

Haldon Forest and SSSI Plan

2018 - 2028

West England Forest District



The mark of
responsible forestry

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



Ben Robinson
FCE File Ref: OP10/81
(Old PE 62, 65 & 67)

Declaration by FC as an Operator.

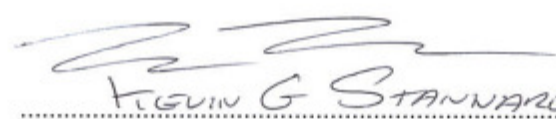
**All timber arising from the Forest Enterprise estate
represents a negligible risk under EUTR (No 995/210)**

Application for Forest Plan Approval


Forest District:	West England FD	
Woodland or property name	Haldon, North Wood , Webberton, Powderham, Black Forest, Whaddon Brake and Ideford, Well Covert, Great Plantation	
Nearest town, village or locality:	Kennford, Ashcombe, Kanton and Bovey Tracey	
OS Grid reference:	SX 884 847	Haldon Forest Park
Local Authority District/Unitary Authority:	Teignbridge District Council	

Plan Area:	1728 ha
Conifer Felling:	77 ha
Broadleaved Felling:	5 ha

1. I apply for Forest Plan approval for the property described above and in the enclosed Forest Plan.
2. I confirm that the scoping, carried out and documented in the Consultation Record attached, incorporated those stakeholders that the FC agreed must be included. Where it has not been possible to resolve specific issues associated with the plan to the satisfaction of consultees, this is highlighted in the Consultation Record.
3. I confirm that the proposals contained in this plan comply with the UK Forestry Standard.
4. I undertake to obtain any permissions necessary for the implementation of the approved Plan.

Signed 
 Forest Management Director

Date18th December 2017.....

Signed 
 Area Director

Date of approval.....13th February 2018.....

Date approval ends.....13th February 2028.....



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PART 1 – Description and summary



Summary

About

The Haldon Forest Plan area is made up of the one large forest block along the Haldon ridge with a number of outliers surrounding it including Great Plantation, Powderham, Whaddon Brake and Ideford. The Plan area contains three SSSIs, the greatest of which is the Haldon Forest SSSI and is the equivalent to 53% of the Plan area. The SSSI is designated for its dwarf heathland, raptor and lepidotera assemblages and nightjar. As a prominent feature along a ridge within the distinctive lowland setting within easy distance of Exeter, the Plan Area has a very high natural, recreation and landscape diversity and value.

The forests managed as part of the Public Forest Estate stretch from North Wood in the north, 2 miles west of Exeter, through the main block close to the village of Chudleigh to Great Plantation in the south which is 1 mile from Bovey Tracy.

The public forest here is predominantly conifer having been planted after the First World War to address the national timber shortage. Now large areas of restored lowland heathland, rotational forestry and the creation of felled sites support a nationally significant population of nightjar and rare butterflies.

The forests also provide a unique outdoor experience for visitors from the nearby urban settlements as well as the numerous tourists who visit Devon every year. Haldon Forest Park is a key tourist site for Exeter and Devon with thousands of visitors every year.

The majority of the Plan area is Open Access, confirmed by the Countryside Rights of Way Act. The exception is Whiteway, Spicers, Powderham and Whaddon which are all de facto Open Access due to it being leased from another landowner.

Objectives

The core aim of the Plan is to deliver the 50 Year Vision by producing woodlands with increased conservation, recreation and landscape benefits whilst maintaining a viable timber output. The long term aim of management is to continue to sustainably produce timber whilst providing a forest rich in wildlife, attractive to people and increasingly resilient to climate, pests and diseases.

The social, economic and environmental objectives of management are:

- The continued production of sustainable and marketable woodland products
- The protection and enhancement of woodland and open habitats and their associated species.
 - The creation and maintenance of permanent and transient open habitats.
 - The restoration and management of the Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- The provision and maintenance of recreation facilities.
 - Support the development of increased and sensitively managed recreation provision.
 - Improve stand resilience around recreation infrastructure.
- The delivery of well-designed proposals that comply with landscape design principles in keeping with the local landscape character.
- The conservation, maintenance and enhancement of cultural and heritage assets .

What we'll do

The current Plan outlines management proposals including felling and restocking over several decades, with felling licence approval for operations up until 2028.

Crops in more exposed positions where soils are thin will continue to be managed primarily for conifer timber production under a clearfell and restock scheme. Crops in less exposed positions will be managed to continuous cover forestry prescriptions so as to create a diverse and resilient forest structure.

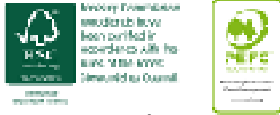
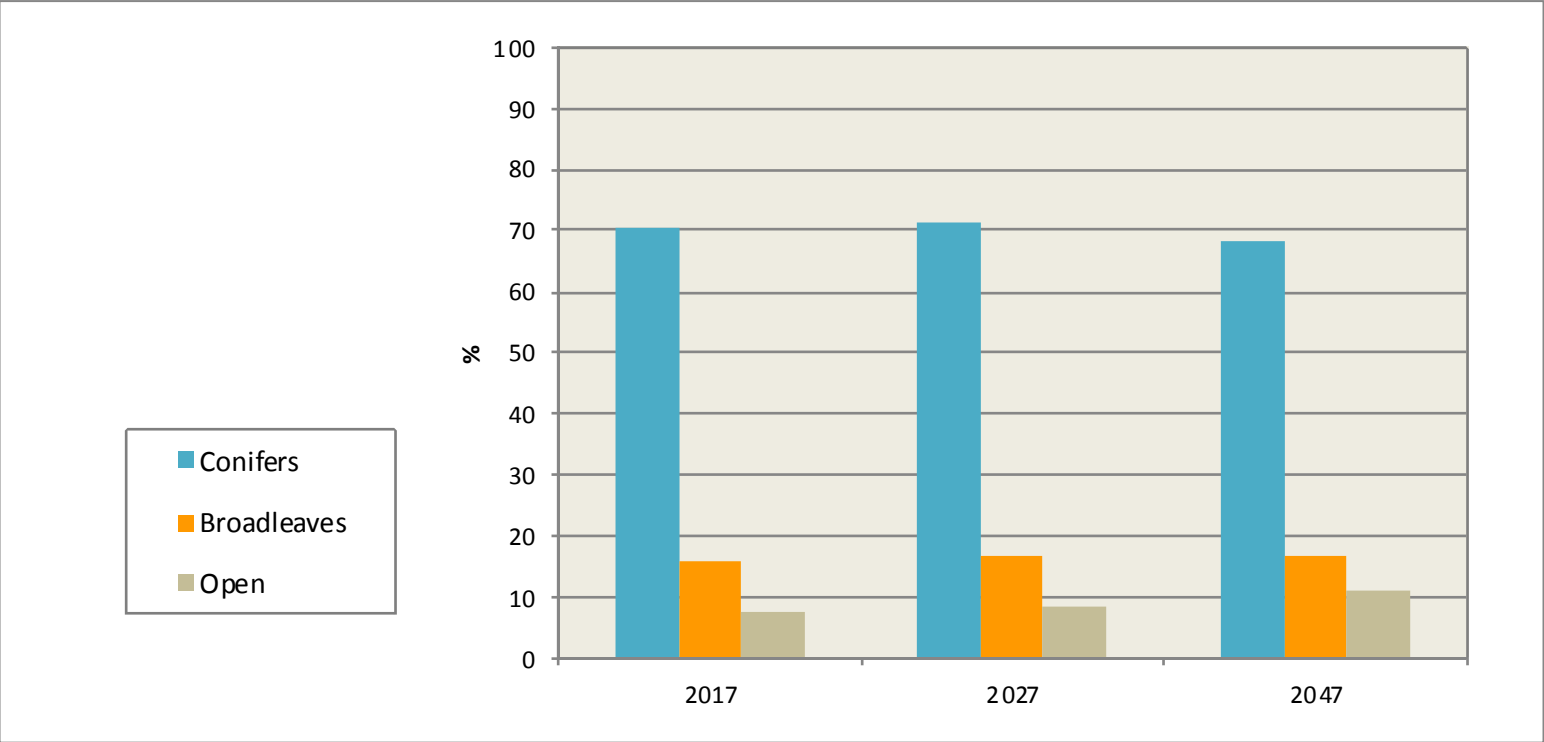
A comprehensive review of forest and heathland against the 50 Year Vision has meant that considerable areas will be restored in the future. The implementation and maintenance of an environmental corridor system and further 137 hectares of proposed heathland restoration, including 14 hectares in the next Plan period will continue to increase diversity of habitat and internal landscaping. Restocking design in specific places will look to enhance the heathland connectivity and butterfly habitat.

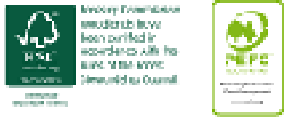
The planned areas of clearfelling, restocking and permanent open habitat creation during the ten years to 2028 are summarised in the chart below.

HECTARES	Conifers	Broadleaves	Open habitat
Clearfelling	77	5	-
Restocking/Regeneration	53	15	14

In addition to these defined operations, ongoing thinning and selective felling of both conifers and broadleaves will be carried out in the plan area at five to ten year intervals.

The proportions of conifer and broadleaved woodland and open habitat at the beginning of the plan period are shown in the bar chart. The increase in native broadleaves and permanent open habitat expected within the Plan period and over time is indicated in the middle and right hand columns of the chart.





Location

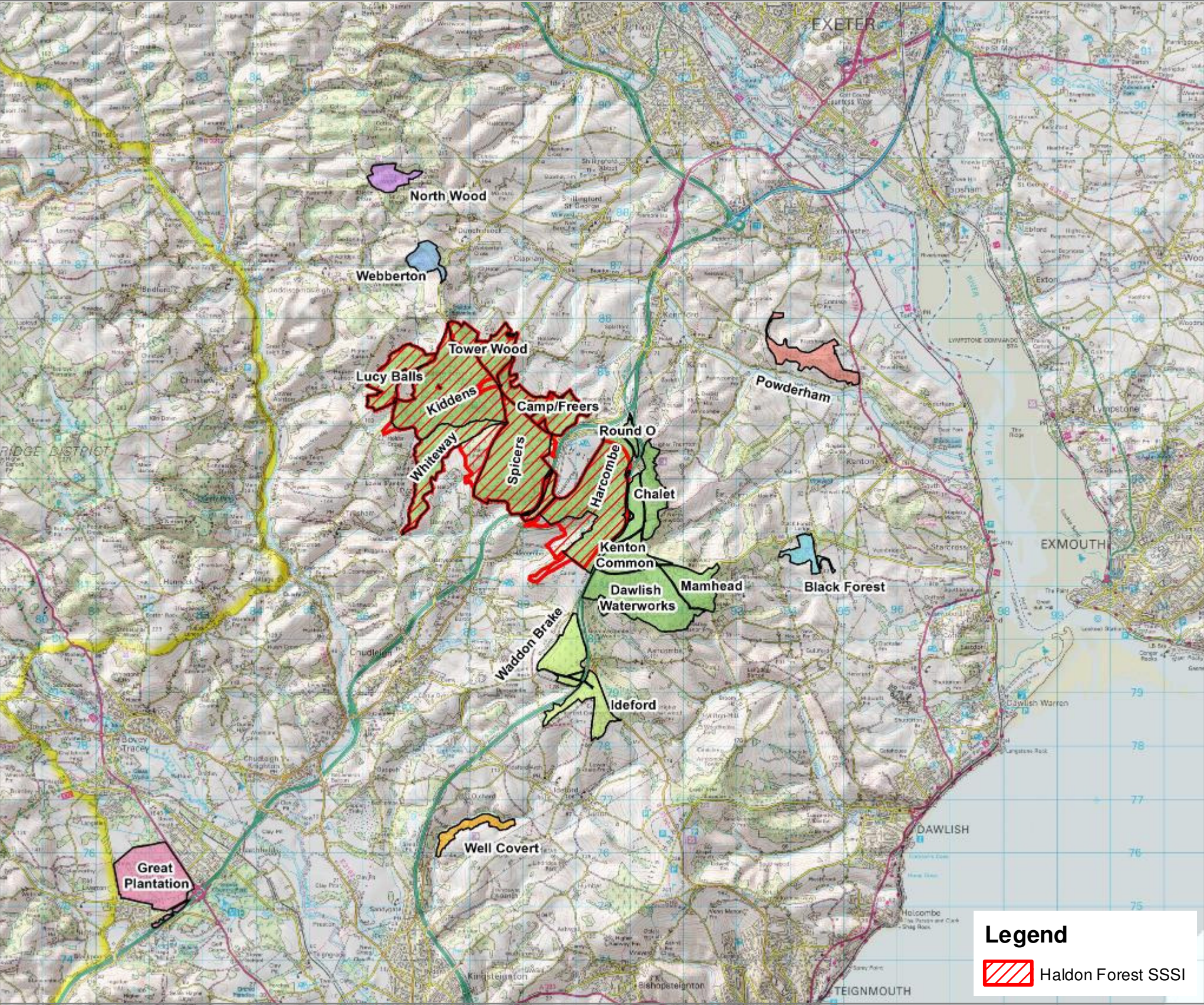
The Haldon Forest Plan area totals 1728ha within the Teignbridge District of Devon. The Plan area is made up of one large contiguous forest block with a number of separate outlying woodlands in a lowland wooded landscape.

The Plan area consists of 916ha of the Haldon Forest SSSI which is within the Plan area and is equivalent to 53% of the Plan area. A core aim of this Plan is to maintain the designated units in their current condition and carry out any necessary management practices as required by Natural England to move or maintain the SSSI units into/in favourable condition.

Forest	Area (ha)	% of Plan Area
North Wood	31	1.8
Webberton	29	1.7
Main Block	1297	75.0
Powderham	63	3.6
Black Forest	27	1.6
Whaddon Brake & Ideford	116	6.7
Well Covert	27	1.6
Great Plantation	138	8.0

The majority of the Plan area sits within the Devon Redlands National Character Area and the main block is a prominent feature along a ridge within easy distance of Exeter. The Plan area offers exceptional biodiversity-value which is confirmed by the extent of ecological designation both within and surrounding the Plan area.

The climate is warm and fairly moist with an average annual rainfall of 830 – 1130mm. The Plan area sits between 30m and 250m above sea level with the slopes predominantly south facing with a steep northerly escarpment along the main block. Soils vary significantly from ball-clay at Great Plantation to rich brown earth brown earth at Powderham and Black Wood. The majority of the elevated areas, including the main block are shallow podzolic soils with gleying occurring in places, these often are nutrient poor with a flint cap or a high stone component.



Panorama of Haldon ridge from the east





Tenure & Management Agreements

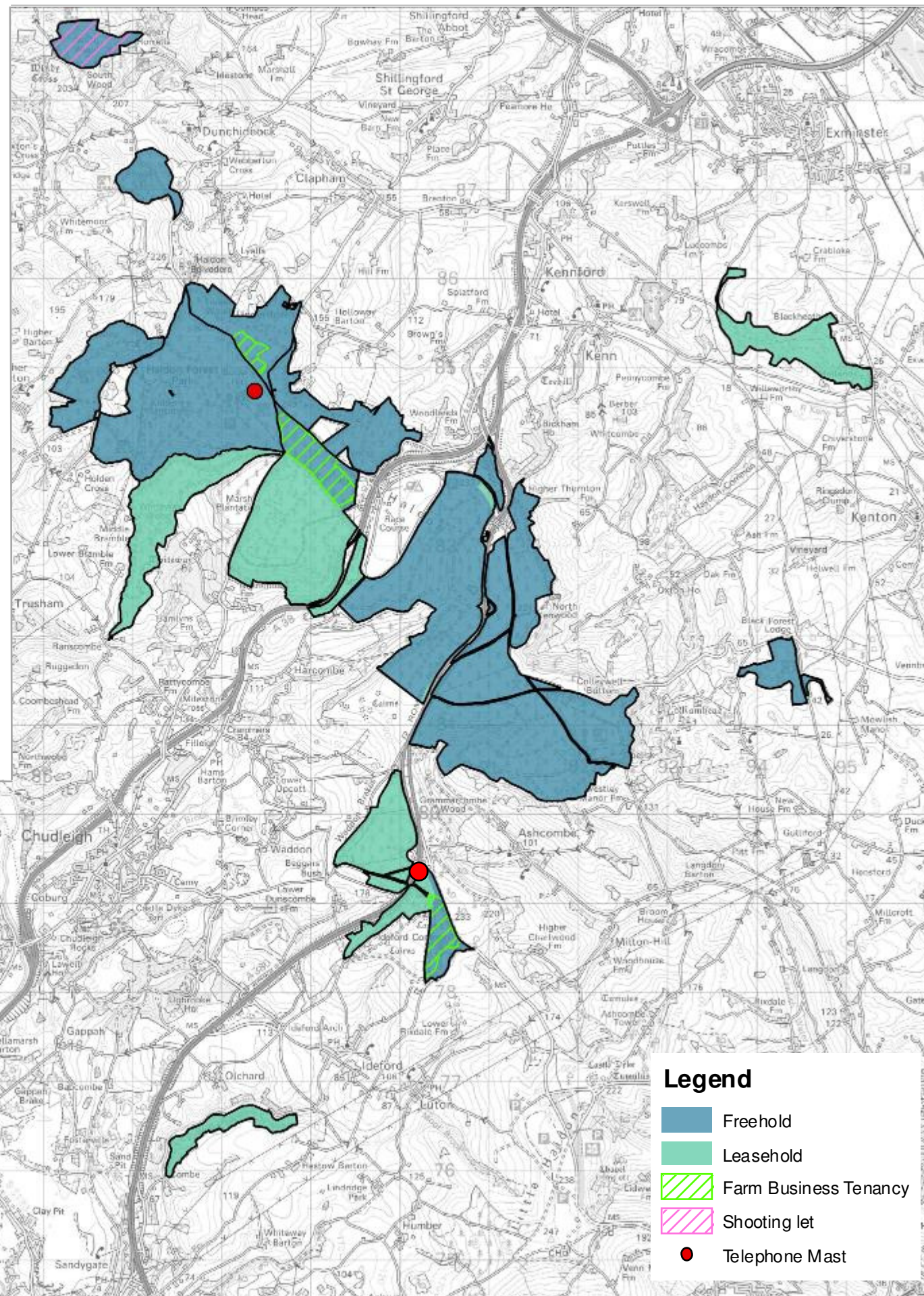
The majority of the Plan area (1285ha) is owned outright as freehold. As a result these areas are retained as Open Access. The main areas of freehold are Kiddens, Harcombe, Dawlish Waterworks which was recently acquired and Great Plantation.

Leasehold areas totalling 443ha are Whiteway, Spicers, Powderham, Whaddon and Well Covert. In places access, management and shooting rights are limited due to nature of the tenure.

Heathland sections of Ideford, Spicers and Tower Wood are managed through livestock grazing under a farm business tenancy.

The Haldon Forest Park has a number recreation leases which are within the main hub area. The acknowledgement and management around these will be included in the zoning and management of the areas in immediate vicinity to the hub (see Page 61)

One shooting let in North Wood and two telephone masts, at Buller's Hill and Whaddon are also management agreements which need to be considered when considering management proposals for the Plan area.



History

The Forestry Commission acquired its first 350ha at Haldon in 1920. Lease or purchase acquisitions continued into the 1960s by which time Haldon was the nucleus of the Forestry Commission's 'Exeter Forest', totalling 1925 ha of woodland within a 12 mile radius of Exeter. Today, land managed by the Forestry Commission at Haldon totals 1590 hectares (excluding Great Plantation).

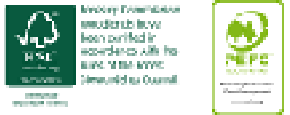
Pioneering forestry on the plateau was not easy, and there were many challenges, most significantly the poor soils characteristic of heathland. Fires lit both accidentally and deliberately gradually destroyed the shallow peat layer, leaving a thin stony soil that was heavily compacted and dried out quickly.

In the early days, planting involved hard labour, breaking up the ground with a pick and boring a hole with an iron 'dibble'. Finding the right conifer species for these conditions involved extensive trial and error, and records show heavy losses from severe drought and entire areas scrapped due to poor growth.

Before the conifer plantations, the Haldon plateau was covered by heathland and the lower slopes had long grown oak coppice, other broadleaves, and some conifers. This was exploited, unsustainably, during the First World War. It was in the aftermath of the war that the Forestry Commission was set up to provide homegrown timber and reduce the over-reliance on foreign imports.

Efficiency increased as knowledge grew and machinery became more advanced. From 1920 until 1950, around 60 staff managed forest operations at Haldon (dropping during the Second World War), but by 1985 only 15 operational staff were required. Today, the Forestry Commission has just five operational staff for the Exeter area, a direct result of advances in technology and greater reliance on contractors.

Although Haldon is still very much a working forest, in recent years recreation and conservation have become increasingly important. Haldon is now coming full circle, as some areas of plantation are now being restored to heathland. The significant storms of winter 2014 and subsequent windblow clearance of 2014/15, totalling 74ha, has led to a significant change in forest structure and character across the main Haldon block. This has left a legacy which influence restocking, and future felling plans.



Designations

Ecological Designations

South Hams SAC - includes Chudleigh Caves and Woods and Haytor and Smallacombe Iron Mines which both fall within 4 kilometres of the Plan area. South Hams in south-west England is thought to hold the largest population of greater horseshoe bat and are a primary reason for selection of this site.

Haldon Forest SSSI - 916ha of this designation is within the Plan area. It is notified for its heathland which supports nationally rare species such as nightjar. It is also notified for its assemblages of raptor species which use the high forest for nesting. The rare species of Lepidoptera which are found here, notably on rides and recently felled areas are the third reason for designation.

Quarry SSSIs - Tower Wood Quarry (north) Buller's Hill Quarry (south) are two now disused quarries designated for displaying the residual facies of the different Palaeogene 'Haldon Gravels'.

Great Haldon Heaths SSSI - lies outside the Plan area but heathland restoration within the Plan area in recent years now complements this designated site.

Ancient Woodland- 112 ha of the Plan area is designated as ancient woodland. The majority of which is Plantation on ancient woodland (PAWS) - See Pages 35-36 for more detail.

Heritage Designations

Windy Cross Scheduled Monument - is a small designated heritage monument which sits on the edge of North Wood. It is in a stable condition. See Appendix 5 for further details.

Mamhead Registered Park and Garden - is a designated parkland partly attributed to Lancelot Brown, with landscape structures, around an early C19 mansion. It is noted for its mixed woodland structure and Obelisk.

Powderham Registered Park and Garden - is part of the Powder Castle and Estate which abuts Powderham forest on the eastern edge. Proposals will complement the designation.

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