

CSM 6 Appendix 1a FOREST ENTERPRISE - Application for Forest Design Plan Approvals in England

Forest Enterprise - Property

Forest District:	West England
Woodland or property name:	Croft
Nearest town, village or locality:	Ludlow and Leominster
OS Grid reference:	Croft Wood: SO 443 663
Local Authority district/unitary Authority:	Herefordshire

Areas for approval

	Conifer	Broadleaf
Felling	26.4 Ha	
New planting (complete appendix 4)		

1. I apply for Forest Design Plan ~~approval~~/amendment approval* for the property described above and in the enclosed Forest Design Plan.

~~2. * I apply for an opinion under the terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England & Wales) Regulations 1999 for afforestation* /deforestation*/ roads*/ quarries* as detailed in my application.~~

3. I confirm that the pre consultation, carried out and documented in the Consultation Record attached, incorporated those stakeholders which the FC agreed must be included. Where it has not been possible to resolve specific issues associated with the plan to the satisfaction of consultees, this is highlighted in the Consultation Record.

4. I confirm that the proposals contained in this plan comply with the UK Forestry Standard.

5. I undertake to obtain any permissions necessary for the implementation of the approved Plan.

Signed
 Forest District Manager

Signed
 Conservator

District

Conservancy

Date

Date of Approval

Date approval ends

*delete as appropriate

Current situation

FC are now working in partnership with NT to remove the conifer from the central part of Croft Wood reverting the area to a more open structure by restoring Wood Pasture management. Figure 2 shows the remnant distribution of Veteran Oak Pollards that would indicate a landscape with a structure more akin to Wood Pasture; a fair proportion of which occur in Secondary Woodland.

In order to fund the restoration work, NT will be entering part of Croft Wood into the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme offered by Natural England. (Figure 3). The Application must be approved by December 2013 if it is to be successful since 2013 is the last year HLS is being offered in its current form.

Figure 2

Showing the distribution of remnant Oak Pollards within Croft Wood against Ancient and Secondary Woodland.

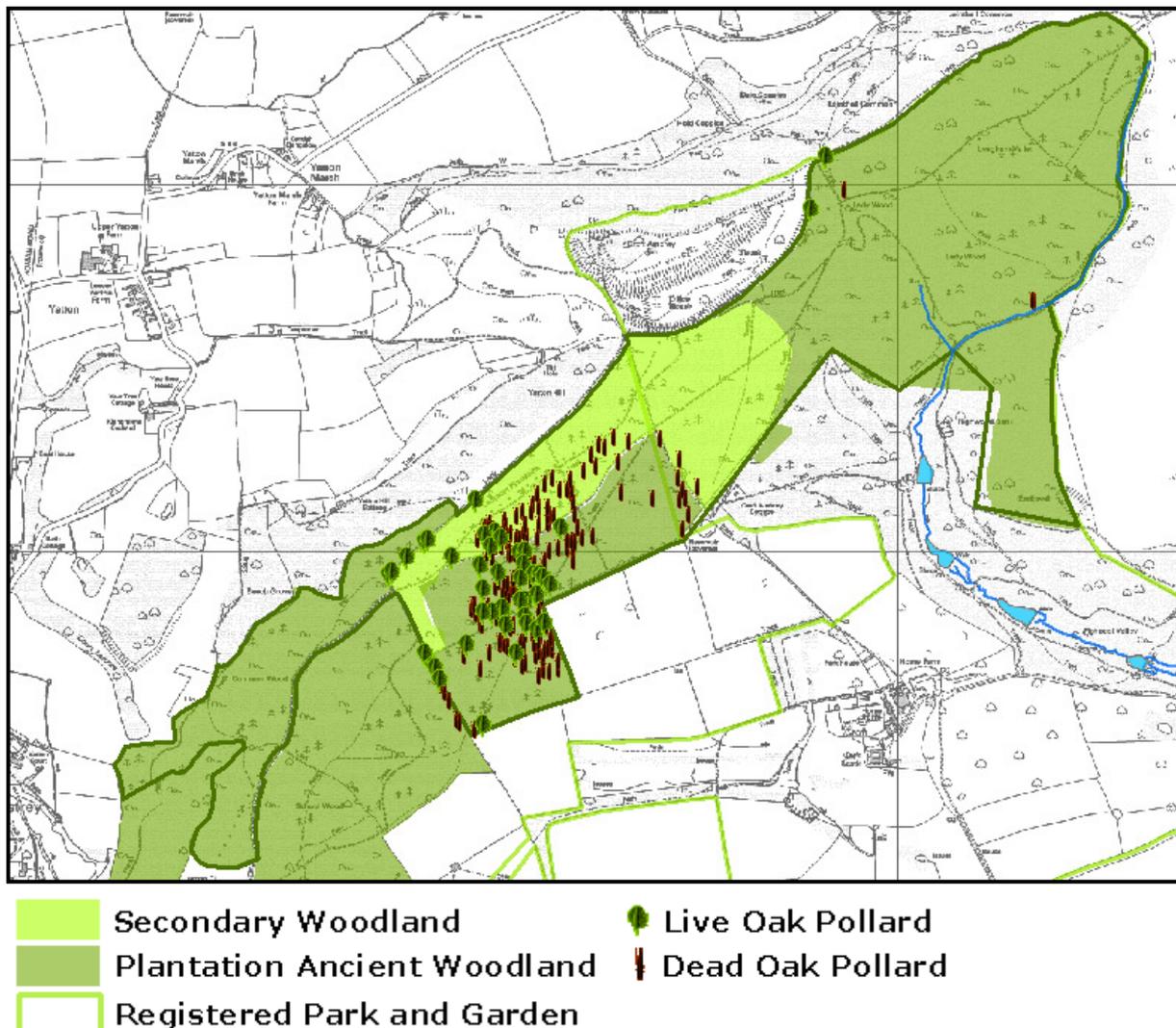
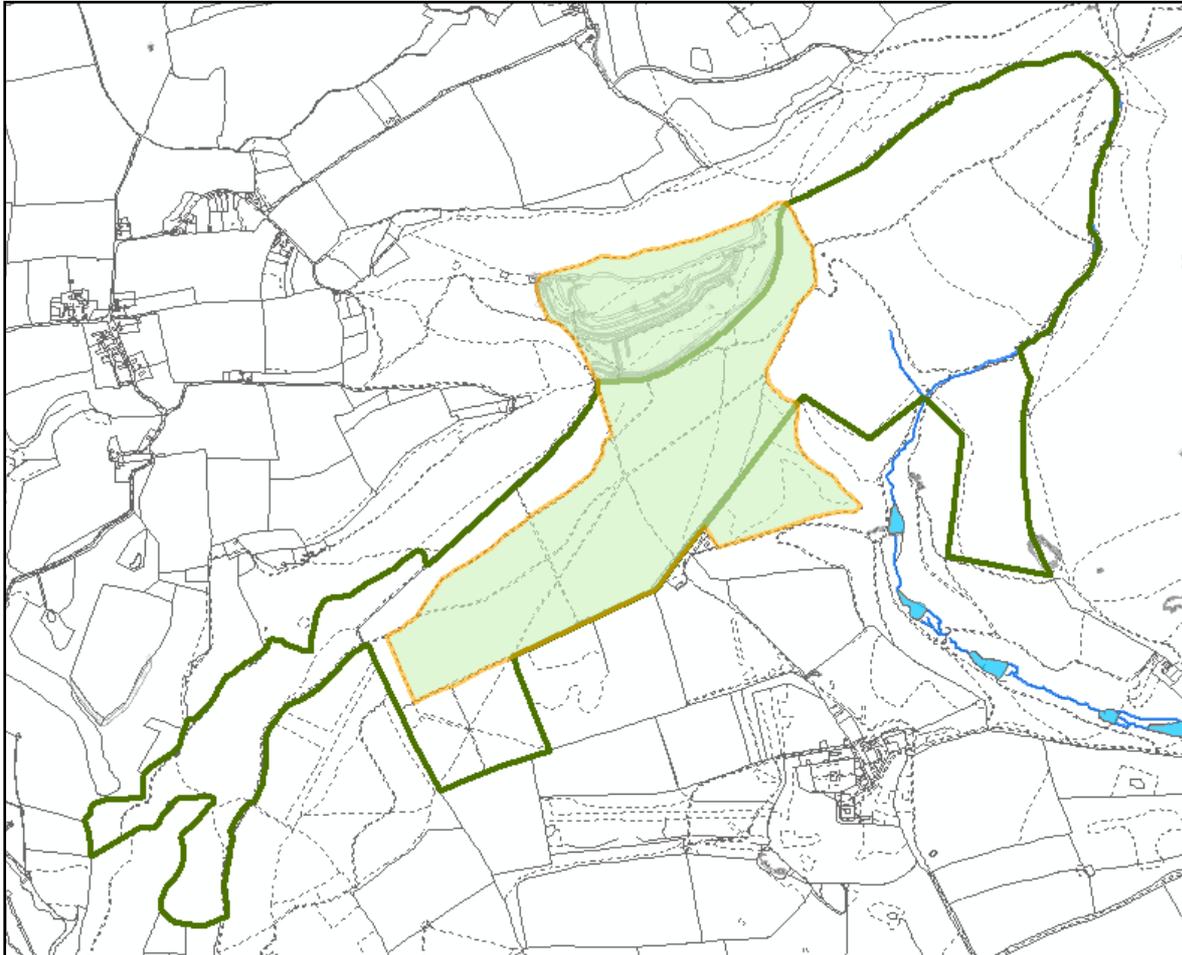


Figure 3

The extent of the HLS application area shaded in green, in relation to Croft Wood outlined in dark green and under FC management. (Appendix 2.2 shows NT field numbers related to FC compartment numbers)



Proposed work

The HLS area within Croft Wood will be included in a Farm Business Tenancy (FBT) agreement between FC and NT. This will detail NT responsibilities in relation to future planting and thinning of temporary conifer retentions undertaken as part of the plan amendment approved by Forest Services. (See Appendix 2.1 for lease extent)

Conservation

Within Croft wood the main issues that need resolving in order realise the goal of restoration to Wood Pasture are:

- Presence of species covered by EPS legislation
- Veteran trees including numerous veteran pollards
- Any lichens, fungi, insects and other invertebrates associated with the veteran trees or pollards

European Protected Species (EPS)

Records from the Herefordshire Biological Records Centre (BRC) are able to confirm the presence of several species of bat within Croft Wood and the surrounding area.

Although there are records from the BRC for Dormice in the surrounding countryside, habitat within Croft Wood is not suitable for Dormice and is considered to be unfavourable at the present time. The only record of Dormice goes back to 2009 and is in Oaker Coppice to the east of Croft Wood.

With the above in mind the FP amendment will focus on ensuring that FP proposals comply with EPS legislation in relation to management of bat habitat.

To enable the amendment to be compliant with EPS legislation a survey was commissioned with the work being carried out by *Collins Environmental Consultancy Ltd* from Newent in Gloucestershire. The survey was designed to establish what species of bats are present, which areas of Croft Wood within the HLS area they are using and for what purpose.

Appendix 1.3 to 1.3.2 and 1.4 give proposals as to how recommendations given in the report (Appendix 2.4) could be implemented to achieve the objective of Wood Pasture restoration for the central area of Croft under HLS (see figure 3 on page 4). A Resume of the Collins bat report can be found in Appendix 2.3.

Veteran Trees and Pollards

The majority of the veteran pollards are in the western end of the wood and their distribution can be seen in figure 2 on page 3. The trees are in varying states of health having been over-shaded by conifer during the past 50 years or so with a large number either dead or in decline.

A process of halo thinning has begun to open these pollards back up, with the pollards in areas of mature larch responding best. Where Western Hemlock is a main component, natural regeneration has occurred resulting in a number of pollards being surrounded by Hemlock natural regeneration, which will be removed progressively as the groups of broadleaf planting establish themselves. Hemlock regen should be removed before trees are mature enough to set seed, or compromise the health of the veteran pollards, which ever is soonest. Management of the veteran pollards subsequent to the proposed felling of coupe 17013 to create Wood Pasture will be detailed within plans drawn up by NT with each plan covering either individual trees or groups of trees.

Lichens, fungi, insects and other invertebrates

With the pollards in various stages of decline there may be potential, once thinning of the retentions has been progressed, for other species of insects, invertebrates or bryophytes to become present (if not already so) within the habitats provided by the pollards. It may well be at this later stage that commissioning survey work would establish the presence of such species validating the success of work carried out to date and would also help inform management for the removal of remaining overstorey within the retentions with any recommendations within such a report(s) being followed. It maybe that this work can be paid for under the HLS scheme that NT wish to enter into.

Given below is an approximate time line indicating the work that will be carried out.

August to September 2013: Bat survey commissioned and report compiled to help in the drawing up of a felling plan to meet the objective of Wood Pasture restoration. (Appendix 2.3 & 2.4)

July to October 2013: FC produces an FP amendment in consultation with NT compliant with EPS regulations covering the new proposals for Wood Pasture management. (Appendix 1)

First week November 2013: Presentation to NT of proposals and NT sign them off ready for public consultation.

October to 25th November 2013: Public Consultation.

End of November 2013: Submission of FP amendment to Forest Services.

1st December 2013: Start of a 15 year FBT (based on the FP amendment) between FC and NT and the start of NT 10 year HLS funding.

July 2013 to August 2015: NT prepares plans that will cover the future management of the remaining live, fallen and dead Oak pollards, the distribution of which can be found on the Site Analysis map (Appendix 1.1).

Feb/March 2014: Forest Service considers approval of the FP amendment.

Summer 2014: Initial felling work of around 25-30 Ha will be undertaken by FC during 2014 detailed on the Felling Plan (Appendix 1.3 & 1.3.1). Some conifer will be retained temporarily around veteran trees to minimise impact. These will be progressively removed over subsequent years - Appendix 1.3.2, following guidance laid out in the Bat report. Conifer retentions will be maintained along principal bat flight routes until they are replaced by broadleaf through restocking – Appendix 1.3.2.

Winter 2014 and 2015: Initial planting of broadleaves in groups to begin Wood Pasture restoration. Planting will be carried out within and adjacent to the Bat linkages as well as across the Wood Pasture restoration area. Planting to be undertaken by NT in accordance to the FP. (Appendix 1.4)

Late 2014 or early 2015 to end of FBT in 2028: NT will be responsible for all further planting work and thinning operations of any temporary conifer retentions within the HLS area. Both these operations will be done in accordance with:

- The Forest Plan
- The Farm Business Tenancy agreement
- The Higher Level Stewardship agreement
- EPS habitat legislation. - FC/NE guidance note on managing woodlands with bats. See recommendations given in Bat report of 2013. (Appendix 1.3.2 / 2.4 and 2.5)
- Veteran tree management plans drawn up by NT

2015 and 2020: Timings for mid-term and 10year reviews of the Croft FP unit. FP reviews will provide a mechanism that will enable the rate of removal of the conifer over storey in coupes 17046 and 17017 to be carefully monitored and adjusted accordingly; further survey work would be required should a faster rate of removal be indicated by the review process. At the 2015 review this could be funded by HLS.

