotations varying from 6 years to 400 years. (also see definition for rotation)
Enrichment planting		Planting different species within areas of regen that helps diversify the range of species in a wood and in doing so can make it more resilient to future climate change and future threats from disease. Enrichment may be desirable in areas where success of regeneration is uneven, patchy or where a regen crop is limited by the number of species present.
Group felling / group planting		This is where small areas of woodland are felled hence the name "group felling" and then either allowed to develop through the use of nat-regen or in this case planted hence "group planting". These techniques can help to develop structure* within a wood over a given length of time and is often used in conjunction with continuous cover. *Either in terms of age or number of tree species present, since shelter and shade are provided by the remaining upper storey one can consider a larger number of tree species when deciding what to plant.
Hectare	Ha	Unit of area equating to 2.47 acres.
Native (and honorary native)		The trees making up the woodland are part of England's natural, or naturalised flora. Determined by whether the trees colonised Britain without assistance from humans since the last ice age (or in the case of 'honorary natives' were brought here by people but have naturalised in historic times); and whether they would naturally be found in this part of England.
Natural Regeneration	Regen or nat-regen	Trees growing on a site as a result of natural seed fall, and can be used as a management process and can allow cleared areas of woodland to germinate, grow and develop naturally. This process can happen anywhere and woods can be managed to encourage nat-regen although there is no guarantee of success. In these instances, or if nat-regen is unlikely for a variety of reasons, one can use enrichment planting or group planting to achieve the same affect. The process usually relies on an overstorey of "parent trees" being present or on parent trees being close by to provide the seed. These parent trees will usually of been thinned and managed with natural regeneration in mind. Existing areas of nat-regen are then usually developed through carefully thinning the surrounding woodland over a number of years, to give more light and space to ensure the young trees can establish themselves into larger trees eventually allowing them to be incorporated ('recruited') into the main crop for the next rotation at some point in the future. Usually done in small groups or in strips this system can allow a varied woodland structure to develop over time. Protection from competing plant species and mammal browsing might be required in the early stages by fencing or using tree shelters.

Rotation		Generally a commercial term used to describe the length of time an area of trees is growing for, from the time of planting to the time of felling. For broadleaves a rotation is generally a lot longer than that of conifer species* and can broadly speaking be anywhere between 80 years to 3-400 years, as opposed to conifer crops whose rotation is generally shorter but can vary from 20-25 years to 120 years plus. *The exception being that of coppice where rotation length can vary from 5 or 6 years up to 30 years plus depending on management objectives. "First rotation" would refer to an area of wood planted on open ground not previously wooded. And so "second rotation" is one where woodland has been cleared and replanted.
Shelterwood		A management system that is applicable to conifer or broadleaf, where tree canopy is maintained at one or more levels without the need to clear-fell the whole site. Felling can occur, but generally in small "groups" whose size shape and spatial distribution will vary depending on site conditions. The "groups" are then either: allowed to develop and establish by the use of natural regeneration, are planted or are established using a mixture of both techniques. This known as a "group shelterwood system" A variation on this is "Single tree selection". This variation removes individual trees of all size classes more or less uniformly throughout the stand to maintain an uneven-aged stand and achieve other stand structural objectives. While it is easier to apply such a system to a stand that is naturally close to the uneven-aged condition, single tree selection systems can be prescribed for even-aged stands, although numerous preparatory thinning interventions must be made to create a stand structure where the system can truly be applied.
Silviculture		A term coined during late 19th century from the Latin *silva meaning* 'wood' and the French *culture* meaning 'cultivation' and so Silviculture is the art and science of controlling the establishment, growth, composition, and quality of forest vegetation to achieve a full range of forest resource objectives.
Stand		A group or area of trees that are more or less homogeneous with regard to species composition, density, size, and sometimes habitat.
Thin	TH	Selective removal of trees from a wooded area, giving remaining trees more space to grow into larger trees. Thinning is done to: Improve the quality and vigour of remaining trees. Remove trees interfering with mature or veteran broadleaf trees. Give space for tops (or "crowns") of broadleaf trees to develop and potentially act as a future seed source. Give space for natural regeneration to grow and develop with the intention of recruiting these younger naturally grown trees as a part of the future woodland structure. Create gaps for group planting or enrichment. Remove species of tree that may compromise the intended management objective of the woodland eg: non-native or invasive species such as Sycamore, Western Hemlock or birch. Improve the economic value of a wood. Help realise opportunities to enhance ecological value. **NOTE:** This list is not in any order of priority and will vary depending on management objectives.
Yield Class	YC	A method of measuring the growth rate or "increment" of a crop of trees by age and height; measured in m3 per Ha per annum. E.g. A crop with a YC of 16 is one that has an annual increment of more than 16m3 but less than 17m3, although generally only even numbers are used when stating YC.

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APPENDIX 4 - Consultation Record

Consultation conducted via Citizen Space between 12th March and 19th April

Consultee Name	Consultee Comment	FC Response
STATUTORY		
Devon CC	**Heritage Baseline** Recent archaeological survey work, including transcription of archaeological features from aerial photographs and LiDAR, has been placed on the Devon and Somerset County Historic Environment Records. This information is available online via the South West heritage Trust (Somerset) and Devon County Council. Details of the Blackdown Hills AONB and East Devon River Catchments National Mapping Programme (NMP) project are also available online. This project has helped to identify and record the location and extent of archaeological earthworks, often hidden beneath forestry, particularly evidence of extractive industries such as iron mining and whetstone mining. **Heritage Assets Specific to Forestry Areas** Blackborough: Is notable for its extensive and coherent belt of whetstone mining of probable 18th to early 20th century date running N-S on the eastern scarp of Newcombe Common. There are also more irregular areas of pitting in Newcombe Errish Plantation. Shaldon: Contains less coherent, dispersed evidence of whetstone mining and possibly other forms of mineral extraction. There are also a number of deserted post-medieval farmsteads, such as Newhouse, Rooks Cliff and Old House. Newhouse is surrounded by the ridged earthworks of former in-field orchards. Culm Davy: There are relic field boundaries in Whitehall Plantation. These represent post-medieval enclosure of former common, prior to afforestation. A smaller area of boundaries north of Clements Common may be associated with early afforestation. There is extensive evidence of open-cast mineral extraction on the north side of Whitehall, possibly for iron-bearing deposits, whetstones or gravel. Huntsham: is covered by EA LiDAR data but has not been studied. Remains 'terra incognita'. South Cleave: No known archaeology, though the area was part of the NMP study. Strete Raleigh: Evidence of prehistoric activity (scatters of flint tools) and also medieval or post-medieval field boundaries were observed prior to quarrying. Parts of these features may survive in the unquarried fringes. The northern boundary is also the historic parish boundary between Rockbeare and Whimple and is therefore a significant historic landscape feature. **Management Issues** The types of earthwork feature referred to above are can be quite robust, but their extensive nature, areas of relative slightness and lack of understanding of them as heritage assets can make them vulnerable to gradual erosion or wholesale loss to vehicular movements and mechanised cultivation techniques. They can also be attractive to 'adrenaline sports' such as off-road quad, motorcycle and cycling, which can also cause significant erosion of the archaeology. Generally speaking the felling or thinning of forest cover, leaving such earthwork features in open or wooded heath environments would enhance their conservation and public access to and understanding of them (see the opening up and interpretation of the whetstone mines in private forestry at Witness Moor, Payhembury). Subsidence caused by the extensive underground whetstone mines may be a local H&S issue in paces, both in terms of public access and operational activities.	Noted, passed to Beat team to inform management and operations. Noted, passed to Beat team to inform management and operations.

Somerset CC	No Response	-
Natural England	No Response	-
Environment Agency	No Response	-
Mid Devon DC	No Response	-
Taunton Deane BC	No Response	-
East Devon DC	No Response	-
Historic England	No Response	-
Bickenhall CP	No Response	-
Curland CP	No Response	-
Hemyock CP	No Response	-
Huntsham CP	No Response	-
Orchard Portman CP	No Response	-
Otterford CP	No Response	-
Pitminster CP	No Response	-
Rockbeare CP	No Response	-
Sheldon CP	No Response	-
Staple Fitzpaine CP	No Response	-
Uffculme CP	No Response	-
Upottery CP	No Response	-
West Buckland CP	No Response	-

NGOs

Blackdown Hills AONB	National Mapping Programme based on Lidar system which has covered the whole of the Blackdown Hills AONB https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/discover-and-understand/landscapes/blackdown-hills-nmp/ . Recreation and access did not feature very heavily in the Forest Management Plan – no real understanding as to why this was the case. How do we formulate a strategy for R&A in East Devon if there are no guidelines/benchmarks? A map showing the Herepath and car-parks would be useful background plus to explain current FC/FE policy on promoting access The use of data cubes and people counters was also raised.	The Forest Plan sets the objectives and proposals for land management not recreation and access. Recreation and access is included to illustrate how this and land managent influence and complements the other. This is outlined on page 9, as below: *Visitor numbers will be maintained. Road and ride corridor and car park aesthetics enhanced and maintained. Felling together with a delayed restock program will continue to diversify stand and age structure. Viewpoints enhanced and maintained at time of intervention, where possible.*

Blackdown Hills AONB cont.	The Somerset Catchment Partnership were not represented under the 'Water Management' section of the document Need County Wildlife Site reference/ where to obtain the data- as important wildlife designations (but not statutory)	Page 43 updated accordingly.
Somerset Wildlife Trust	No Response	-
Wessex Water	No Response	-
Blackdown Hills Trust	No Response	-
Butterfly Conservation	No Response	-
Neroche Woodlanders	No Response	-
Ancient Tree Forum	No Response	-
Otterhead Lakes	1. Pleased to see mention of protecting and enhancing scheduled and unscheduled cultural and heritage assets. 2. Similarly mention at Quants of the unfinished reservoir though there are other heritage features there including lost gardens. 3. Concerned that Otterhead Lakes is described correctly as being managed as a nature reserve with a forest school and fishing licence but with no mention of the lost gardens, Victorian designed landscape and surviving garden plants. 4. This becomes of greater concern as parts of the lost gardens, Victorian designed landscape and some of the surviving garden plants such as for example Rhododendron maximum hybrids 'Eileen' and 'Lady Eleanor Cathcart' are within the Otterford Forest boundary also lime (linden) trees. 5. Mr Sam Negus and I spent several hours a few years ago looking at heritage features such as the remains of Anders Lane Farm, the estate yard, dogs'graves, railings and garden plants within Otterford Forest as above at 5. 6. Visitors to Otterhead are unaware of the boundaries between Otterford Forest and the Otterhead Estate Trust leased land. 7. There is information about heritage features at Otterhead on the Estate Trust's website www.e-voice.org.uk/otterheadestate	Acknowledged Page 15 updated accordingly. Comment passed to Beat team to consider
South West Heritage Trust	There are a few points to note with regards to the historic environment. I appreciate that the coupes will be subject to an individual consultation process, but flagging sites which could be impacted by works at this stage would be beneficial. Buckland Coupe 62998a contains site 43645, the site of Quants Farm. Otterford Coupe 62048 contains site 43469, the site of a Bronze Age barrow PriorsPark Coupe 62996 contains site 45644, a quarry & lime kilns, with the kilns located at the southern end of the clear fell area; Castle Neroche/Staple Common Coupe 62988 contains site 38900, site of a cottage & buildings, as well as the parish boundary Appendix 8, Thurlbear Wood, table 1.9.3 could do with updating with all known historic environment information - there are four limekilns mapped within our records, (not all identified beyond mapping) as well as quarrying and areas of boundaries and earthworks in Didworthy Coppice. https://www.somersetheritage.org.uk/her	Observations passed to Beat team to inform management and future operations. This comment should be raised with the current managers and authors of Appendix 8, the Somerset Wildlife Trust.

Somerset Geology Group	I think the draft FC plan needs some strengthening re **potential opportunities for multiple conservation interest gains re landscape/heritage/biodiversity / recreational use aspects for the smaller FC non-SSSI** areas. They missed out on the Neroche-Project type approach a few years ago - particularly for example the **Blackborough area** – but some of my comments below may also apply to other such areas, such as landscape considerations for the steeply sloping areas of the Culm Davy block (which is illustrated in the draft plan). This response is prompted by the fact that I happened to walk in the **Blackborough area** at the weekend – and saw a notice about the consultation. The FC land there is closely adjacent to Garnsey's Tower ruin - with people apparently regularly using the FC ride to walk there - along a flat route from an informal parking area, with **potentially spectacular views** from the FC ride of typical Blackdowns AONB landscape at its best: across the Bodminscombe valley below (with its ancient field enclosures) to the adjacent ridge of Hackpen (with its typical semi-natural woodland and more open former 'common land' remnants on the steep upper slopes and promontory). This interest, and that below, is not yet identified in the draft FC plan. The only information I can find about Garnsey's Tower, which would appear to be on adjacent privately owned land, is from an Uffculme parish history book - which indicates it is probably a c 1700s folly related to 'gentrification' of Bodminscombe Manor below, Garnsey apparently being the family that held that manor within the Uffculme parish. The ruin is in poor repair at the moment and would benefit from some conservation repairs. A quick look at the website indicates no heritage information readily available, but it is often mentioned in walks booklets and as a destination for local walks. This is an example of the opportunity for a **multi-agency multiple-interest conservation plan for this wider Blackborough area** - including potential pluses for adjacent forestry managers/ landowners - and I suggest this could be mentioned in both the FC and AONB plans - and related to objectives/strategic opportunities in the National landscape Character Area document for the Blackdowns. There is also a Devon **Local Geological Site** on other adjacent forestry land at Blackborough, plus associated **industrial archaeological remains** (Bill Horner Devon CC archaeologist is aware of areas which have had recent investigations re the whetstone quarrying in this general area). Plus there is evidently regular recreational use for walking by families, horseriding, etc in the area, with as above, spectacular views of typical AONB historic landscape – but some views are likely to be largely lost by mature trees, rather than enhanced, under the draft FC plan - which I suggest could be modified. There is scope for heathland restoration on the top flat ground, semi-natural woodland/ open areas restoration on the steep slopes below, plus more detailed wetland conservation planning for the area of the old Water Works. There is scope for heritage conservation work re the geology, whetstone industry and features such as Garnsey's Tower and improved footpath maintenance and associated interpretive material - including potentially oral/local history community input, such as in the Neroche project. There are, for example geology fossil collections from the late1800s from the area which have never been seen by local people - which I think I mentioned at the last AONB Heritage forum meeting – as well as whet stones. Some are held in store at RAMM - and include chalcedonised specimens if I remember the literature correctly (a hydrated form of quartz very similar to chert and flint). Interestingly the recent forestry work near Garnsey's Tower, apparently accessed via the FC ride, has broken up the steep ground surface there to reveal numerous, and often large, freshly broken fragments of the Cretaceous Upper Greensand 'Blackborough Sandstone', including highly siliceous bands: not fossiliferous, but apparently 'chalcedonized' in parts and ranging in colour from pale translucent white-blue to deep red (known locally as 'bottle flint'). So the Forestry Commission land at Blackbrough is a central - and potentially key element - for landscape conservation in this part of the AONB.	We know that the forest is a dynamic environment and individual spots which have great views today will eventually become obscured and new veiwpoints open as the crops grow and are then harvested. I know what you mean about the brilliant view from Blackborough and to capture this we have installed the bench at this spot. The life of a bench is approximately 10 years at which point we also anticipate the view at this point will be disappearing. As such these temporary view points are not acknowledged in the plan. It is difficult to capture partnership projects in a document like the Forest Plan which is meant to be a document more focussing on the Forestry Commissions direct intentions, rather than aspirations, these are better outlined elsewhere. Garney's Tower and the noted LGS are not on FC land and therefore it is not appropriate to include aspirations or future management within this document. Aspirations for restoration should be followed up with landowner. This Forest Plan has appraised the recent heathland creation and considered the suitability of other sites for heathland creation. Future open habitat creation is focussed on areas where it will consolidate management and complement surrounding habitats, in line with the FC Open Habitats Policy, In the current climate we would be very happy to be part of a larger initiative but are not in a position to lead one

	I've just realised too - at the end of last week - that the Local Geological Site at Otterhead (a small old quarry, just off the main track) is - I think - just within the FC leased land from Wessex Water (correct). It looks to be immediately adjacent to - rather than within - the Local Nature Reserve in the valley bottom area there. It's one of four LGSs within the Somerset part of the AONB, that we'll be updating info on in the next year or so, as part of our Somerset Geology Group partnership project with Somerset Environmental Record Centre to review Somerset's LGSs. Please could you feed any information and management recommendations on this LGS directly to me so I can incorporate them in our management of the site. A detailed management prescription is not really appropriate to include in the Forest Plan we could certainly make reference to the location of an LGS on our land.	Please could you feed any information and management recommendations on this LGS directly so we can incorporate them in our management of the site. A detailed management prescription is not really appropriate to include in the Forest Plan we could certainly make reference to the location of an LGS on our land

NEIGHBOURS AND INDIVIDUALS

Member of Public	I cannot comment on some of the areas but have visited / used quite a few regularly. Thurlbear Wood SSSI is coppiced regularly and managed well but seems to suffer from parallel footpaths springing up everywhere thus degrading the site. I believe this is a major problem for an area of such importance. I am wary of the type of "recreation" use, for instance although shooting (pheasants) might be lucrative the flora and fauna in woodlands can be severely degraded by the concentration of birds. Thank goodness we are all stakeholders in these areas as they would be lost under private ownership	Concerns passed to local Community Ranger to monitor
Member of Public	Clear felling and planting too many conifers is inappropriate to the needs of the community. These woods are of vital community and wildlife value, far more than wasteful commercial value.	Level of clearfelling and conifer replanting has been greatly reduced as a result of Neorche Project and future reversion of woodlands to native cover through thinning.
Member of Public	Our house is adjacent to the woodlands and we love to hear the birds, especially the owls at night. The tree roots protect us against landslip.	Acknowledged.
Member of Public	Not being familiar with the true concept (s) of the plan nor having attended any presentation I can only speak of South Cleave, which is near to my place of residence. I have noticed that the very large machinery for felling is indiscriminate in it's nature both to single and groups of hardwoods which could have been preserved and wasteful in harvesting. I have noticed some contractors leave waste - litter and signage which is outdated but this is improving now. I am pleased to note that shooting does not take place here now by forestry employees as this was dangerous and as far as I am aware risk assessments for those walking were not in place. I have not witnessed shooting here now for 4-5 years.	Concerns passed to local Beat to monitor
Member of Public	Ditches and drainage need to be cleared and maintained so that water flows in the correct channels. The ditch around the derilict cottage in culm Davy wood hasn't been cleared in about 20 years it is full of silt and mud .during the recent rain the stream flows down the track and around the bank rather than through it so much that the track is being washed away. General track maintenance to stop some areas deteriorating. Education of people dumping rubbish, biodegradable and general rubbish and dropping litter. Keeping tracks and foot paths open and clear of fallen branches and rocks for all walkers, cyclists and horse riders to enjoy a lovely wood	Comments passed to the Beat team to consider.
Member of Public	The section concerned is just on the northern tip of Staple Park where the orange dotted line does not follow the bridleway on the OS which should come out on the eastern side and go round the field boundary.	Page 39 updated accordingly.

Appendix 5: SSSI Management Plan for Ruttersleigh SSSI

Plan Period 2018 - 2028

1. Agreement and Consent

District	West England Forest District
Name of SSSI	Ruttersleigh
Compartment Numbers	**6249, 6253, 6255, 6259-61**
OS Grid reference	ST260160
Period of Plan	2018 - 2028

(J. GILLETT)

Date: 15/10/2018

H G STANWAY

West England Forest District

Date: 14/5/2018

* Agreement is conditional to a Notice of Proposal being submitted with detail prescription of works

The signing of this plan by Natural England gives the necessary consent under Section 28 (6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), as amended, for the management prescriptions detailed in this plan and to be undertaken without necessity to consult prior to each operation during the plan.

FC England will keep a written record of work carried out during the period of this plan.

2. SSSI Notification

County	Somerset
Site Name	Ruttersleigh
District	Taunton Deane
Status	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended
Local Planning Authority	Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council
National Grid Reference	ST260160
Area	97 ha
Ordnance Survey Sheet	1:50,000: 193 1:10,000: ST 21NW

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act) 1991

The Forestry Commission managed unit of the SSSI is in Unfavourable Recovering condition

3. Potentially Damaging Operations

Ref. No.	Type of Operation
1	Cultivation, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, and re-seeding.
2	Grazing and changes in the grazing regime, including type of stock or intensity or seasonal pattern of grazing and cessation of grazing.
3	The introduction of stock feeding and changes in stock feeding practice.
4	The introduction of mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation and changes in the mowing or cutting regime, including cessation.
5	Application of manure, fertilisers and lime.
6	Application of pesticides, including herbicides (weed killers).
7	Dumping, spreading or discharge of any materials.
8	Burning.
9	The release into the site of any wild, feral or domestic animal, plant or seed.
10	The killing or removal of any wild animal*, other than pest control.
11	The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant or plant remains, including shrub, herb, dead or decaying wood, moss, lichen, fungus, leaf-mould and turf.
12	Changes in tree and/or woodland management including afforestation, planting, clear and selective felling, thinning, coppicing, modification of the stand or underwood, changes in species composition, cessation of management.
13a	Drainage (including use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains)
13b	Modification of the structure of watercourses (eg. streams), including their banks and beds, as by re-alignment, re-grading or dredging
13c	Management of aquatic and bank vegetation
14	The changing of water levels and tables and water utilisation, including irrigation, storage and abstraction through boreholes.
15	Infilling of ditches, ponds, pools or marshes
16a	The introduction of or subsequent changes in freshwater fishery production and/or management, including sporting fishing and angling.
20	Extraction of minerals, including topsoil and subsoil.
21	Construction, removal or destruction of roads, tracks, walls, fences, hardstands, banks, ditches or other earthworks, or the laying, maintenance or removal of pipelines and cables, above or below ground.
22	Storage of materials
23	Erection of permanent or temporary structures, or the undertaking of engineering works, including drilling.
26	Use of vehicles likely to damage or disturb features of interest.
27	Recreational or other activities likely to damage the trees and epiphytic lichens.
28	Introduction of game management and changes in game management and hunting practice.

4. Important Evaluation Criteria

Diversity

A majority of the unit is designated for the types of grassland identified and a significant proportion of the SSSI is woodland supporting W7, W8 and W10 woodland NVC types. These habitats are not compartmentalised through the site despite being split into 10 units, with numerous units identified as containing multiple habitats.
The lichen assemblages are linked very strongly with ancient trees, mostly pollards, that indicate a previously open woodland landscape where trees were not frequent enough to shade out the grassland elements but were commonplace enough to create woodland conditions in some locations.
The Wood White is spread across the units as a unifying theme. This acts as an indicator species for the health of several other rare butterfly species. This is a butterfly of woodland glades.

Naturalness

Intervention in the landscape has seen two dramatic changes, one when the landscape was coniferised in the 1940's and 50's, and then deforested as a result of the partnership Neroche Project in the early 2000's. At the time of writing the landscape is settling down after the changes and much of the landscape is now grazed by Exmoor ponies and Longhorn cattle. The natural flora and fauna identified in the citation is able to reassert itself however scrub and bramble are becoming a significant threat to the designed open landscape. Some conifers remain and are seeding, which is potentially problematic if too great in number.

Rarity

The lichens were surveyed in 2007 and a report identified lichens of international importance.
The Wood White is a butterfly in rapid decline and Butterfly Conservation state it is important to protect the strongholds where viable populations still exist. However in recent years numbers of the butterfly have also been heavily reduced with the last recorded sighting made in a survey in 2014, even as the conservation works have followed best practise.
The ancient trees are of great interest in themselves and for the lichens they support.
Four separate types of NVC mire grassland are listed:

MG5 Neutral grassland *Cynosurus cristatus – Centaurea nigra (area 2.1ha)*
M23 Neutral rush pasture *Juncus effusus/acutiflorus – Galium palustre (0.8ha)*
M24c Marshy grassland *Molinia caerulea – Cirsium dissectum (1.2ha)*
M29 Soakway *Hypericum elodes – Potamogeton polygonifolius (<0.1ha)*

5. Factors Influencing Management

Difficult access

Although access to the site is possible at certain drier times of the year the topography of the site makes it difficult to manage. Soil is prone to waterlogging and many springline mires feed streams throughout the site. One of the main access routes has been prone to landslips which are difficult and expensive to remedy, this can cut off large areas of the site from vehicular access.

Progression to scrub

In many of the habitats there is a requirement of grazing or mowing to prevent the invasion of scrub and rank vegetation. This is usually summarised in the management plans as 'lack of grazing'. At the time of writing a herd of English Longhorn cattle and some supplementary Exmoor ponies are used to provide rough grazing.

6. Conservation Objectives and Management Aims

The aim is to maintain the habitats currently in unfavourable recovering condition and carry out any necessary management practices as suggested by Natural England to move the SSSI toward favourable condition. The condition status of the SSSI is monitored by Natural England at regular intervals conforming to the reporting cycle for SSSI.

The aim of the Forestry Commission will be to provide an overview of the different organisations working toward an improving SSSI, if necessary to provide a coordinating role ensuring best use of resources and that the people involved continue to communicate.

The general principle is to let natural processes continue to develop and to manually aid the gradual creation of sustainable open space in mosaic with semi-natural woodland.

7. Agreed Habitat Management

To be conducted directly by the Forestry Commission

Management Prescriptions for the period 2018 - 2028		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
1	Survey and GPS location of veteran trees	◆									
2	Halo thin trees casting heaviest shade on Veteran trees to benefit lichen communities	◆	◆	◆							
3	Thin non-native stands toward predominantly native composition		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆
4	Cut scrub mechanically to keep grassland open			◆			◆			◆	
5	Undertake survey for Wood White and habitat throughout the SSSI	◆									

To be conducted directly by other organisations

Scrub control through grazing and mechanical cutting will be undertaken by external bodies. This will be aided through HLS until 2022.

Actions in support of other organisations

The FC will commit to actively support other land managers across the SSSI. They will freely offer and share their knowledge, skills, contacts and experience and wherever possible equipment, resources, staff time and budgetary contribution.

8. Record of SSSI Management

Operation	Signed	Date

Appendix 6: SSSI Management Plan for Quants SSSI & SAC

Plan Period 2018 - 2028

1. Agreement and Consent

District	West England Forest District
Name of SSSI	Quants
Compartment Numbers	**6222 and 6223**
OS Grid reference	ST187178
Period of Plan	2018 - 2028

(J. GILLETT)

15/11/2018

Date:

H G STANWAY

West England Forest District

Date: 14/5/2018

* Agreement is conditional to a Notice of Proposal being submitted with detail prescription of work.

The signing of this plan by Natural England gives the necessary consent under Section 28 (6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), as amended, for the management prescriptions detailed in this plan and to be undertaken without necessity to consult prior to each operation during the plan.

FC England will keep a written record of work carried out during the period of this plan.

2. SSSI Notification

County	Somerset
Site Name	Quants
District	Taunton Deane
Status	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended
Local Planning Authority	Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council
National Grid Reference	ST187178
Area	20 ha
Ordnance Survey Sheet	1:50,000: 193 1:10,000: ST 11NE

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act) 1991

The Forestry Commission managed unit of the SSSI is in Unfavourable Recovering condition

3. Potentially Damaging Operations

Ref. No.	Type of Operation
1	Cultivation, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, and re-seeding.
2	Grazing and changes in the grazing regime, including type of stock or intensity or seasonal pattern of grazing and cessation of grazing.
3	The introduction of stock feeding and changes in stock feeding practice.
4	The introduction of mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation and changes in the mowing or cutting regime, including cessation.
5	Application of manure, fertilisers and lime.
6	Application of pesticides, including herbicides (weed killers).
7	Dumping, spreading or discharge of any materials.
8	Burning.
9	The release into the site of any wild, feral or domestic animal, plant or seed.
10	The killing or removal of any wild animal*, other than pest control.
11	The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant or plant remains, including shrub, herb, dead or decaying wood, moss, lichen, fungus, leaf-mould and turf.
12	Changes in tree and/or woodland management including afforestation, planting, clear and selective felling, thinning, coppicing, modification of the stand or underwood, changes in species composition, cessation of management.
13a	Drainage (including use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains)
13b	Modification of the structure of watercourses (eg. streams), including their banks and beds, as by re-alignment, re-grading or dredging
13c	Management of aquatic and bank vegetation
14	The changing of water levels and tables and water utilisation, including irrigation, storage and abstraction through boreholes.
15	Infilling of ditches, ponds, pools or marshes
16a	The introduction of or subsequent changes in freshwater fishery production and/or management, including sporting fishing and angling.
20	Extraction of minerals, including topsoil and subsoil.
21	Construction, removal or destruction of roads, tracks, walls, fences, hardstands, banks, ditches or other earthworks, or the laying, maintenance or removal of pipelines and cables, above or below ground.
22	Storage of materials
23	Erection of permanent or temporary structures, or the undertaking of engineering works, including drilling.
26	Use of vehicles likely to damage or disturb features of interest.
27	Recreational or other activities likely to damage the trees and epiphytic lichens.
28	Introduction of game management and changes in game management and hunting practice.

4. Important Evaluation Criteria

Butterfly meadows and rides

Unimproved calcareous and neutral grassland of, the False Oat-grass - Wild Parsnip type, with False Oat-grass, Devil's-bit Scabious, Cowslip, Hairy Violet, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil. Rarer plants include Bee Orchid, with Marsh Helleborine and Greater Butterfly-orchid under shady margins. There are frequent old anthills supporting a contrasting flora, and one area has a more acid flora including Heather.

This vegetation supports a diverse breeding butterfly and moth fauna including Duke of Burgundy, Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Green Hairstreak and Narrow-bordered Bee Hawkmoth. Marsh Fritillary has maintained a small but significant population on the site for many years, and led to the SAC designation, but the species has declined sharply and the current status is unclear. Wood White was present until 2005. Other species present include Silver-washed Fritillary (nectaring).

Restored open space

From being bare of all vegetation following conifer harvesting in 2006, these areas developed a moderately diverse vegetation within four years. The sward is a tussocky covering of Soft Rush and Yorkshire Fog with Bramble patches, scattered with remaining conifer tree stumps, and a flora including Greater Birdsfoot-trefoil, Common Centaury, Meadowsweet, Sharp-flowered Rush, Cowslip and Fleabane. Willow, Birch and Alder scrub remains an aggressive component, and in some areas European Gorse is abundant. Mature ash and oak are scattered throughout, sometimes dense enough to form wood pasture.

Ancient semi-natural and PAWS woodland

The woodland is dominated by Ash with some Pedunculate Oak, with a few remnant 1971 plantings of Douglas Fir and Western Hemlock, with wetter areas of Goat Willow and groups of large Aspen. There is a large Black Poplar on the edge of the southern bridleway. The understorey is mostly Hazel with Field Maple, Hawthorn, Holly, Dogwood, Blackthorn and Rowan. Wild Service Tree occurs rarely. The ground flora is dominated in parts by Pendulous Sedge with drier areas carrying Bluebell and Dog's Mercury.

Hartley Field

This discrete field contains unimproved neutral grassland of the Crested Dog's tail - Common Knapweed type, with Yorkshire Fog, Sweet Vernal-grass, Meadow Vetchling, Common Bird's-foot Trefoil, Devil's-bit Scabious, Meadowsweet and Cowslip

5. Factors Influencing Management

Progression to scrub

In many of the habitats there is a requirement of grazing or mowing to prevent the invasion of scrub and rank vegetation. This is usually summarised in the management plans as ‘lack of grazing’. At the time of writing a herd of English Longhorn cattle and some supplementary Exmoor ponies are used to provide rough grazing. The wooded and scrub component of the site is very important for the extensive edge habitat it provides, giving sheltered microclimates and variable structure for protection, nesting, roosting and hibernation. The challenge is to maintain a
sensible balance between scrub and open space.

6. Conservation Objectives and Management Aims

The aim is to maintain the habitats currently in unfavourable recovering condition and carry out any necessary management practices as suggested by Natural England to move the SSSI toward favourable condition. The condition status of the SSSI is monitored by Natural England at regular intervals conforming to the reporting cycle for SSSI.

The aim of the Forestry Commission will be to provide an overview of the different organisations working toward an improving SSSI, if necessary to provide a coordinating role ensuring best use of resources and that the people involved continue to communicate. Within this overall objective, to seek to maintain the suitability of the site for specific threatened species, notably Marsh Fritillary, plus Duke of Burgundy, Dingy and Grizzled Skipper, Narrow-bordered Bee-hawkmoth.

The general principle is to let natural processes continue to develop and to manually aid the gradual creation of sustainable open space in mosaic with semi-natural woodland.

7. Agreed Habitat Management

To be conducted directly by the Forestry Commission

Management Prescriptions for the period 2018 - 2028		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Survey and GPS location of veteran trees	◆									
2	Halo thin trees casting heaviest shade on Veteran trees to benefit lichen communities		◆				◆				◆
3	Thin out or deaden all non-native specimens		◆				◆				

To be conducted directly by other organisations

Scrub control through grazing and mechanical cutting will be undertaken by external bodies. This will be aided through HLS until 2022.

Actions in support of other organisations

The FC will commit to actively support other land managers across the SSSI. They will freely offer and share their knowledge, skills, contacts and experience and wherever possible equipment, resources, staff time and budgetary contribution.

8. Record of SSSI Management

Operation	Signed	Date

Appendix 7: SSSI Management Plan for Prior's Park and Adcombe Wood SSSI

Plan Period 2018 - 2028

1. Agreement and Consent

District	West England Forest District
Name of SSSI	Prior's Park and Adcombe Wood
Compartment Numbers	6240 and 6241
OS Grid reference	ST225170
Period of Plan	2018 - 2028

(J. GILLETT)

Date: 15/10/2018

H G STANNARD

West England Forest District

Date: 14/5/2018

* Agreement is conditional to an Notice of Proposal being submitted with detail prescription of works

The signing of this plan by Natural England gives the necessary consent under Section 28 (6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), as amended, for the management prescriptions detailed in this plan and to be undertaken without necessity to consult prior to each operation during the plan.

FC England will keep a written record of work carried out during the period of this plan.

2. SSSI Notification

County	Somerset
Site Name	Prior's Park and Adcombe Wood
District	Taunton Deane
Status	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended
Local Planning Authority	Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council
National Grid Reference	ST225170
Area	103.6 ha
Ordnance Survey Sheet	1:50,000: 193 1:10,000: ST 21NW

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act)1985

Unit 3, managed by Forestry Commission England is currently in Unfavourable Recovering condition.

3. Potentially Damaging Operations

Ref. No.	Type of Operation
1	Cultivation, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, and re-seeding.
2	Grazing and changes in the grazing regime, including type of stock or intensity or seasonal pattern of grazing and cessation of grazing.
3	The introduction of stock feeding and changes in stock feeding practice.
4	The introduction of mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation and changes in the mowing or cutting regime, including cessation.
5	Application of manure, fertilisers and lime.
6	Application of pesticides, including herbicides (weed killers).
7	Dumping, spreading or discharge of any materials.
8	Burning.
9	The release into the site of any wild, feral or domestic animal, plant or seed.
10	The killing or removal of any wild animal*, other than pest control.
11	The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant or plant remains, including shrub, herb, dead or decaying wood, moss, lichen, fungus, leaf-mould and turf.
12	Changes in tree and/or woodland management including afforestation, planting, clear and selective felling, thinning, coppicing, modification of the stand or underwood, changes in species composition, cessation of management.
13a	Drainage (including use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains)
13b	Modification of the structure of watercourses (eg. streams), including their banks and beds, as by re-alignment, re-grading or dredging
13c	Management of aquatic and bank vegetation
14	The changing of water levels and tables and water utilisation, including irrigation, storage and abstraction through boreholes.
15	Infilling of ditches, ponds, pools or marshes
16a	The introduction of or subsequent changes in freshwater fishery production and/or management, including sporting fishing and angling.
20	Extraction of minerals, including topsoil and subsoil.
21	Construction, removal or destruction of roads, tracks, walls, fences, hardstands, banks, ditches or other earthworks, or the laying, maintenance or removal of pipelines and cables, above or below ground.
22	Storage of materials
23	Erection of permanent or temporary structures, or the undertaking of engineering works, including drilling.
26	Use of vehicles likely to damage or disturb features of interest.
27	Recreational or other activities likely to damage the trees and epiphytic lichens.
28	Introduction of game management and changes in game management and hunting practice.

4. Important Evaluation Criteria

Diversity

A large proportion of the SSSI is ancient semi-natural woodland, supporting W7 and W8 woodland NVC types.

There are also small areas of non ancient woodland habitat that have developed alongside the stream in the lower areas of the valley and wet flushes and marshy ground. Open habitat is provided alongside rides, throughout the area occupied by the overhead power line and in the recent clearfells where successional habitat will provide an important element of open space for the next few years.

The SSSI supports a diverse variety of tree and shrub species including wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*), small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*), hawthorn (*Cratageus monogyna*) and guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*) with a diverse ground flora resulting from the varied geology and topography across the site.

Naturalness

Intervention in the ancient semi-natural woodland due to poor access and steep and sloping ground has been fairly minimal in recent years. This lack of intervention has allowed an interesting woodland to develop where natural processes are starting to take place on the often steep and unstable ground. Reasonable amounts of deadwood are starting to accumulate present across the site.

Rarity

Slope alderwood (NVC W7), associated with the Keuper Marl and the Lower Rhaetic mudstones and siltstones of the Blackdown Hills is unusual in southern Britain and can be found over significant parts of the site. Alder woodland is often associated with rich invertebrate interest and should be maintained.

5. Factors Influencing Management

Difficult access

Although access to the site is possible at certain times of the year the topography of the site makes it difficult to manage. Any management on the higher sloping ground would need to take place using motor manual methods and due to the relatively small parcel sizes available, management of this woodland is not economically viable.

6. Conservation Objectives and Management Aims

Maintain the designated woodland habitats currently in unfavourable recovering condition and carry out any necessary woodland management practices as required by Natural England to move the SSSI into favourable condition.

The condition status of the SSSI is monitored by Natural England at regular intervals conforming to the reporting cycle for SSSI.

Prior's Park wood illustrates a number of past management practices; coppice woodland now supporting old standards with derelict coppice, pockets of secondary woodland on old fields, slope ash and alder on the poorly drained clay as well as 20th century coniferisation and recent restoration clearfells.

The resulting woodland represents an interesting and diverse mixture of woodland types supporting a number of tree, shrub and ground flora species. In addition there are small pockets of open space created by the overhead power lines and the recent clearfelling of conifer.

Although perhaps considered by some as "under-managed" one has to question the benefits that woodland management would bring to the site. Cutting the derelict coppice would provide warmer sunny conditions that would benefit certain ground flora and invertebrates but at what cost to the species that favour moist, shaded conditions current present. In addition, poor access and sloping terrain makes woodland management (except for small scale fire-wood production) difficult and uneconomic across the site.

The conservation objective for the site is to let natural processes continue, to welcome the gradual creation of gaps in the canopy and the increased deadwood this will provide, and to encourage natural regeneration of species in both the canopy gaps and the clearfelled PAWS restoration areas. Deer will continue to be managed across the site by the Somerset and East Devon beat Forestry Commission wildlife ranger.

The clearfells are transitional open habitat and as open space is gradually lost through natural regeneration, the main ride leading through the SSSI will benefit from some intervention in the form of ride-side coppicing and the removal of the small area of conifer adjacent to the main ride.

Ideally all of the remaining conifer should be removed from the SSSI as this is a major factor in the unit not achieving favourable condition.

7. Agreed Habitat Management

Management Prescriptions for the period 2018 - 2028		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
1	Fell small area of Norway spruce alongside main ride sub-compartment 6240a					◆					
2	Open up main ride through SSSI by removing one tree length from sub-compartment 6240a alongside ride					◆					
3	If regeneration of native woodland does not take on the clearfell sites consider planting with small groups of broadleaves					◆					
4	Continue to monitor and manage deer numbers on site	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆

8. Record of SSSI Management

Operation	Signed	Date