

Woodland Case Study No. 1

Fargo Plantation Woodland, Wiltshire



1. Location

Geographical region: Wiltshire

Woodland Name: Fargo plantation

Name of woodland owner/manager/contractor: National Trust

Woodland size: 5 ha

2. Type and description of woodland

Type of woodland

Prior to works this was mixed plantation woodland, following works, broadleaved plantation.

Characteristic species and features

Ash & sycamore predominant, with beech, silver birch and Scot's pine occasional. Prior to works 30% site Corsican pine, Douglas fir & larch, over hazel understorey.

Canopy

High forest canopy with approximately 80% cover on southerly two thirds. Following conifer removal, the northerly third is predominantly hazel understorey with 5% broadleaf standard canopy. Glades at archaeological features.

Understorey composition

Hazel locally abundant in scattered blocks. Occasional scrub including hawthorn & spindle.

Field/ground layer

Ground flora typically poor, consisting mainly of common nettle, cleavers, ground ivy, wood avens and herb-robert. Mostly bare ground beneath the occasional beech.

Dead wood, number of trees per Ha equivalent

< 5 dead per hectare, mostly wind-thrown conifer spp.

Invasive species

None

Is there any evidence of grazing or browsing of large herbivores?

Roe deer are browsing young trees. Rabbits present.

Is there connectivity via hedges etc to other areas of woodland?

Very limited in wider area though another 13ha woodland block exists 100m to the north

Predominant landscape type around woodland

Large open fields, semi- improved grassland and restored chalk grassland.

3. Use of Woodland

Woodland use type

This is a plantation woodland with some evidence of coppicing in the past (growth now typically 30-50cm). It is thought to have been formerly used for pheasant rearing, now managed for archaeological features, nature conservation, landscape/shelter belt, recreation and access and potential coppice restoration.

Woodland management carried out in this woodland

Management	Past 5 years	Current	Next 5 years	Area, frequency and tree species affected
Coppicing			Y	Hazel
Thinning		Y		5 hectares of corsican pine, douglas fir, larch, ash, sycamore, beech, birch.
Other felling				
Extraction of timber		Y		550 tonnes (60% conifer)
Planting				
Ride creation/maintenance		Y		
Glade management		Y		
Ditch/drainage maintenance				
Creation of buildings/structures				
Management for particular species				
Control of invasive species				
Non-intervention	Y			
Other				

What other management activities on land adjacent to the woodland might impact on the woodland?

None - woodland is fenced from cattle grazed pasture on three sides. Fourth side currently public highway, soon to be closed to public vehicles.

4. Use of woodland by bats

Bat species found on site

Bat species	Roost use	Foraging use	Unknown but recorded as present	Other
Soprano pipistrelle		X		
Noctule		X		
<i>Myotis</i>		X		

If woodlands used for foraging

(i) What component of woodlands used?

(ii) How has this information been collected?

The three species were recorded by bat detector during the emergence and dawn surveys.

Any other information about bats using the woodland

Cavities identified during the initial April walkover survey as having the potential to support roosting bats were checked internally with endoscope prior to the autumn felling works. No bats were found roosting however.

5. Type of activity reported in this case study

Why?

Were the activities directly for bat conservation?

☐

Or were they necessary as the result of other unrelated activities?

☒

Type of activity

Description of activity

Felling of coniferous trees and thinning of remaining deciduous trees

Objective of activity

To improve the protection of archaeological features within the woodland, to open views between archaeological features (inter-visibility) within and outside the woodland, & to increase the woodland's nature conservation value and capacity for public enjoyment, plus incorporating health & safety considerations.

How was the activity modified due to bats?

Targeted felling area assessed for potential impacts on bats by April walkover survey, and autumn emergence and dawn survey immediately prior to works. Trees were categorised according to the Bat Conservation Trust's 'Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines'. Wherever possible (within the constraints of visual amenity and public health and safety that were a central reason for the works going ahead) features identified with the potential to support roosting bats were retained. The presence of other species such as badger, and EPS such as dormice was risk assessed as a precautionary measure.

How is success of activity to be measured?

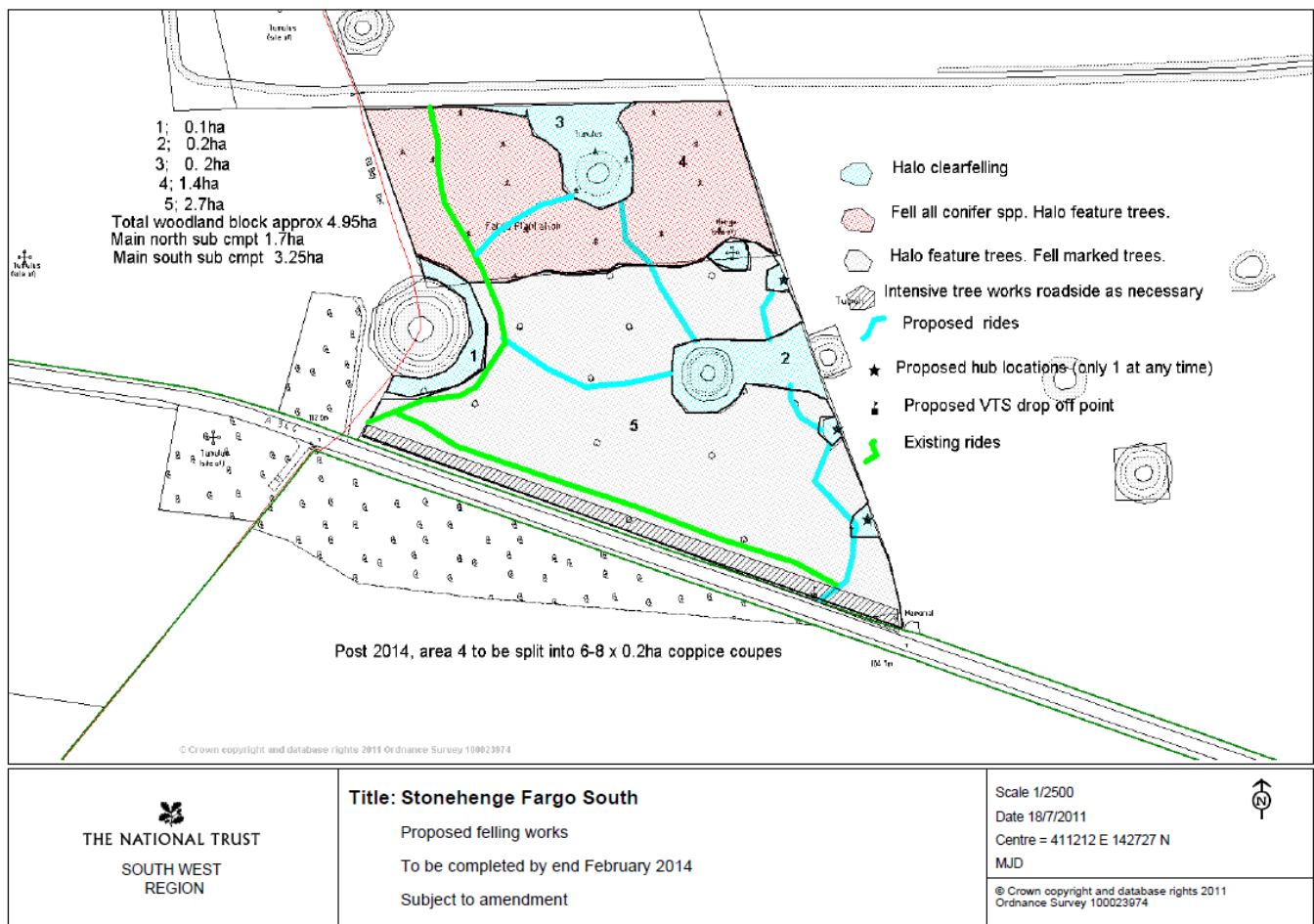
The retention of features with the potential to support roosting bats and the prevention of disturbance or harm to bats is the measure of success.

Additional info

Twelve trees were initially identified as having the potential to support roosting bats, and six were considered unavoidably impacted by the proposed works. Of these, after closer inspection four were categorised as either having *features which may have limited potential to support bats* (category 2) or as *having no potential to support bats* (category 3). One of the four was retained as the limb that had been of health and safety concern had naturally fallen to the ground, and the other three were felled (one in sections and another with its root plate left as habitat) following a negative result from the emergence and dawn surveys.

Two trees were categorised as having *potential for use by single bats* (category 1) one of which was upgraded to *highly suitable features capable of supporting larger roosts* (category 1*) following further inspection. Both trees were retained by removal of the stem above the features of potential bat interest, which addressed health and safety concerns whilst ensuring that the potential for bat roosting was retained.

6. Drawings or plans of the project:



7. Monitoring Data

Evidence of bat use post activities

None so far

8. Measures of success

Based on the objective of the activities do you deem the activities to have been successful?

Very successful - The objectives of archaeological protection, improved settings for archaeological features, views in and out of the woodland, and improved structure for biodiversity, incorporating health & safety improvements have all been achieved.

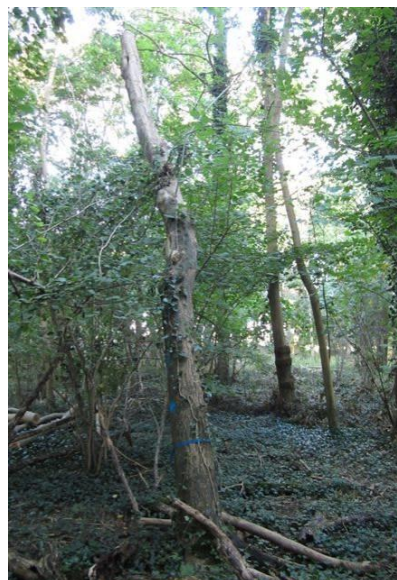
Are there lessons from this project that you would like to highlight?

Careful and timely planning has been rewarded with achieved objectives whilst ensuring bat habitat is not diminished. The survey and reports compiled, followed by tree surgery requirements did increase costs, but also reduced reputational risk and ensured compliance with both statute and best practice, so very much worth the investment.

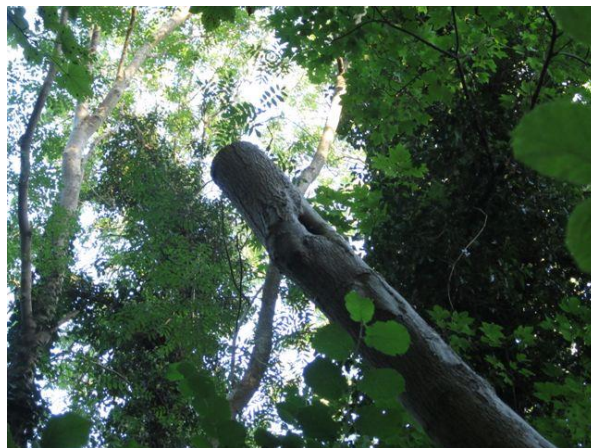
9. Photos (before and after)



Retained category 1*
ash tree pre works



Retained category 1*
ash tree post works



Retained category 1 ash tree pre works.
This tree was pollarded above the
features identified.