



Sandlings Forests Recreation Strategy

Contributing to
Recreation & Tourism Management
in the Sandlings AONB



1. Foreword

I am very pleased to be able to introduce you to our recreation strategy for the Sandlings Forests. This is an important document for East Anglia Forest District as it clearly demonstrates the role three of the Sandlings forests have to play in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths' Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) countryside access agenda.

In essence this strategy is about connecting people with the land resource in a variety of imaginative ways that will inspire them to view and use the countryside differently.

The strategy sets out what the Forestry Commission (FC) believes to be the most appropriate future for public access provision across the Sandlings forests.

Many of the proposed facilities or activities will require feasibility studies and may be viewed as aspirational. However, the Forestry Commission believes that with support, all are achievable over the next 15 years and that they will provide real added benefit to the area.

The renewal and relocation of existing facilities at Rendlesham, the careful opening up of Tunstall forest to access, plus Dunwich's strengthened role for access within an environmentally sensitive area could all provide key strategic roles in managing, redistributing or absorbing visitors throughout the AONB.

Three forests with the potential to improve access opportunities in the Sandlings.

Public consultation showed that there is great concern at all levels within the AONB about visitor pressure. My sincere thanks go out to all who contributed to this strategy as your comments really are helping to shape the future. The FC believes that the Sandlings forests have great potential to contribute to public access in creative and exciting ways in the AONB to redistribute and absorb some of that pressure. This document seeks to identify that potential and show stakeholders what could happen quite acceptably, with careful planning.

Furthermore this strategy provides the platform from which future development projects, via the county planning process, can proceed in an atmosphere of clear understanding. It is also hoped that this strategy will provide the catalyst for partnership planning of visitor access on a landscape scale.

Jim J Lyon
Forest District Manager
December 2005

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2. Introduction

2.1 Stakeholders

This recreation strategy is very much about clarifying the situation and engaging people with a new role for the Sandlings forests as a social as well as an environmental resource. The thoughts and opinions of our key stakeholders have been sought throughout the construction of this strategy.

To the Forestry Commission the term stakeholders is an all-embracing one, covering anybody who might have an interest in how the forest operates and what it does, or does not provide. Therefore, the term embraces local residents, day-visitors and tourists, neighbouring landowners, as well as regional agencies and authorities.

a. Key Stakeholders

Nine key stakeholder groups were identified at the start of this process:

- Friends of Sandlings Forest
- Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB unit
- Suffolk Coast & Heaths Partnership
- Suffolk Coastal District Council
- Suffolk County Council (public rights of way)
- Wantisden Farms: Bentwaters, Staverton Park & Thicks.
- Ministry of Defence (RAF Woodbridge)
- Neighbouring conservation landowners: RSPB, SWT, NT, EN
- Aldeburgh Foundation

It was chiefly discussions with these stakeholders that led to the formulation of the first draft of the strategy, which was put out to public consultation in June 2005.

b. Other organisations and the general public

At a public forum in June attendees (a mixture of organisations and private individuals) were questioned regarding different aspects of the three forests. Additional public responses were received and meetings with interested parties and parish councils continued until the end of October 2005. All of the response data was then used to inform the redrafting of the final version of the strategy which was presented to the 9 key stakeholders in late December 2005.

This recreation strategy was approved and formally adopted by the Forestry Commission in March 2006.

2.2 Reviewing the consultation process

This document builds on the initial draft circulated during the summer of 2005. Both drafts result from a long and detailed strategy development process and the route that was followed is illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Sandlings Recreation Strategy Development Process												
Action	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Project Briefing meeting												
Introductory letter to 9 Key stake holders												
Meetings with 9 key stakeholders & research												
Public Consultation												
Revision												
Final key stakeholder consultation												
Publish												

The first draft was circulated in June 2005. In July there was a separate forum for interested organisations and the general public. General consultation closed in October. Full details of this consultation process and the responses obtained are contained in a statement of consultation, which is available on request.

2.3 Five primary strategic themes for the AONB

Five clear themes emerged from discussions with the key stakeholders that the any overall Sandlings strategic plan will need to tackle:

- Sustainable transport
- Environmental protection
- Overnight capacity
- Enhanced facilities
- Rights of way links

3. The Sandlings - Suffolk's Coast & Heaths

3.1 A valuable landscape

The Suffolk coast and its immediate hinterland is a valuable wildlife and landscape resource. The area was designated as an AONB in May 1970 and occupies some 403 km², from Holbrook/Stutton to the south to Covehithe in the north; although from the FC's perspective the key area runs from Sutton Hoo to Southwold.



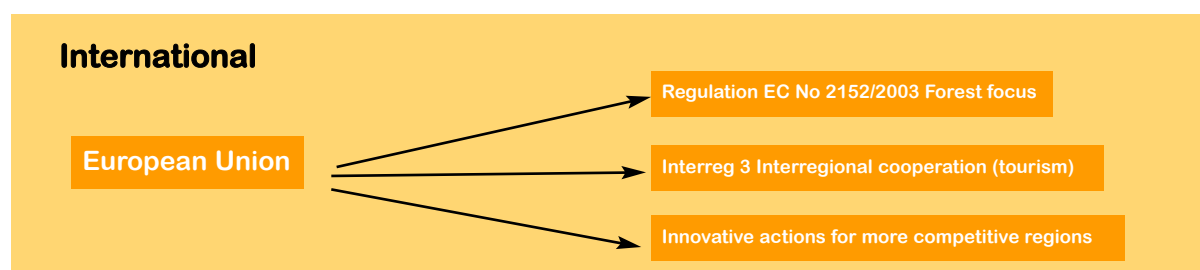
Figure 1

Within this area is a high concentration of visitor 'honey-pots', including Snape Maltings, Orford, Aldburgh, Minsmere, Dunwich, Walberswick and Southwold. In total there are over 70 attractions within these towns or scattered across the AONB, ranging from small local museums or amateur collections to national treasures; from nature reserves to a variety of sports/activity centres.

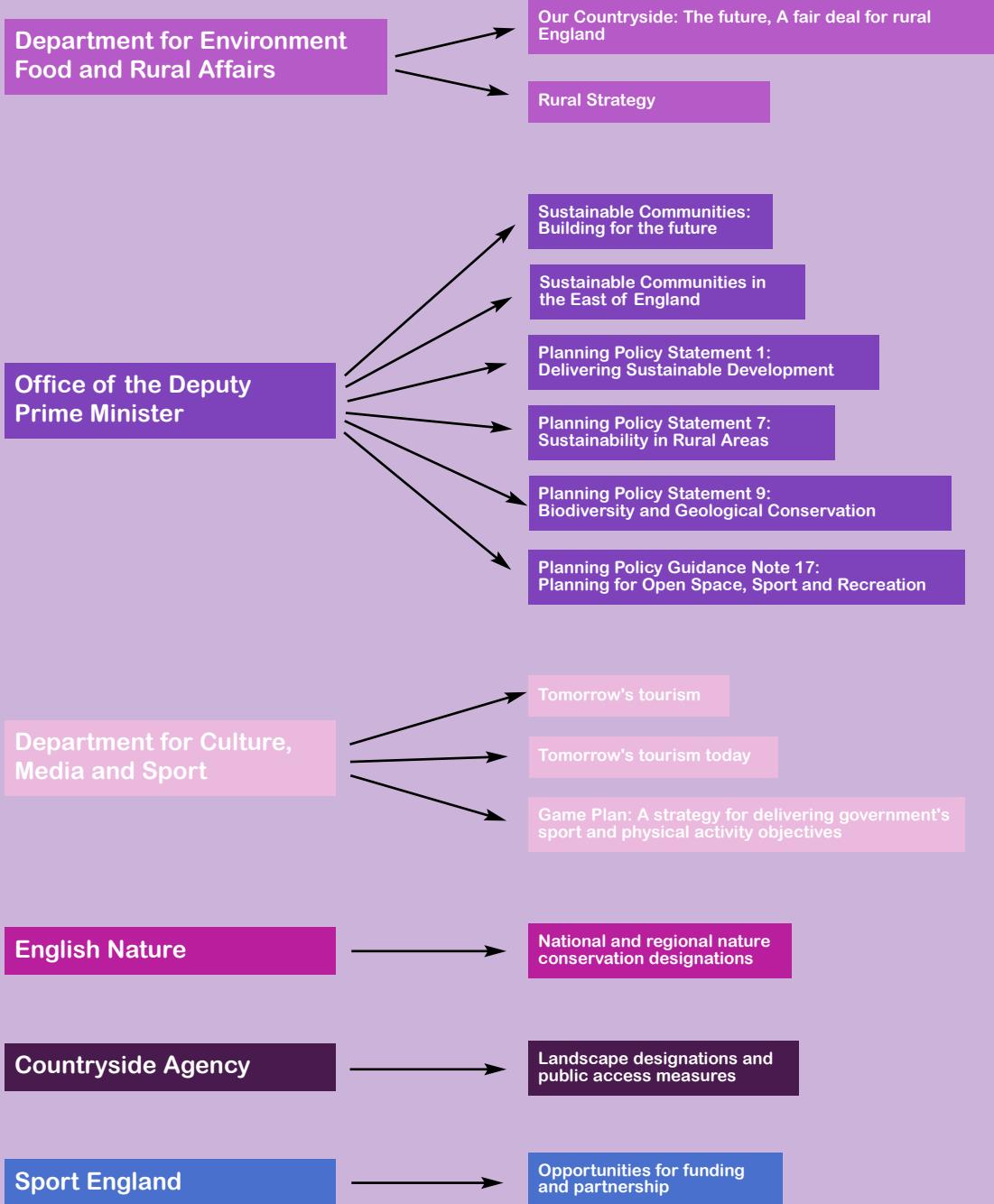
Additionally, there a number of cycle routes and walks, including the Sandlings Walk, Suffolk Coast and Heaths Path, the Stour and Orwell Walk and Route 1 of the National Cycle Network, the North Sea Cycle Route, South Suffolk Cycle Route and the Suffolk Coastal Cycle Route. Several of these already provide links both within and between the forests and some of these attractions. Suffolk County Council (SCC) acknowledges the rights of way network will benefit considerably from a programme of improvement.

3.2 A demanding policy context

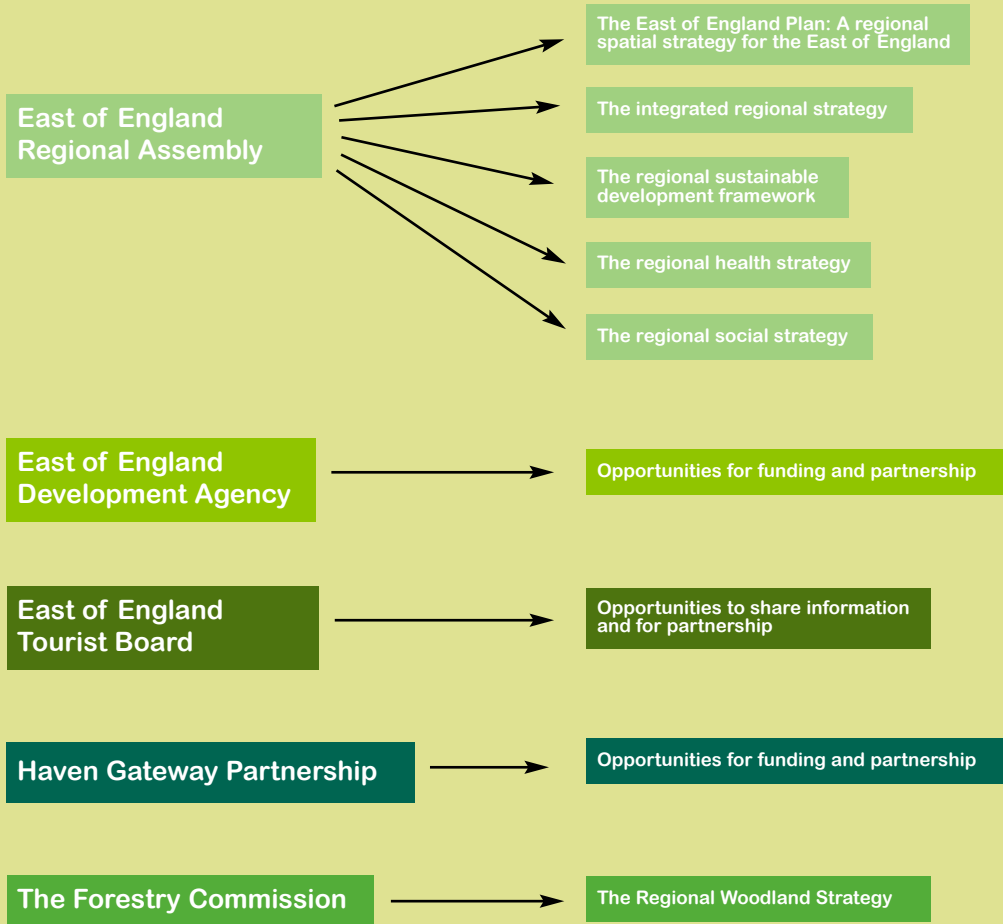
The policy context within which the FC operates is a demanding one as Figure 2 indicates. In fact this diagram considerably underplays the comprehensive and sometimes conflicting pressures the District must contend with when developing its strategic responses. Many of the statutory environmental requirements may be interpreted as running somewhat contrary to the social access agenda.



National



Regional



Local

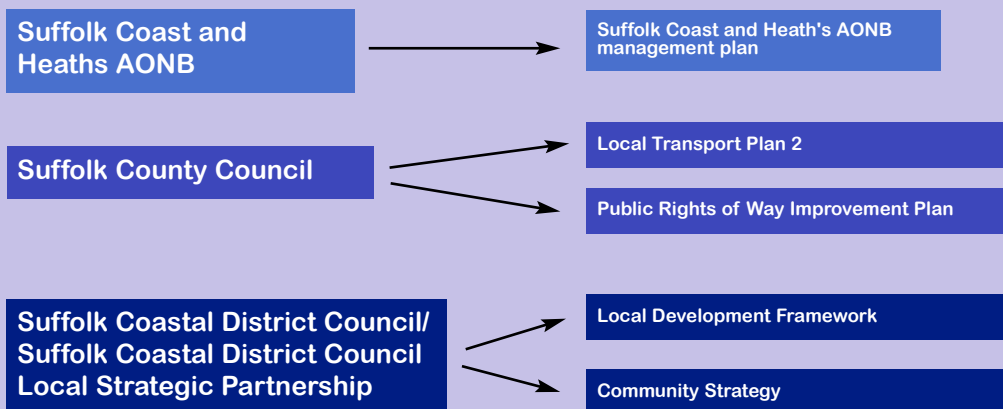


Figure 2

3.3 A problematic infrastructure

By its very nature the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is a significant tourist attraction. There is a strong perception amongst authorities, organisations and the local community that the area's travel infrastructure is under pressure.

The stakeholder discussions demonstrated that sustainable transport is a primary issue, with many feeling that it is the current road network that is at fault. The western boundary of the AONB is the A12. From it, visitors are fed to the coastal 'honey pots' via a west to east minor road network and throughout the summer months many of these access roads are often felt to be at full capacity.

In view of this it would be beneficial for the AONB to develop an area-wide mixture of options to more efficiently channel this traffic and persuade visitors to adopt alternative and less environmentally damaging ways of accessing the area. Increasing overnight stays of visitors is also seen as a potential strategy to reduce traffic flow in and out of the AONB.

3.4 Increasing visitation levels - a national as well as a regional issue

Increasing mobility, relative wealth and leisure time have triggered universal access pressures on countryside sites throughout England. In East Anglia this is likely to be compounded further by population growth and development around all major communities and new zones such as the M11 corridor.

Wholly consistent with this trend, the Suffolk coast has experienced a rise in visitor numbers. Typically there were 20 million tourism visits into the AONB over the period 1992 to 2001 (EETB figures¹) with twin-peaks of 2.5 million visitors in 1996 and 2.6 million in 2000. This report lays stress on the deficient nature of much of the data it was based upon and stresses the need to improve monitoring across the region.

Numbers of trips is perhaps a more appropriate measure of the visitor pressures on the AONB. In 2003 EETB calculated that for the Suffolk Coast and Heaths District alone saw almost 500,000 overnight stays and 4.1 million day trips. It has been argued in some quarters that the area is reaching saturation point if it is to continue to reflect its chief virtue, namely remain an area of peace and tranquillity.

In common with most countryside sites in East Anglia the forests are subject to three distinct categories of user/visitor: locals, day visitors (on the whole travelling from locations up to two hour's journey time each way) and tourists, who stay overnight in the area.

a. Local Communities

In keeping with other countryside sites the majority of general daily access to the three forests is from the residents of nearby settlements; the daily dog-walker who could use a site in excess of 200 times per year². Most day trippers seldom break into double figures for the number of visits they make each year, because of the travel element. A recent survey of local dog walkers in Dunwich showed that the locals catchment area typically encompassed Saxmundham, Yoxford and Halesworth, although it also stretched to Lowestoft.

¹ EETB's 'Visitor & Recreation Data in the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' 2003. Although this report lays stress on the deficient nature of much of the data it was based upon.

² Pers Comm: Brandon Country Park, visitor survey data.

b. Day visitors

Residents from elsewhere in the region and beyond also regularly use the forests, especially at weekends and holiday periods. Key settlements such as Norwich, Ipswich and Colchester are all within one hours' drive-time of the Suffolk coast.

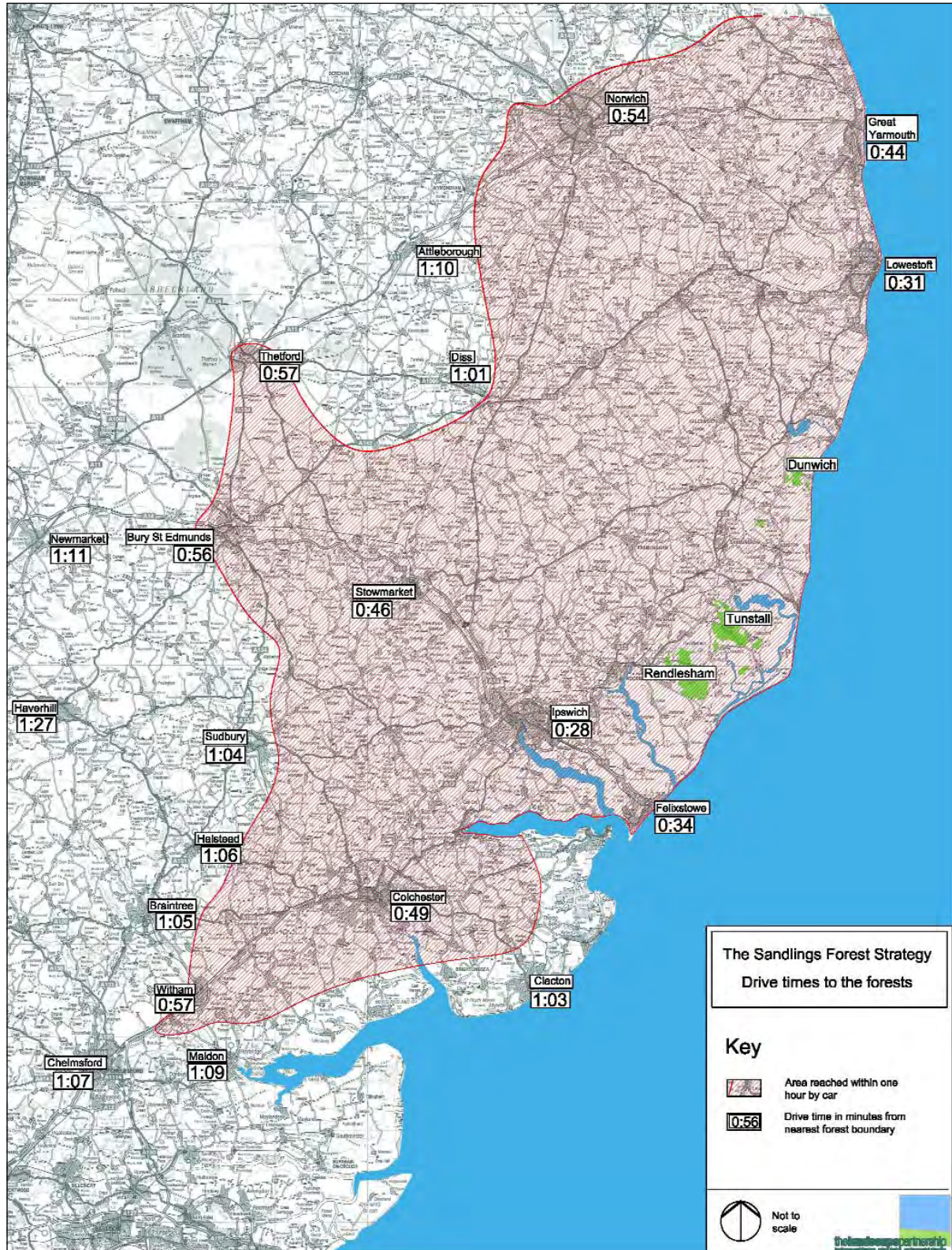


Figure 3

Survey data³ indicate day trips by far and away amount to the largest proportion of visitors to the AONB. EETB statistics suggest it could be of the order of 3 million visitors, accounting for well in excess of 4 million trips per annum. Their chief activity appears to be walking.

On the forest estate the second two most significant groups of users are cyclists and horse riders. The forests also play host to a wider range of specialist users (Table 2). For these groups, the forests often represent the only opportunities for their activity to take place to any significant degree within the countryside. These events are managed and pass off with minimal effect to other forest users.

Table 2: Summary of Club Events in Sandlings Forests

Event Type	2004			2005		
	Rendlesham	Tunstall	Dunwich	Rendlesham	Tunstall	Dunwich
Husky	2			1		
Horse	5	1	2	3	4	2
Vehicle (4WD)		1			1	
Carriage	2			1		
Dog training	1			1		
Motorbike	1	4		2	6	
Cycle	2			2		1
Orienteering	1			2	1	3
Running	1			1		
Rescue Training	1			2		
Total Events	16	6	2	15	12	6

The A12 places the Sandlings well within commuting distance of London (c8.0m population). The area is also on a rail link between London and Norwich.










c. Tourists: overnight visitors

Although the smallest of the three groups of visitor (according to EETB figures this group probably amounts to 0.5 million), the revenue they generate renders them of much greater significance. The Coast and Heaths Visitor Survey of 2004 suggested an average level of spend well in excess of £30.00/day. When considered alongside results of the national UK Day Visit Survey, this figure may be significantly on the low side.

The Sandlings Forest Strategy

Access Links

Key

-  Principal settlements
-  Access links
-  Railway
-  Suffolk Coastal Cycle Route
-  Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Path
-  The Sandlings Walk
-  Roads
-  Boat route
-  Integrated sustainable 'green' transport
-  Forestry Commission forest

 Not to scale

the landscape partnership
enhancing nature and rural environment planning

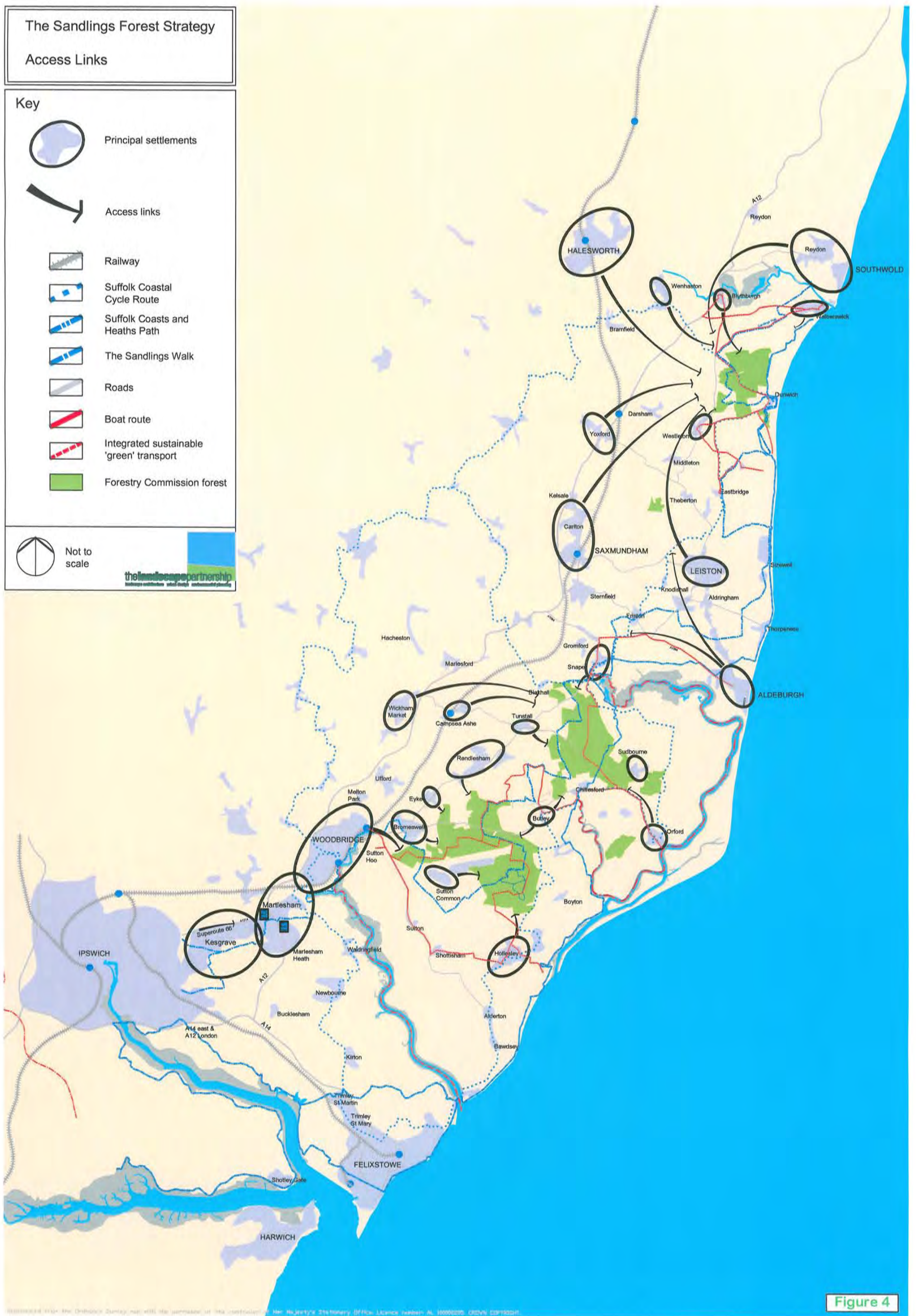


Figure 4

4. The FC's Sandlings Estate - a unique resource

4.1 Three thousand hectares of accessible countryside.

The Forestry Commission has five woodland and forest holdings within the Suffolk Coast AONB totalling some 3110 hectares: Rendlesham (1426 ha), Tunstall (1170 ha), Dunwich (514 ha), Gedgrave and Theberton. Of these five, the big three (Rendlesham, Tunstall, Dunwich) constitute the main public access areas (Map at 3.1).

Theberton wood is 25 ha in size, is tucked off the main visitor routes and is of value only to the adjacent community. Gedgrave is leasehold woodland and public access is precluded from the tenancy agreement.

The forests of Rendlesham, Tunstall and Dunwich sit within the most used segment of the Sandlings AONB. Tunstall constitutes an almost blank slate for visitors and, as it is topographically more interesting than Rendlesham, is likely to deliver a more varied visitor experience.

4.2 Statutory environmental requirements and public access.

The FC forests were originally managed for their strategic timber value. In spite of the global down turn in timber values, that objective has been secured and the wood products now underpin at least four regional processors with raw material from forests accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS).

Although catastrophically damaged in the 1987 storms the forests are well on their way back in to production and are now also visually attractive once more.

In 2001 both Rendlesham and Tunstall forests were designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) under the European Birds Directive for woodlark and nightjar. Any new access development must be compatible with the objectives of these legal designations. Although Dunwich forest has no legal environmental designation, it is nevertheless managed as though one was in place and this is encompassed within the District's forest design plan process.

In tandem with these requirements, the Forestry Commission is able to provide for public access. As of December 2005 the freehold woodland was dedicated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, securing pedestrian access in perpetuity. Permissive access for cyclists and horse riders will continue to be supported. As a consequence this land represents a significant public access resource.

With the growth for countryside access, Government policy has shifted to require the public forest estate to fulfil their social engagement opportunities to the maximum. For the Sandlings forests to continue to be relevant to the UK Government into the future, they must be seen to be fully engaging with the social agendas for access, health, inclusion and education.

Economics remain important. As a tourism resource, forests and woodlands are well placed to add benefit within the rural economy far beyond that of the forest products alone.

Together the environmental and social objectives are now the key drivers to forest policy and these objectives are clearly apparent in the District's strategic plan, published in 2005⁴.

The practical objective of this proposed Forestry Commission recreation strategy is to provide places for people in the countryside and to remove barriers to access, as well as increase engagement and understanding, whilst still protecting the environment.

4.3 Forests as access sinks - a visitor 'sponge'.

Forests are acknowledged to have great scope to absorb and dissipate activity, whilst continuing to apparently provide peace and tranquillity⁵. This capacity is amply demonstrated at several FC sites around the UK (New Forest and Grizedale are notable examples). Sandlings forests can contribute directly to the management of visitors in a sensitive area.

There is great scope for the enclosed landscape of the three key forests to act as a 'sponge' absorbing and hiding people. Local FC staff estimate that the actual number of day visitors to Rendlesham forest alone is comfortably well over 100,000 per annum. It is appreciated that this increasing level of use has a knock-on disturbance effect on local residents within the forest boundary.

The consultation process has highlighted that there is a need for the AONB team to develop a recreation and tourism for the area as a whole. There is great potential to deliver access developments in the AONB on a landscape scale through partnerships such as the Blythe to Alde Partnership (English Nature, The National Trust, the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Unit, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the RSPB).

In this respect it should be noted that the Sandlings Walk, Suffolk Coast and Heaths Path and the Suffolk Coastal Cycle route provide links within and between the forests and other attractions.

The FC, in partnership with regional planners, communities, landowners and businesses, can play an important role in the management of visitors throughout the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB by providing destinations that disperse pressure.

The FC's Sandlings Estate assumes a greater and unexpected significance for the entire AONB - for there is no other landholder with the capacity and willingness to absorb such a high proportion the public access demands.

⁴Forestry Commission, East Anglia Forest District, Strategic Plan, 2005.

⁵Leisure Landscapes: Understanding the role of forests & woodlands in the tourism sector. Suzanne Martin, 2004.

4.4 The need for investment

To capitalise on this forest capability requires investment. Although the FC began providing recreation infrastructure in its forests twenty years ago, provision has not kept pace with demand. Recreation in the forest is at a crossroads for change as the current infrastructure is either ageing, in the wrong place relative to local residents, or minimal. Rising costs and reduced funding now present a considerable challenge if visitor demand is to be properly managed.

Across all three sites improvements to infrastructure, facilities and services will help enhance the visitor experience and, more importantly, provide an opportunity to spread visitors over a wider area by highlighting options and delivering more choice.

4.5 Options for change

The three potential options for managing public access in the future are summarised in Table 3 below.

Option	Action	Effect
Provide less.	Reduce or close formal access points (car parks); remove trails and interpretation. Withdraw to provide basic access at Rendlesham. Close toilets & restructure car access to restrict general access to edges of forest only. Focus delivery of education and specific events.	Pedestrian access secured by CRoW dedication. Overall loss of access opportunities as car parking retreats to gateway locations and public rights of way entry points. Reduction in public access pressure in forest. Forests sole purpose an environmental & timber resource & background landscape feature. Regional visitors excluded from forest resource.
Maintain current provision.	No change. Maintain sites within current funding. Increase car charges at Rendlesham.	Capped funding position prevents any significant improvement to access. Annual reprioritising of access and education provision to make best use of available resources. Investigate options to cap visitor entry to Rendlesham or increase charges to create investment revenue. No new FC funded access project. Overall reduction in access quality over time.
Provide better access provisions.	Plan & design for new infrastructure and access opportunities. Seek funding and service partners to provide capital and reduce management costs. Design in car charging structures that provide income streams to sustain access management.	Opportunity to repackage public access to fit the forest for the next 20+ years. Opportunity for forest to engage with & absorb visitors and contribute positively to local economy & protection of sensitive areas in the wider landscape.

The Forestry Commission believes that the only way forward is to create better access provision that people want to engage with, in partnership with other bodies who have agendas to deliver throughout the countryside.

5. The Forestry Commission's capacity to deliver.

5.1 Delivery constraints

The funding climate remains difficult and internal capital to renew facilities is extremely limited while increases in maintenance liabilities require constant reprioritisation of facilities. While land management can sustain access at its most basic levels, the proposals in this strategy call for a significant level of additional funding for staffing and capital works.

a. Finance

The Sandlings forests currently cost in excess of £350,000/yr to manage.

Timber remains a critical part of the forest business throughout the East Anglia Forest District, providing c£1.5m income to sustain the forest management. In 2004/5 the Sandlings forests generated an income from timber of £117,000. This will increase as, 19 years after the 1987 hurricane, the replanted crops start to come back into production cycles.

Income through forest-based recreation and tourism activity in East Anglia generated £1.25m in 2004, which reduced the overall cost of delivering public access and education provision to £0.5m/year. The Sandlings contribution from recreation activity was £32,000.

Probably less appreciated is the contribution that the forest makes to the local economy through tourism, directly through employment in the forest and indirectly via secondary spend on accommodation and the like in the wider community.

The cash resource available for managing and maintaining local access infrastructure is £18,500 per annum. The site action plans in section 6 provide an indication of the level of investment needed to make key projects work and underlines the need for FC to increase resources to underpin any new provision. At its most basic requirement, in order to meet one of the Friends of Sandlings Forests desires, this would mean one additional ranger.

b. Personnel

Over the last 30 years the personnel resource available to the Forestry Commission in the Sandlings has declined from a staff of 54 to just 4:

- 1 x Forester - delivery of forest management, environment & social programme.
- 1 x Works Supervisor - operational support to the forester.
- 1 x Recreation Ranger - delivery of recreation, education & community programmes.
- 1 x Wildlife Ranger - wildlife monitoring & control, forest security & public liaison.

In addition to managing visitors, the Recreation Ranger also delivers education experiences for up to 1500 students each year. Consultation highlighted a demand for a volunteer scheme in the forest. To deliver this either current staff duties must be reprioritised or additional resource found.

5.2 The need for partnership

In the current funding climate the Forestry Commission alone will not be able to deliver the concepts set out in the strategy. Any development must be sustainable for the long term, making the creation of revenue streams important to underpin new expenditure. Partnership working thus lies at the heart of the delivery of this strategy.

Rendlesham and Tunstall are within the Haven Gateway partnership area. The Haven Gateway provides a framework within which its partner organisations, drawn from both the private and public sectors, work together to promote economic opportunities and secure the future prosperity of the Haven Gateway. There is a clear link between these partnership objectives and the objectives of this strategy which need to be explored.

6. FC - Site proposals

6.1 Strategy overview

In summary the FC proposals in relation to the five AONB issues are:

Table 4

Primary AONB Issues	Rendlesham: Revival & relocation of established infrastructure	Tunstall: Realisation of an under-utilised access asset	Dunwich: Low key access, building on the environmental attraction.
Sustainable Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sutton Hoo links • Connections to Wantisden Farms & Farm Machinery display • Links to Suffolk Punch Centre • Woodbridge link • Improved forest links (Tunstall) • Toll drive • Enlarged car parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest access gateway – with links to Snape Maltings • Bridleway links • Forest drive • Enlarge car parking facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to other Dunwich area tourist attractions • Car parking improvements
Environmental Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate assessment or EIA on developments • Reclaim Woodbridge runway as heathland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate assessment or EIA on developments • Manage access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate assessment or EIA on developments • Manage access
Overnight capacity improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve & relocate campsite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review schools camping facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp site/bunk barn
Enhanced facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved/moved Forest Centre • Educational centre • Performance area • Archery maintained • Paint ball or role play facility • Reclaim Woodbridge airfield 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BMX track • Sculpture trail • Outdoor performance area • Introduce cycle routes • Provide horse box parking • Provide more picnic sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilet facilities • Archery reviewed • Improved wildlife viewing. • [Link to Bridge Farm refreshments]
PRoW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area-wide access & recreation study • Migrate PRoWs to bridleway to facilitate cycling • Explore possibility of ProW between Tunstall & Rendlesham 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area-wide access & recreation study • Migrate PRoWs to bridleway to facilitate cycling • Explore possibility of PROW between Tunstall & Rendlesham • Investigate PROW between Tunstall & Snape • Increase signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area-wide access & recreation study • Migrate PRoWs to bridleway to facilitate cycling • Establish Northern footpath • Link to Bridge Farm refreshments

In order to deliver this programme it will need to be staggered. Initially the emphasis might need to be on opening Tunstall to take the strain off the adjacent Rendlesham infrastructure.

A detailed feasibility study and investment planning to fund a new visitor centre for Rendlesham will clearly take a significant period of time. This project will necessarily be a medium to long-term programme.

Access development within Dunwich remains essentially low key and can comfortably run parallel with other project work, although this set of initiatives will need to be co-ordinated with the Blythe to Alde partners.

6.2 Individual site action plans

The following tables and maps summarise the proposed site-by-site plans.

These plans all seek to manage and develop the key recreational uses of the forest: walking, cycling and horse riding.

Table 5; Rendlesham

Location	Strategic Plan Objective	Recreation activity/infrastructure	Action	Beneficiary	Implementation		Resources (Financial) Low : <£50,000 Med: <£150,000 High: >£150,000
					Time scale Immediate: 2 to 5 yrs Interim: 5 to 10 yrs Aspiration: 10 to 20 yrs	Possible partnerships	
Rendlesham To improve transport links, reducing motor access. To improve links to existing populations and the local community	ART 1: Managing the Forestry Commission's current estate in East Anglia for public access ART 2: To expand the economic value of the estate	Area wide planning for access & recreation	Sandlings AONB recreation strategy & partnership planning	National, Regional & local	Immediate	AONB team, Suffolk Coastal District Council.	Medium
		Archery	Maintain existing activity	Local	Immediate	Current provider	Low
		Forest centre	Feasibility study into relocating the forest centre, providing a transport hub, combining the forest centre with a café, a visitor/educational centre and a performance area, enlarging the existing car park and creating a toll drive	Regional & national	Interim	Suffolk County Council, SCDC, AONB team, Friends of Sandlings Forest, Local Education Authority, local landowners, National Trust, SWT, RSPB, English Nature.	Medium to High
		Links to and partnerships with other tourist attractions	Explore feasibility of linked events and activities with Sutton Hoo, improved communications and shared facilities with the Kemballs, and the provision of transport links from the forest centre to the proposed Suffolk punch centre	National	Interim	Sutton Hoo, National Trust, The Kemballs, Suffolk Punch Centre	Medium
		Camp site	Feasibility study to assess the options for moving, enlarging and improving the existing camp site	Regional & national	Immediate	Current provider, FC Forest Holidays	Medium
		Links to Woodbridge Town and other populations	Improve forest links and Public Rights of Way, explore the feasibility of a farm/forestry machinery display in partnership with farm landowners	Local	Immediate	Suffolk Coast and Heaths, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Farm landowners	Low
		Paintball/role play/team building facility	Provide land lease business opportunity for activity	Regional	Interim	Provider	Medium
		RAF Woodbridge, runway	Reclaim the airbase land originally compulsory purchased from FC by MoD	Local	Interim	MoD, RAF Woodbridge	Medium to high

The Sandlings Forest
 Draft Recreation Strategy
 Key to Concept Plans
 (Figures 5-7)

existing	improved	new	
			Paintball
			Archery
			Culture
			Equestrian centre
			Railway station
			Forestry office
			Visitor centre
			Car park
			Museum
			Tourist feature
			Historical element
			Picnic site
			Camp site
			School camp site
			Golf course
			BMX area
			Railway
			Sandlings Walk
			Suffolk Coasts & Heaths Path
			Suffolk Coastal Cycle Route
			SCCR alternative routes/short cuts
			Forest Walks including Daisy's Walk, Phoenix Trail, Tunstall Walkway and Dunwich Forest Trail
			FC cycle paths (Rendlesham)
			Public Footpath
			Bridleway
			Byway open to all traffic
			Road used as public path
			Forest Drive/integrated transport route
			Proposed path (other)
			Proposed boat route
			English Nature (Walberswick NNR)
			National Trust
			Ancient Woodland

Table 6; Tunstall

Location	Strategic Plan Objective	Recreation activity/infrastructure	Action	Beneficiary	Time scale <i>Immediate: 2 to 5 yrs</i> <i>Interim: 5 to 10 yrs</i> <i>Aspiration: 10 to 20 yrs</i>	Possible partnerships	Resources (Financial) Low : <£50,000 Med: <£150,000 High: >£150,000
Tunstall <i>Enhance existing facilities and create new links</i>	ART 1: Managing the Forestry Commission's current estate in East Anglia for public access ART 2: To expand the economic value of the estate	Area wide planning for access & recreation	Sandlings AONB recreation strategy & partnership planning	National, Regional & local	Immediate	AONB team, Suffolk Coastal District Council.	Medium
		Forest link	Contribute to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, exploring Public Rights of Way between Rendlesham and Tunstall, and Rights of Way links between Tunstall and Snape	Local	Immediate	Friends of Sandlings forest, Parish Councils, Ramblers Association and other walking clubs, Suffolk County Council, Volunteers	Low
		Forest access gateway	Explore the feasibility of a forest access gateway, to find a suitable location for a forest drive, to maintain and improve forest car parks, cycle routes and picnic sites, to provide horse box parking facilities and to review brideway links	Regional	Interim	Adeburgh Foundation, Snape Maltings, Friend of Sandlings forest, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Suffolk County Council, AONB Team	Medium
		BMX track	Regulate and improve facilities	Local	Immediate	Local cycle groups, local communities, Sustrans, private sponsor, Community Sports Network Officer, District Councils, Sport England	Medium
		Enhanced facilities	Creating a sculpture trail and an outdoor performance area with links to Snape Maltings and the school campsite	Regional	Interim	Adeburgh Foundation, Friend of Sandlings Forests, Regional Arts Council	
		Review camping provision	Feasibility study into the enlargement and improvement of the school campsite and associated facilities	Local	Interim	Local Education Authority, Scouts, private franchise, Forest Holidays	Medium to high

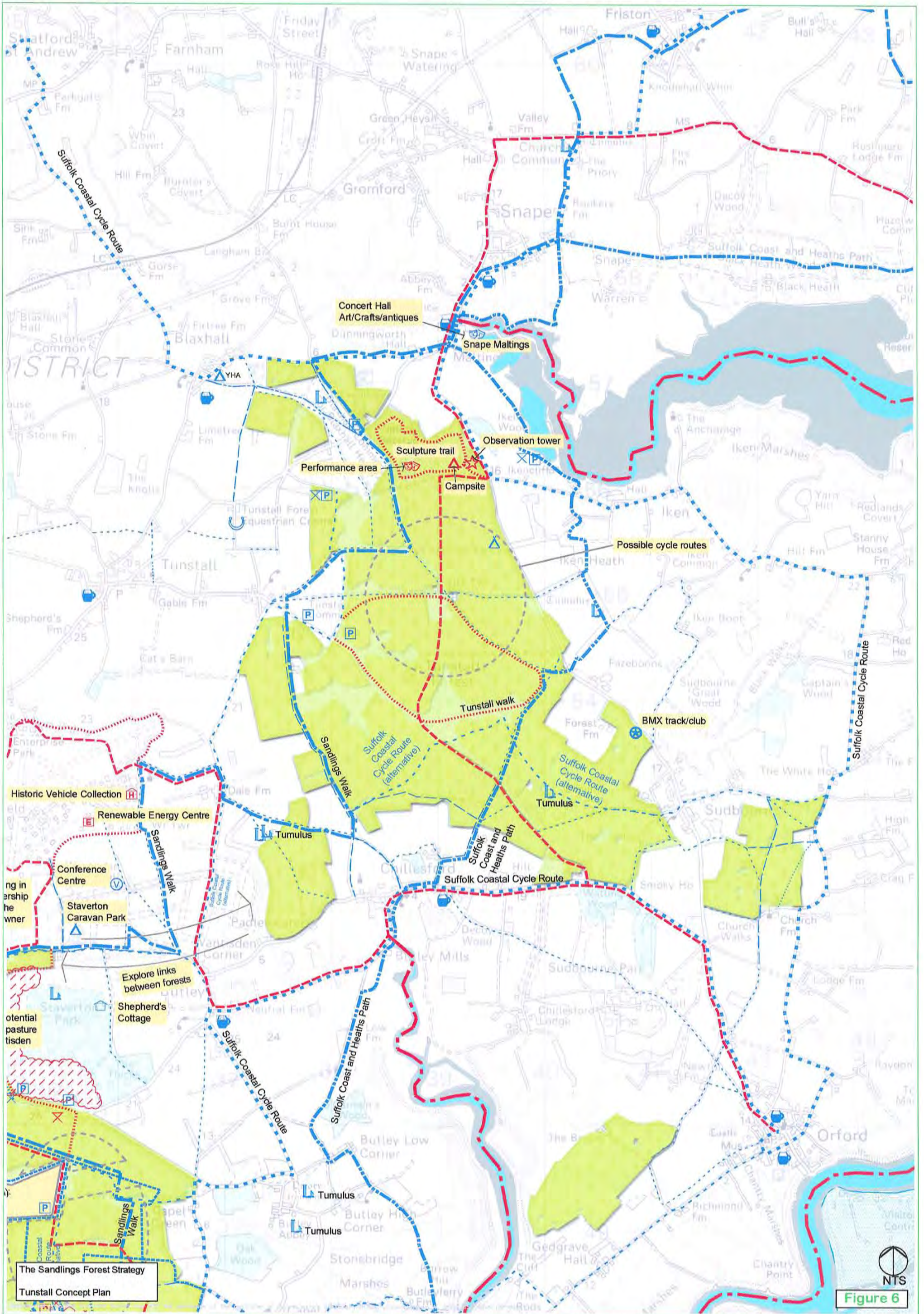
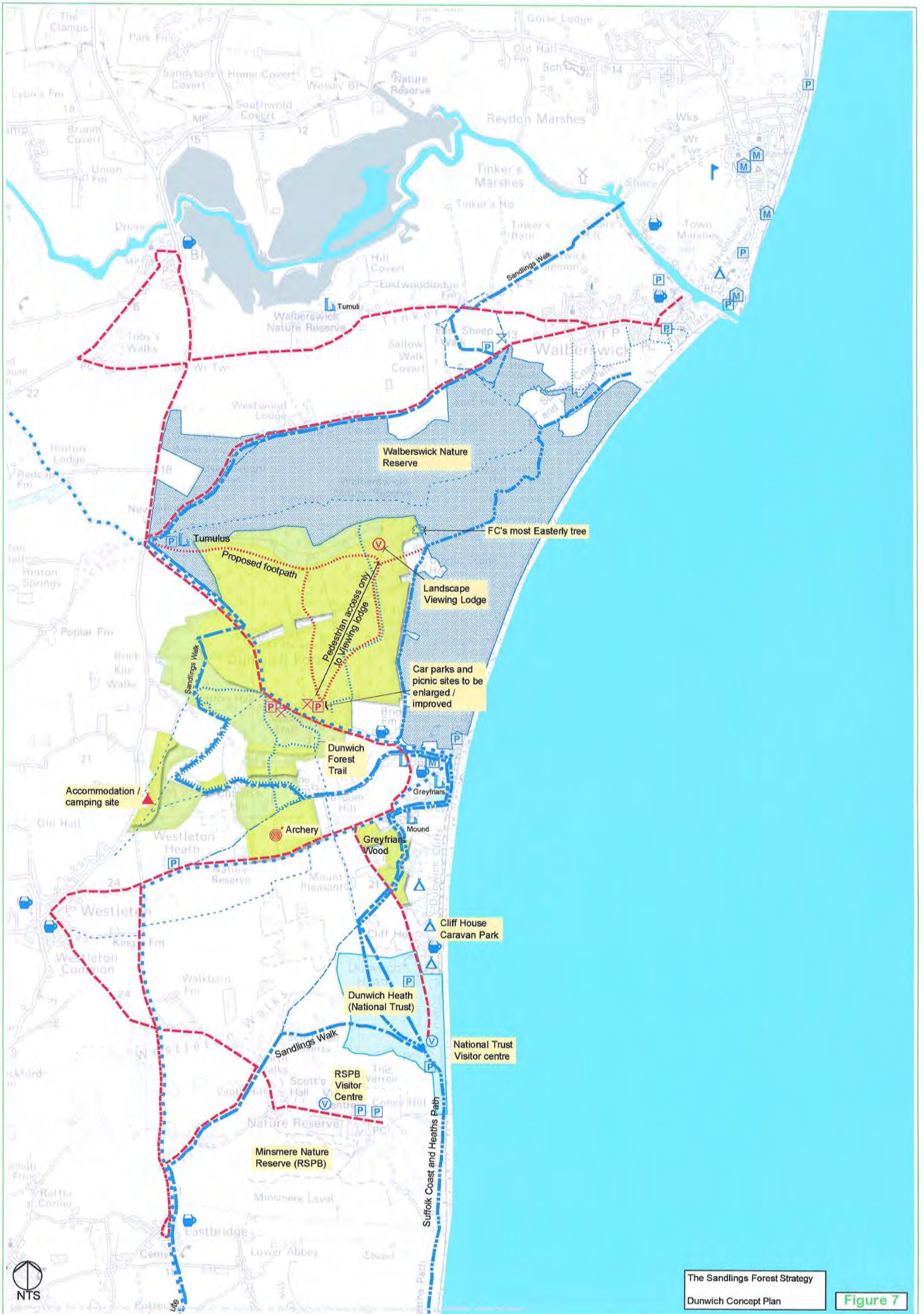


Figure 6

Table 7; Dunwich

Location	Strategic Plan Objective	Action		Beneficiary	Time scale <i>Immediate: 2 to 5 years</i> <i>Interim: 2 to 10 years</i> <i>Aspiration: 2 to 20 years</i>	Implementation Possible partnerships	Resources (Financial) Low : <£50,000 Med: <£150,000 High: >£150,000
		Recreation activity/infrastructure	Action				
Dunwich The promotion of eco friendly activities	ART 1: Managing the Forestry Commission's current estate in East Anglia for public access ART 2: To expand the economic value of the estate	Area wide planning for access & recreation	Sandlings AONB recreation strategy & partnership planning	National, Regional & local	Immediate	AONB team, Suffolk Coastal District Council.	Medium
		Car parks	To improve maintenance and increase capacity if required	Local	Immediate	Suffolk Coastal District Council, Suffolk County Council, AONB Team	Medium
		Toilet facilities	Feasibility study to identify where additional toilet facilities are necessary	Local	Immediate		High
		Camp sites/ bunk barn accommodation	Feasibility study into the capacity of the AONB to accommodate overnight visitors	Regional/national	Immediate	Suffolk Coastal District Council AONB Team.	High
		Walberswick viewpoint	Create a viewpoint over Walberswick nature reserve	National	Aspiration	English Nature, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Local Education Authority	High
		Archery	Maintain the current activity and review its location	Regional	Immediate	Current provider	Low
		Forestry Commission's most easterly tree	Promote as a landmark	Regional	Aspiration		Medium
		Links to and partnerships with other tourist attractions	Support local transport links & explore partnership approach to delivering recreation with other local providers; Greyfriars Priory, Dunwich Museum, the National Trust and RSPB	Regional	Interim	Network Rail, Sustrans, cycle franchise, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Coast and Heaths, Greyfriars Priory, English Heritage, the National Trust, Dunwich Museum, Local Education Authority, RSPB, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, English Nature	Medium - high



7. Towards a Regional Strategic Recreational Plan

The Forestry Commission is keen to ensure that its woodlands play a leading role in a more integrated approach to providing for the needs of communities, visitors and the environment.

A key message that came through from stakeholder comments received during the consultation process was the need for a wide area approach to planning for access and tourism. Typically this stemmed from concerns over roads and the feeling from some communities that they were seasonally swamped by visitors and that improvements to attractions would only exacerbate the problem.

The development of an AONB-wide strategy involving all of the key partners will help bring issues and solutions in to focus. Consequently, the Forestry Commission actively supports the development of a regional tourism and recreation strategy for the AONB.

7.1 An AONB-wide recreation & tourism strategy

For an AONB-wide recreation strategy, based upon the AONB Management Strategy, to be effective will require the resolution of the following inter-related set of key issues:

a. Towards co-ordinated/sustainable transport

Work on the transport network has to move forward at county level. The FC mapping exercise looked at existing road and river routes in conjunction with activity centres and indicated that great potential exists to package a regional solution around a number of different transport options. A sustainable transport strategy is likely to have to involve linking the railway line, waterways, bus routes, and public rights of way. It will always be difficult to separate drivers from their cars. Radical solutions could include regional congestion charging, although the development of strategically placed, improved car parking hubs that allow drivers to get close to their destinations before moving on to short hop local transport solutions might also be achievable. Encouragement of non-car visits relies on providing the reliable, exciting alternatives that turn a trip into an event; a visit to an experience.

With the revision of its own management strategy already underway the SC&H AONB team is well placed to lead and facilitate this initiative, linking with regional interests as required.

There is potential to explore sustainable transport links, within and between the forests. For its part the FC is happy to include its estate within the development of regional planning options and the proposals for Rendlesham and Tunstall could contribute to wider car management.

b. Protecting the environment

Sustainable tourism is about fitting people into sensitive environments. Measures that need to be generally applied across the AONB would include broad adoption of environmentally good practices (from litter collection, to waste control, pollution safeguards, water conservation, noise abatement). Access provision in sensitive areas requires infrastructure that's good enough to take people to somewhere interesting or to provide people with the experience they want.

The FC's contribution to protecting the environment is enshrined within the forest design plan and SPA appropriate assessment requirements.

c. Increasing overnight capacity

Additional overnight capacity could directly contribute to a reduction in car traffic and should also create a substantial increase in community revenue that would underwrite the overall plan's sustainability. The FC has a contribution to make to this resource in camping and caravanning facilities.

d. Enhancing visitor facilities/experience

The provision of visitor facilities has to be about providing destinations that contribute to visitor management, without unduly restricting the entrepreneurial activity that is necessary to underpin a healthy local economy. Appropriate commercial activity has an important part to play in underpinning access services.

The FC development strategy is very much about improving on current facilities and using the existing estate to attract and hold visitors in defined areas. But, it is also about linking the forest resource in to the wider area to create a much broader, area-wide joined up visitor package.

e. Public rights of way network

The FC supports the development of a comprehensive intra-regional grid of connections for pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders. Such a network would contribute significantly to the sustainable transport agenda.

8. Next steps

There is a clear need to distinguish between those initiatives that should be driven by the AONB team and local authorities and those proposals that are purely the responsibility of the FC, although both will contribute to a mutually sustainable outcome.

8.1 AONB Level

Ideally under the leadership of the SC&H unit a co-ordinated schedule of activity will need to be directed at the following areas:

- Creating the sustainable transport network
- Providing additional tourist facilities
- Overnight accommodation opportunities
- Enhancing the ROW network

8.2 FC Level

Underpinning some of these activities the FC will need to:

Table 8

Action	Timing
Reprioritise local resources & maintenance programme.	2006
Begin feasibility study for Rendlesham & Tunstall proposals.	2006+
Develop revenue streams to cover cost of maintenance & staff	2006+
Identify and detail partner opportunities, including links to AONB Management Strategy initiatives.	2006+
Assessment of visitor holding capacity.	2006
Develop a plan to reclaim RAF Woodbridge should it be wholly or partly decommissioned.	2006
Formalise funding plans	2007+
Plan & commission Tunstall access developments	2008+
Plan & commission Rendlesham facility development	2008+
Commence Dunwich programme	2008+