

Definitions of Favourable Condition for designated features of interest



These definitions relate to all designated features on the SSSI, whether designated as SSSI, SPA, SAC or Ramsar features.

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Name of Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
BIGSWEIR WOODS SSSI	
Names of designated international sites	
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	WYE VALLEY WOODLAND SAC
Special Protection Area (SPA)	N/A
Ramsar	N/A
Relationship between site designations	

Version control information		
Status of this Version (Draft, Consultation Draft, Final)	Final	
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Quality assurance information		
Checked by	Name Peter Holmes	Date 6 December 2013
	 Signature	

Definitions of Favourable Condition: notes for users

Definitions of Favourable Condition

The definitions comprise one or more condition definitions for the special interest features at this site. These are subject to periodic review and may be updated to reflect new information or knowledge. They will be used by Natural England to determine if a site is in a favourable condition. The standards for favourable condition have been developed and are applied throughout the UK.

Standards for favourable condition are defined with particular reference to the specific designated features listed in Table 1, and are based on a selected set of attributes for features which most effectively define favourable condition as set out in Tables 2, 2a and 3. When an SSSI's features meet these attributes, then they are said to be in 'favourable condition'.

Explanatory text for Tables 2 and 3

Tables 2, 2a and 3 set out the measures of condition which we will use to provide evidence to support our assessment of whether features are in favourable condition. They have been tailored by local staff to reflect the particular characteristics and site-specific circumstances of individual sites. Quality Assurance has ensured that such site-specific tailoring remains within a nationally consistent set of standards. The tables include an audit trail to provide a summary of the reasoning behind any site-specific targets etc. In some cases the requirements of features or designations may conflict; the detailed basis for any reconciliation of conflicts on this site may be recorded elsewhere.

Use under the Habitats Regulations

The Definitions of Favourable Condition (DFCs) are used to periodically measure and assess the condition of both notified SSSI features and designated European Site features.

Where SSSIs also form part of a European Site (such as a SAC or SPA), a separate document containing specific European Site Conservation Objectives will have been prepared. These objectives are those referred to in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the "Habitats Regulations") and the Habitats Directive 1992. They are for use when either the appropriate nature conservation body or a competent authority is required to make an 'appropriate assessment' of the likely effects of a proposed plan or project on the integrity of a European Site under the relevant parts of the respective legislation. The European Site Conservation Objectives are available at www.naturalengland.org.uk.

The concepts of 'site integrity' and 'favourable condition' are similar and the assessment of a feature's condition will measure attributes that also represent aspects of a site's ecological integrity. However, the periodic determination of a feature's condition is separate from a judgement about the effect upon a site's overall integrity. This is because the DFCs do not represent a comprehensive or definitive list of all of the elements that might contribute to site integrity, merely those that are most appropriate to monitor in order to rapidly determine the present condition of a feature. The full range of factors that are components of a site's integrity, and which may need to be considered by an appropriate assessment, will be specified in the European Site Conservation Objectives. Some of the information contained within the DFCs may however contribute to such assessments.

Table 1 Individual designated interest features

BAP Broad Habitat type / Geological Site Type	Specific designated features	Explanatory description of the feature for clarification	SSSI notified interest features	SAC qualifying interest features	SPA qualifying interest features dependency on specific habitats			Ramsar criteria applicable to specific habitats			
					Annex 1 species	Migratory species	Waterfowl assemblage	1a Wetland characteristics	2a Hosting rare species &c	3a 20000 waterfowl	3c 1% of population
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew woodland	Woodland habitats of the following NVC types:	At notification this site was designated based on the Bolt Survey 1979/80 using Peterken standtypes (see Map 3). These have been transposed to the NVC types shown left (see Map 2).	*								
	W10 <i>Quercus robur</i> - <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> - <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> woodland		*								
	W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> - <i>Acer campestre</i> - <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland		*								
	W14 <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> - <i>Betula spp</i> - <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> woodland	*									
	And the following European site types (Corine):	The selection and designation of the SAC in 2000 was undertaken against the Corine types shown left. Although the representation of									

BAP Broad Habitat type / Geological Site Type	Specific designated features	Explanatory description of the feature for clarification	SSSI notified interest	SAC qualify	SPA qualifying interest features dependency on specific habitats			Ramsar criteria applicable to specific habitats			
	<i>Tilio-Acerion</i> forests of slopes, scree and ravines <i>Asperulo-fagetum</i> beech woodland	these types on this site is very low, the presence of large amounts of Lime, Ash and Beech in the W10 Oak stands indicates a modified type with close association to these two European types and hence the inclusion of Bigsweir Woods in the SAC. Details of the relationship between the NVC and European types are shown on Map 2.		* *							

NB. Features where asterisks are in brackets (*) indicate habitats which are not notified for specific habitat interest (under the relevant designation) but because they support notified species.

Table 2 Habitat extent objectives

Extent - Dynamic balance	To maintain the designated features in favourable condition, which is defined in part in relation to a balance of habitat extents (extent attribute). Favourable condition is defined at this site in terms of the following site-specific standards.
	On this site favourable condition requires the maintenance of the extent of each habitat type (either designated habitat or habitat supporting designated species). Maintenance implies restoration if evidence from condition assessment suggests a reduction in extent.

Habitat Feature (BAP Broad Habitat level, or more detailed level if applicable)	Estimated extent (ha) and date of data source/estimate	Site Specific Target range and Measures	Comments
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew woodland	49.17ha (GIS 11 July 1996)	No loss of woodland (which include rides and coppice coupes)	Extent is an estimate equal to site size

Audit Trail
Rationale for habitat extent attribute (Include methods of estimation (measures), and the approximate degree of change which these are capable of detecting).
Whole site is woodland habitat – extent is therefore taken as digitised boundary area.
Rationale for site-specific targets (including any variations from generic guidance)
Other Notes
48.16ha given as area on citation. 49.17ha given on ENSIS from GIS.

Table 3 Site specific Habitat condition objectives

To maintain the Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew woodland at Bigswear Woods SSSI in favourable condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features. Favourable condition is defined at this site in terms of the following site-specific standards:
Site-specific details of any geographical variation or limitations (where the favourable condition standards apply)
This objective is required to cover both the NVC types (derived from Peterken on which the site was selected and designated) and the European Site (SAC) woodland types based on the Corine classifications. Maps 2 and 3 identify the relationship between these types.

Site-specific standards defining favourable condition

Criteria feature	Attribute term in guidance	Measure	Site-specific Targets	Comments	Use for Condition Assessment?
W10 <i>Quercus robur</i> - <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> - <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> woodland W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> - <i>Acer campestre</i> - <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland W14 <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> - <i>Betula spp</i> - <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> woodland (and corresponding SAC types)	Area	Extent & location of stands assessed by field survey and/or aerial photography, in relation to baseline NVC Map 1998.	No loss of ancient semi-natural stands. No loss of ancient woodland.	Stand loss due to natural processes e.g. in minimum intervention stands may be acceptable. Stand destruction may occur if the understorey and ground flora are irretrievably damaged even if the canopy remains intact. As a guideline, loss can be defined as at least 0.5 ha or 0.5% of the stand area, whichever is the smaller. 20% canopy cover is conventionally taken as the lower limit for an area to be considered as woodland.	Yes

Criteria feature	Attribute term in guidance	Measure	Site-specific Targets	Comments	Use for Condition Assessment?
W10 <i>Quercus robur</i>-<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>-<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> woodland W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>-<i>Acer campestre</i>-<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland W14 <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>-<i>Betula spp</i>-<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> woodland (and corresponding SAC types)	Structure and Natural processes	Age/size class variation within and between stands assessed by field survey using structured walk and/or transects; presence of open space and old trees, dead wood lying on the ground, standing dead trees.	Canopy cover present over 30-90% of stand area. Understorey cover:(2-5m) present over at least 20% of total stand area in W8 (Ash/Lime) and W10 (Oak/Lime/Beech) stands and over at least 10% in W14 (Beech) stands. Ground flora present over at least 50% of area in W8 (Ash/Lime) and W10 (Oak/Lime/Beech) stands and over at least 30% in W14 (Beech) stands. At least three age classes spread across the average life expectancy of the commonest trees. Dead wood: a minimum of 3 fallen/lying trees >20 cm diameter per ha and 4 trees per ha allowed to die standing.	In coppiced stands a lower canopy cover (of standards) can be accepted. There is generally a good structural variety in these stands although veteran trees may be under-represented because of past treatment and the unstable nature of some sites. Ground flora may appear sparse in places late in season where colonies of <i>Allium</i> have died back (W8). The understorey may range from virtually non-existent to impenetrable Holly/Yew. If understorey is very dense, it may be affecting the ground flora or lichen growth on the lower trunks of trees. Ground flora is generally very sparse under Beech stands, particularly on acid sites or where there is a well-developed understorey.	Yes
W10 <i>Quercus robur</i> -	Composition	Cover of native vs non	At least 95% of cover in	Sycamore is regarded as	Yes

Criteria feature	Attribute term in guidance	Measure	Site-specific Targets	Comments	Use for Condition Assessment?
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>-<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> woodland W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>-<i>Acer campestre</i>-<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland W14 <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>-<i>Betula spp</i>-<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> woodland (and corresponding SAC types)		native species (all layers) assessed by field survey using structured walk and/or transects.	any one layer of site-native or acceptable naturalised species. Minimum levels of particular native tree/shrub species : W14 areas – Beech present in mature canopy at least 30% cover for the feature as a whole. Death, destruction or replacement of native woodland species through effects of introduced fauna or other external unnatural factors not more than 10% by number or area in a five year period.	non-native in this site as there are very few mature specimens in the canopy. There is an increasing spread of this species in the understorey and regeneration in the ground flora – objective of management should be to prevent the further establishment of maturing and seeding trees and to remove existing specimens. Where cover in any one layer is less than 100% then the 95% target applies to the area actually covered by that layer. Factors leading to the death or replacement of woodland species could include pollution or new diseases. Damage to species by non-native species that does not lead to their death is not necessarily unacceptable. Excessive browsing/grazing, even by native ungulates, may be undesirable if it causes shifts in the composition/ structure of the stand.	

Criteria feature	Attribute term in guidance	Measure	Site-specific Targets	Comments	Use for Condition Assessment?
W10 <i>Quercus robur</i>-<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>-<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> woodland W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>-<i>Acer campestre</i>-<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland W14 <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>-<i>Betula</i> spp-<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> woodland (and corresponding SAC types)	Regeneration potential	Successful establishment of young stems in gaps or on the edge of a stand assessed by field survey using structured walk and/or transects in spring or summer.	High forest & minimum intervention areas: Signs of seedlings growing through to saplings to young trees at sufficient density to maintain canopy density over a 10 yr period. Coppice areas: Unbrowsed regrowth from coppice stumps reaching 1.5m within 2 years on 95% of cut stumps). No more than 20% of areas regenerated by planting. All planting material of locally native stock. No planting in sites where it has not occurred in the last 15 years.	A proportion of gaps at any one time may develop into permanent open space; equally some current permanent open space/glades may in time regenerate to closed canopy. Assess this attribute by site visit in Spring/Summer. Regeneration may often occur on the edges of woods rather than in gaps within it. The density of regeneration considered sufficient is clearly less in parkland sites than in high forest; in coppice most of the regeneration will be as stump regrowth. The minimum level of regeneration to be acceptable from a nature conservation viewpoint is likely to be much less than that needed where wood production is also an objective.	Yes
W10 <i>Quercus robur</i>-<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>-<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> woodland W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>-<i>Acer</i>	Indicators of local distinctiveness	Ground flora type assessed by field survey using structured walk and/or transects, or as appropriate to	80% of ground flora cover referable to relevant NVC community (W8, W10, W14)	This attribute is intended to cover any site-specific aspects of this habitat feature (forming part of the reason for notification) which are not	Yes

Criteria feature	Attribute term in guidance	Measure	Site-specific Targets	Comments	Use for Condition Assessment?
<i>campestre-Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland W14 <i>Fagus sylvatica-Betula spp-Deschampsia flexuosa</i> woodland (and corresponding SAC types)		feature in spring or summer. Distinctive and desirable species which are elements of the notified features. Patches of associated habitats and transitions	Maintain conditions suitable for : Nationally Scarce plant populations: <i>Festuca altissima</i> and <i>Cardamine impatiens</i> And also Protected species: Dormouse (<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>).	covered adequately by the previous attributes, or by separate guidance (e.g. notified species features). Changes leading to these targets not being met may be acceptable where this is due to natural processes. These plant species require open, light and disturbed conditions eg along rides and in coppice coupes. Dormice require a well-established understorey with a diverse species composition and good connectivity within and across the site and to hedge-lines outside the site. Coppice coupes, where present, should be small in size and non contiguous. Deadwood (holes and old stumps) are important for hibernation.	

Audit Trail

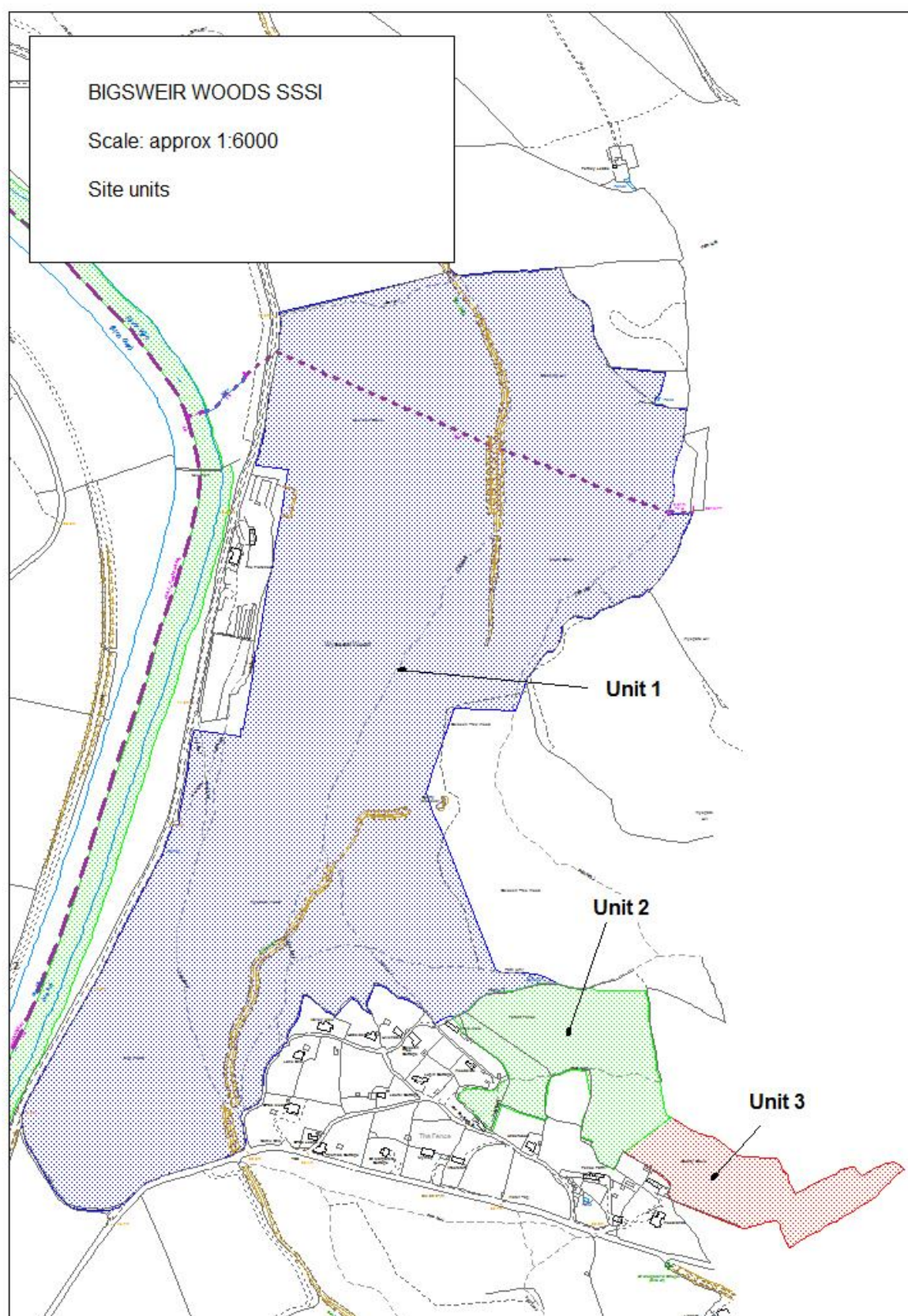
Rationale for limiting standards to specified parts of the site

No distinction in targets made between stand types across the site (all units – see Map 1) although some specific targets are included in relation to W14 beech dominated areas. These may have reduced levels of understorey and ground cover but these cover only very small area overall.

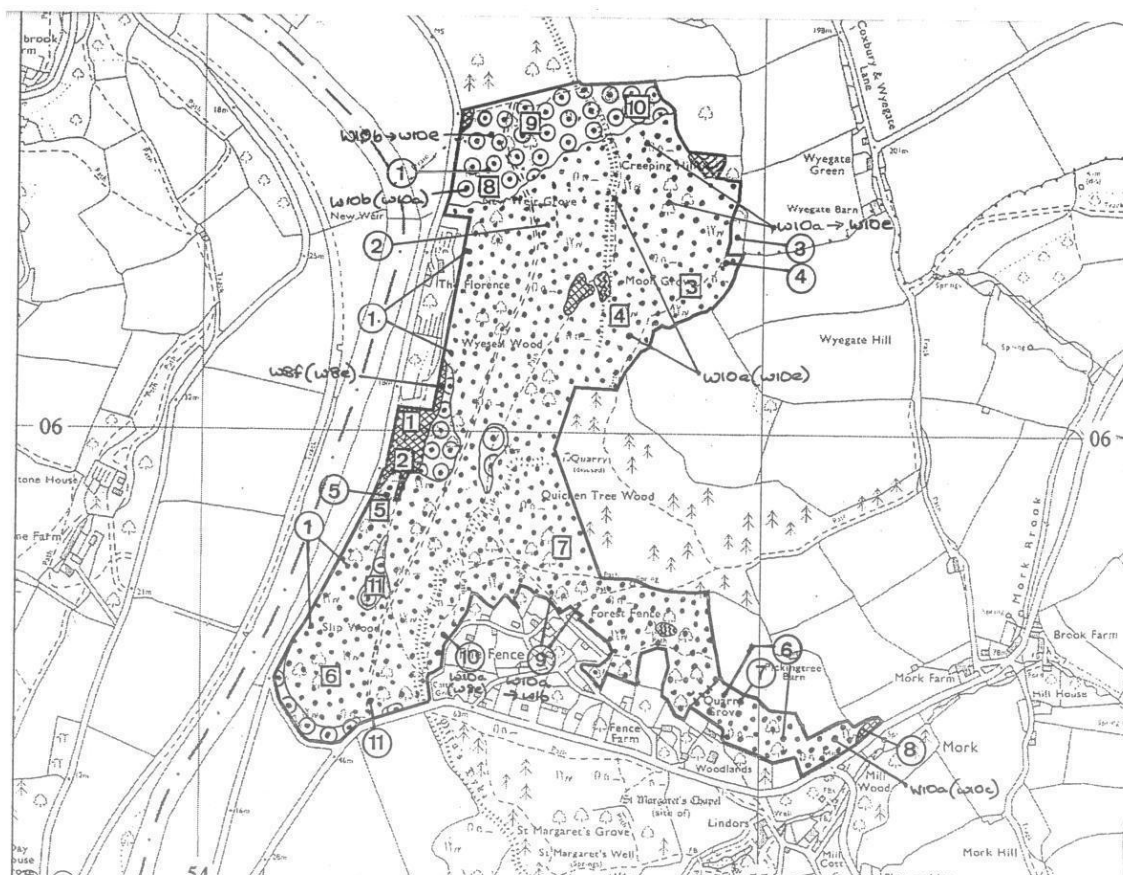
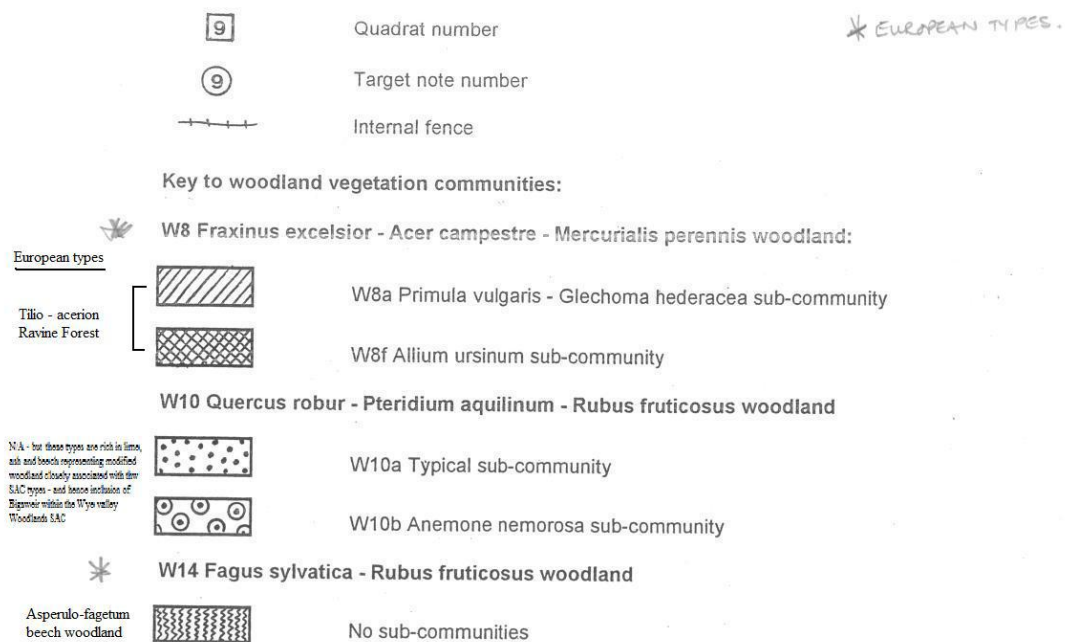
Rationale for site-specific targets (including any variations from generic guidance)
No variation from generic guidance.
Rationale for selection of measures of condition (features and attributes for use in condition assessment) (The selected vegetation attributes are those considered to most economically define favourable condition at this site for the broad habitat type and any dependent designated species).
Other Notes

Annex 1 Map(s) of key areas for monitoring

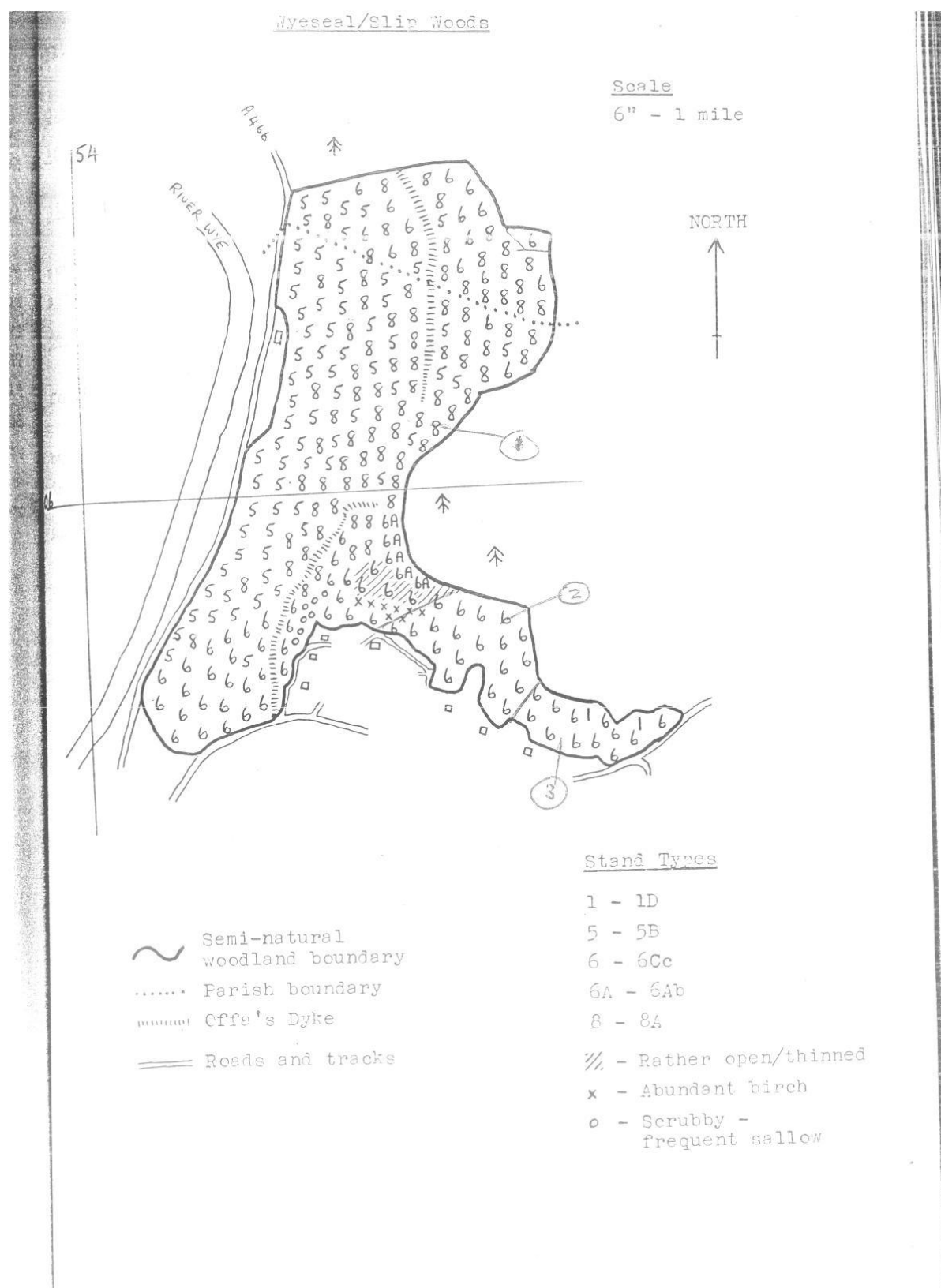
Map 1 Site units



Map 2 Bigsweir Wood SSSI Woodland NVC and European types



Map 3 Bigsweir Wood SSSI Peterken stand types



Annex 2 Location of features by unit

Features	units	1	2	3
Feature A		W8	W8	W8
Feature B		W10	W10	W10
Feature C		W14	W14	W14

Above features need to be checked with accompanying maps and during the next ISA.