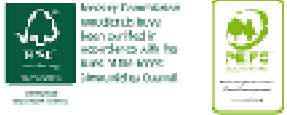


# PART 6 – Conservation, heritage and recreation







## Recreation and Public Access

The Plan area experiences a high level of formal and informal recreational usage. The majority of the Main Block and outlying forests (excluding Powderham, Whaddon Brake and Well Covert) are held under freehold and are therefore Open Access. Together with the Forest Park Hub at Bullers Hill and paid parking at Mamhead, these areas have a greater focus on recreation provision with a number of waymarked bicycle, walking, orienteering and horse riding trails in place. The leasehold tenured blocks mean access is limited to De Facto along the Public Rights of Way.

The use of the Plan area by local individuals as well as numerous visitors and tourists demonstrates the value of the forests to the local community, these features will be maintained in balance with ecological value.

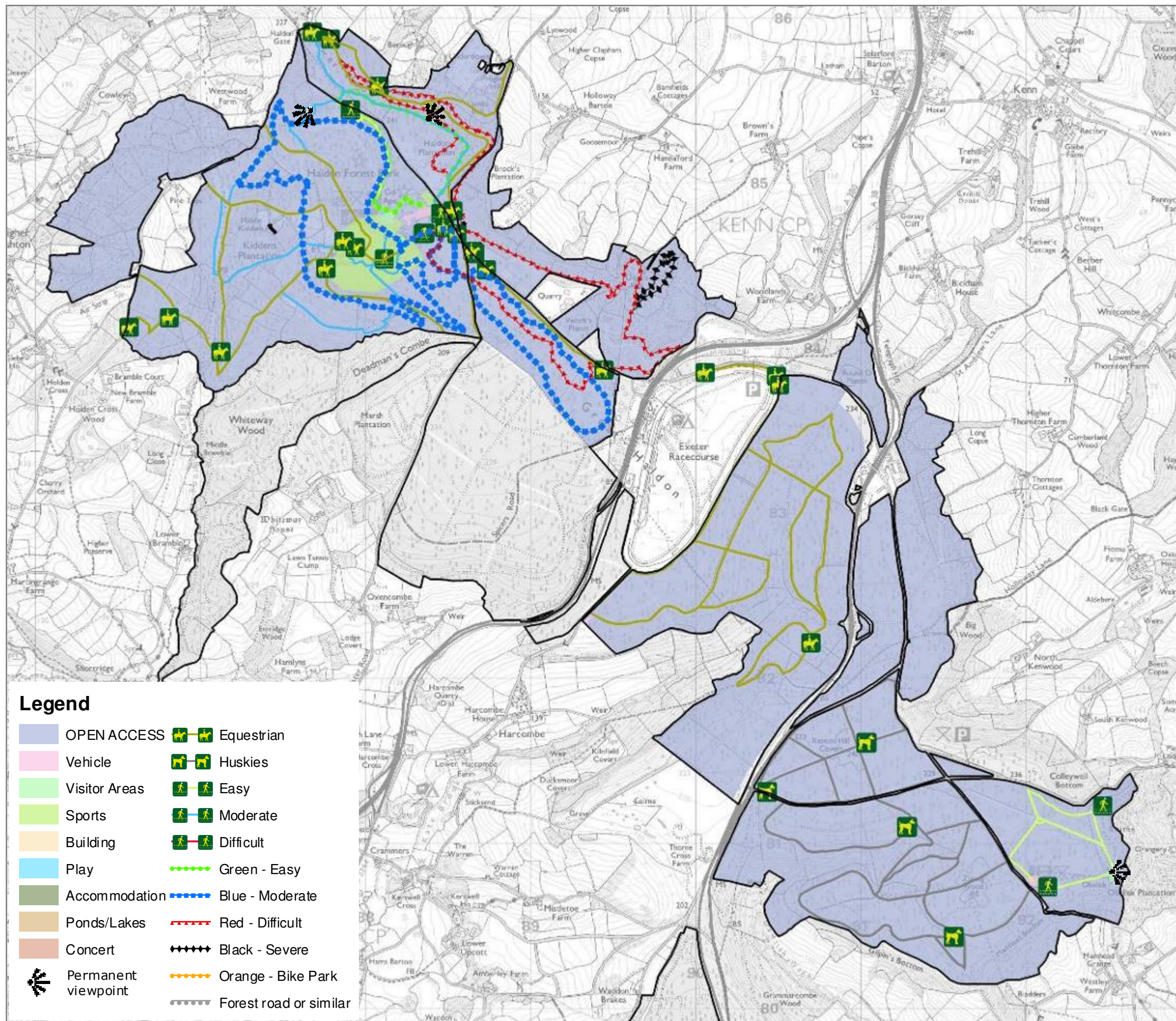
Within the SSSI, any new trails will be subject of discussion between FC and NE at the planning stage.

Any events planned for within the bird breeding season will be assessed for their likelihood of disturbance and re-routed if necessary.

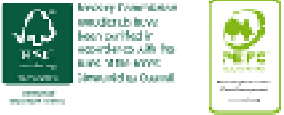
The Plan area also absorbs a lot of the recreational pressure as an alternative to nearby coast and numerous informal car parking facilities are available.

Three permanent viewpoints will be maintained within the main block, the Bird of Prey Viewpoint within Kiddens, the Discovery Trail Viewpoint within Tower Wood and the Obelisk at Mamhead. These will be maintained open as required by the Haldon Forest Park Recreation Team.

Opportunities to use operations to create temporary view points will also be utilised at the time of intervention. This work will primarily be along the high ridge and where existing infrastructure (i.e. paths) are already in place, so as to minimise impact. This will in turn, lead to other viewpoint areas being allowed to scrub up therefore reducing the need to significant open habitat maintenance.







Legend

- OPEN ACCESS

Vehicle

Sports

Play

Ponds/Lakes

Equestrian

Easy

Difficult

Blue - Moderate

Black - Severe

Forest road or similar
- Visitor Areas

Building

Accommodation

Concert

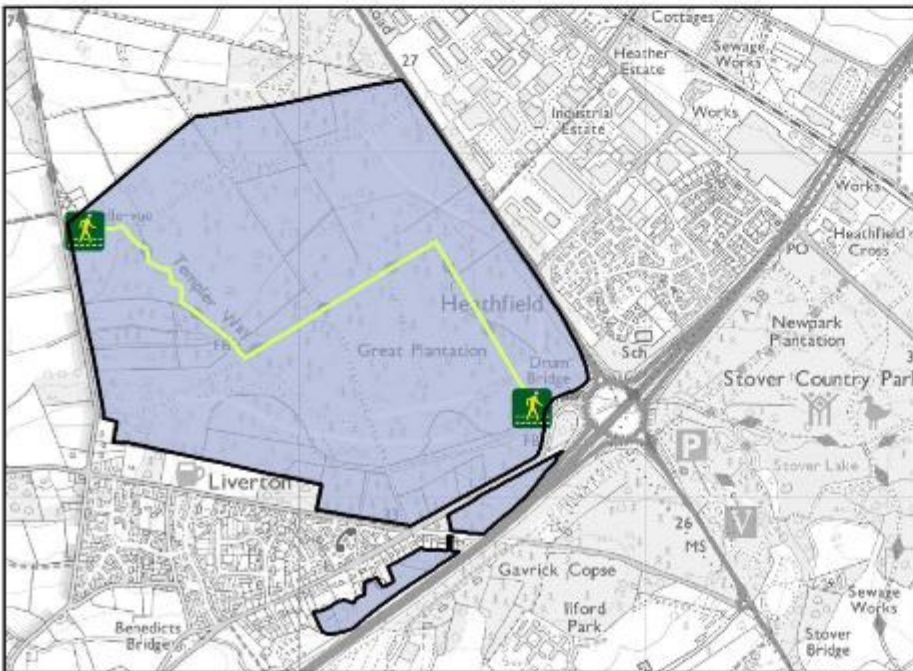
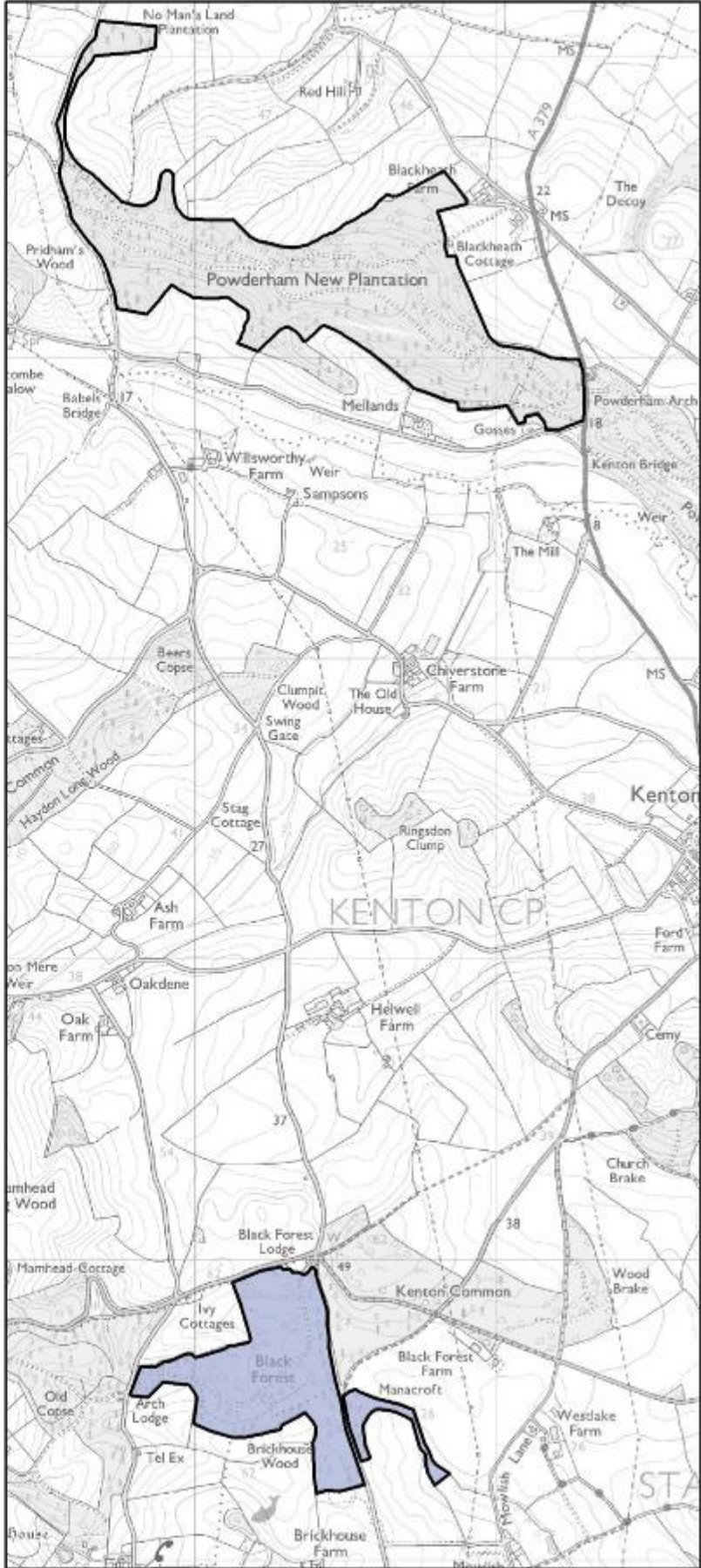
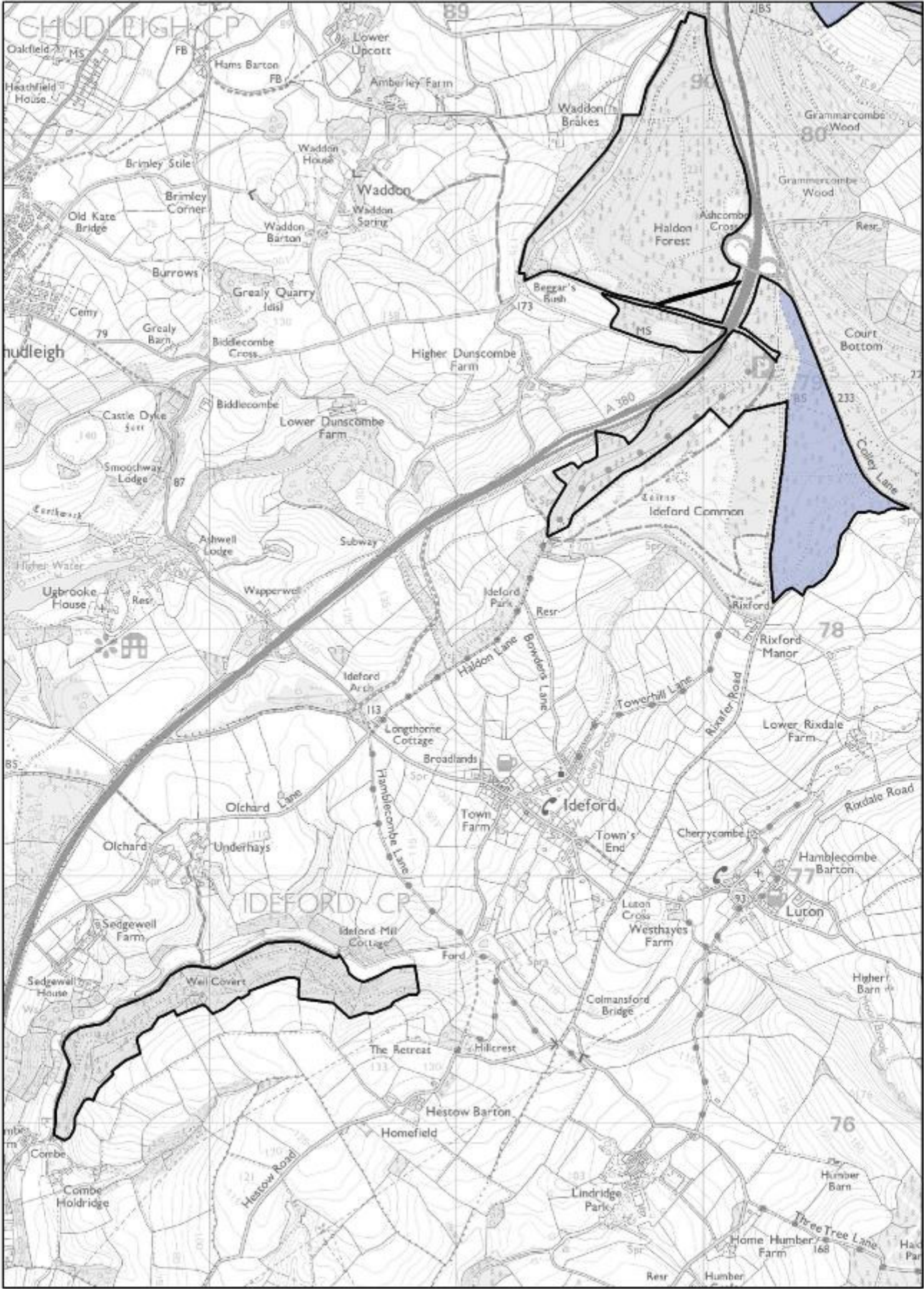
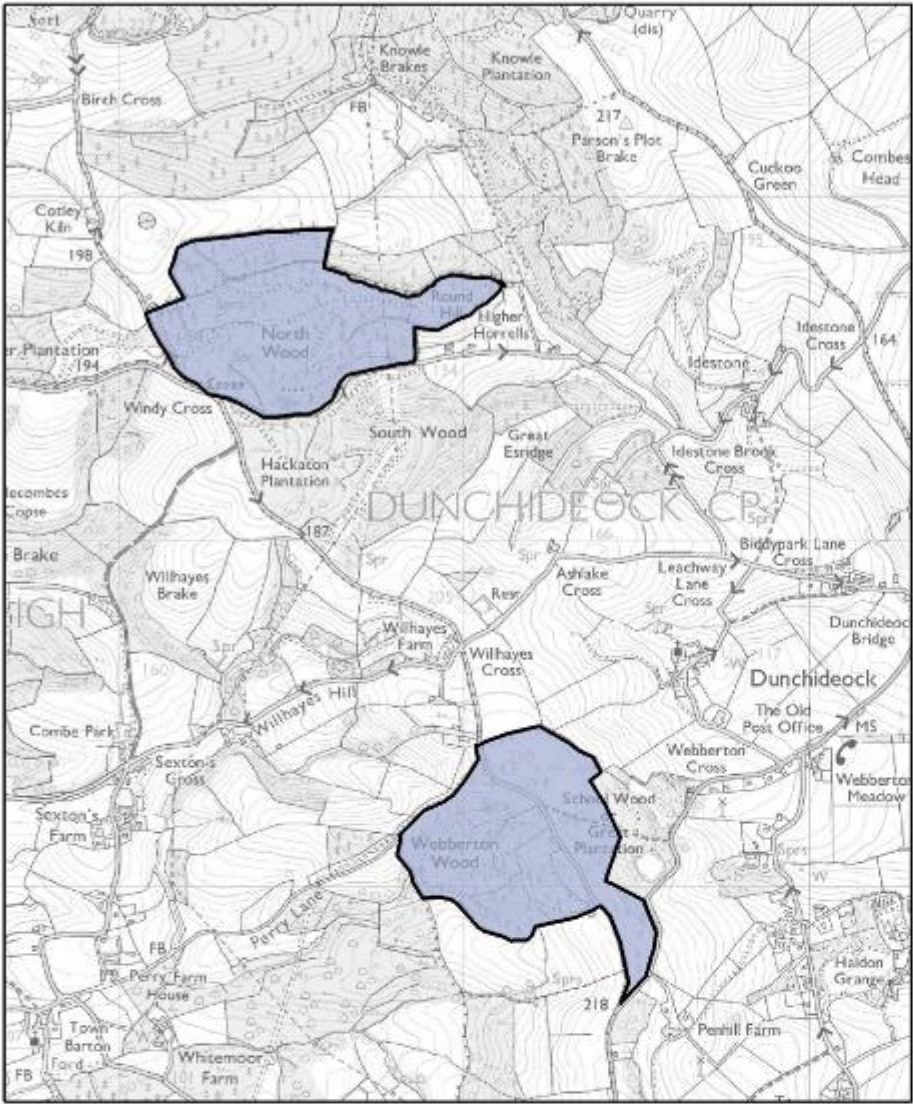
Huskies

Moderate

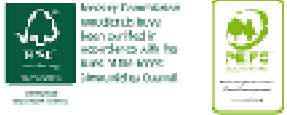
Green - Easy

Red - Difficult

Orange - Bike Park







## Recreation Management Zones

Due to the high recreation provision within the ecologically sensitive landscape, the Plan area has been divided into four management zones, focussed around the Forest Park Hub. These have been determined by recreation importance and visitor experience.

The aim is to establish a clear understanding of the role the forest has in providing for the recreational needs of a large number of visitors alongside its importance in supporting a number of SSSI designated habitats and species all whilst remaining a productive working forest.

**Zone 1** - experiences exceptionally high visitor interaction and therefore infrastructure and amenity value must be maintained. It includes the Recreation Hub including entrances, car park, main visitor buildings, Forestry Commission offices and maintenance areas, Pump Track & Cycle Skills area.

Trees will be managed to maximise stability to ensure safety, minimise Park closure and to provide a forest experience. This will be achieved by heavy thinning of young crops and then regular light thinning where possible and the utilisation of underplanting to ensure that forest cover is perpetuated into the future. Ecological interest in this area is limited due to low forest cover and high levels of disturbance.

Management is led by the Haldon Forest Park Team.

**Zone 2** - has a very high visitor footfall as it includes Discovery Trail, Bullers Hill area, Go Ape and road edge. It also includes proposed short loop trail, habitat trail bird hide and 2 new viewpoints to the Discovery Trail.

The forest will be managed through sensitive thinning and retention of quality areas of pine crops to provide an attractive backdrop to areas of open heath with high landscape value.

Significant areas of lowland heathland falls within this zone simply due to its proximity to the Buller's Hill visitor centre. Balancing the use of this zone for recreation on dedicated trails and cycle routes through sensitive lowland heathland habitats supporting species such as nightjar and reptiles is of paramount importance. Dogs will be excluded during the most sensitive times of the year.

Management is led by the Haldon Forest Park Team with input from the Beat Team.

**Zone 3** - takes in the wider trail network including longer distance and higher grade mountain bike and walking trails. Recreation remains a key influence in this area given the significant visitor numbers and people's desire to explore wider areas of the forest beyond Zones 1 and 2.

The forest will be managed for a range of objectives including the provision of safe, diverse and interesting landscape for a range of informal and formal recreation.

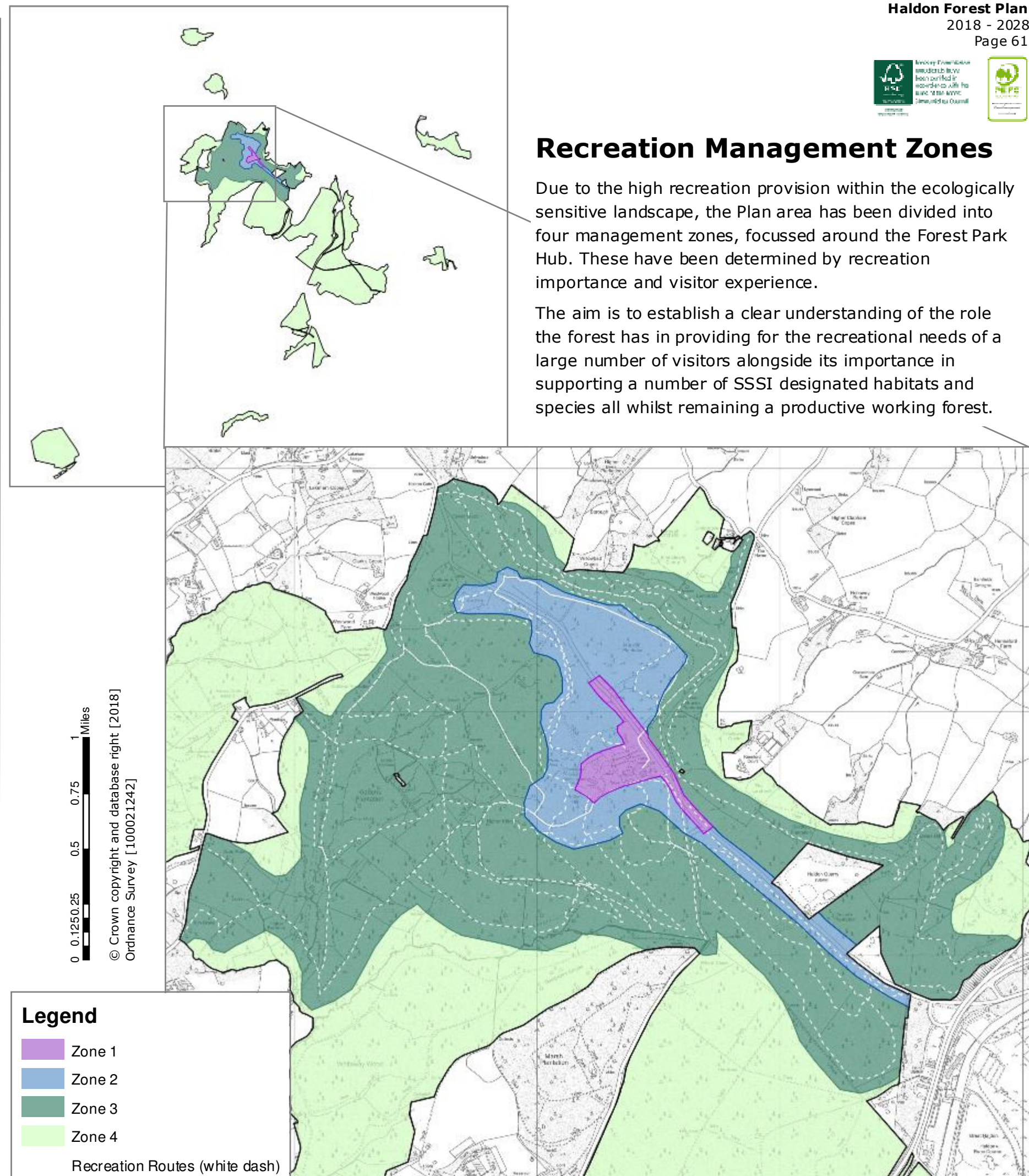
This zone encompasses significant areas of SSSI designated forest and heathland important for a range of species including raptors and nightjar which are especially vulnerable to disturbance. Exclusion zones will be put in place around known nest sites to ensure disturbance from organised events does not occur. The use of waymarked trails through lowland heathland and exclusion of dogs at certain times of the year will reduce damage and disturbance to lowland heathland habitats and species. Creation of new informal mountain biking trails will be monitored.

Management is led by the Beat Team with input from the Haldon Forest Park Team, particularly in close proximity (i.e. 10 metres) to trails.

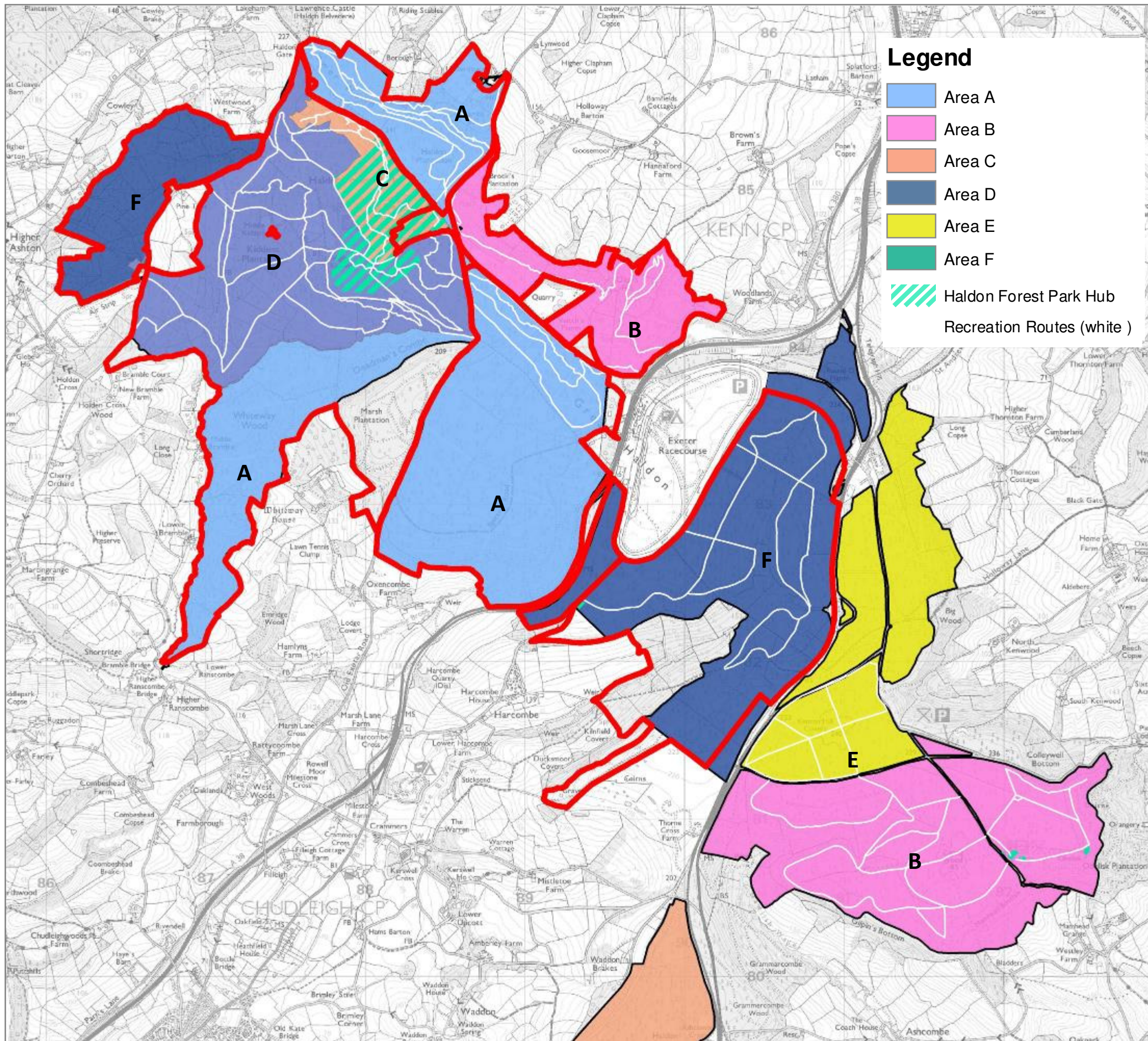
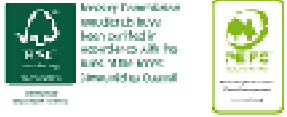
**Zone 4** - includes the rest of the forest outside of Zones 1,2 and 3. No formal trails exist within this area and recreational usage is limited to informal walking and mountain biking.

This zone encompasses significant areas of forest which are valuable for nesting raptors due to lower levels of disturbance. Balancing the ecological requirements of breeding raptor and nightjar is a key objective of this area in line with sustainable timber production.

Management is led by the Beat Team.







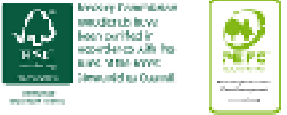
## Operation Units & Working

To balance the impact of forest operations on the high recreation provision and visitor numbers around the Forest Park Hub area, the Main Block has been divided into six operational blocks. The intention is work these areas on a rotation so that forest operations are discreet and do not adversely affect the visitor experience.

The aim will be for operations to be targeted, swift and to a very high standard, utilising interpretation where appropriate so that the Haldon Forest becomes a showcase for exemplary forest management.

Opportunities to use operations to create temporary (e.g. ten year) view points will be utilised. These areas will be less than 0.5 ha and therefore within the threshold OF cms6.





## Conservation - Ride sides & Habitats

Ride and road sides, together with watercourses and hedgerow management will conform to the prescriptions outlined in the District document, Design and Management of Environmental Corridors (2017). This document outlines the management of light levels, pinch points and forest edge dynamics and is agreed with Forest Services. The objective is to use the ride network to extend and connect with the surrounding heathland, this will be achieved through proactive, targeted widening and unstocking of edges to some coupes following felling operations to create a mixed transient open and diffuse scrubby habitat. Where appropriate, following felling and cleaning operations, opportunities will taken to extend and buffer the priority habitats underlined. This work will be focussed on areas highlighted with red hatch - - - over the Plan period.

### Legend

- Haldon SSSI
- Moor and Heath
- Hedgerow
- Forest Road Edge
- Conservation + Recreation
- Public Roadside
- Windthrow protection
- Watercourse
- Broadleaved Belt
- Lowland beech/yew woodland
- Wet woodland
- Lowland heathland
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
- BROADLEAVED; MIXED/YEW WOODLANDS
- CONIFEROUS WOODLANDS
- BOUNDARY & LINEAR FEATURES
- NEUTRAL GRASSLAND
- ACID GRASSLAND
- BRACKEN
- INLAND ROCK
- Surveyed; Unknown Habitat

**Wet woodland** Occurs in a number of areas of the Plan area where soils are poorly drained or seasonally wet such as flushes and streamsides with alder, birch and willow the predominant species. These will continue to be managed sensitively with attention paid to ensuring light levels promote favourable habitat conditions.

**Lowland heathland** is typically made up of an assemblage dwarf shrubs such as heather and gorse as well as grasses such as *Erica cinerea*, *Erica tetralix* and *Molinia caerulea* on shallow peats. The majority of heathland sites are located along the Haldon ridge. Managed as permanent open habitat with no more than 20% tree cover through mechanical cutting of regenerating tree species, the plan will aim to connect these areas through a well managed ride network.

**Bracken** occurs frequently on the acidic soils within the Haldon Plan area. Although it can become invasive and requires management through cutting, rolling and spraying, a patchy mosaic of bracken is maintained along the Kiddens powerline for the habitat requirements of the small and pearl-bordered fritillary butterflies.

**Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland** will be managed sensitively to ensure the quality is maintained in perpetuity. Thinning will be reviewed on a ten yearly cycle with the aim of enhancing and improving the condition of the habitat. Removal of invasive or unsuitable species, such as laurel, rhododendron or Western hemlock will ensure that this habitat is maintained and used as a building block for future native broadleaf restoration.

0 0.1250.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

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Legend

- Moor and Heath

Hedgerow

Forest Road Edge

Conservation + Recreation
- Public Roadside

Windthrow protection

Watercourse

Broadleaved Belt
- Lowland beech/yew woodland

Wet woodland

Lowland heathland

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
- BROADLEAVED; MIXED/YEW WOODLANDS

CONIFEROUS WOODLANDS

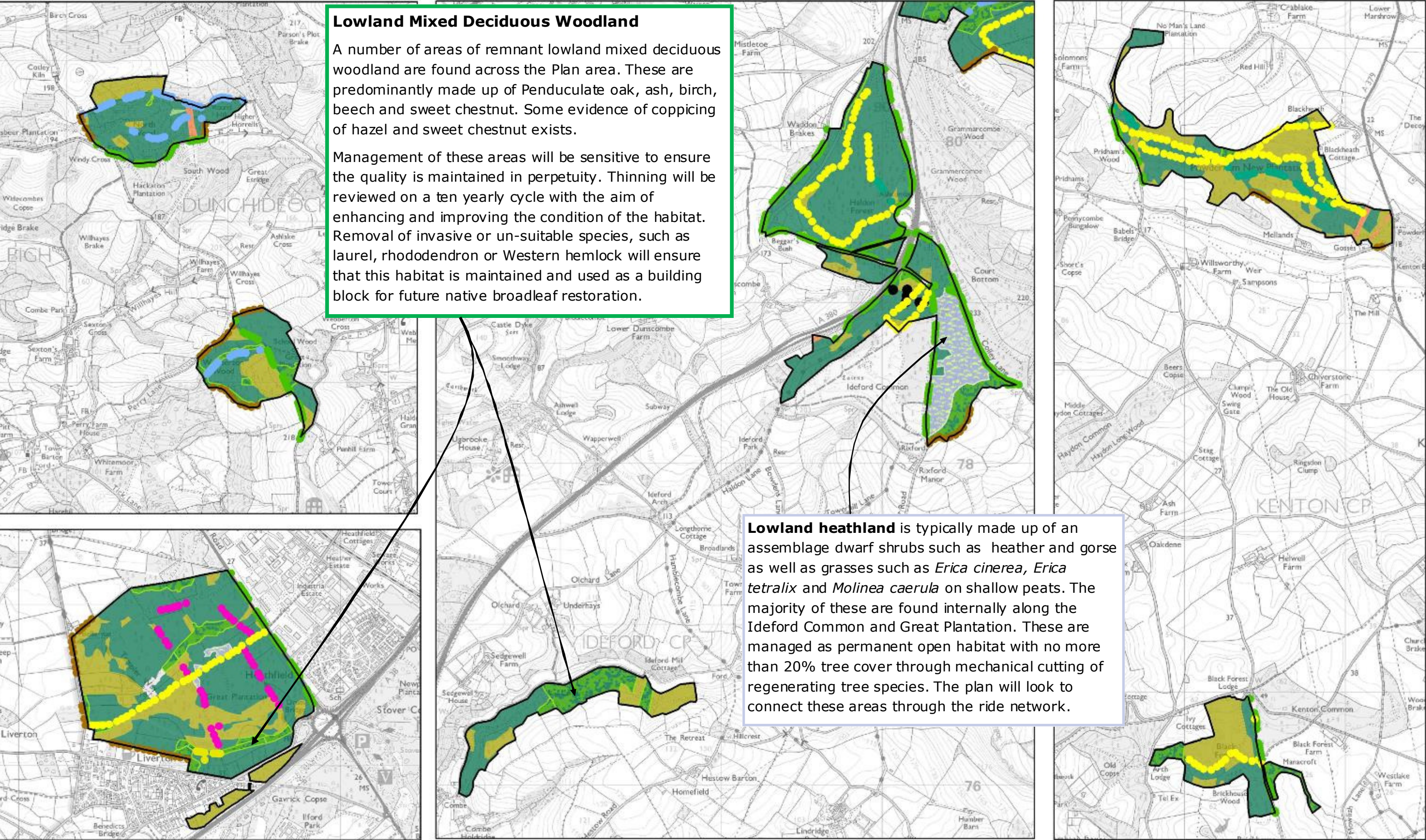
BOUNDARY & LINEAR FEATURES

NEUTRAL GRASSLAND
- ACID GRASSLAND

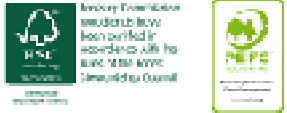
BRACKEN

INLAND ROCK

Surveyed; Unknown Habitat

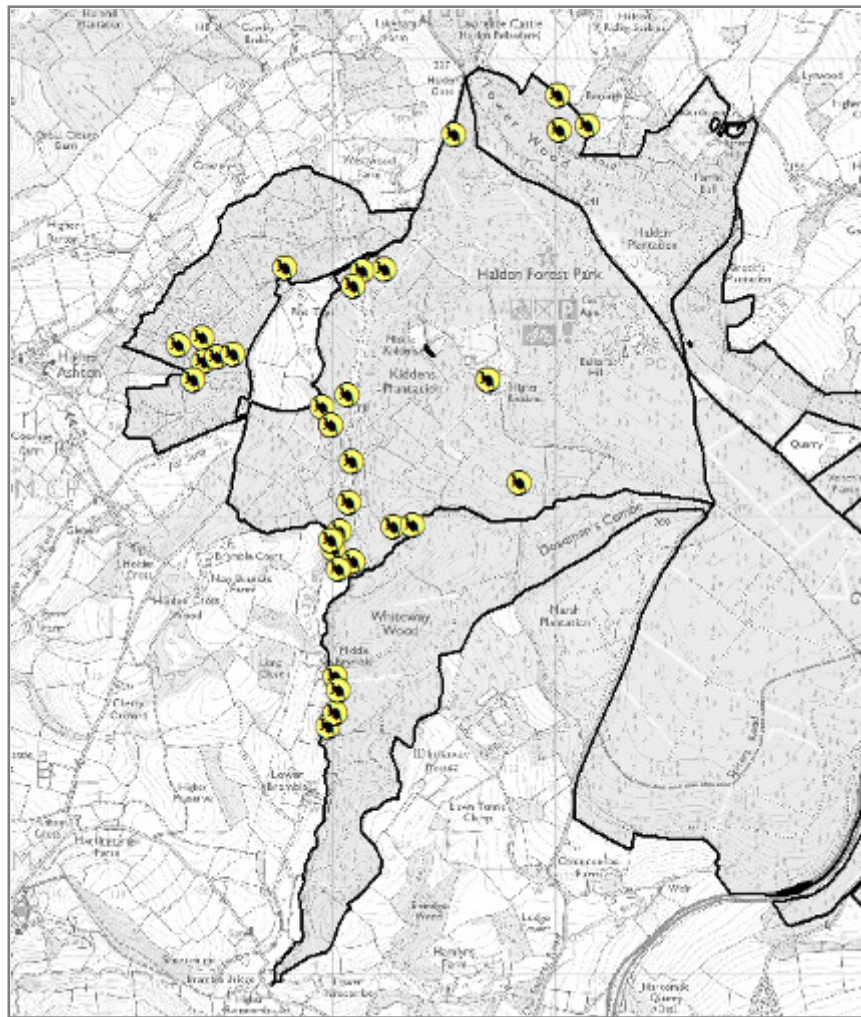






**Dormouse** favourable habitat is found throughout the Plan area, and there are records of this species in Kiddens and Lucy Balls (see map) but also in Great Plantation and Webberton.

This European Protected Species requires pinch points across corridors to allow habitat connectivity between broadleaved woodland, particularly in stands with a high hazel and/or sweet chestnut components. The prescriptions outlined in the Environmental Corridors document will ensure appropriate habitat provision and management will be in line with Best Practice Guidance (FC & NE, 2007).



## Conservation - Features

The Forest Plan area is used by a number of interesting flora and fauna some of which are highlighted below. Haldon Forest and its associated open habitats make a significant contribution to the provision of semi-natural habitats in the wider landscape.

On the other hand some non-native flora and grazing fauna species can have a detrimental impact on the forest and its features if their numbers are too high. Species such as rhododendron, encroaching wild deer, grey squirrel and boar will all be managed in line with District Strategy to ensure that their pressure does not have a negative impact on the condition of habitats and crops.

0 0.1250.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

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**Trees of Significant Interest (TSI)** are found throughout the Plan area and will be retained in perpetuity. The majority of these trees are beech but also include wild service, crab apple and oak. When crops are thinned crowns will be released slowly to minimise the impact of sudden exposure to desiccating winds and sun scorch. Management will be in line with FC TSI Guidance (Ops

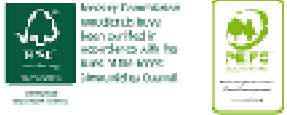
**Turtle Dove** is a severely declining bird which once used Haldon Forest SSSI as a sanctuary and was designated accordingly. This bird prefers to inhabit hedgerows (particularly hawthorn), woodland edges and scrub, however due, in part, to the agricultural intensification it is in steep decline. Haldon has some rumoured sightings of Turtle Dove in recent years but confirmed sightings have been absent for a number of years. Management will aim to provide areas of dense scrub and shrub layers along woodland edge and seed rich habitat throughout open grassland and rides.



**Grizzled and Dingy Skipper** (pictured) are becoming increasingly rare in the UK. The Kiddens area of the Plan area is home to a vibrant population of the butterfly. Favouring warm sheltered areas with sparse vegetation including ride sides, woodland clearings and abandoned quarries, both species will benefit from the clearfelling programme as well as the environmental corridor work proposed in this Plan.







## Heritage Features

People have lived and farmed on Haldon for at least 5,000 years. It has been both a barrier to transport but also a commanding position from which to control the surrounding countryside. The Plan area holds a number of indications of this rich cultural heritage some of which can be dated back to the Bronze age. These include disused settlements, barrows, wells and kilns.

Windy Cross Scheduled Monument, is situated 13m north of the crossroads, at the southern edge of North Wood. It is aligned NNW to SSE. The cross survives as a simple Latin cross which is octagonal in section, and is Listed Grade II. It is most likely a Christian cross erected during the medieval period between the 9th and 15th centuries AD

More recent indications also exist: Mamhead Park (now a Registered Park and Garden) was once owned by the Balle family, then the Newmans who rebuilt the house to the designs of famous architect Anthony Salvin. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown landscaped the gardens. The famous Obelisk, erected c1742 by Thomas Balle stands 100 feet high and was used as a navigational aid for the Exe estuary.

Numerous other heritage features, including boundary stones and crop marks, are within the Plan area and are recorded within the Historic Environment Record. This database, and where appropriate experts, will be consulted before operations take place to ensure features are preserved for the future enlightenment and education and enhanced though management.

Mature hedgebanks are found throughout the Plan area and are managed at the time of operation in line with the District document, Design and Management of Environmental Corridors (2017).

### Legend

- Scheduled Monument
- Unscheduled Monument
- Mamhead Park Registered Park and Garden
- Powderham Castle Registered Park and Garden

0 0.375 0.75 1.5 2.25 3 Miles

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