

The Sefton Coast Woodlands

Forest Plan Scoping Report

September 2001

The Mersey Forest Team,
Risley Moss,
Ordnance Avenue,
Warrington.

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Introduction

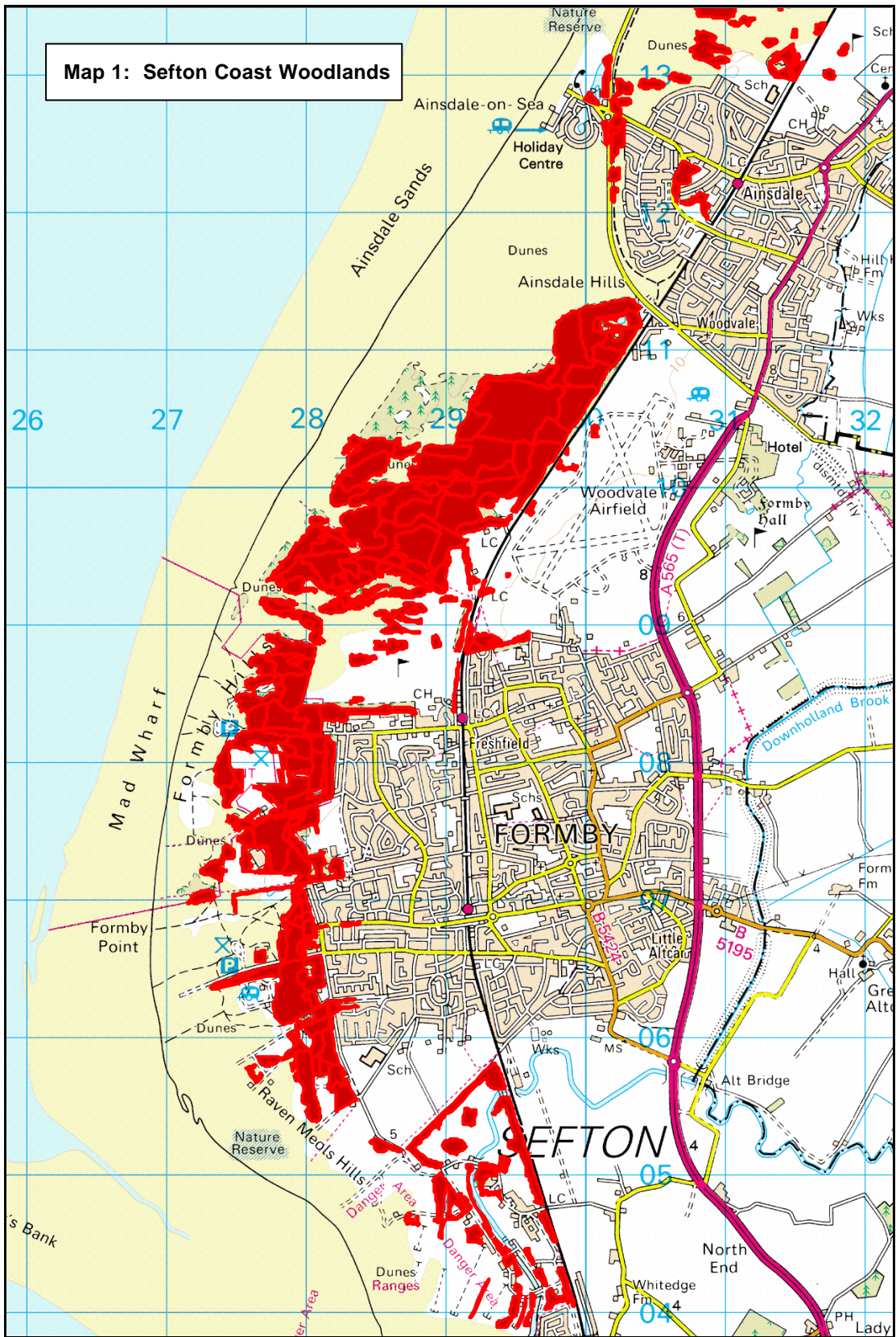
- The Scoping Report refers to the collectively owned woodland area known as:

The Sefton Coast Woodland

The Sefton Coast Woodland stretches between Little Altcar in the south and Hesketh in Southport in the north. It is all that forest within this area west, or seaward, of the Liverpool to Southport railway line (with the exception of a small amount of woodland on RAF Woodvale, adjacent to the National Nature Reserve).

Map 1 overleaf, illustrates the location around Formby town without showing the full spread of the woodlands.

Map 1: Sefton Coast Woodlands



- Forestry Commission Forest Plan reference number: **010017**
- The scoping process is described as being "...to enable [you] to explain [your] objectives and future plans to other parties interested in [your] proposals. Scoping also presents an opportunity for [you] to receive any new or better information about [your] proposals and the issues that affect them. The discussions should identify all the relevant issues that [your] Forest Plan must address." (ref: Forest Plans. Forestry Commission, October 1999).

The scoping process would appear to be described in the Applicant's Guidance Notes for the benefit of a single owner. The Sefton Coast Woodlands have multiple ownership with each owner describing quite specific and sometimes different reasons for managing the Forest. This makes the scoping process more complicated than involved than suggested in the guidance notes.

On the Sefton Coast, it would appear that all owners and interested parties wish to ensure that the Forest is maintained as a viable and important landscape feature and habitat. Despite the variety in interests, it has been possible to prescribe management practices which work towards this common vision without preventing individual owners from retaining their more specific interests.

For the purposes of this Forest Plan, the scoping process must include the coming together of owners to agree to manage the Forest in partnership. The next stage of scoping must be to identify the issues that underlie the forest management prescriptions. This was done by approaching all the owners and number of representatives of interest groups to generate the issues which must be addressed.

The Forest Plan was drafted using five-year cycles of operation to work towards the medium and long-term objectives. Once the draft was written to the satisfaction of the owners and interest group representatives, it had then to be tested with the wider public, using both the existing mechanisms of the owners and interest groups and additional meetings and discussion forums.

The Forest Plan is due in October 2001 to be drafted in its final form for submission to the Forestry Commission for approval.

Scoping as described above was carried out between the period February 2000 and August September 2001:

Date	Venue	Event
February 2000		Forest Partnership formed
February 2000		MF agrees to coordinate
May 2000		Steering group defines process
		Begins meeting on a regular basis
September 2000		Grant Application submitted to FC
October 2000		Scoping process begins
November 2000		Issues explored with owners and interest groups

Date	Venue	Event
December 2000		Surveys and information collection begin
20 January 2001	Crosby Civic Hall	First Public meeting to discuss issues and approach
February 2000		First draft of issues and proposals presented to steering group
2 March 2001	Formby High School	
25 April 2001		Southport Area Committee
April 2001		Formby presentation
April 2001		Ainsdale presentation
April / May 2001		Birkdale presentation
12 April 2001		Formby Area Committee
May 2001		Ainsdale workshop
25 May 2001	Formby Civic Society	Discussion forum
11 July 2001	Formby U3A	Discussion forum
26 July 2001	Ainsdale Civic Society	Discussion forum
23 August 2001	Hillside Golf Course	Committee presentation

Participants

Applicants

Sefton Coast Forest is distributed between 30 different ownerships:

Mr Rob Wolstenholme,
English Nature,
Ainsdale Sand Dunes & Cabin Hill NNRs
2, West End Lodge,
Pinfold Lane,
Southport PR8 3QW.
Phone: 01704 578774

Mr Andrew Brockbank,
The National Trust,
Formby Point,
Victoria Road,
Freshfield,
Formby L37 1J.
Phone: 01704 878591

Mr Dave McAleavy,
Leisure Services Department,
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council,
Formby Council Offices,
Freshfield Road,
Formby L37 3PG.
Phone: 0151 934 2961

Mr Ian Makin,
Leisure Services Department,
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council,
Pavillion Building,
Coronation Walk,
Southport.
Phone: 0151 934 2367

Club Secretary,
The Formby Golf Club,
Golf Road,
Formby L37 1LQ
Phone: 01704 872164

Colonel GJO Wells-Cole,
RFCA,
Altcar Rifle Range,
28, Alexander Drive,
Liverpool L17
Phone: 0151 929 2601

Mr JI Kippax,
Director,
Hesketh Golf Club,
Cockle Dick Lane,
Southport PR9 9QQ.
Phone: 01704 536897

Mr John Graham,
Club Secretary,
Hillside Golf Club,
Hastings Road,
Southport PR8 2LU.
Phone: 01704 567169

Mrs Jean Ryan,
Conservation Officer,
Formby Ladies Golf Club,
Golf Road,
Formby L37 1YH
Phone: 01704 873493

Mr MC Gilyeat,
Club Secretary,
Royal Birkdale Golf Club,
Waterloo Road,
Southport PR8 2LX.
Phone: 01704 567920

Mr Neil Jones,
Pilkington Estates,
Falcon Cottage,
Fawke Common,
Sevenoaks,
Kent TN15 0JX
Phone: 01732 761350

Sq Ldr Les Anderson,
Station HQ,
RAF Woodvale,
Liverpool Road,
Formby L37
Phone: 01704 872287 x 7200

Manager,
Shorrocks Hill Country Club,
Lifeboat Road,
Formby L37 2EB
Phone: 01704 873835

Mr Brian Coupe,
St Joseph's Adult Services,
Blundell Avenue,
Freshfield,
Formby L37 1PH.
Phone: 01704 872132

Mr R Wagstaff,
St Luke's Church,
St Luke's Church Road,
Formby L37 2DE
Phone: 01704 877655

Mr R Kershaw,
Greenloons Farm,
Formby L37 2DD
Phone: 01704 874013

Mr Dennis Fitzpatrick,
Atherton Cottage,
Formby L37 2DD
Phone: 01704 872486

Mrs CA Duerden,
Asparagus Cottage,
St Lukes Church Road,
Formby L37
Phone: 01704 872519

Terry Philips,
15, Teynham Avenue,
Knowsley Village,
Merseyside
Phone: 0151 546 7988

Mr & Mrs Ibbes,
Golf Cottage,
Off Golf Road,
Formby
Phone: 01704 870066

Properties not contactable:

Firwood Lark Hill Farm Hawes House Badger's Rake Freshfield Dune Heath Southport and Ainsdale Golf Course Garden Woods 1, Alexander Road Cottage 2, Alexander Road Cottage
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Interest Groups

- Name of the organisation / groups participating*
National Trust
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC)
English Nature
Royal Forces Cadet Association (RFCA)
Ministry of Defence (MoD)

Formby Golf Club
Formby Ladies Golf Club
Royal Birkdale Golf Club
Hesketh Golf Club
Hillside Golf Club
St Lukes Church
St Joseph's Hospital
Sefton Coast Watch
Formby Civic Society
Formby U3A
Ainsdale Civic Society
Environmental Advisory Services (Knowsley, St Helens, Sefton MBCs)
Lancashire, Cheshire and Merseyside Wildlife Trust
NPI Red Alert

- *The names of the people dealt with*
 - Mr Rob Wolstenholme (English Nature)
 - Mr Andrew Brockbank (National Trust)
 - Mr Dave McAleavy (SMBC)
 - Mr Reg Clapson (SMBC)
 - Mr John Houston (SMBC)
 - Major Bill Hunter (RFCA)
 - Mr Robin Burnett (Formby Golf Club)
 - Mr Jo Simpson (Formby Golf Club)
 - Mr Marek Milweski-Jones (Formby Golf Club)
 - Mr Ian Kippax (Hesketh Golf Club)
 - Mr John Graham (Hillside Golf Club)
 - Mr Derek Turner (Hillside Golf Club)
 - Mr Chris Whittle (Royal Birkdale Golf Club)
 - Mrs Jean Ryan (Formby Ladies Golf Club)
 - Mrs Val Moran (Formby Ladies Golf Club)
 - Mrs Gill Fell (Shorrocks Hill Country Club)
 - Mr Brian Coupe (St Joseph's Hospital)
 - Sq Ldr Les Anderson (MoD, RAF Woodvale)
 - Mrs Jo Shorrock (MoD, RAF Woodvale)
 - Mrs C Duerden (Asparagus Cottage)
 - Mr Dennis Fitzpatrick (Atherton Cottage)
 - Mrs Ann Ibbes (Golf Cottage)
 - Mr Terry Philips (Shorrocks Hill)
 - Mr Bob Wagstaff (St Lukes Church)
 - Mr John Kerr (EAS)
 - Mr Jim Hersey (Sefton Coast Watch)
 - Mrs Susan Taylor (Formby Resident)
 - Mr Peter Thornton (Formby Resident)
 - Mrs Molly Rathbone (Formby Resident)
 - Mr Jim Settle (Formby Resident)
 - Dr R Yorke (Formby Civic Society)
 - Mr Steve White (Lancs, Cheshire & Merseyside WT)
 - Mr Ken Parkes (NPI Red Alert)
 - Councillor Barry Griffiths (Sefton Council)

- *The contact addresses and phone numbers*
- *Correspondence references*

Issues Arising

- *An indication of each participant's objectives / desired outcomes – including those of the applicant*

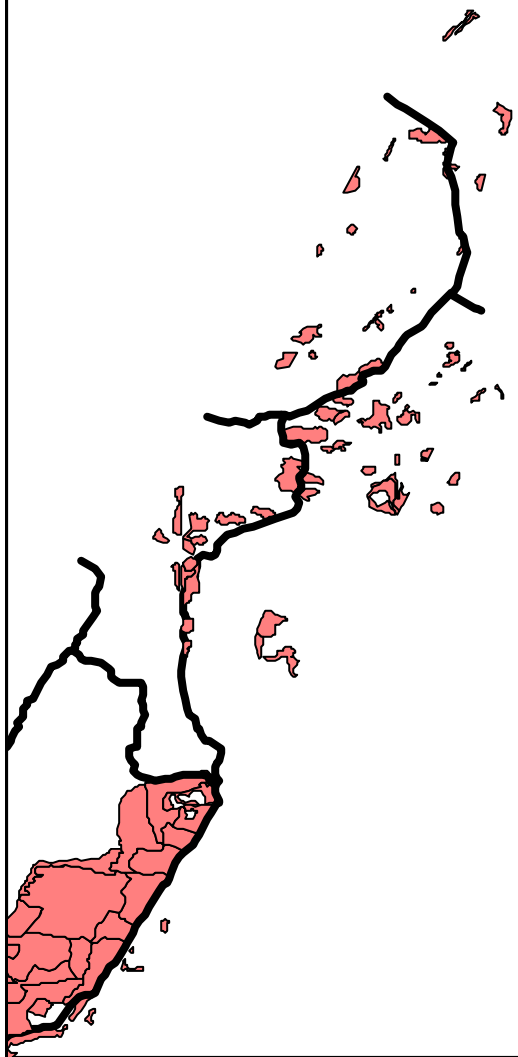
Broad Issues raised in the first phase of scoping:

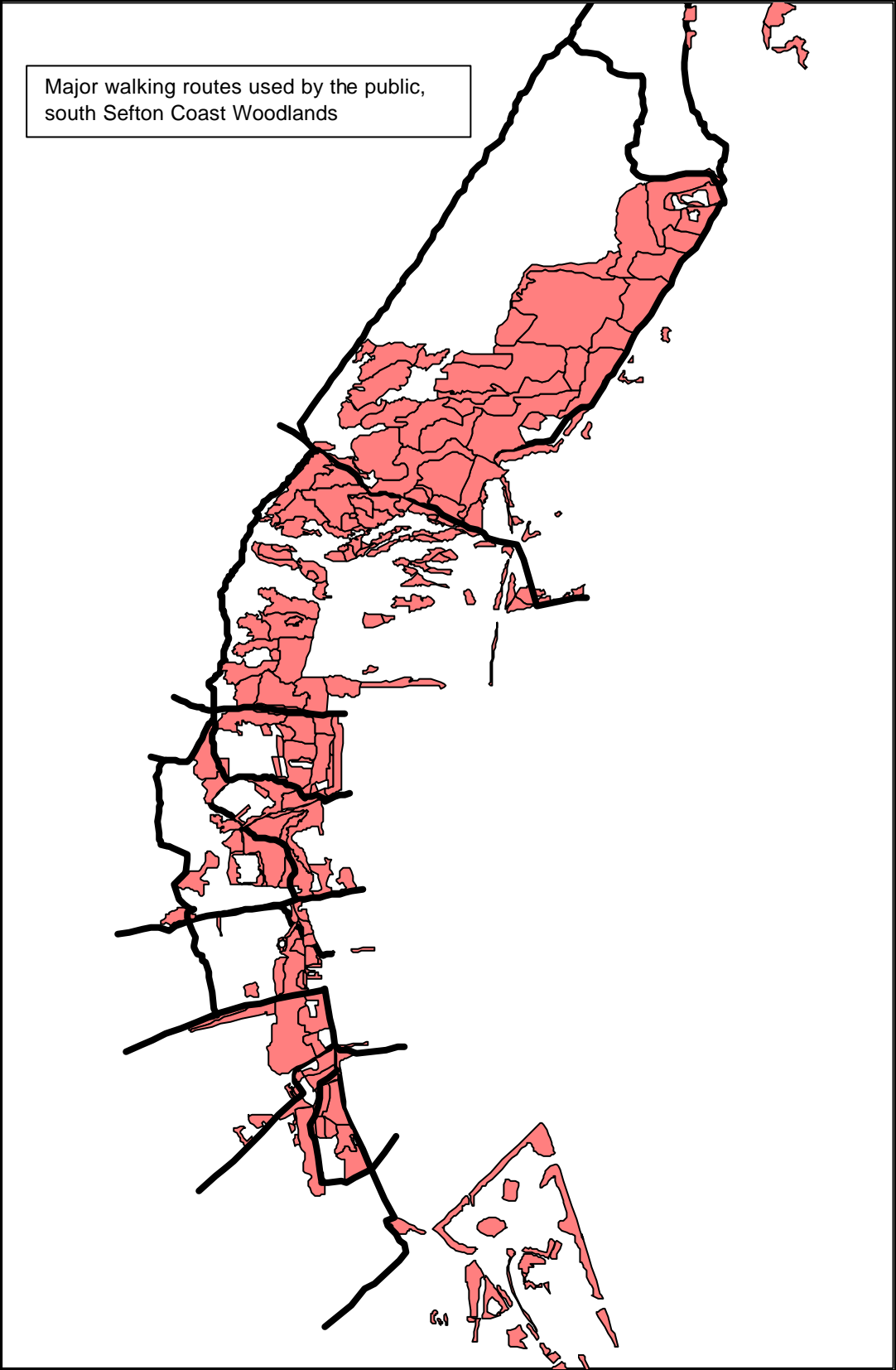
- The dune restoration process.
 - The Preservation of the red squirrel 'refuge'.
 - Maintenance of the historical and natural features of the landscape.
 - Re-establishment of good forest management practice.
 - Long term management.
 - Marine erosion
 - Sand dune encroachment
- *A description of any concerns expressed, survey requests or assistance and support offered by each participant*

More specific concerns raised by people in the second phase of scoping:

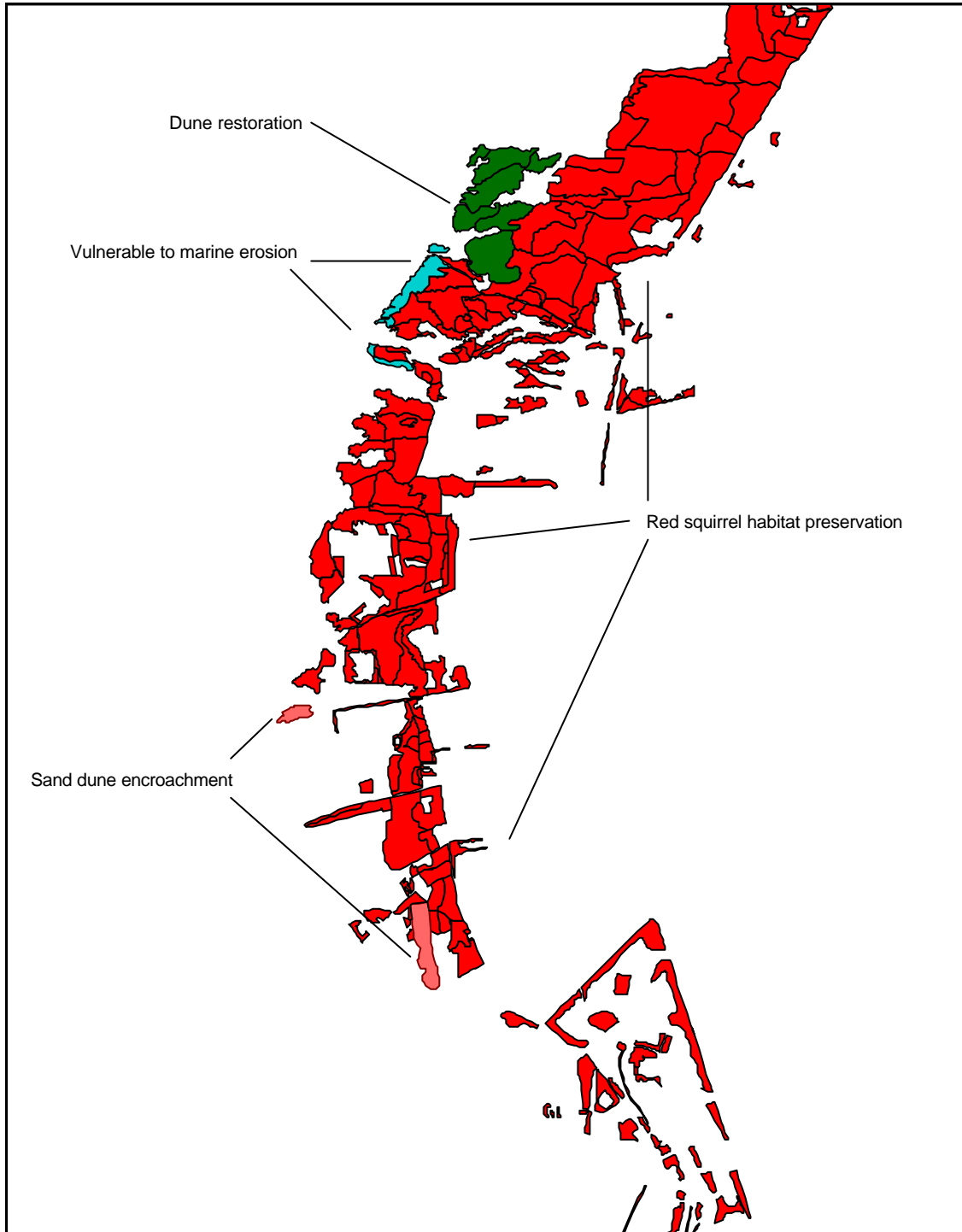
- The areas and percentages prescribed – who says they are correct?
 - The importance of **all** the habitats and species
 - Balance between pine and broadleaf species
 - The quality, timing and control of the management
 - Funding of and commitment to the Plan
 - Accessibility of the Plan to all interested people
 - Commercial return – self-sustaining or a threat to the habitat?
 - Fire and hygiene
 - Opportunities for community involvement
 - Squirrel conservation a high priority
- *A description of any existing or potential access (including customary access which may not be on a statutory or permissive basis):*

Major walking routes used by the public,
north Sefton Coast Woodlands





- *An annotated 1:10,000 map showing the areas affected by any of the issues raised.*



Assessment

- *An objective assessment of the likely impact each issue might have on the planning and the management of the forest work. The assessment must recognise and highlight areas of potential conflict between various objectives of the participants.*

Broad Issues raised in the first phase of scoping:

- The dune restoration process.

This relates to the National Nature Reserve at Ainsdale Sands. English Nature became concerned with the encroachment of shrub species into dune habitat. The restoration programme had the primary aim of retaining a major portion of the NNR as a dune habitat. The removal of the frontal woodland would reduce the speed of succession and allow time to thin and remove the birch scrub from the forward slacks.

The public responded to the felling of the forward woodlands by generally opposing the programme. The work was divided into four phases and after the first two were completed, English Nature agreed to review the success of the programme and to undergo a process of public consultation with regard to the remaining area under final two phases.

English Nature has commissioned an independent review by CMACS, Liverpool University and has agreed to consultation over 12 to 18 months from January 2001. It is unlikely that further work will be undertaken on the remaining area (whatever the outcome of the consultation) for perhaps three years. The implication of this being that it falls outside the span of the preparation period for the Forest Plan.

- The Preservation of the red squirrel 'refuge'.

With something like 95% of the English population of red squirrel having been lost, small areas such as the Sefton Coast Woodlands become important refuges. Concern among all organisations and interest groups has been to maintain this refuge population. There are several issues, but perhaps the main one has been the aging pine crop in the Woodland. It is assumed that coning will drop off with increasing age which will threaten the main food supply for the red squirrel. A secondary issue has been the high proportion of Corsican pine. Coning being cyclical could lead to a food deficit period if coning was poor at a time of bad weather and disease incidence. Any scenario that led to a drastic drop in red squirrel population could result in the grey squirrel establishing a foothold which could not be reversed.

- Maintenance of the historical and natural features of the landscape.

The Sefton Coast landscape in its current form is regarded as a significant national and international asset. Local community and general public use of the area is high and people attach great importance to all the features of the area. The concern of the various interest groups (land managers and users) is to find the balance between maintaining a dynamic landscape, but also keeping the essential features and habitats. Too much emphasis on one particular aspect to the neglect of another excites strong feelings and concern is immediately expressed.

- Re-establishment of good forest management practice.
For a number of reasons management of the pine woods has been minimal over the past few decades. Some thinning has been carried out in some areas, some restocking, but generally the Woodlands are suffering from under-management. On the one hand many people among the interest groups recognise this and are demanding that action be taken. On the other hand the public is nervous of activities in the Woodland that are not adequately explained and consulted on. Thus the need is to re-establish a culture of good management in a climate of trust and understanding.
- Long term management.
Even with the initiative of this Forest Plan, there is some scepticism as to long term consistency of management. Some of the land managers have long term views, but some do not or cannot afford to without adequate support. Concern has been expressed about the resources that will be available for management in the long term future.
- Marine erosion
Some of the forward compartments are vulnerable to marine erosion. The implications of this for those compartments and for the area as a whole is an issue that encroaches on the Forest Plan and yet cannot really be dealt with by the Plan. However, it is still an issue.
- Sand dune encroachment
Several Forest compartments are also affected by dunes that have mobilised and are being encroached on. Again concern is expressed about coastal erosion and though the distinction between marine erosion and sand dune movement is not always made, it is again a concern that people have in the area.
- *A description of any concerns expressed, survey requests or assistance and support offered by each participant*

More specific concerns raised by people in the second phase of scoping:

- The areas and percentages prescribed – who says they are correct?
- The importance of **all** the habitats and species
- Balance between pine and broadleaf species
- The quality, timing and control of the management
- Funding of and commitment to the Plan
- Accessibility of the Plan to all interested people
- Commercial return – self-sustaining or a threat to the habitat?
- Fire and hygiene
- Opportunities for community involvement
- Squirrel conservation a high priority

Proposed Planning Action

- *A statement of how each issue could be planned for within a Forest Plan and how any conflicts might be resolved. This might include any proposed amendments to management policies.*

- The dune restoration process.
English Nature commissioned CMACS to write a review of the dune restoration programme. This review was submitted and made public in January 2000. They have subsequently informed the public in a Sefton Coast Forum meeting in January 2001 that they intend to consult on the Dune Restoration programme over a period of 12 to 18 months. No decisions relating to the affected compartments (7 compartments, 20 hectares) will therefore be incorporated into the Forest Plan as it is due to be submitted to the Forestry Commission in October 2001. It has been proposed that English Nature submit an action plan to the Plan as consultation is completed—this would constitute an amendment to the Plan.
- The Preservation of the red squirrel 'refuge'.
The principles behind managing the pinewoods focus on the retaining them as prime red squirrel habitat.
 - a) Ensure that broadleaf composition does not increase above 10% of the total area.
 - b) Manage the pine mix at something like 60:40 Corsican:Scots to diversify coning cycles and therefore provide a wider base to the main food source.
 - c) Ensure that there is a 'normal' forest age structure to ensure the vigour of cone production (as a food source).
 - d) Maintain canopy bridges when planning and executing forest operations.
 - e) Ensure that tree bridges are not created with surrounding forest e.g. Moss Wood to the south near Crosby.
- Maintenance of the historical and natural features of the landscape.
Given the many different aspects of the landscape, the Forest Plan has to try to work with those aspects within its remit to achieve a balance between the different needs and priorities of management.

Management has been structured to ensure that the existing character is maintained. The increase in Scots pine in the pine composition will ensure that there is a diversification of food source for the squirrel, but without changing the essential character of the pine woods. The retention of about 10% broadleaf in composition works towards variety without compromising the red squirrel habitat.

- Re-establishment of good forest management practice.
The whole thrust of the Plan is to establish a management regime that retains a vigorous age profile and keeps the forest as a dynamic and vigorous habitat for priority species. The scoping process will work towards providing a climate of trust and understanding to ensure that there is public support for the work.

There is also emphasis on carrying out many of the thinning and restocking operations in the first years of the first 5-year cycle address the lack of activity over, especially the past seven or eight years.

- Long term management.
The 20-year vision, with 5 and 10-year objectives, together with the identification of progress indicators within an iterative cycle of management gives the Forest Plan a long term perspective. Regular 10 or 5 year revision of vision and

objectives will ensure that the Plan will stay relevant and useful as a management tool. The funding cycle within the Forest Plan concept lends itself to a long term perspective for management of the woodlands.

- Marine erosion
The Forest Plan cannot address the issue of marine erosion. Where the frontal woods are vulnerable, the Plan is recommending that regular reassessment of the situation be made to ensure that management can be adjusted according to need. Any subsequent management decisions would be submitted as amendments to the Plan. The Plan gives some background to the nature of marine erosion, but reference is made to the relevant Sefton Coast Partnership, an initiative which holds within its mandate the ability to look at the implications of coastal erosion over a wider scale than just the frontal wood areas.
- Sand dune encroachment
Two compartments are currently vulnerable to sand dune encroachment. These compartments will be assessed regularly over the period of the Plan with the view to taking appropriate action if needed—again these would be submitted as amendments.
- *A description of any concerns expressed, survey requests or assistance and support offered by each participant*

More specific concerns raised by people in the second phase of scoping:

- The areas and percentages prescribed – who says they are correct?
- The importance of **all** the habitats and species
- Balance between pine and broadleaf species
- The quality, timing and control of the management
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- Commercial return – self-sustaining or a threat to the habitat?
- Fire and hygiene
- Opportunities for community involvement
- Squirrel conservation a high priority

All the concerns addressed above relate to guiding principles within the Forest Plan and are explained in the document and will be part of the awareness raising or explaining phase of the Scoping Process. Being a management document it is inevitable that there is a style and language that is difficult to understand for the interested 'lay person'. One of the aims of the final phase of scoping is to put across a number of the concepts in a way that make them understandable to the public in general.

- *An outline of any surveys to be undertaken.*
No additional surveys are envisaged. The writing of the Plan will require a silvicultural survey to be conducted within all the woodland compartments. This will be presented in the Plan document in tabular and map format.

