Creating a Woodland Management Plan – authors guidance

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Revision history

Date	Version	Comments
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20/12/13	1	Final version
01/07/14	1.1	Updated to reflect changes in EUTR
15/01/15	1.2	Countryside Stewardship
10/11/17	2.0	Updated to reflect version in CS WMP grant manual
20/02/18	2.1	Updated to reflect revised WMP template and Inventory and Plan of Operations sheet
05/10/22	2.2	Logo and broken links in the document updated. Section 7 Maps – Map Quality updated to highlight that Google maps and images of maps are not accepted by the Forestry Commission
26/02/25	2.3	Updates throughout to links and page numbers Section 1 – 3 hectares amended to 0.5 hectares in line with CSHT updates. UKFS link updated Section 2 – link updated for Ops note 35 Section 5 – updates to Deer Initiative link and information on funding for species management plans for deer and grey squirrels. Section 6 – change from CS Woodland Planning Grant to PA3: Woodland Management Plan grant. Section 8 – removed referral to proforma as this has been retired from WMP process
12/06/26	2.4	Section 8 - updated process for amending plans and clarified information about requesting change permissions/conditions on an approved felling licence.

1 Introduction

This guidance is for the preparation of a UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) compliant management plan using the Forestry Commission template.

A Woodland Management Plan (WMP) helps woodland owners review their aspirations alongside the physical characteristics of their wood and identify woodland management operations for the next 10 years or more.

A WMP approved by the Forestry Commission:

- helps demonstrate that woodland products harvested from your woodland are legally and sustainably sourced (as required by biomass heating systems supported by the government's Renewable Heat Incentive)
- is mandatory if you wish to apply for any other woodland related grants under Countryside Stewardship (apart from Woodland Creation/Tree Health)
- ensures consideration is given to legal requirements associated with designated sites (for example, SSSIs, Scheduled Monuments, Tree Preservation Orders, Registered Parks and Gardens), protected species and more
- includes a 10-year felling licence

Overview

If your holding includes 0.5 hectares or more of woodland, Countryside Stewardship includes a grant to help you plan and produce a UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) compliant Woodland Management Plan (WMP).

All woodland on your holding will need to be included in your plan, including recently planted woodland and small and/or narrow woodland blocks. (Some smaller areas may not be eligible for a grant but for completeness they should be included in the plan).

WMPs supported by Countryside Stewardship **must** include all the following:

1. A plan, written on the Forestry Commission WMP template (or the corresponding My Forest editable PDF version)
2. A plan of operations, presented on the Inventory and Plan of Operations Excel document
3. Annotated maps (see map section of this guidance)

Preparation

The following guidance details the essential information needed in a UKFS compliant WMP. If this information is not included, the Forestry Commission will be unable to approve your plan. In many cases woodland owners or agents may wish to provide additional detail. This can be provided in supporting appendices.

The Woodland Management Plan should be a working document that summarises the current woodland resource and details the broad management intentions over a minimum 10-year period. It should include details of felling and restocking and identify any work for which you may be seeking further grants. For example, for deer management or rhododendron eradication.

It is not expected that fine grain operational detail will be included in the plan. However, if you choose not to, this will need to be contained in Operational Plans or Operational

Site Assessments (OSAs) produced separately. Ideally these are produced immediately before you start an operation.

If the woodland contains areas that are SSSI, a 'Supplementary Notice of Operations' may also be required; you should check this with your FC Woodland Officer or Natural England Advisor. Details of your Woodland Officer can be found here: (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission/about/access-and-opening).

The UKFS and its guidelines outline the context of forestry in the UK, sets out the UK Governments approach to sustainable forest management, defines standards, and provides a basis for regulation and monitoring (The UK Forestry Standard). Owners and agents should refer to the UKFS when formulating their objectives and drafting the plan, and test it with local stakeholders and against the UKFS criteria published on the FC template.

2 Steps in securing Forestry Commission approval

This guidance has been prepared to help you present a draft plan which is UKFS compliant and which the Forestry Commission can review and approve quickly. Please ensure this guidance is read, and all necessary information is detailed in your draft Woodland Management Plan to help speed up approval.

It can take time for a management plan to be approved – especially for sites where statutory consultations are required. If the plan author engages with Woodland Officers and other stakeholders early in the process, this will help to facilitate quick approval.

There are several process steps that must be completed during or after production of a plan, and before any grant claim can be made.

1 Site visits

Site visits are crucial in preparing good WMPs.

A joint site meeting is likely to be required between:

- owner and/or agent
- any key stakeholders (for example, Natural England on SSSI sites or Local Planning Authority where a TPO/Conservation Area is present)
- Forestry Commission Woodland Officer

Ideally this happens before the draft plan is submitted to allow open discussion of challenges and opportunities.

Effective site meetings benefit from the provision of a simple introduction to the woodland, including location maps and background information for those attending.

Production and submission of the draft WMP shortly after the meeting should avoid the need for a further site visit.

Alternatively, the Woodland Officer will have to arrange a site visit after they have received and read the draft plan.

2 Stakeholder engagement

Land managers are encouraged to discuss proposals with local stakeholders, such as gamekeepers, immediate neighbours, local parishes, and statutory bodies (if protected sites may be affected). They may provide useful information which will improve your plan.

Such engagement helps avoid misunderstandings about woodland management, and provides an opportunity to address concerns before forestry operations actually start.

Further advice is available in [Forestry Commission Operations Note 35.]

3 Formal consents

The Forestry Commission will formally consult statutory bodies (where protected sites may be affected) to ensure those bodies are aware of and, where possible, endorse the WMP. For potentially sensitive cases, we may recommend that representatives are included in the site meeting:

- Natural England, where the site includes, or is adjacent to, an SSSI
- Historic England, where the site includes a Scheduled Monument or Registered Park or Garden
- Local Planning Authority, if the site is covered by a Tree Preservation Order or is in a Conservation Area

Owners and agents may wish to contact representatives of such bodies in advance and/or invite them to the site meeting.

Land managers must always obtain written consent from:

- Natural England for any operations on SSSI land, even when the work will take place as part of an approved woodland management plan
- formal consent is not required for work adjacent to a SSSI, but Natural England may wish to advise the land manager on the proposed work to ensure it does not cause damage to the features of interest
- Local Planning Authority and/or Environment Agency, or others, in respect of woodland infrastructure developments – for example, woodland entrances, loading areas, roads and tracks, stream and river crossings and positioning of culverts

You must seek these consents directly with the relevant authority (in some cases a fee may be charged).

4 Draft plan and felling licence

A draft plan, including maps and the Inventory and Plan of Operations (including restocking proposals) must be submitted to the Forestry Commission.

Your local Woodland Officer will review the plan to ensure it adheres to the principles of the UKFS. If details are missing, your Woodland Officer may request additional information or amendments and a new draft to be sent.

When your Woodland Officer is satisfied that the felling and restocking proposals broadly adhere to the UKFS, we will place details of any proposed tree felling (except thinning) on the Public Register for 28 days prior to processing the felling licence.

5 Plan approval

The plan will be approved based on the criteria detailed in the table below, and only when felling permissions have been approved. Your Woodland Officer will inform you when the plan has been approved.

A UKFS criteria checklist (shown in Table 1) is included on page 2 of the WMP Plan template to help you ensure that you have met the criteria.

Table 1 – UKFS management plan criteria

No	UKFS management plan criteria	Minimum approval requirements
1	**Plan objectives** Forest management plans should state the objectives of management and set out how an appropriate balance between social, economic, and environmental objectives will be achieved.	• Management plan objectives are stated. • Consideration is given to environmental, economic and social objectives relevant to the vision for the woodland.
2	**Forest context and important features in management strategy** Forest management plans should: • address the forest context and the forest potential • demonstrate how the relevant interests and issues have been considered and addressed	Management intentions communicated in ***Sect. 6*** of the management plan are in line with stated objective(s) ***Sect. 2***. Management intentions should take account of: • relevant features and issues identified within the woodland survey (***Sect. 4***) • any potential threats to and opportunities for the woodland, as identified under woodland protection (***Sect. 5***) • relevant comments received from stakeholder engagement and documented in ***Sect. 7***
3	**Identification of designations within and surrounding the site** For designated areas, such as National Parks or SSSI, particular account should be taken of landscape and other sensitivities in the design of forests and forest infrastructure.	• Survey information (***Sect. 4***) identifies any designations that impact on woodland management. • Management intentions (***Sect. 6***) have taken account of any designations.

4	**Felling and restocking to improve forest structure and diversity** When planning felling and restocking, the design of existing forests should be re-assessed and any necessary changes made so that they meet UKFS requirements. Forests should be designed to achieve a diverse structure of habitat, species and ages of trees, appropriate to the scale and context. Forests characterised by a lack of diversity, due to extensive areas of even-aged trees, should be progressively restructured to achieve age class range.	• Felling and restocking proposals are consistent with UKFS design principles (for example scale and adjacency). • Current diversity (structure, species, age structure) of the woodland has been identified through the survey (***Sect. 4***). • Management intentions aim to improve/maintain current diversity (structure, species, and ages of trees).
5	**Consultation** Consultation on forest management plans and proposals should be carried out according to forestry authority procedures and, where required, the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations.	• Stakeholder engagement is in line with current FC guidance and recorded in ***Sect. 7***. The minimum requirement is for statutory consultation to take place, and this will be carried out by the Forestry Commission. • Plan authors undertake stakeholder engagement (ref FC Ops Note 035) relevant to the context and setting of the woodland.
6	**Plan update and review** Management of the forest should conform to the plan, and the plan should be updated to ensure it is current and relevant.	• A 5-year review period is stated on the first page of the plan. • ***Sect. 8*** is completed with one indicator of success per management objective.

3 Completing the Forestry Commission woodland plan template

You find the woodland plan template and inventory and plan of operations spreadsheet on Create a woodland management plan.

There are 2 versions of the full management plan template:

1. **Macro enabled** – suitable for use in Word 2007 onwards (not suitable for Mac users).

   This version of the template includes added functionality such as help boxes and drop-down lists to help complete the template.

Note: some users find the drop-down lists and functionality in this version a limitation and prefer the macro-disabled version for flexibility.

2. **Macro disabled** – suitable for all versions of MS Word and Mac users.

   This version has no drop-down lists or functionality but is more flexible for the user. The template includes several sections that guide owners use to consider all the necessary details. If the author of the plan wishes to include additional information that cannot be put into the template sections – or wants to include photographs – these should be submitted as appendices and cross referenced in the plan.

Structure of plan content

The plan should be a coherent whole. It should flow from vision to objectives and work plan.

Vision: details what the owner would like the woodland to be like in the future.

Objectives: how the vision will be achieved taking account of any economic, environmental and social factors.

Management Strategy: how you will achieve the objectives to meet the vision.

Plan of Operations: sets out the work plan that is needed to achieve the management strategy, particularly any works that require licences from the Forestry Commission.

Front cover

The front cover should clearly state the property name and, if for a grant funded plan, the grant scheme case reference. It is important the woodland owner knows and understands the content of the draft plan before it is submitted. The plan author should also be identified. If this plan is a renewal of a previous plan, you should complete the table with relevant review information.

Section 1 – Property details

This section is for basic personal and property details – fill in the relevant information. You will be asked to list the maps you are submitting with the plan. Much of the information required in a management plan can be presented on a map and these should be used wherever possible and labelled/ named appropriately. You will also have to confirm a series of declarations.

Section 2 – Vision and objectives

2.1 Vision

Use this section to briefly describe your long-term vision for the woodland. For instance, how do you want the woodland to look or be used in the future? The vision should be achievable and specific to your woodland and your personal objectives. It should be expressed in one or 2 brief paragraphs only.

2.2 Management objectives

Based on your vision, determine the key objectives for woodland management. These should be what you hope to achieve or change within the woodland over the next 10 years (minimum). Some objectives may reach beyond the term of the plan.

Objectives are a set of specific, quantifiable statements that represent what needs to happen (to achieve the long-term vision). For instance, they might detail intentions to improve access, biodiversity, recreation or timber sales. For example:

- enhance biodiversity through ride management, glade creation and retention of deadwood
- improve resilience to climate change through a programme of thinning and increasing species diversity with enrichment planting

Each objective should be a brief separate statement of management intent. Basic operational and practical details of how these objectives will be met are included in later sections of the plan. Don't include them here.

Objectives will need to consider any constraints (including site designations) or threats to the woodland, to ensure that they are achievable. Objectives should not conflict with each other.

There is no limit to how many objectives you identify, but you need to consider what are the resources and effort required to deliver all of them. Ask yourself: 'What's most important to achieve, and by when?'

Section 3 – Plan review – achievements to date

A Woodland Management Plan is a working document covering a minimum period of 10 years. Monitor work carried out during that period and record achievements here. If applicable, use this section to identify achievements made against previous plan objectives.

A 5-year review of the plan should take place. Record your achievements against your management strategy as they occur to clearly demonstrate management through the life of the approved plan.

Also, note any variations from your plan and why they were necessary. This is likely to be required if being audited against UKFS, UKWAS or the sustainability criteria for Renewable Heat Incentive compliance.

Section 4 – Woodland survey

4.1 Description

Use this section to provide a brief written description of your woodland as it is now.

Do not repeat detail of your objectives for the wood or your management intentions. These are covered in their own sections of the management plan template.

Completing this information will require knowledge of the woodland and its context in the landscape. Maps, photographs and graphs can provide a useful supplement to this section. If these resources are used, please cross reference them. Photographs should be submitted on a separate annex and not put into the main plan template.

As a minimum requirement, the written description should consider the following but may have additional detail:

- geographical location and elevation of the wood
- woodland context in the landscape – for example, is it one woodland block within a larger forest? Or several small woodlands surrounded by agricultural land?
- are there any designations on the woodland (such as SSSI, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, AONB, TPOs)?
- what are the principal soil types?
- what are the characteristics of the wood itself? For example, is it single species plantation or neglected hazel coppice with oak standards, or both?
- are there any notable features (such as ponds, veteran trees, wood banks, wayleaves, escarpments)?
- are there any protected or rare species?
- what is the management history if known?
- is there public access?
- is there any recreational activity in the woodland?

4.2 Information

This section is to identify specific features in and adjacent to your woodland. Ensure you specify 'Yes' or 'No' on every row of the table.

Where you respond 'Yes' to any feature, provide details in the notes section or refer to appendices where applicable. For instance, you should specify details such as where the feature is found and when it was surveyed.

These features may be things that make your woodland unique or special. Identifying and mapping them can ensure their enhancement or preservation and they should be considered in the later management strategy of the plan (section 6).

Designations

You must declare designations, as some may require consent by law to carry out your proposed plans. Failure to disclose the designations may result in illegal activity.

Designated areas or features should be indicated on one of the annotated maps within your plan. If a designation is applicable, please provide details in the notes field.

Many designations can be checked online using the MAGIC map browser or Heritage Gateway. The Forestry Commission's own (advanced) Land Information Search (LIS) can also highlight certain designated areas.

To check for TPOs and conservation areas you must contact your local planning authority.

European protected species (EPS)

These species are protected by law. If you specify ‘no’ to presence of any of these species but there is suitable habitat on your site, you may be asked to outline your reasoning. For example, bats are assumed to use all woodlands in England.

There may be suitable habitat for protected species even if they are not known to be present. If you have not surveyed for these species, you may be able to get data from your local biodiversity record centre or from an online source such as NBN Atlas.

Otherwise, surveys should be completed or, if habitat is suitable, species should be assumed to be present. Always follow good practice guidance.

Find good practice guides for specific woodland related protected species. Summarise how you will consider management of these species in the subsequent management strategy of the plan (section 6).

Priority species

Other priority species may also be present in your woods. You can consult target maps to locate any species known to be in your area and which may need bespoke management.

If the wood is within a target area for a Section 41 species or for woodland bird assemblages, appropriate management must be considered. This could be the starting point for further discussions with the relevant body that is responsible for protection of those species.

Historic environment

Scheduled ancient monuments, registered parks and gardens and listed buildings can be viewed on MAGIC or the Forestry Commission’s Land Information Search.

Unscheduled monuments might include archaeological features such as wood banks or earthworks. If you identify these in your woodland at point of survey, they should be mapped and considered in the management strategy. They should also be considered when it comes to an Operational Site Assessment for forestry works, to minimise disruption or damage of the feature.

Veteran trees

Where veteran or future veteran trees are present, they should be mapped, or a commitment should be made to map these during the lifetime of the plan. (At least before any work is undertaken which could adversely affect them).

If required, use the Operations Site Assessment form template as a checklist to make sure archaeology and other features are correctly considered and recorded.

Landscape and people

Alongside landscape designations and characterisation, consider and map landscape features (such as viewpoints, settlement, infrastructure) where possible.

CROW access land, PRoW and permissive access routes should be mapped and detailed as there are regulations that apply to these features.

Water

Water features should be mapped. Always consider how you will carry out work within riparian zones and on slopes adjacent to water courses. Good management will help avoid unwanted incidents – for example, water pollution and the penalties associated with that. It will also help meet Environment Agency (EA) targets for water improvements in your area.

Note: buffers exist around water courses and water bodies and may prohibit certain management activities. Seek EA guidance.

4.3 Habitat types

Surveying and understanding the woodland structure and its habitat components help determine your vision and objectives. Use online map data from the National Forest Inventory (FC LIS) to identify any ancient woodland sites.

Specify 'Yes' or 'No' in each row of the table to identify if a habitat type is present and provide the Cpt location of the habitat. You can use maps to supplement this section.

Non-woodland habitats

Also identify any non-woodland habitat areas within and/or adjacent to woodland areas in your plan. Woodland management can have significant effects on light levels, water table levels and colonisation from tree seed of adjacent areas. Understanding what these other habitats are, and what they require to be able to be sustained, is a key part of your woodland management planning.

4.4 Structure

Ensuring woodland has a varied structure in terms of age, species, density, origin and open space will provide a range of benefits for the resilience and biodiversity of the woodland.

Complete the table to identify and describe the different structural components that exist within the woodland (see example in Table 2). Add additional rows to account for other woodland types.

Table 2

Woodland type (e.g. broadleaf, conifer, coppice, intimate mix)	% of mgt plan area	Age structure (even/ uneven)	Notes (understory or natural regeneration present)
Conifer	31	Even	Compartments of Norway spruce plantation
Native broadleaf	20	Uneven	Areas of ancient woodland principally Oak and Beech high forest
Coppice with standards	40	Uneven	Compartments 1-3. Mostly hazel with oak canopy. Hazel in 12 year rotation
Open space	10	Uneven	Managed woodland glades in compartments 4 and 5

Note: Please ensure percentages add up to 100.

Section 5 – Woodland protection

This section is used to identify the current and potential threats to your woodland. You must not only consider the threats at the time of planning, but also any that may become an issue during the lifetime of the plan.

5.1 Risk matrix

To help manage these threats, this section of the plan template provides a simple mechanism to establish risk. This helps to inform and prioritise control measures.

Woodland protection is split into several individually headed sections (such as plant health, environment, climate change). Some of the sections contain a list of potential threats. You are only expected to assess those which are (or will become) relevant to your woodland during the plan period.

For each potential threat that you identify, you need to establish both the:

- **likelihood** that the threat is present
- **impact** this would have on the woodland

These can then be cross referenced against the risk matrix shown in section 5.1 of the management plan template. This will help indicate the overall level of risk and necessity for action.

The response to each risk, although informed by the risk matrix, should not solely state the advised level of action (i.e. monitor, plan for action, action). Instead, it should elaborate on and describe what you intend to do. For each threat identified you should specify:

- its extent or distribution
- what impact it is likely to have, when and why. (For instance, if a tree disease is present but affected tree species are at a low density in the wood, then the impact is likely to be low. Your reasoning for any action proposed should be specified)
- a response to the threat that provides achievable, time bound and practical measures to protect the woodland, or facilitate adaptation to impacts

Simply 'monitoring a threat' is not a sufficient response strategy. You must detail how you will monitor and what measures will be taken if the threat is found to be compromising your objectives, protected features or impeding UKFS.

In each sub-section of the template there are suggestions of what potential threats could be considered. But you should include those most relevant to your woodland and your circumstances – including any others not suggested.

Additional sub-section forms can and should be added if required.

5.2 Plant health

Tree diseases are an increasing threat to our woodlands. Ash dieback, Phytophthora species, red band needle blight, acute oak decline, chestnut blight and others have all been found to varying extents in England.

Identify the tree species or areas in your woods that are most susceptible and consider your management options should those trees be infected now or in the future.

Planning for the future, with consideration for species and for structural diversity, can help improve the resilience of your wood overall and help you cope with these impacts.

Find information on [specific tree pests and diseases](). These pages also contain information about distribution, rate of change and other factors which may help to inform your assessment of the likelihood of presence.

5.3 Deer

Deer presence can often be the main reason why woods in England fail to reach good ecological condition. They can have a significant effect on growth of young trees and on timber quality, so robust information should be included in this section.

You should survey to check if deer are currently present in the woods, and if so, identify which species. Where is the impact and what is the evidence? What mitigation measures will be taken, such as culling, fencing, individual tree protection.

If deer are not present, are they found locally? Are they likely to impact in the future?

Impact assessments and ongoing monitoring should be undertaken regularly, which might include the use of exclosure plots. Include this sort of information in this section and expand in the management strategy.

A deer management plan is highly recommended and is mandatory for some woodland management grants. Advice on assessments, monitoring and plans can be found at The Deer Initiative.

Game managers who operate within the woodland should be engaged in setting the objectives for woodland management.

Capital funding is available to pay for a species management plan, through PA7: Species management plan.

5.4 Grey squirrels

The grey squirrel is a common threat to the production of quality timber and negatively impacts biodiversity and tree safety. Even if you do not wish to produce high quality timber, you may still need to manage the impacts of grey squirrel on your own, and neighbouring, woodland.

In the template, you should specify:

- current levels of damage
- likely impact on your objectives, protected features or the UKFS
- what activity will be carried out to maintain or improve the situation

Capital funding is available to pay for a species management plan, through PA7: Species management plan.

5.5 Livestock and other mammals

Consider the impacts of any grazing livestock within or adjacent to the woodland. How are boundaries secured and how is grazing managed? Are there any issues, and if so, how will they be resolved?

Other mammals such as rabbits, hares or wild boar may be impacting. If so, they should also be included in the management plan. Add a new sub section form for each threat.

Identify the impact of the mammal, and what your mitigation or control response will be, and how this will be monitored.

5.6 Water and soil

The soil and water section should cover soil erosion, compaction, pollution and potential acidification of water and, where appropriate, how your woodland could play a role in flood flow management.

Be aware of local topography when assessing the affects that erosion and run off may have on water courses, including those that may not be on your land. Consider the risks of damage to soils, particularly when working in wet conditions or on steep slopes.

Check for past damage: erosion on tracks, wet areas on rides, impeded drainage and waterlogged soils. Understand where drains intercept water and where they release it. Describe how you will manage this during operational activity.

Overall, pollution must be avoided. If you are considering operations that run a risk of a pollution incident, you should detail here how you intend to minimise the risks. Any broad assessment or strategy should be refined as part of a detailed Operational Site Assessments prior to any operational works.

5.7 Environmental

Existing knowledge of your woodland and its surrounds should inform your assessment of the risk posed by broader environmental factors. You should also consider impacts of your proposals to the surrounding environment and properties. Some mitigation might require working with neighbours.

You can also use this section to address disposal of forestry waste, where you must meet relevant legal requirements. This section could include disposal of chemical containers used for herbicides or pests, removal and disposal of planting bags, tree shelters and used treated timber, for example, from tree stakes.

Some of the environmental risks to be considered in this section are listed below, but others may also be relevant. Those with the greatest likely relevance to your wood should be addressed, including identifying measures to be taken. Add additional sub section forms as required.

- invasive species (rhododendron, laurel, Himalayan balsam)
- waste disposal (plastics from bottles, planting bags, tree shelters)
- fire (woodland structure including open space, recreational risk)
- flood (history of flooding, proximity to water courses)
- wind (exposure to strong winds or high wind hazard class)

5.8 Social

In this section, consider if and where the public is allowed to access your woodland.

In many instances this will be access via public rights of way such as footpaths or bridleways. Each will bring with it the requirement to maintain access throughout the year. You may wish to liaise with the local rights of way officer on how to manage specific forestry operations where a PRoW is affected.

Countryside Rights of Way Act (where woodland has been dedicated as Open Access), and England Coastal Path margins give the public free access to roam. There are also legal requirements to be met to close such designated land so you can carry out forestry operations or other activities in woodland.

Identify what access is permitted and detail how significant this will be for any forestry activity you propose to enact during the plan period. Detail what actions you will need to carry out to enable those operations to start.

Use this section to address events and sporting activity, such as game bird shoots. Identify how these will be managed alongisde the wider woodland management, and how such arrangements will be monitored.

Use this section to identify any anti-social behaviour issues, such as fly tipping or trespassing. And which protection methods you might consider using.

5.9 Economic

UK Forestry Standard requires that a woodland plan consider the economic aspects of managing woodland. In this section you should identify the economic drivers (such as timber production, wood products, recreation, tourism) that the woodland will focus on during the plan period.

In this section, consider the cost of the proposed operations, if they will be met by the outputs from the woodland, or if additional subsidy (such as via a grant scheme), will be required.

Consider the range of timber products and their marketing, or marketing other aspects of the woodland (for example, for tourism, sporting events or general recreation).

The woodland plan should demonstrate that the cost of managing a woodland has been considered and is part of the wider set of factors being evaluated, but without revealing any specific confidential and/or financially sensitive information.

5.10 Climate change and resilience

Find information about the potential impact of climate change and how this can be considered through woodland management.

This includes details about likely impacts and potential mitigation/ control measures that can improve woodland resilience.

Consider woodland structure, species diversity, site suitability for species (now and in the future), provenance of new planting stock, and threats to small woodlands. Specify any measures that will help inform woodland management planning.

The Ecological Site Classification system (ESC) provides guidance on projected climate change and suitable species under climate change scenarios.

Section 6 – Management strategy

This section should detail how you intend to achieve the management objectives you identified and listed in section 2.2

Each of the named objectives should be listed in a new row in the table. The 'Management Intention' column should specify in more detail the processes needed to achieve the corresponding objective. Refined operational detail is not required here, but it is expected that this will be included in an Operational Site Assessment prior to work being started.

Any features identified in earlier sections and any threats listed in section 5 should be considered in the management strategy. If you are quoting the use of best practice guidance, specify which guidance you are referring to, and how you intend to deliver it.

Your strategy should consider and detail the areas of felling, methods of restocking, timescales, constraints, and should be accompanied by maps where possible.

Appendices may also be used to supplement this section if required (cross reference where applicable). An example management strategy is in Table 3 below:

Table 3

Management objective / feature	**Management intention**

Objective 1: Enhance biodiversity through ride management, glade creation and retention of deadwood	• The ride network shown on Map 1 will be managed on an annual basis to create/maintain a 2-zone structure throughout. • Ride widths will vary between 12 and 16 metres to ensure sufficient light can reach the ride floor. The central strip will be mowed annually in late summer and the shrubby edges will be cut on a 3-year cycle to enhance habitat for butterflies and ground flora. • Glades in Cpts 3 and 4 marked in red on Map 1 will be cleared of existing scrub encroachment and maintained as open space with annual mowing in late summer. • An additional glade of approximately 0. ha (see Map 1) will be created in Cpt 2 following removal of rhododendron.

Section 7 – Stakeholder engagement

For any woodland management plan there will be important stakeholders who should be notified about your proposals. Some of these will require formal consultation and others will be informal.

Use this section to identify people and organisations with an interest in the woodland and to record any engagement undertaken, responses received, and what you did to address those responses. Early discussions provide an opportunity to resolve any potential conflicts, identify possibilities for collaboration and avoid misunderstanding.

Some likely stakeholders include:

- statutory bodies for designated sites or areas: Natural England, Historic England, local planning authority, AONB
- local planning authority for permitted/full development proposals
- local planning authority/Environment Agency for water-related permissions/ licences
- immediate and community neighbours
- tenants of the land, or adjacent land
- recreational users: such as horse riding groups, shoot organisers, public rights of way officers
- interest groups and NGOs, if relevant, such as conservation trusts

Statutory consultees

You should seek advice on designated or protected features as early as possible. This might involve inviting organisational representatives to a site visit, which could be also attended by the Forestry Commission Woodland Officer.

Statutory bodies will want to see draft copies of any plans and may request additional information or suggest amendments. The owner is responsible for ensuring that any work proposed and carried out does not breach regulations protecting the designated site.

For example, if your management plan includes areas of SSSI woodland, you may need to complete a Supplementary Notice of Operations (SNO). You should discuss this with the Woodland Officer or Natural England advisor. The completed SNO will detail how operations likely to damage (OLDs) will be managed for the SSSI. This helps Natural England provide consent for work and ensure that the SSSI is suitably protected.

For statutory consultees, once the necessary site visit/ consultations/ plan amendments have taken place, your Woodland Officer will be able to obtain the formal consent as part of the plan review process.

This does not include for development proposals, where direct approval will be needed from the relevant planning authority.

Section 8 – Monitoring

Regular monitoring of work and analysis of the results is critical in establishing whether objectives are being met. It also helps identify previously unknown issues.

Use this section to establish a method(s) of monitoring each of your objectives listed in Section 2.2. Each objective should be copied into a row in the first column of the table.

Indicators of success should be carefully considered and methods of assessments established and specified. These are likely to include a variety of techniques depending on the objective, such as periodic walk over surveys, fixed point photography, habitat assessments, deer exclosure plots, examination of balance sheets.

Monitoring and reporting are mandatory requirements of some woodland grants.

The whole woodland management plan should be periodically reviewed and updated so it remains current. We suggest this should happen every 5 years and that the review should be informed by results of the monitoring programme. The more information contained in this section, the easier it is to review and update future plans.

Woodland plan review

The final 2 pages of the Forestry Commission woodland plan template are for Forestry Commission use. They enable the Woodland Officer to record if they think the plan submitted for review meets each of the UKFS criteria against which the plan is assessed.

Where the plan has inadequacies, incomplete information, lack of evidence or other reasons for noncompliance with the UKFS criteria, the Forestry Commission woodland officer will record these here and seek a review of the woodland plan prior to re-submission.

4 Non-Forestry Commission woodland plan templates

We will accept woodland plans for review on non-Forestry Commission woodland plan templates. However, grants will not be available to fund their completion. The exception to this is a woodland plan produced on the myForest website.

Non-Forestry Commission templates must provide sufficient information to meet the UKFS woodland management plan criteria shown in Table 1. To help an author using a non-Forestry Commission template, we provide a cover sheet to wrap round your woodland plan when you submit it for review. The cover sheet helps identify where the plan is for, that it is unfunded, and highlights the UKFS criteria the plan author must address.

While the layout of a non-Forestry Commission template can be different, it is important that vison, objectives and operational plan are clear, and that all the topics within the Forestry Commission template have been adequately addressed.

5 Inventory and plan of operations

The **Inventory and Plan of Operations** is an Excel spreadsheet that allows you to create a summary of your woodland sub-compartment information. These details should exactly correspond with your compartment map, and are the details required if you wish to gain felling licence approval through the management plan.

There are 2 versions of the spreadsheet:

- one is full of formulae that highlight errors or missing information, helping to ensure that your completed Inventory and Plan of Operations is correct when it is submitted. However, the sheet is highly protected and may restrict you from presenting data in a way you want to
- the other does not contain formulae and so does not provide any of that assistance, but, equally, is less protected and allows you to present data more flexibly

You can use either spreadsheet, but please ensure you use the latest version (v4). Older versions may be returned.

Completing the spreadsheet

Both spreadsheets contain different tabs that are used for gathering the following data:

- customer details
- sub-compartment inventory, and some woodland structure information
- felling and restocking information
- work programme

Some fields are mandatory, and some are optional (to be completed at the author's discretion).

Tab 1 – User guidance

The first tab of each spreadsheet provides some guidance on what information the user must provide, and how the sheet will use it.

Tab 2 – Customer details

This tab on each spreadsheet captures property, customer and/or agent information that is required for legally generating a 10-year felling permission. All personal information will be handled in line with current data protection legislation.

This tab also enables you to enter the property/woodland plan name, so that the spreadsheet is identifiable as being part of the suite of woodland plans documents (plan template, maps and inventory and plan of operations).

Tab 3 – Compartment and sub-compartment record

This tab sets out detailed information for each compartment and sub-compartment.

The compartment and sub-compartment numbers should be established by you during your woodland survey and **must** match those shown on the sub-compartment map.

How you chose to subdivide your woodland is up to you based on management needs. However, by way of a data standard, and to help produce a 10-year felling licence, we require a compartment (numeric) and a sub-compartment (letter) format. For example, 1a only, no further sub components. This may mean having to create and map more sub-compartments, for instance, for individual selective felling areas within a main compartment.

Before you start completing compartment and sub-compartment information on the spreadsheet, you must have a good idea of what felling operations you will be carrying out. For example, within a sub-compartment you may propose an oak thinning and broadleaf coppice. This will require 2 rows on the sheets – a row for that sub-compartment for the thinning and an additional row for that sub-compartment for the coppice felling.

These 2 points will help you keep the Inventory and Felling and Restocking sheets simple, even for larger woodland properties.

1. If you have more than one felling type in a particular compartment – you will need to create a repeat sub-compartment Inventory entry for each felling type.
2. Ideally, the complete area of each felling location (not thinning) should be mapped as a separate sub-compartment.

Important: For those who already have a previous version of their Inventory and Plan of Operations, you cannot copy and paste into the new (2024) formula version. Doing so will break the formula and prevent the sheet from working correctly.

Mandatory fields – sub-compartment records

The first 11 columns (A to K) are mandatory.

On the formula sheet, information put into these fields automatically populates on the subsequent tabs in the formula spreadsheet. The non-formula sheet requires the completed inventory data to be copied to other tabs.

The remaining fields in this tab (L to AB) are optional, so can be used for additional planning information if required.

Please note the following.

1. The gross area of each sub-compartment is its whole area. The net area is the area that can be actively managed, so you should be excluding things like waterbodies, rides or surfaced roads.
2. The species columns should only identify the principal species in the sub-compartment. Use a generic abbreviation (such as MB/MC/NBL) for groups of species that make up less than 20%.
3. A species list can be found on the final tab of the spreadsheet, and on the formula spreadsheet. A ‘quick check’ list is provided in Row 7 of the sheet. In the formula sheet, unrecognised species codes are highlighted for you to check.
4. Any statutory designations that apply to specific sub-compartment must be included in column F. If there is more than one, separate them from the previous one with a comma. This helps us ensure the correct consultation procedures are followed. Failure to disclose designations could result in your plan being returned for further work, or potentially invalidate any felling licence issued and result in illegal activity.

Tab 4 – Felling and restocking

This tab sets the details required for a felling licence application.

Sub-compartment record – columns A to F

In the formula version of the spreadsheet, the first 6 columns (A to F) automatically populate the ‘Felling & restocking’ tab using the information provided in the ‘Inventory’ tab (Sub-cpt record). Do not paste information into these columns.

In the non-formula sheet, you will need to re-input the data from the inventory again.

You could copy the data for columns A to D from the 'Inventory' tab and paste them into columns A toD on the 'Felling & restocking' tab, but you still have to manually add the species and the designations.

Felling information – columns G to R

Columns G to R include proposed felling activity within each sub-compartment over a 10-year period. These must be completed accurately and in full if you require a felling licence. All associated restocking information should be provided in columns S to AJ (as explained below).

Column G:

Specify the area of the sub compartment that is to be felled or thinned. If you propose more than one felling type within the plan period in this sub-compartment, you will need to enter a new row for that sub-compartment and that additional felling type.

In the formula spreadsheet, this means adding the additional row in the 'Sub-Cpt record' tab, not the 'Felling & restocking' tab.

Column H:

Detail the felling type to be carried out. Only one type of felling should be specified per row. **See above.**

Abbreviations for the type of felling can be found in Tab 1 'Guidance'.

Columns I to N:

All species that are proposed for felling and that account for more than 20% of the volume of timber that will be felled must be listed. Individual species at or below 20% can be grouped as mixed broadleaf (MB) or mixed conifer (MC), or as MIX.

On the formula spreadsheet, cells may become highlighted while data is being entered. Use the 'Guidance' tab to identify and address any issues (some highlighting is advisory rather than error related) and make relevant corrections.

Species codes can be found in 'Species List' tab.

Columns O to P:

Enter the estimated volume (m3), split by broadleaf and conifer, using the 2 columns provided. This is an estimate only.

If you are unsure, a simple PDF timber volume calculator can be found on the Forestry Commission felling licence pages.

Column Q:

Use this column to indicate the year in which felling is proposed.

The Plan of Operations covers a 10-year period. If over this timeframe you intend to carry out 2 thinning operations within the same sub-compartment, you can show this by providing felling years for both interventions.

Don't forget to increase the volume of timber to be removed in Columns O and P.

Column R:

You can add comments in the 'Notes' column if you think your proposals need clarification.

Restocking – Columns S to AJ

These columns include information about how the felled compartments will be restocked by planting, natural regeneration and/or coppice regrowth. You do not need to enter restocking details for thinning operations.

The management strategy (section 6) of your Woodland Management Plan should outline your broad strategy for restocking – for instance, where planting, natural regeneration or coppice regrowth will be used.

Column S:

This column should state the restock area. In most cases, it should be the same area as the felled area from Column G 'Area to be felled'. If your proposal is to restock an alternative area, you can complete the restock details on the same row as the felling details. But note, this in the 'Notes' column.

Column T:

You need to state the percentage of open space you will be creating (if any).

Columns U to AF:

The restocking information you provide needs to be split by principle species – those that will be more than 20% of the mixture – and show the percentage of the restock area each species accounts for.

For minor species at or below 20%, these can be grouped as mixed broadleaf (MB) or mixed conifer (MC), or as MIX.

Column AG:
This column will automatically total the percentage of area that has been accounted for by the restock species and open ground data you enter. This must add up to 100%.

Column AH:
You are asked to state the stocking density – the number of trees to be planted or regenerated per hectare. Where you have mixed stocking densities for example broadleaves and conifer, you should identify both stocking densities separated by a forward slash '/'.

Column AI:
You are asked to estimate the proportion of the area which will be restocked by natural regeneration (which includes coppice regrowth).

Column AJ:
You are asked to confirm what the restocking outcome is for each restocking proposal. In most instances, you will be restocking in the same location as the felling. But occasionally you will be looking to replant in an alternative area or create permanent open ground within woodland.

If you are proposing not to replant at all (deforestation), use 'Do not intend to restock'. Submit your proposal with the relevant EIA enquiry form for deforestation and supporting information identified in the Open Habitats Policy for that EIA determination.

Tab 5 – Work programme

This tab lets you communicate your planned activities in each sub compartment to support achievement of your objectives. Information might include an outline of any major operation planned, PAWS restoration, new access routes or restructuring of the woodland. This information can also be supplied on maps.

6 Small Woodland Management Plan

Similar to the full Woodland Management Plan template, there are 2 versions of the Small Woodland Management Plan:

1. Macro enabled – suitable for use in Word 2007 onward. This version of the template includes added functionality such as help boxes and drop down lists to assist with completing the template

2. Macro disabled – suitable for all versions of MS Word and Mac users. The process for enabling macros is outlined in Section 3 of this document.

Overall, the Small Woodland Management Plan is a condensed version of the full template and has been designed to be appropriate for the scale and complexity of smaller woodlands (those under 10 hectares).

The Small Woodland Management plan template is not eligible for the PA3: Woodland Management Plan grant. However, the information provided can be used to generate a 10-year felling licence and evidence category B compliance. Ultimately, the information could be expanded to complete the full management plan template.

Approval criteria

The template includes 3 core criteria against which the plan will be assessed and approved. These are stated on the front of the document to set out the minimum information that is required.

Completing the Small Woodland Management Plan

Most sections within the Small Woodland Management Plan are broadly similar (if not identical) to the same sections in the full template for which details are provided in Section 3, Section 4 and Section 5 of this document.

The biggest difference is the reduced level of information required for the woodland survey, the removal of the woodland protection risk matrix and inclusion of a Felling and Restocking table in place of a Plan of Operations. This is described in more detail in the following sections.

Section 4 – Woodland survey

This section has been condensed to focus on the brief description of the woodland property. This should provide an overview of the woodland in its wider context and could cover information such as location, history, landscape, access routes, topography, soil types, ecological features, the predominant use of the woodland (commercial, recreational) and neighbouring land use.

It is also important to identify within this section any designations, such as SSSIs, SAMs, and Tree Preservation Orders.

Section 8 – Felling and restocking

Unlike the full Management Plan template, the Small Woodland Management Plan does not have an associated Plan of Operations. Instead, information relating to felling and restocking is captured in section 8 of the template.

This information is required for a felling licence application to be processed from the management plan. To remain compliant with EU Timber Regulations, all species that account for more than 20% of the volume of timber that will be felled must be listed.

Individual species at or below 20% need to be grouped as mixed broadleaf (MB) or mixed conifer (MC). Species mixtures (both broadleaf and conifer species) can be presented on a single row.

7 Maps

Required maps

There are certain maps that must accompany every plan.

Use sensible judgement to determine how much information can be clearly shown on each map and combine information onto fewer maps only if it is visibly clear (for instance in small woods, one map may be sufficient).

Required maps are as follows:

1. Location map(s): showing all the woods within your plan within the wider landscape, and with their access points shown. This is best presented on an appropriately scaled map that can incorporate such things as public access routes, vistas, utilities, watercourses and other landscape scale detail that will impact a plan’s execution.
2. Compartment map(s): using an appropriate scale to clearly show all the numbered compartments/ sub-compartments and their boundaries in your woodland. This map will need to be signed and dated as it will form part of your felling licence.

   When drawing up the Compartment map, consider all the felling operations you will want to undertake, and try to draw sub-compartments for each on before completing the Inventory and Plan of Operations.
3. Operations map(s): using an appropriately scaled map to clearly show where key woodland management work will be undertaken – for example, ride management, clear felling, veteran trees.
4. Constraints map(s): on an appropriate scale to clearly show all the designated land (for example, SSSI or AONB) and any other major constraints.

It is likely that other maps may be needed to demonstrate the management intentions and woodland features. If you are considering applying for further woodland grants under Countryside Stewardship, you will need maps (perhaps based on your operations map) indicating the location of management prescriptions.

Features that could be mapped are:

- rides and open space
- invasive species or other threats
- water bodies or features
- ancient woodland
- veteran and notable trees
- archaeological features
- recreational areas
- locations for proposed capital items, such as fencing or new infrastructure

Map quality

Maps need to be of sufficient quality for clear interpretation by the Forestry Commission or any other stakeholder. You may use your own GIS packages to produce these maps.

We offer a map request service providing suitable base maps.

For all maps, note the following requirements.

1. All features shown on the map must be included in a key.
2. All maps must be produced with an Ordnance Survey (OS) backdrop or with features that enable the user to easily locate the detail on the ground.
3. Maps need to be located with an OS Grid reference (usually the access point to the wood) and a north arrow.
4. Use sensible judgement to determine how much information can be clearly shown on each map and combine information onto maps if it is clearly visible.
5. When using colours or effects please ensure they are sufficiently distinct for interpretation.
6. Google Maps and images of maps are not accepted by the Forestry Commission. These are copyright protected and should not be used commercially without appropriate licensing from Google.

7 Submission checklist

Submit your draft woodland management plan to the Operational Delivery Team Hub in your area by email or by post. Make sure you include the correct documents for your woodland management plan.

1. Woodland Management Plan template

Correct Woodland Management Plan template submitted as editable document in MS Word, as an ODT file or via MyForest (editable PDF):

- small template for woodlands 0 to 3ha
- small or full template for woodlands 3 to 10ha
- full template for woodlands over 10ha and all CS RPA funded plans
- include the Forestry Commission cover sheet if you are using a non-Forestry Commission template (CS RPA funded must use the Forestry Commission or MyForest template)

2. Maps

Maps should highlight compartment boundaries. Required maps are:

- location maps
- compartment maps
- operations maps
- constraints maps

If possible, also include the shapefiles of your map.

3. Agent Authority Form (AAF)

For all plans where an agent is acting on behalf of the applicant.

4. Inventory Plan of Operations (v4)

   For all applications with a felling licence, except small Woodland Management Plans (less than 3ha).

8 Amendments to plans after approval

The Woodland Management Plan is intended as a working document, and you may want to amend it during its lifetime. If you wish to make changes, your plan must still be UKFS compliant.

If you think your plan may need to be amended, contact your Woodland Officer in the first instance. They will discuss the proposed changes with you and advise you on the next steps to take.

Amending felling proposals

The Forestry Act 1967 does not enable felling permissions to be changed once issued, and certainly not once the felling has started.

If you wish to change permissions or conditions on your approved felling licence, this may be possible without the need for a new application.

Discuss any issues with approved felling licences with your Woodland Officer as early as you can to see what can be agreed. Read further guidance on how to request change permissions or conditions on your felling licence.

If you wish to add new components to the felling programme (after approval of your plan), you will need to apply for a stand-alone felling licence.

The new application should only contain the new felling proposals, and not any felling already approved. New applications should be fully UKFS compliant (i.e. take account of existing approved felling areas) and will be subject to any necessary consultations.