

PART 2 – Vision and objectives



A 50 Year Vision

The Vision for the future of the Plan area is bold but in keeping with the Forestry Commission’s key strategic goals and the local and national value which is placed on the area.

Set against the backdrop of the Landscape Character whereby *the Haldon ridge, a coniferous plantation with remnant heath, forms a landscape setting for Exeter and the settlements around the Exe*, this Vision looks to achieve an area which is a haven for wildlife, fun and commerce. A ‘Key Opportunity’ of the National Character Area (Natural England, 2013) is *the restructuring existing conifer plantations as they reach maturity, to allow for reversion to lowland heath and associated mire habitats, and enhancement of the setting of historic assets, while maintaining the wildlife interest of Haldon Forest and balancing recreational demand*. In 50 years time this Plan will look to have delivered a rich mosaic of robust habitats which supports a multitude of rare and common flora and fauna species as well as contributing to a low-carbon economy.

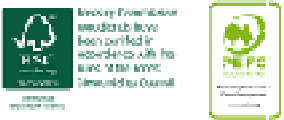
Conifer dominated forest predominantly managed through clearfelling and restocking and contributing to a vibrant woodland economy will remain the main habitat type. Rare and protected species, such a goshawk, hobby and nightjar will continue to call the forest home. The conifer forest will also be a popular and safe place to come exercise, learn and relax in a robust natural environment. The trees will be valued not only for their ecological and social value but also as a timber product, water regulation and for carbon sequestration which as climate change takes effect will be of increasing importance. A diverse structure of young, thicket and maturing crops across the area will be provide suitable continuous habitat over time. Areas of retained Scots pine and Douglas fir will allow the development of old growth and regressing specimens which become valuable to senescent loving species. Some forested sites not appropriate for forestry practice because of poor site condition or exceptional ecological value will not be restocked at the time of maturity to better integrate and balance open habitat with high forest.

Broadleaf woodland will grow in size and improve in condition as restoration to native cover takes affect in certain areas. Managed more sensitively but still with productivity in mind through thinning or coppicing, these more secluded areas will become a haven for a multitude of micro habitats, species and ecosystem functioning. Mature and future significant trees will be retained and allowed to breakdown providing deadwood habitat and nutrient cycling. Everything from rare dormice and butterflies to lichens and wet willow will enhance the contribution to ecology, cultural heritage and social value and to the wider landscape. Riparian areas will be enhanced through broadleaf intrusion and openrf up to dappled shade to become invaluable to the quality and storage of water that passes through.

Heathland, a key part of the Landscape Character, will feature more significantly in the area’s makeup. Lowland heathland areas will be consolidated and managed as dwarf shrub to support the rare and protected flora and fauna species which inhabit these areas. Scattered pine trees and occasional stable broadleaf trees may be retained to create habitat diversity and landscape impact. In addition to these, wooded heath managed on a rotational basis may become a home for numerous heath and scrub loving species such as nightjar, dormice and butterflies. As a minimum, these areas will be managed as a transient heathland, which will mean they may become up to 100% wooded at times with broadleaf scrub before being cleared on a rotation. This will create a dynamic and diverse mosaic of heathland habitat providing for large variety of species.

The small areas of grassland on rides and roadsides will be wider than currently and support common and protected butterflies and other rotational scrub loving species. These areas will also be invaluable to the enjoyment of the area for people, creating windows into the wider forest and out into the landscape.

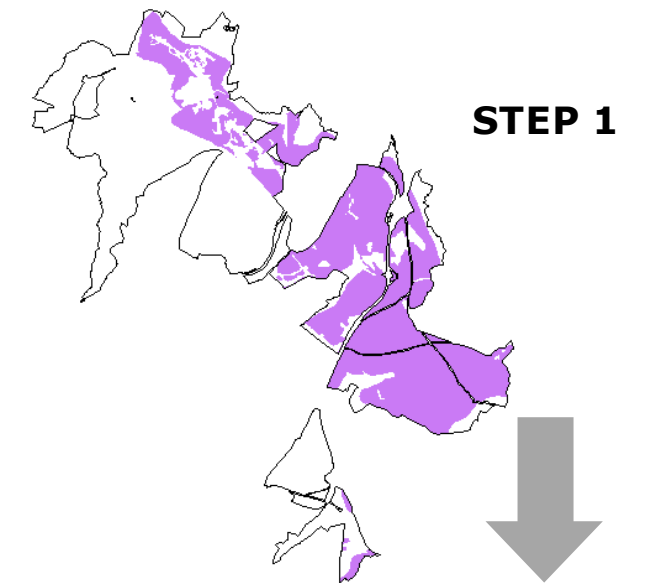
The 50 Year Vision outlined in this Plan will be delivered in part over the next 10 years through the Objectives outlined on Pages 12 and 13 with the proposal and prescriptions following.



Part of the Haldon ridge was designated by Natural England in 1992 as the first man made forest cited as Site of Special Scientific Interest in its own right, rather than because of the value the site had before it was planted. The ridge is also recognised by the Forestry Commission as a 'Nationally Important Open Habitat' (Forestry Commission, 2013c).

The following steps outline how the balance between forest and heathland will be achieved over the following rotation across the Haldon ridge, with expectation that the vast majority of creation will be delivered within the next 50 years.

HALDON RIDGE		
SSSI	Non-SSSI	Total
919ha	494ha	1413ha



STEP 1

It is observed that remnant and potential heathland assemblages are found primarily on the gravel and greensand formations and not on the calcareous breccia and Crackington formation. Areas of existing restored or remnant heathland and built areas are not restorable either because of their current ecological value or irreparable condition. Some land not owned by the Forestry Commission has obligations associated with it and are therefore currently not appropriate for restoration.

AREA OF POTENTIAL HEATHLAND		
SSSI	Non-SSSI	Total
290ha	322ha	612ha



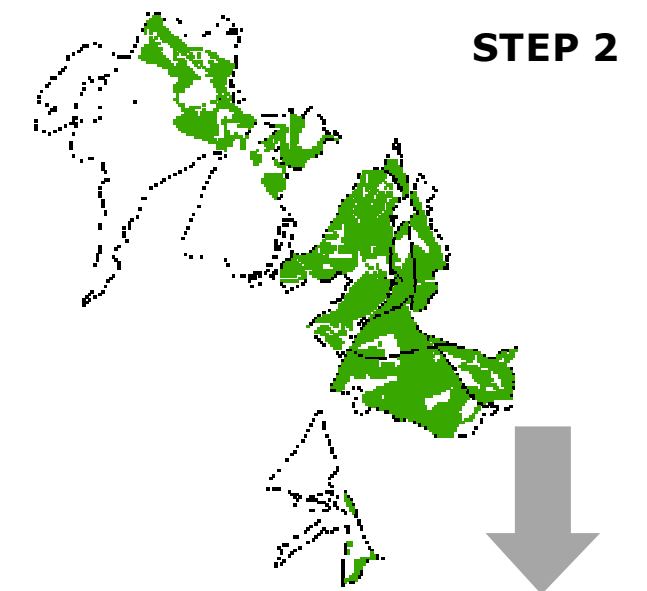
STEP 2

Broadleaf areas - It is generally accepted and defined in Policy that there should be no loss in contiguous broadleaf woodland habitat. Therefore areas ($>0.25\text{ha}$) of contiguous native and naturalised broadleaf cover of an average $\text{dbh} > 30\text{cm}$ will not be considered as potential heathland areas.

Haldon Forest SSSI is known to host an array of raptor species, and is designated accordingly. Species such as goshawk, buzzard and kestrel are known to nest and hunt within and around the forest. Areas of contiguous conifer (>5ha) which are either known to hold raptor or experience considerable low disturbance will not be considered as potential heathland areas.

The trees are intrinsic to the visitor experience at Haldon Forest Park. People value visiting a forest where they can experience nature and exercise close to an urban centre. The trees also create a robust environment which can absorb a large number of people. Therefore there will be no further loss of forest cover within 300m of Hub facilities.

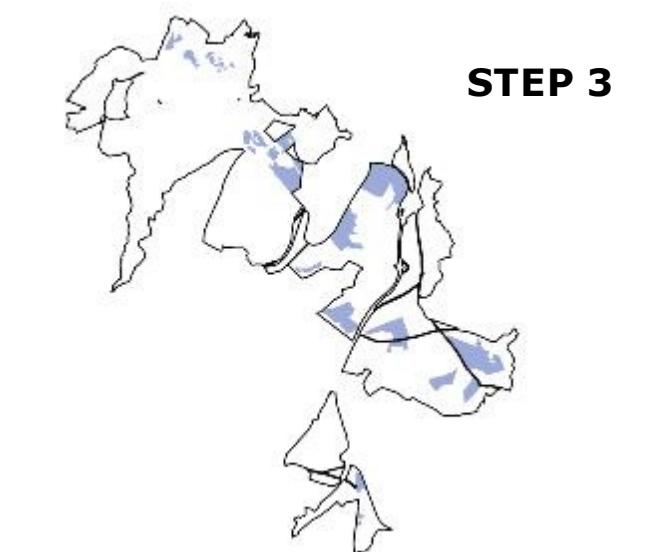
AREA OF SUITABLE FOREST		
SSSI	Non-SSSI	Total
262ha	281ha	543ha

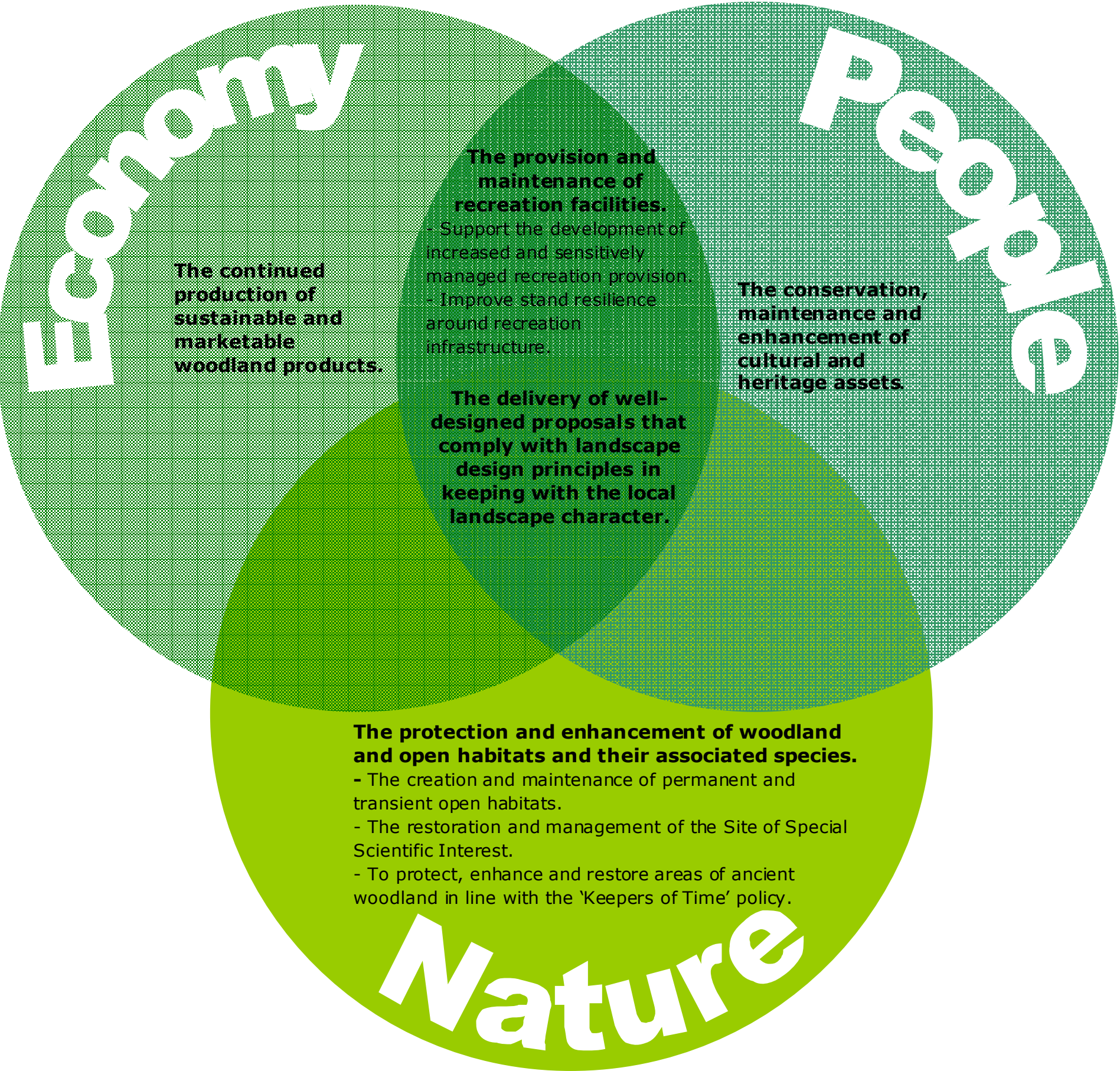
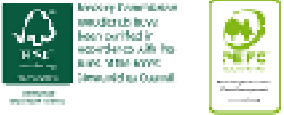


STEP 3

In addition to potential heathland areas remaining from Steps 1 and 2 (69ha) there is an assumption that it is better to connect existing or potential areas of heathland to facilitate more efficient management and better ecological value. Therefore a minimal viable patch heathland size of 15ha within 20ha is proposed in line with Policy. Small fragmented areas of potential heathland, will not be restored to heathland and where non-native tree cover divides two significant of potential heathland, additional creation is proposed to create efficient and robust areas of management. This adds another 67ha to the area of potential heathland which is also suitable as forest.

PROPOSED FUTURE HEATHLAND		
SSSI	Non-SSSI	Total
76ha	61ha	137ha





WEST ENGLAND FOREST DISTRICT

PROTECTING AND EXPANDING ENGLANDS FORESTS
AND WOODLANDS AND INCREASING THEIR VALUE TO
SOCIETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

The objectives of this Plan will, in part, deliver the *West England Forest District Strategic Plan* (2013a) and the national *Strategic Plan for the Public Forest Estate in England* (2013b).

Sustainable management of the woodland will be to the standards required to maintain FSC and PEFC accreditation and therefore must deliver economic, environmental and social objectives.

The meeting and monitoring of these objectives is outlined on the following page.



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



Meeting Objectives

District Strategy

Economy

Maintain the land within our stewardship under FSC/PEFC certification.

Improve the economic resilience of our woods and forests.

Encourage and support business activity on the Estate

Nature

Improve the resilience of the natural environment of the Estate under our stewardship.

Realise the potential of the Public Forest Estate for nature and wildlife.

Maintain and improve the cultural and heritage value of the Estate.

People

Maintain existing established consultation panels and engage with other consultative bodies such as National Park Authorities and AONBs.

Provide high quality woodland based recreational opportunities for people and business focusing on the 3 principle Forest Centres.

Forest Plan Objective

Meeting Objective

Monitoring

The continued production of sustainable and marketable woodland products.

The majority of the Plan area will remain productive through thinning yield.

Some clearfell timber production of mature crops will occur, majority from the conifers.

Comparison of average annual production forecast yield (10,000m³ (2021) and 9,500m³ (by 2028)) with actual production at the Forest Plan (FP) five and ten-year review.

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.
- To protect, enhance and restore areas of ancient woodland in line with the 'Keepers of Time' policy.

Appropriate reinstatement works will be carried out once operations have been concluded.

Protection and enhancement of water supplies and soil quality through sensitive implementation of operations and improved restocking practices.

Overall creation of 14ha of additional open space (lowland heathland and wooded heath) in Plan period 2018-27 and continued maintenance of 124ha.

Continued delivery of transient open habitats through clearfell and restock programme — 68 ha in Plan period.

Restoration of ancient woodland through a gradual thinning process

Management of SSSI's in line with specific management plans towards and maintained 'favourable condition'.

Raptor, nightjar and lepidoptera numbers will be maintained.

Operational site planning of harvesting and restocking operations will help monitor the effect of management.

Ongoing monitoring of soil and water quality pre and post harvesting with input from outside stakeholders.

Analysis and comparison of SCDB and site visit to open habitat through the Forest Plan review process.

Analysis of clearfell completion at Review

Analysis of naturalness scores at Review stage

Through correspondence with Natural England at regular interval — SSSI condition is monitored by NE

Measured at Review stage through analysis of ongoing surveys and records.

The provision and maintenance of recreation facilities.

- Support the development of increased and sensitively managed recreation provision.
- Improve stand resilience around recreation infrastructure.

Visitor numbers will be maintained.

Road and ride corridor and car park aesthetics enhanced and maintained in line with Zoning prescriptions.

Felling together with a delayed restock program will continue to diversify stand and age structure.

Operational zoned working will deliver minimal impact whilst demonstrating sustainable forest management

Current figures (300,000 visitors to Haldon per year) compared at FP review.

Visitor feedback comments, to be included in Review where appropriate.

The delivery of well-designed proposals that comply with landscape design principles in keeping with the local landscape character.

Implementation of proposals will soften and better integrate the woodland with the surrounding landscape

The use of Scots pine and Douglas fir as retention crops to ensure the stand diversity is maintained in a period of significant replanting

Fixed point photography analysis at Forest Plan review stage

The conservation, maintenance and enhancement of cultural and heritage assets .

Manage to relevant SM management plan during the planning of operations.

Protect and enhance unscheduled sites at the time of intervention.

Successful review of SM Plan and feature condition

Operational site planning of harvesting and restocking operations will help monitor the effect of management.