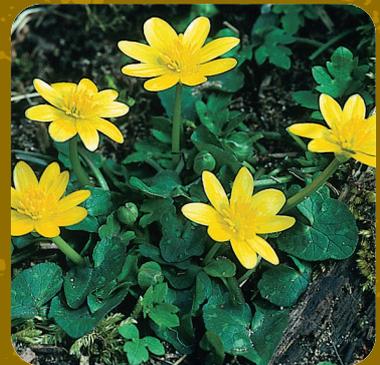


Introduction to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard



Introduction to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard

UKWAS Steering Group



© Copyright UKWAS Steering Group 2000

Revised and reprinted 2003

ISBN: 0 85538 592 8

Printed in the United Kingdom on GF Smith Accent Smooth
FCMS003/UKWAS(MDA)NMS-1K/MAR03

If you have questions or comments after reading this booklet, please contact the UKWAS Support Unit at the following address:

UKWAS Support Unit
c/o Forest industries Development Council (FIDC)
53 George Street
Edinburgh EH2 2HT
T: 0131 220 9296
F: 0131 220 9291
E: alison@fidc.org.uk

Contents

Section 1: The UK Woodland Assurance Standard	2
Section 2: What is forest certification?	3
Section 3: How does UKWAS relate to other forest certification schemes?	3
Section 4: How does UKWAS certification work?	4
Section 5: Small woodlands: a special situation	5
Section 6: Future Developments	6
Annex 1: Steering Group	8
Annex 2: The Standard	9
Annex 3: Useful Addresses	10

Section 1:

The UK Woodland Assurance Standard

The UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) is the standard for the independent certification of forest management in the UK. The Standard has been developed by a broad partnership of forestry, environmental and social organisations in response to increasing demand for products from certified forests.

Recognised by all

The UKWAS offers woodland owners in the UK a Certification Standard that is recognised by all major stakeholders and by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Pan-European Forest Certification Council (PEFC).

World first

The UKWAS was launched in June 1999 and represents the first ever consensus on a forestry performance Standard at a national level. Woodlands that satisfy the requirements of the Standard are managed to a standard recognised and endorsed by UK and international forestry, environmental and social organisations.

Steering Group

The UKWAS is managed by a Steering Group made up of representatives of all sectors and interested parties. The Group takes all its decisions by consensus. This means that it will not act in a way that is against the expressed wishes of any one of its members. The composition of the Steering Group is set out in Annex 1.

The Steering Group is the owner of the Standard. It is the ultimate authority for deciding how the requirements of the Standard should be interpreted in practice and is responsible for keeping the Standard under review. The Group has established an Interpretation Panel to deal with questions of interpretation of the Standard.

A meaningful Standard

For forest certification to be effective the Standard of management being claimed must be meaningful and there must be confidence that it is actually being met.

The Standard needs to conform to internationally accepted definitions of good forest management. There is widespread agreement on the general principles of good forest management – environmental, social and economic sustainability. The Standard also needs to be supported by stakeholders and the most effective way of getting this support is to develop the Standard in a completely open process so that anyone who wants to influence the outcome has the opportunity to do so.

The UKWAS was developed by a group representing a wide range of organisations including the national forest owners' organisation – the Forestry and Timber Association – the national forest industry organisation – the Forest Industries Development Council – environmental organisations such as the World Wide Fund for Nature and Friends of the Earth, Trade Unions, Local Authorities and UK Government forestry and nature conservation agencies. A summary of the Standard is at Annex 2.

Further Information

For more information about UKWAS and links to related sites, visit: www.forestry.gov.uk/ukwas.

Section 2:

What is forest certification?

Forest certification is still fairly new, but certification of other production processes has been around for a long time. Certification against the international quality management system standard ISO 9000 has become a condition of doing business in many markets. The more recent environmental management system standard ISO 14001 is likely to develop in the same way.

To achieve certification, a company needs to satisfy an independent auditor or certifier that it is achieving the requirements of a recognised standard. Certification of forest management works in exactly the same way. It provides consumers with the assurance that the timber or wood in the product they are buying comes from well-managed forests.

In the 1980s environmental organisations campaigned against the trade in timber from unsustainable logging, in particular in tropical forests. The campaigns forced timber buyers in the UK and other major consumer countries to look at the sources of their timber. They discovered misleading claims about the source of the timber and the quality of forest management. Forest certification offered a practical solution.

Forest and Trade Networks

The demand for forest certification has grown with the formation of Forest and Trade Networks – associations of companies that buy or sell timber and that are committed to sourcing their supplies from independently certified forests. They work in partnership with environmental NGOs, in particular WWF. The first of these associations was the WWF 95+ Group in the UK established by the World Wide Fund for Nature. By mid-2000 the WWF 95+ Group had over 100 member companies who between them accounted for around 20% of UK wood product purchases. Similar groups have been established covering 30 other countries.

Importance for woodland owners

There are many reasons why a woodland manager might want independent certification. The main one is to develop or maintain access to markets. Forest certification enables selective promotion of products from responsibly managed forests. Producers and manufacturers can reassure existing customers, or reach new ones who want to know that the products they are buying come from well-managed sources.

Section 3:

How does UKWAS relate to international forest certification schemes?

There are many different forest certification schemes in operation or under development around the world.

The UK Woodland Assurance Standard has been designed to operate in association with international forest certification and timber labelling schemes. It was the world's first national standard to be launched with the support of all the main national stakeholder organisations and to be recognised by the FSC and the PEFC.

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

Currently the only globally applicable forest certification scheme is the FSC scheme. Formally established in 1993, the FSC is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation. The FSC has developed a set of 10 International Principles and Criteria for forest management as a basis for national forest certification standards. It accredits certification bodies to carry out independent audits against national standards, which it has endorsed. The FSC also licences the use of its trademark. The FSC is a membership organisation and its members include leading international environmental NGOs, first nations groups, trades unions, and commercial and not-for-profit forestry enterprises.

Other international certification schemes

In Europe, private forestry organisations have developed the Pan-European Forest Certification scheme (PEFC). Launched in 1999 the PEFC provides at a European level the same components, which the FSC provides at the global level – endorsement of national standards, accreditation (by national accreditation bodies rather than by the PEFC governing body) and a trademark and label. For acceptance by the PEFC Council, national standards must comply with the criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management which have been developed by the European countries as part of the Pan-European Ministerial Process. In recent months PEFC has taken steps to become a global organisation.

National certification schemes

A number of countries have developed national certification schemes, for example Indonesia and Finland. National schemes are likely to have real value in the global forest products market place only if they operate under the umbrella of recognised international schemes.

Section 4:

How does UKWAS certification work?

Woodland owners achieve certification against the UKWAS by engaging a certification body to audit their forest management policies and practices against the requirements of the Standard.

Independent assessment by certifying bodies

Independent (also known as third party) certification gives confidence that a company or individual is actually achieving the Standard because it is carried out by accredited certification bodies. These organisations specialise in independent verification of systems and practices against published standards.

Accreditation of certifying bodies

Certification bodies are monitored by accreditation bodies. Accreditation bodies ensure that certification bodies are consistent and achieve an acceptable standard in making their assessments.

Selecting a certifying body

Woodland owners select the certification body on the basis of the services they offer, including which Scheme certificate they can offer. Information about certification bodies can be obtained from the UKWAS Support Unit, FSC UK and the certifying bodies themselves. Contact details for certifying bodies operating at the time of publication are in Annex 3.

Certificates

Woodland owners who come through an audit successfully receive a certificate from their certification body. The certificate can be shown to customers as confirmation that the woodland has been certified. If a woodland owner wants to supply timber under an FSC certificate, they will need to engage a certification body accredited by FSC International to carry out the audit. If they want to supply timber under a PEFC certificate, then they will need to engage a certification body accredited by the UK Accreditation Service.

Chain of custody and labelling

Timber can be bought and sold, processed and reprocessed many times before it reaches the final customer. These links form what is called the wood supply chain. Between and within these links, timber from certified woodlands can become mixed with timber from non-certified woodlands. To make sure that timber being sold as coming from a certified source is in fact from a certified source, each link in the wood supply chain needs to undergo a chain of custody audit.

A chain of custody audit ensures, as far as is practical, that the companies which form the links in the supply chain are implementing procedures which ensure that

certified and non-certified materials are kept separate, or that any mixing is within defined limits. As with forest management audits, chain of custody audits are carried out by accredited certification bodies.

Labels/trademarks

The FSC allows its trademark to be used in product labels and in certain types of promotional material by companies that have achieved chain of custody certification after an audit by an FSC accredited certification body. The FSC has published rules that govern the use of its trademark including the circumstances when it is acceptable to mix timber from certified and non-certified sources.



FSC-UK-0032 FSC Trademark © 1996 Forest Stewardship Council A.C.

Section 5:

Small woodlands: a special situation

In the UK as in other European countries there are many small woodland holdings. For these holdings the cost of certification would be very high in relation to their income if each holding attempted to achieve certification individually. This is simply because there are some costs which arise in every audit however large or small the woodland. The UKWAS Steering Group is committed to exploring ways of making certification more accessible to owners of small woodland holdings. This policy is being taken forward in three ways: keeping audit costs to the minimum consistent with good auditing practice by adapting the Means of Verification in the Standard; promoting group and resource manager certification; and ongoing research into ways of reducing cost.

Adapting the Means of Verification

As well as stating the requirements, which woodland owners have to meet, the Standard sets out the Means of Verification, which certification bodies will use to check compliance. For small woodland holdings, the Means of Verification have been adapted to reduce the amount of new documentation that is required.

Group certification

Group certification is where a group of landowners or managers agree to submit a joint application for certification. The group appoints a co-ordinator to be responsible for ensuring that all the members of the group meet the requirements of the Standard. The group co-ordinator evaluates potential group members before they join the group, and monitors compliance. The certification body can then evaluate the group of woodland properties by sampling. This can reduce the cost of certification for individual properties.

Group certification has a number of other potential advantages. The group co-ordinator will look after the administration of the scheme and keep copies of relevant documentation. This can make certification less of a burden to the individual woodland owners. The group co-ordinator may be able to market timber for the whole group or provide other services. The group may be able to share management overheads, for example working with the same contractors, or sharing advice on the management of natural habitats.

Resource manager certification

Resource Manager certification is a particular form of group certification in which a forest manager or forest management company takes full responsibility for the management of members' woodlands. The manager's policies and systems are evaluated by the certification body, together with a sample of the managed woodlands.

Ongoing research into ways of reducing costs

The UKWAS Steering Group, is supporting research into further ways of reducing the cost of certifying small woodland holdings. The Steering Group's aim is that certification should be accessible, at a reasonable cost, to all woodland owners who are committed to achieving the requirements of the Standard.

For the latest information on work to reduce the cost of certification for small woods, visit the UKWAS website: www.forestry.gov.uk/ukwas.

Section 6:

Future Developments

Forest certification has enormous potential for encouraging responsible forest management by enabling consumers to choose products from well-managed forests and by providing producers with a mechanism to demonstrate good stewardship to their customers.

In the UK approximately 1.1 million hectares of forests and woodland – out of a total of 2.7 million – have been certified against UKWAS. Given the interest being shown in certification that figure is set to grow, with the prospect that, by 2007, 80% of the UK's timber harvest will be from certified forests.

It is clear that forestry in the United Kingdom can stand comparison with the best in the world.



Annexes



Annex 1:

Steering Group

The Steering Group has 11 sections. The number of seats and the nominating bodies for each of the sections are as follows:

Section	Maximum number of representatives	Appointing organisations
Private woodland owners	6	Forestry and Timber Association Country Landowners and Business Association Scottish Landowners Federation
Forestry practitioners	5	Institute of Chartered Foresters Forestry and Timber Association
State forest sector	3	Forest Enterprise Northern Ireland Forest Service
Environmental organisations (including “not for profit” woodland owning/managing organisations)	6	Wildlife and Countryside Link
Woodland user organisations (e.g. walkers, horse riders, cyclists)	2	Wildlife and Countryside Link
Wood processing	3	UKFPA, WPIF
Wood products trade	2	WWF 95+ Group Timber Trade Federation
Forest workforce	2	Transport and General Workers Union Forestry Contracting Association
Countryside Agencies	1	Joint Nature Conservation Council
Local government	2	Local Government Association of England Convention of Scottish Local Authorities Local Government Association of Wales Association of Local Authorities of Northern Ireland
Forestry standards setting bodies	5	Forestry Commission Forest Stewardship Council UK

In addition, the Forest Industries Development Council is represented on the Steering Group.

Annex 2:

The Standard

The Standard sets out the requirements which woodland owners have to meet in order to achieve UKWAS certification and the Means of Verification (the objective evidence) which certification bodies will look for during an audit to check that the requirements are being met.

Main requirements

The Standard is arranged in 8 sections. The requirements are summarised in the following table:

Section	Summary of requirements
1.	Compliance Compliance with relevant laws and regulations and with the requirements of the UKWAS Standard.
2.	Management planning Documentation of management plan, sustained yield of timber and non-timber forest products, monitoring of progress and impacts, and review of the management plan.
3.	Forest design: creation, felling and replanting Environmental impacts of plans assessed and taken into account, new woodlands appropriately located and designed, even-aged woodlands restructured, appropriate species and silvicultural systems used, felling and restocking designed in accordance with relevant guidelines, and conversion to non-forest land only takes place when ecologically desirable.
4.	Operations Environmental impacts of operations assessed, relevant permissions obtained, measures taken to protect special features, implementation of operations monitored, and forest roads appropriately designed and properly maintained.
5.	Protection and maintenance Risk of damage from wind, fire, pests and diseases is minimised, tree health is monitored, wild mammals are managed appropriately, use of synthetic chemicals minimised, genetically modified organisms are not used, appropriate steps are taken to prevent pollution.
6.	Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity Areas and features important for biodiversity are safeguarded and where possible enhanced, game management does not cause long term impacts on the woodland ecosystem, deadwood habitats are provided, semi-natural woodlands are conserved and where possible enhanced.
7.	The Community Local communities are consulted, traditional and permissive use rights are maintained and some provision is made for public access, adverse impacts on local people are minimised.
8.	Forest Workforce Health and safety standards are implemented, staff and contractors are properly trained, employees are allowed freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Annex 3:

Useful Addresses

UKWAS Support Unit

c/o Forest Industries Development Council (FIDC)
53 George Street
Edinburgh
EH2 2HT

T: 0131 220 9296
F: 0131 220 9291
E: alison@fidc.org.uk

Forest Stewardship Council UK Working Group

Unit D, Station Building
Llanidloes
Powys SY18 6EB

T: 01686 413916
F: 01686 412176
E: fsc@fsc-uk.demon.co.uk

PEFC Council

2ème étage
17 rue des Girondins
L-1626 Luxembourg

T: +352 26 25 90 59
F: +352 26 25 92 58
E: pefc@pt.lu

Certification Bodies

Soil Association

Woodmark, Bristol House
40-56 Victoria Street
Bristol BS1 6BY

T: 0117 914 2435
F: 0117 925 2504

SGS Forestry

Qualifor Programme
Oxford Centre for Innovation
Mill Street
Oxford OX2 0JX

T: 01865 202345
F: 01865 790441
E: forestry@sgsgroup.com

BM Trada Certification

Office 30, Stirling Business Centre,
Wellgreen Place
Stirling FK8 2DZ

T: 01786 462122
F: 01786 474412
E: bmtrada@ttlchiltern.co.uk

UKFQC

Craigs House
82 Craigs Road
East Craigs
Edinburgh EH12 8NJ

T: 0131 317 2500
F: 0131 317 1872
E: pbrown@sfqc.co.uk

