

Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex

28th October 2009

South Downs Forest Design Plan; Invitation to contribute to the future of the FC managed woodlands in the South Downs

[Marden Block (Inholmes Wood, Wildham Wood, Stoughton Forest and Walderton Down), Charlton Forest (including Drovers Wood), Selhurst Park, Eartham Wood, Houghton Forest and Rewell Wood.]

From the Environment and Planning Manager, Forestry Commission:

Management of Forestry Commission woods is carried out according to a Forest Design Plan, a strategic document which covers one wood, or a group of woods that share common features.

Forest Design Plans set out long term objectives for woodlands, striking a balance between social, economic and environmental interests. They show the first 10 years in more detail, in particular setting out where felling and replanting will take place. Each plan must contribute toward the objectives of "A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests" (DEFRA, 2007) and is required to meet both the UK Forestry Standard and the UK Woodland Assurance Standard.

One of the key features of the national forestry strategy is that there should be engagement with local communities when shaping long term plans. We now wish to take the opportunity to engage with a range of organisations and the local community as we develop a plan for our woods on the South Downs. We need to involve people who have a strategic view of the value, use and character of woodland, as well as those who have a more detailed local knowledge of the site.

At this first stage, I want to receive feedback from you on what you feel is important about the woods, what problems they may have, what opportunities you think there may be and what you think are the priorities for the future management. The information gathered from this exercise will then be used to help produce a draft plan, which will be made available for further comment.

I attach a [map of the woodlands involved](#) and a comments form for you to fill in and return (*not included*). You will also find a Design Brief attached, which gives our thoughts on what are the key features of the woodlands and the issues we need to address.

I would like to have your initial thoughts back by Friday 13th November. However, there will be a further opportunity to comment on a good draft later in the process. If you wish to be consulted at the draft plan stage, please return a comments sheet or contact us to register your continuing interest.

Design Brief, South Downs II

From Forestry Commission; Jane Noble, Forum Officer has added Grid References for the centre of the blocks to aid location

The woodland blocks covered by this design plan are the Marden Block (Inholmes Wood, Wildham Wood, Stoughton Forest and Walderton Down), Charlton Forest (including Drovers Wood), Selhurst Park, Eartham Wood, Houghton Forest and Rewell Wood.

The Marden Block (GR SU824 125) is a complex of four freehold woodlands 5 miles north west of Chichester; Inholmes Wood, Wildham wood, Stoughton Forest and Walderton Down amount to 396 hectares (ha). All four woodlands are predominantly beech plantations dating from 1940 to 1965. Stoughton also contains some areas of conifer such as Corsican pine and Douglas Fir. Both Stoughton and Walderton contain significant areas of Yew woodland.

There are a number of key features in this block. Inholmes and Wildhams are a mixture of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). There are 6 Scheduled Monuments in Stoughton Forest. The Yew areas in Walderton and Stoughton have been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Stoughton also neighbours the Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve (NNR) which is also a SSSI. All of the woods are significant skyline features when viewed from the villages of Walderton and Stoughton.

Charlton Forest & Drovers (GR SU910156 / SU865155) is a large leasehold woodland of 997 hectares approximately 8 miles north of Chichester. Charlton is almost entirely Beech plantation planted between 1940 and 1960, with a few small areas of conifer plantation. Drovers is a mixed woodland of conifers and beech.

The majority of the woodland is a mixture of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). Charlton contains 5 Scheduled Monuments, some of which spread onto neighbouring land. The South Downs Way long distance footpath runs along the northern boundary of some of the wood. Under the terms of the lease, public access in Charlton Forest is limited to Public rights of way. There is an oilwell within the western end of Charlton Forest.

Selhurst Park (GR SU925122) is a leasehold woodland of 211ha approximately 7 miles north east of Chichester. The majority of Selhurst is beech planted between 1950 and 1960 with a few conifer plantations dating from around 1990. About a third of the woodland is a mixture of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). It provides spectacular views south across the coastal plain. Selhurst contains one Scheduled Monument.

Eartham Wood (GR SU945115) is a leasehold woodland of 273 ha approximately 8 miles north east of Chichester. The majority of Eartham is beech planted between 1940 and 1955 with a few conifer plantations dating from around 1990. The whole woodland is a mixture of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). It contains 4 Scheduled Monuments including Stane Street, a Roman road.

Houghton Forest (GR SU990115) is a leasehold woodland of 233 ha approximately 4 miles north west of Arundel. It is a mixed woodland with oak, ash, beech, Corsican pine and Norway spruce as well as other minor species. An area of approximately 10ha in the middle of the Forest is designated Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). The South Downs Way long distance footpath passes close to the northern boundary of the wood. There is a popular car park and picnic area adjacent to the wood.

Rewell Wood (SU990090) is a leasehold woodland of 281ha approximately 2 miles west of Arundel. It is a mixed woodland with a number of conifer and broadleaf species present. It also contains 98ha of sweet chestnut coppice, which is managed on a rotation of around 20 years. The majority of the woodland is a mixture of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). It is a stronghold of the rare Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly and is also noted for its rich flora and fauna associated with the coppice management. The wood also contains 3 Scheduled Monuments, which are extensive earthworks that spread onto neighbouring land. Rewell also contains part of a SSSI and neighbours the Fairmile Bottom Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

Land and Natural Environment

- Areas of this woodland complex are PAWS. The plans should allow for gradual restoration to site-native species, with the most shade casting conifers targeted for early removal.
- There are two SSSI's in this Forest Design Plan (FDP) area. Plans should take account of their management requirements.
- There are 19 Scheduled Monuments in this FDP area. Plans should take account of their management requirements.
- The coppice areas in Rewell Wood are vital to the survival of the Pearl-bordered Fritillary in the area. Plans should take account of this species and its national importance.
- Open rides and road habitats need to be maintained and where possible expanded to provide a variety of habitats.
- The limited age range within these woods has a tendency to limit the variety of habitat present. Management should seek to widen the age range found in these blocks to benefit flora and fauna

Communities and Places

- The woodlands are close to Chichester and Arundel as well as several local villages. The woodlands should provide an attractive backdrop to the lives of local people.
- Recreational use of the woodlands varies but is predominantly by local people, horse riders, cyclists and walkers passing along the South Downs Way. Design should maintain and where possible improve the attractiveness of the woodlands for visitors.

Working Woodlands

- Design and management of the woods, which are in places exposed and on thin calcareous soil overlying chalk, should aim to minimise the risk of windblow.
- The predominance of beech in most of these woods make them more vulnerable to the impacts of new diseases and climate change. Design and management should seek to diversify the variety of species present.
- A continuing sustainable harvest of timber is vital for the continuing maintenance of other programmes, which deliver an enhanced environment, secure the woods for the future and thus provide employment opportunities. Plans should reflect these underlying needs.