

A service standard for Management Plans across England

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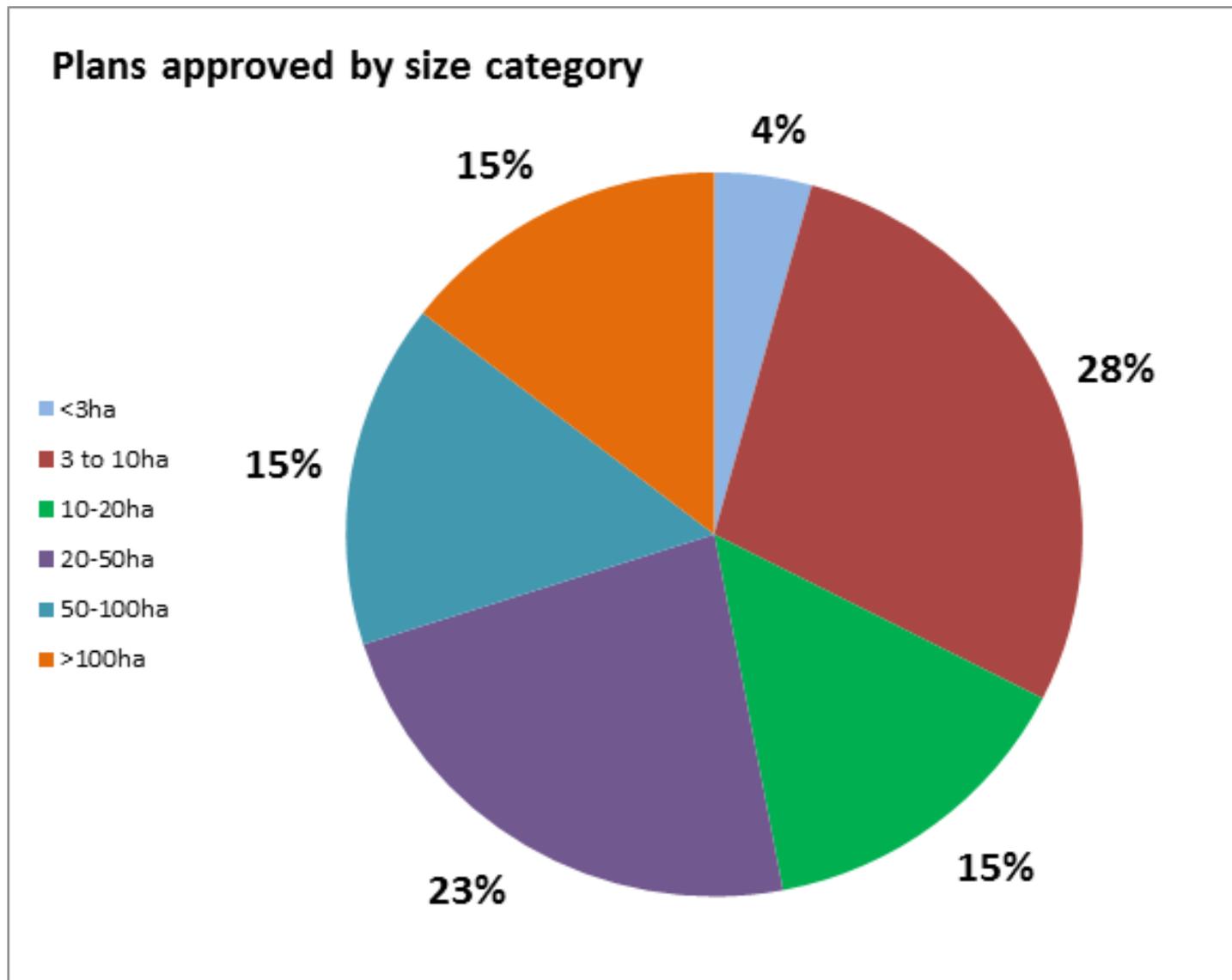
- Can we agree that Quality Management Plans underpin sustainable woodland management; especially if you are bringing a woodland into management for the first time?
- Particularly important in South East where:
 - we have so much woodland
 - Over half of which is semi-natural
 - evolving markets (which require sustainably sourced wood)
 - A highly interested and articulate populace
- So what do we mean by Service Standard?

The South East Service Standard Pilot

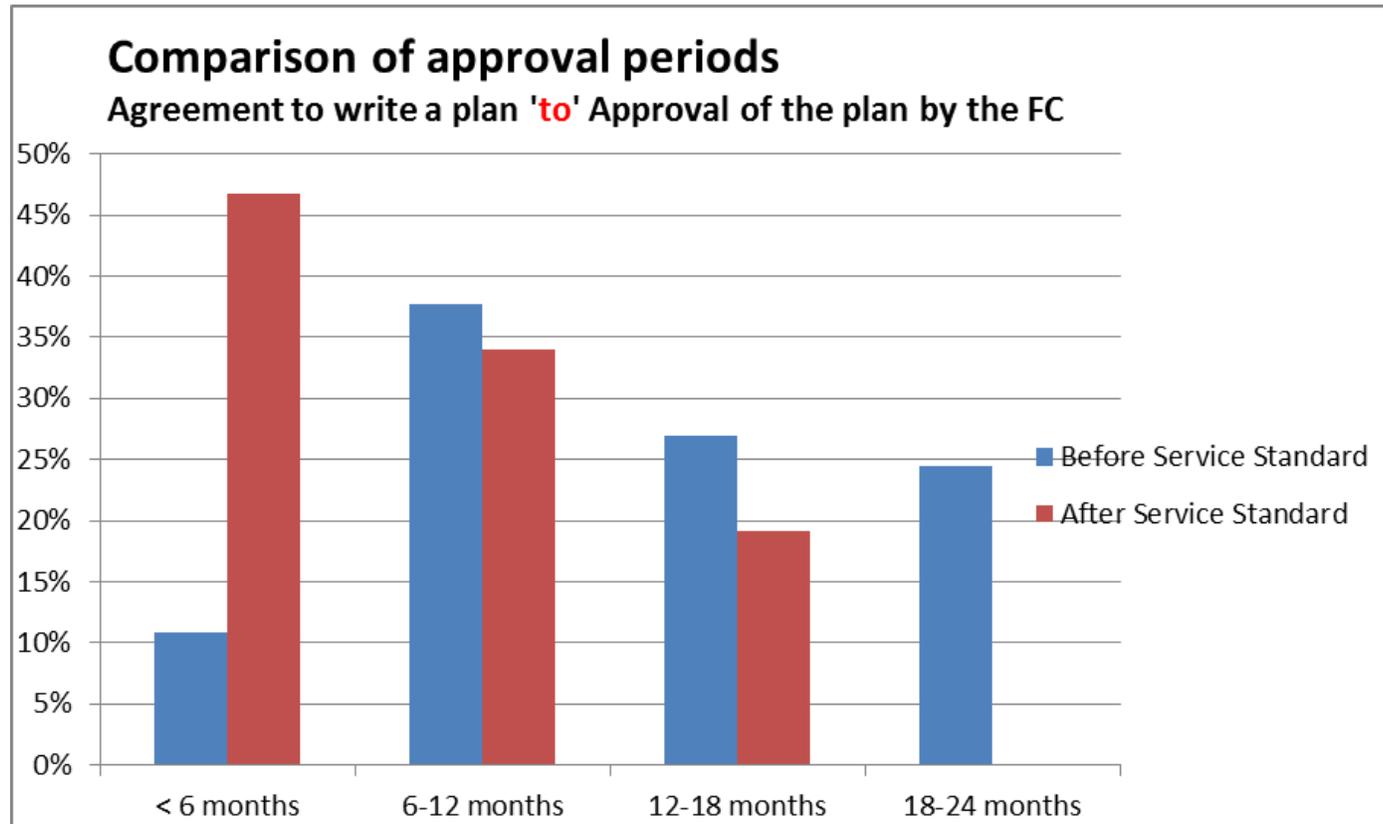
- Ran a 12 month Pilot in the South East following the “**Better Plans Faster Approval**” events in 2015
- Built on an earlier SW project
- **AIMS of Service Standard pilot were to:**
 1. Improve quality of first draft of plans.
 2. Shorten approval period for Management Plans.
 3. Facilitate earlier approval of associated Felling Licences
 4. Monitor work and work loads to identify and reduce blockages
 5. Achieve greater consistency across FC staff and Applicants

- Launched at meeting with agents in June 2016
- Used a spreadsheet to track progress & outcomes
- Considered whether:
 - a. A 1st draft – could be responded to within 28 days
 - b. The option to submit a 3rd draft plan would make a significant difference
 - c. A pre-draft WO site visit would improve the quality of the plan
 - d. Other work had a significant impact

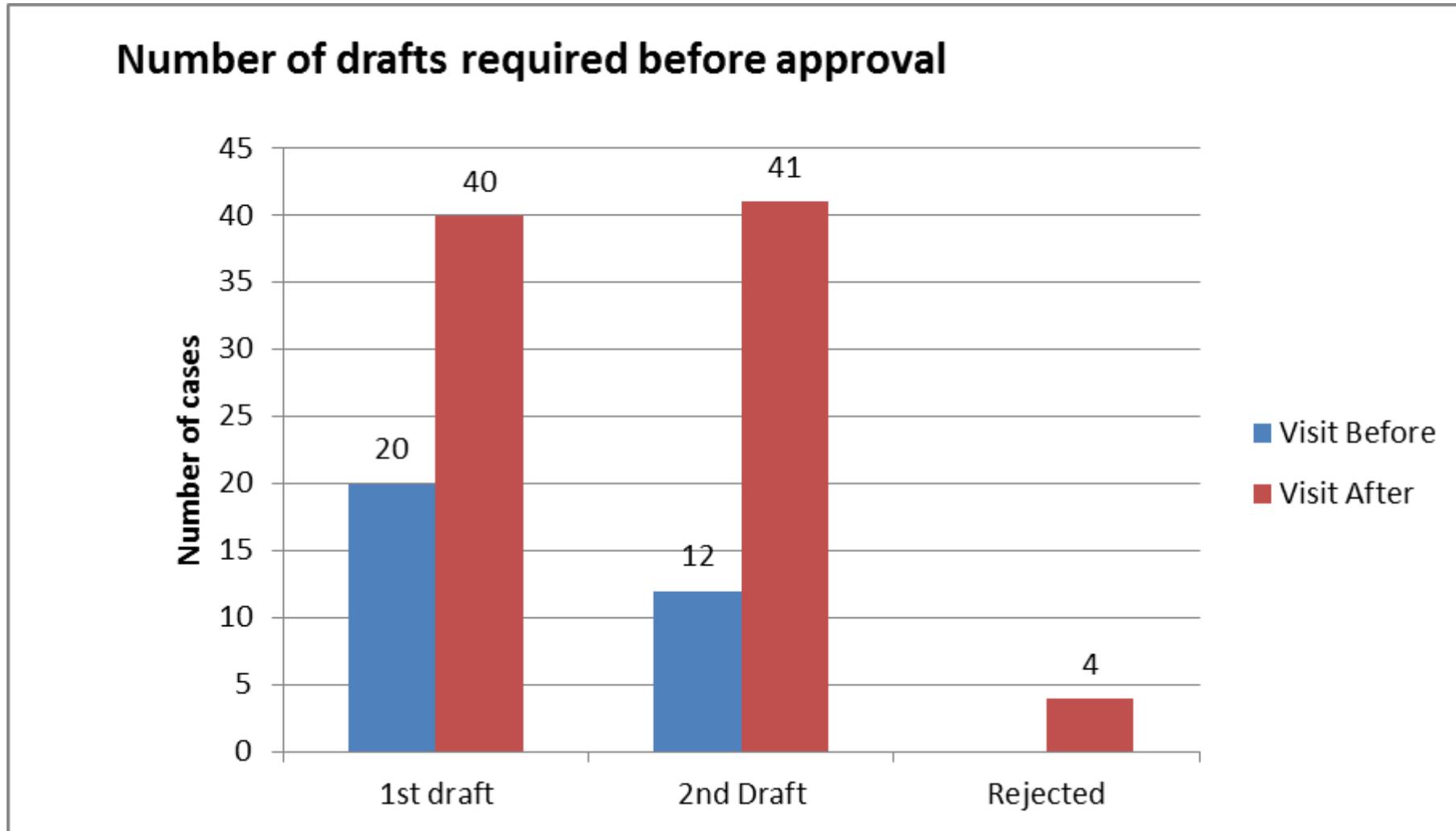
- 117 plans submitted and approved by 9 woodland officers between June 2016 and June 2017
- Set up a spreadsheet to record date of plan receipt and response as well as reasons for failure to achieve approval
- Plans reflected all sizes of wood, 4 were unfunded



- Total 117 plans in pilot of which:
- 99 approval completed with FLA
- 14 'Approved in Principle' – awaiting FLA at end of pilot
- 4 rejected
- 43 agents completed 71 plans
- 45 produced without agent
- 50 did not have pre-visit – 67 pre-visited by WO



- Average days from agreement to approved plan
 - Before pilot 121 days
 - After pilot 81 days



- **Plan of Ops**
 - Not completed
 - Failed to consider species under threat from diseases
 - Poor surveying
 - Adjacency issues for felling.
- **Forest context and important features in management**
 - Ignored data collected on the ground and on maps
 - Highlight issues and then failed to address in strategy
 - Failed to gather important species information easily available – and then adjust plan
 - No consultation with NE ahead of 1st Draft

How many weeks does it take to approve a plan in principle OR issue a felling licence?.

Approved in Principal		Issue of Felling Licence
Period	Weeks	Weeks
2016/7 anytime	7.4	
March – August 2017	4.6	17.6

To roll out the following service standard – The Forestry Commission will:

1. Read and approve (or return with comments) first draft plan within 5 weeks (35 calendar days) for 80% of cases.
2. Limit plan iterations to 2 drafts only.

PLUS:

3. Strongly encourage applicants to engage with a Woodland Officer **before** preparing their first draft plan.
4. Place felling proposals on the public register in parallel with plan appraisal where the agent and wood are known and trusted.

1. We were unable to prioritise Management Plan applications at all times due to other work e.g. processing Countryside Stewardship (though this runs so much easier when there is a good WMP) and un-licenced felling priorities
2. Peer review plan appraisal for consistency within and between areas – first review planned before April 2018

3. Parallel consultation re felling – where the draft plan, appears, on paper, to meet the UKFS we will initiate consultation on requisite felling while we are considering the detail of the draft

4. While we will encourage production of 'A' grade WMP's we will accept 'C' grade plans – i.e. those which meet the core principles of the UKFS

5. We are incredibly encouraged by forestry agents coming together as the 'Woodland Advisors Group' to offer a common standard to woodland owners

What happens next in the SE&L:

- Consider the feedback from this event
- We work within our team and stakeholders to refine the Service Standard during 2018.