

United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard

UKWAS Revision 2009-11 (Consultation Draft) (December 2010)

Consultation Report & Steering Group Responses

29th April 2011

The Steering Group (SG) responses reflect discussions as follows:

- UKWAS Steering Group – 15.03.11
- Oversight/ Drafting Group – 31.03.11
- UKWAS Steering Group – 12.04.11
- UKWAS Board – 20.04.11

Key:

Proposals highlighted in **green** are those where a change has been made, those in **red** are those where no change has been made. Steering Group responses to the consultation feedback received are shown in **red ink**.

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Annex 1: Consolidated Feedback (presented in a separate document)

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

A public consultation to generate feedback on the Consultation Draft of the UK Woodland Assurance Standard was carried out for 60 days between 3rd December 2010 and 31st January 2011; at the request of some consultees, later submissions were also accepted.

An electronic on-line Consultation Feedback Form was provided on the UKWAS website.

The responses were analysed in February and March 2011.

The Draft Standard is broken down into Requirements as follows:

- 8 principal sections (e.g. 3: *Woodland design: creation, felling and replanting*)
- 30 sub-sections (e.g. 3.1: *Assessment of environmental impacts*)
- 87 clauses (e.g. 3.1.1)

The electronic feedback form invited feedback on:

- The Introduction
- Each of the 87 clauses
- The Glossary of Terms
- The Appendix (bibliography)
- Format and design of the published standard
- Other observations of a general nature.

The specific comments received have been assigned to each section and are presented as consolidated feedback in Annex 1 to this report with the respondent's identity shown for each except where a respondent requested his/ her name to be withheld. The general comments made have either been assigned to the most relevant section of the standard or, if of a more general nature, are included as other observations.

Concise lists of key summary points have been prepared and included in Parts 2 and 3 of the main body of the report by section and sub-section; they are categorised and grouped as matters for clarification, proposed additions or, if requiring deeper consideration, as issues. In addition, a short summary is provided of the main issues raised by respondents for each Section. This is intended as the working checklist to make it easy for the drafting team to consider each issue without recourse to the raw responses. However, the reader is recommended to refer to each respondent's full comments given in Annex 1 since these often contain important elaboration on the summary point.

1.2 Characteristics of respondents

27 organisations or individuals responded to the consultation with most using the on-line response form.

All the comments were from organisations based in the UK and can be characterised as follows:

- Woodland owners and forestry practitioners (11)

- State forest enterprises (3)
- Environmental and heritage organisations (3)
- Wood processing industry (1)
- Certification bodies and group scheme managers (4)
- Forestry standard setting and labelling bodies (1)
- Other (4)

Where an organisation has two or more roles, the organisation's most relevant role was taken as its primary interest category.

A full list of respondents is given in Appendix 1.

2. General overall comments

2.1 Revision process

The UKWAS revision process is set out in a process document – *UKWAS Revision 2009-2011: Process and Timetable (March 2009)*. FSC UK and PEFC UK have confirmed that this process conforms to the requirements of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) and includes three phases of consultation amounting to 150 days in all:

- Initial Stakeholders' Consultation (60 days – May-June 2009)
- Consultation Draft (60 days – December 2010 – January 2011)
- Pre-approval Draft consultation (30 days – May 2011)

Issues:

Two respondents (1 & 10) considered that the 60-day consultation period was too short; the number of Bank Holidays in the period was cited and comparison was made with 90-day government consultation periods.

Steering Group response: the process was appropriate and other periods also have several Bank Holidays e.g. 5 Bank Holidays in April/ May.

2.2 Certification in the UK

A number of comments covered the general pros and cons of certification in the UK.

The key issues identified by respondents related to the balance of the standard's content which is regarded as having a heavy emphasis on biodiversity/ environmental aspects but a limited focus on other aspects such as the historic environment and most notably economic aspects. Specific suggestions were made for areas requiring more detailed consideration.

Also highlighted is the problem of accessibility for smaller owners who face direct and indirect costs but have limited capacity to meet the process requirements of certification. There was also an element of confusion about which bodies are responsible for different aspects of certification.

Similarly, concern is expressed over meeting regulatory requirements and there is a degree of confusion over the relationship between regulatory requirements and certification requirements.

Steering Group response: the historical emphasis on biodiversity/ environmental aspects is due to those being the areas of particular concern and debate at the time the UKWAS was originally agreed. It is accepted that some other aspects of current concern need to be covered more fully. In relation to economic aspects, the starting point for an owner managing woods for commercial ends is expected to be the economic/ financial perspective.

2.2.1 Issues relating to the UKWAS standard:

- Balance - over-emphasis on environmental aspects in particular
- Balance - under-emphasis on economic aspects especially commercial viability and timber production within a national context of the loss of 'productive' forest area during restructuring and for developments such as wind farms
- Balance – under-emphasis on landscape and historic environment aspects
- Too great an acceptance of low intensity management rather than on requiring an active management regime and timber production
- More focus on wildfire needed
- More focus on energy crops needed
- More focus on tree health and biosecurity measures/ protocols needed
- Important to avoid the standard extending its scope beyond core activities.

Steering Group response: these points are noted and the intention is to ensure that the standard is comprehensive but remains within scope and is not unnecessarily detailed.

2.2.2 Issues relating to the certification process:

- Focus should be more on outcomes than process with greater flexibility overall and further simplification for smaller owners
- Suggestion that most forestry practice has not been changed by certification
- High auditing costs especially for small and very small owners – 'intolerable burden' with 'no tangible benefit' and likely to be a disincentive to management
- Unnecessary duplication of regulatory regime and confused relationship between regulatory requirements and certification requirements
- Confusion over who is responsible for different aspects of certification – UKWAS Steering Group, forest managers, Group Scheme Managers, Certification Bodies, Certification Schemes, etc.
- Frustration of forest managers/ timber merchants that many owners have no interest in certification and therefore much timber is uncertified – certified contractor model suggested
- Concerns that Controlled Wood/ Non-Controversial Source provisions of Certification Schemes might impact on quality of woodland management practices.

Steering Group response: these points are noted and the certification schemes are aware of the issues raised.

2.2.3 Issues relating to the UK regulatory regime:

- Compliance costs – ‘red tape’, ‘verbose guidelines’, etc. are very challenging for small and very small owners
- Confusion over relationship between regulatory requirements and certification requirements
- Concern that in England some grants are contingent on being certified
- Concern that UK Government (and other buyers) are insisting on procuring only certified timber so restricting market opportunities
- Regulatory regime restricts flexibility to respond to the market.

Steering Group response: these points are noted and the Forestry Commission/ Forest Service are aware of the issues raised.

2.3 Format and design

Feedback was requested on three sets of specific questions relating to the format, section order and design of the certification standard.

Question 1 – bespoke format/ section order & text references

Consultees were asked whether they agreed with the Steering Group’s initial conclusions to retain the bespoke UKWAS format and section order whilst seeking opportunities to improve its design to better emphasise the importance of text references to additional information sources.

Of eleven respondents, seven favour retaining and improving the **bespoke UKWAS format** with which it was suggested ‘most users of UKWAS are now familiar’.

However, three favour a new approach. One woodland owner suggested that ‘a complete rethink’ was needed. Two certifiers suggested it was an ‘historic legacy’ which increases the costs of undertaking certification assessments so should be set aside in favour of the order adopted in the Forest Stewardship Council’s principles and criteria for forest stewardship. Interestingly, FSC UK supports retaining the current format.

Archaeology Scotland noted that there are specific **text references** to Management Planning, Biodiversity Action Plan and Forest Reproductive Materials but no equivalent reference to landscape or historic environment references.

In summary:

- The majority favoured the retention of the current bespoke format with others supporting a FSC P&C format
- The scope for extending the text references (BAP, MP, FRM, etc.) should be considered.

Steering Group response: the bespoke UKWAS format will be retained and the scope for extending text references will be explored.

Question 2 – additional sections and electronic links

Consultees were asked whether it would be helpful to include a **‘how-to-use’ section** at the beginning of the certification standard indicating different functionality, including how to use the different electronic and conventional formats.

Of ten respondents, nine agree it would be helpful but three of these felt this information would sit better in a separate document such as a Guide to the Standard. One respondent felt it would unnecessarily lengthen the document.

Consultees were asked whether it would be helpful to include a table showing the division of responsibilities for different aspects of certification through **‘who-does-what’ section** in the certification standard.

Of ten respondents, nine agree it would be helpful but two of these felt this information would sit better in a separate document such as a Guide to the Standard. One respondent felt it would unnecessarily lengthen the document.

Consultees were asked whether, in electronic formats, it would be helpful to include **interactive electronic links** to information sources and documents listed in the Appendix references – this might draw on the approach adopted in the revised UK Forestry Standard and help to ensure that links are kept up to date.

Of eleven respondents, ten agreed it would be helpful but two of these felt this information would sit better in a separate document such as a Guide to the Standard. One respondent felt it would unnecessarily lengthen the document.

In summary:

- The majority favoured adding ‘how-to-use’ and ‘who-does-what’ sections and interactive electronic links
- Some suggested additional sections would sit better in a separate Guide to the Standard.

Steering Group response: the ‘how-to-use’ and ‘who-does-what’ sections and, if practicable, interactive electronic links will be added within the existing format rather than as a separate Guide to the Standard.

Question 3 – publication formats

Consultees were asked whether, in relation to **publication formats**, a paid-for paper document is necessary and what would they be prepared to pay for a copy?

Of eight respondents, five agreed it would be desirable but three felt it was unnecessary as copies could be printed by the user. Three respondents suggested £15 per copy as a reasonable price.

Consultees were asked which **electronic formats**, including any additional formats, would be most useful.

All seven respondents cited the PDF format as most useful as it can be printed, with one also citing HTML format for its ease of navigation for on-screen use and one citing MS Word format as useful for developing internal audit checklists.

In summary:

- The majority narrowly favoured the publication of a paid-for hard copy
- A £15 price tag was suggested
- A PDF format was overwhelmingly cited as most useful with some also citing MS Word and HTML formats.

Steering Group response: the standard will be made available in pdf, html and MS Word electronic formats only. The SG considers the cost of publishing a printed document is too great but is exploring low volume/ low cost print options using photocopying rather than printing so that hard copies may be made available at cost as required.

3. Detailed comments

Introduction section

Note that in response to Question 2 (see Section 2 above) the majority favoured adding ‘how-to-use’ and ‘who-does-what’ sections whilst some suggested additional sections would sit better in a separate Guide to the Standard.

Issues:

- **Inclusion** of ‘how-to-use’ and ‘who-does-what’ sections
- **Would** they sit better in a separate Guide to the Standard?

Steering Group response: the ‘how-to-use’ and ‘who-does-what’ sections will be added within the existing format rather than as a separate Guide to the Standard.

Sub-section 1: Background and purpose

Issues:

- **Suggested** inclusion of a fuller explanation of the relationship between UKFS and UKWAS

Steering Group response: additional text added on relationship with UKFS, FSC and PEFC.

- **Suggested** highlighting of importance of tree disease identification and reporting and biosecurity guidance and practice.

Steering Group response: rejected. Specific reference to tree disease/ biosecurity does not sit well in the Introduction but is covered elsewhere in the certification standard.

Sub-section 2: Use of the certification standard

Issues:

- **Suggested** re-titling of Section 6 to ‘Conservation *& adaptation* of biodiversity’ so as to emphasise importance of climate change adaptation to biodiversity protection

- **Suggested** additional section (7) to emphasise importance of climate change: 'Adaptation & mitigation to climate change'.

Steering Group response: rejected as considered better to insert references to climate change issues within the relevant requirement sections rather than in the Introduction.

Sub-section 4: Procedures for use of the certification standard

Clarifications sought:

- Is independent peer review of the certification process effective?

Steering Group response: referred to the certification schemes.

Issues:

- **Suggestion** that 'small woods' and 'low intensity managed woods' be used separately rather than jointly as 'SLIM woods' to better reflect the challenges facing owners of smaller woods

Steering Group response: better to differentiate only where it is appropriate to the context.

- **Concern** expressed over whether low intensity management of woods is compatible with sustainable forest management e.g. in relation to silviculture/ biodiversity, wildfires, carbon sequestration, managing pests and diseases

Steering Group response: this concern is based on a misunderstanding of use of the term 'low intensity management' which does not imply that a low level of woodland management is the preferred silvicultural practice.

- **A range** of concerns raised over WMU definition in relation to:
 - Clarity of WMU definition
 - Consistency of terminology e.g. in relation to sub-divisions
 - Status of open space within WMU
 - Definition of landscape unit
 - Importance of ensuring that any implications for auditing intensity, etc. are understood and considered.

Steering Group response: a simplified approach has been adopted. The existing text had been written with the intention of illustrating how the WMU definition might work in different scenarios. However, this approach seems to give rise to yet further need for clarification. Therefore:

- The section entitled 'Area Specificity' has been re-titled 'Defining the Certification Area'. It notes that both wooded and non-wooded areas may be included in the WMU and refers the reader to the 'WMU' section for a definition and to Section 2.1 in relation to management planning documentation.
- The WMU section simply contains the WMU definition (which is intended to conform to FSC's current definition) and the text on management planning and illustrative scenarios has been deleted. Readers are advised to consult CBs/ group scheme managers for any further guidance they may need.
- The 'Scale of Application of the Requirements' section has been merged with the preceding section entitled 'Application of the certification standard to different scales of woodland management unit and intensities of operation'. The illustrative scenarios have been deleted. Instead readers are advised that in achieving the UKWAS requirements they must adopt an approach that is best suited to the characteristics of the woodland and conforms to the spirit of

the certification standard. This gives CBs the opportunity to prevent perverse interpretations of the requirements.

- Section 2.1.1:
 - Requirement – reference is now to ‘areas in the WMU’, rather than ‘woodlands’, to which management planning documentation shall apply
 - Guidance – additional bullet for what management planning documentation might include: ‘For a WMU consisting of multiple areas: an overarching plan’.

Responses to specific questions posed on small woods definition (currently 100 ha. or under)

Question 1 - Do you consider that the definition of ‘small woodland’ should be changed?

There were 15 respondents expressing a range of views which can be summarised thus:

- 5 respondents said the area threshold should be retained
- 5 respondents said the area threshold should be changed
- 2 respondents expressed neutrality or were unable to come to a view due to insufficient information
- 2 respondents expressed general concern about smaller woods or very small woods
- 1 respondent proposed an alternative approach to defining ‘small’ based on the value of the trees.

In addition, the following views were volunteered:

- 2 respondents noted they would be opposed to any decrease in the threshold
- 1 respondent noted they would be opposed to any increase in the threshold
- 2 respondents proposed a reduced threshold
- 3 respondents proposed a higher threshold

FSC UK noted that there would need to be ‘strong justification of any proposed increase, particularly wishing to balance the possible loss of rigour suggested by SLIMF with the likelihood of more woodland area coming into certification’.

Question 2 - If so, what new area threshold should be applied?

- 2 respondents suggested a higher 1,000 ha threshold
- 3 respondents suggested lower thresholds - <10, <20, <25 ha.

Question 3 - How do you believe your proposal would benefit smaller owners?

Question 4 - How do you believe your proposal would affect the total area of woodland under certification in the UK?

Responses to questions 3 and 4 may be characterised as follows:

In support of a higher threshold:

- Lower audit costs
- Reduced cost barriers to certification.

In support of a lower threshold:

- Would encourage a better focus on smaller woods generally in policy terms
- Greater scope to revise certification requirements and auditing intensities.

Steering Group response: The case for a lower threshold is not made and would not deliver clear benefits. However, the FSC now classes GB (and NI once Felling Licences are introduced) as 'low risk' and this is regarded as new evidence to support an increased threshold.

A revised 500 ha threshold is proposed as, without compromising woodland management quality, it is likely to reduce costs for owners/ managers by cutting unnecessary audit visits. This can be expected to assist retention and expansion of woodlands in certification - it is anticipated that more owners of 100-500 ha would enter group schemes and so benefit from decreased auditing intensities.

Section 1

Compliance with the law and conformance with the requirements of the certification standard

This section proved to be largely uncontentious but with points requiring clarification and some additions/ deletions proposed.

A detailed summary of points raised is given below for each sub-section and the reader is recommended to refer to each respondent's full comments given in Annex 1. These often contain important elaboration on the summary point.

Sub-section 1.1: Compliance and conformance

Clarifications sought:

- **1.1.2** Requirement: scope of 'guidelines' Reference amended to 'good practice guidelines'.
- **1.1.5** Guidance (advisory note): concern over interaction between excision to adjust area of WMU and section 3.5.1 requirements relating to deforestation. Requirement 3.5.1 is for both wooded and non-wooded areas to be managed and this is expected to be on a long term basis in accordance with 2.1.1. Possible adjustment of the WMU area is a matter for certification scheme rules on excision and the advice note in 1.1.5 Guidance column refers readers to their CB or group scheme manager for further advice. Minor change made to Guidance advice note to refer to 'any adjustment of the area' rather than 'the adjustment...' to improve clarity. (Also relevant to 6.1.3.)

Additions proposed:

- **1.1.1** Requirement: Compliance with Statutory Plant Health Notices. **Rejected. This is too specific a point to include in an overarching requirement requiring compliance with the law.**

Deletions proposed:

- **1.1.1** Requirement: delete proposed addition of ‘agreements and contracts’ due to concerns over scope and practicality. **Agreed. Text deleted from requirement as contracts and agreements are civil matters which may be subject to litigation; guidance that there should be ‘no evidence of non-compliance with relevant legal requirements’ is revised to:**
 - include ‘agreements’ in list of ‘all documentation’ to meet legal requirements (contracts already included)
 - Add that these should be ‘respected’.
- **1.1.5** Guidance (advisory note): delete proposed advisory note to owners/ managers as unnecessary. **Rejected**

Sub-section 1.2: Protection from illegal activities

Additions proposed:

- **1.2.1** MoV: additional bullet points for Non-SLIM woodlands – *maintain records of illegal and unauthorised activities and follow-up action*. **The need to prescribe the nature of the ‘evidence’ that is acceptable is not accepted. The bullet point is amended to incorporate the need to demonstrate follow-up action.**

Section 2

Management planning

This section proved to be largely uncontentious but with points requiring clarification and some additions/ deletions proposed. An important point of principle is raised in relation to the current focus on controlling active management but not tackling the greater challenge of under-management.

A detailed summary of points raised is given below for each sub-section and the reader is recommended to refer to each respondent’s full comments given in Annex 1. These often contain important elaboration on the summary point.

Section 2: Management planning

Sub-section 2.1: Documentation

Clarifications sought:

- **2.1.1** Guidance: ref proposed addition of Red List species – need for clarity on what these are and what the UKWAS expectations are. **Agreed. Red List species added to the glossary and bibliography.**
- **2.1.1** Guidance: review references to BAPs, HAPS and SAPs to ensure accuracy and in relation to any overlap with Red List Species. **Reviewed and considered appropriate.**

Additions proposed:

- **2.1.1** Requirement: add point (I): *Contingency Planning for incidents and emergencies* **Rejected**. This section is about forest management planning – the proposal would be better captured in Section 5 (Protection and maintenance).
- **2.1.1** Guidance: adopt bullet list format and use the term ‘vegetation fire management plan’ instead of ‘fire management plan’ **Both points agreed**.

In relation to the question - *How can research plots for testing non-standard management techniques be best accommodated within a certified WMU?*

Five respondents answered this question and the view seems to be that excision from the WMU can provide an answer. Two certification managers suggested that this could be managed in the same way as FSC deals with Minor Components in Chain-of-custody certification and therefore a principle is already established.

FSC UK accepted that research plots are necessary but was cautious on whether they could be accommodated within the certified part of a WMU.

Issue: further investigation is required to resolve this question.

Steering Group response: Section 2.1.1 now includes a research policy as a document that can be referred to in the management planning documentation but a specific reference to research trials/ plots is considered to be helpful so that research trials/ plots which are consistent with the spirit of the objectives of the certification standard could be accepted e.g. tests to find alternatives to pesticide use, trials of new species/ provenances might be justified but not use of GMOs.

Additional guidance added to Section 3.4.1 on silvicultural systems: *The establishment of research trials or plots to assess the suitability of species, origins and provenances and/ or silvicultural systems including management and protection treatments should be undertaken in the context of a research policy and conform to the spirit of the certification standard.*

Sub-section 2.2: Productive potential

Issues:

- **2.2.2** Concerns that active management should be required and that under-cutting is as damaging as over-cutting. **Rejected**. This section is about ‘productive potential’.

Additions proposed:

- **2.2.2** Requirement: add in (or create new section): *Lack of management & timber production should not jeopardise the productive potential of the woodland unless there is sound justification for not managing the woodland* **Rejected**. This section is about ‘productive potential’.
- **2.2.2** Guidance: add: ‘*it is recognised that under-management can be as harmful to productive potential as over-harvesting*’ **Rejected**. This section is about ‘productive potential’.
- **2.2.4** MoV: say that chain of custody certifications may be taken into account by inspection bodies **Rejected**. The objective of this section is to ensure that owners/ managers have in place the correct documentation to provide the starting point for chain-of-custody certification.

Deletions proposed:

- **2.2.4** Guidance (advisory note): delete proposed advisory note to owners/ managers as unnecessary. **Rejected**.

Sub-section 2.3: Implementation and revision of the plan

No comments received.

Section 3

Woodland design: creation, felling and replanting

The main focus of concern in this section is in relation to climate change and the use of non-native species, selection of planting stock, etc. The issue of the maximum percentages of primary species that may be used was also raised in relation to whether it was consistent with sustainable forest management which includes the sustainable production of industrial raw material.

Otherwise this section proved to be uncontentious but with points requiring correction, clarification highlighted.

A detailed summary of points raised is given below for each sub-section and the reader is recommended to refer to each respondent's full comments given in Annex 1. These often contain important elaboration on the summary point.

Sub-section 3.1: Assessment of environmental impacts

No comments received.

Sub-section 3.2: Location and design

Corrections proposed:

- **3.2.1** Guidance: Revise to ensure consistent style: *Where appropriate and possible, use should be made of natural etc.* **Agreed**

Additions proposed:

- **3.2.1** Guidance: emphasize that provenance may need to be wider to ensure resilience to climate change and pests & diseases **Agreed – see new text already added in Section 2.2.2 and further text now added to 3.3.1.**
- **3.2.2** Guidance: additional bullet - *Prevention of wildfire incidents.* **Rejected – this section relates to design to create diverse woodland but fire prevention is a protection issue.**

Sub-section 3.3: Species selection

Corrections proposed:

- **3.3.1** Guidance: Revise to ensure consistent style: *Where appropriate and possible, use should be made of natural etc.* **Agreed**

Clarifications sought:

- **3.3.1** Guidance on planting stock from native seed zones/ provenance: is this still best practice given climate change **Amended to clarify that resilience of origins and provenances to climate change to be considered in species selection.**

- **3.3.2** Guidance on planting stock from native seed zones/ provenance: is this still best practice given climate change. **Covered by additional text in Section 3.3.1 relating to species selection.**

Deletions proposed:

- **3.3.1** Requirement: delete text - *b) For new woodlands, native species shall be preferred to non-native.* **Rejected. Native species need not be used if non-natives clearly outperform them in meeting owner's objectives.**

Additions proposed:

- **3.3.1** Guidance: *Certain near natives (Sweet chestnut, Sycamore, Scots pine (in England)) can be treated as natives where, regionally, they have been accepted as such* **Rejected. Already scope in Section 3.3.1 (b) to use non-natives where they clearly outperform native species in meeting owner's objectives.**
- **3.3.1** Guidance: emphasize that provenance may need to be wider to ensure resilience to climate change and pests & diseases **Covered by additional reference to origin and provenance and climate change and through existing reference to genotype.**
- **3.3.2** Requirement: a relaxation sought to allow a greater percentage of primary species where this can be justified. (Specifically it was suggested that an additional 5% of primary species should be permitted in certain circumstances.) **Rejected. Where only one species is suited to the site and matched to the objectives this would be contrary to UKFS requirements. Where two species are suited, there is insufficient justification to make a change.**
- **3.3.4** Requirement (a): suggested that the need for non-native species should be recognised as part of climate change adaptation. **Rejected. This section relates to non-tree species.**

Sub-section 3.4: Silvicultural systems

No comments received.

Sub-section 3.5: Conversion to non-forested land

Comments noted:

- Reworded section welcomed
- Question as to whether timber can be sold as certified is now clear.

Clarifications sought:

- **3.5.1** Requirement: queried whether hydro infrastructure would be treated in same manner as a wind farm **Yes, both would constitute development.**
- **3.5.1** Requirement: regarding 'evidence of substantial dispute' – suggested that wind farms are always contentious so this requires further qualification **Reference is now to 'unresolved substantial dispute' in both Requirement and Guidance.**
- **3.5.1** Requirement: query whether acceptable, working to a forest management standard, to have a certified area with few if any trees left standing. Suggestion that area would subsequently exit certification and would have failed to deliver SFM benefits but obtained certification benefits in timber market. **Requirement is for both wooded and non-wooded areas to be managed and this is expected to be on a long term basis in accordance with 2.1.1. Possible adjustment of the WMU area is a matter for certification scheme rules on excision and the**

advice note in 1.1.5 Guidance column refers readers to their CB or group scheme manager for further advice. (Also relevant to 6.1.3.)

- **3.5.1** Guidance: several comments that 'exceptional circumstances' needs elaboration. The term 'appropriate circumstances' suggested as an alternative. Implication that conversion should be rare whereas when converted for biodiversity, landscape or historic environment reasons it should not be seen as exceptional but as appropriate. **New wording adopted – 'certain limited circumstances as set out in this requirement'**.
- **3.5.1** Requirement: 'more valuable than any type of practicably achievable' is clumsy phrasing plus it might be taken as a reference to monetary value. **Rejected**.

Additions proposed:

- **3.5.1** Guidance: need additional guidance on continued certification of WMU **Requirement is for both wooded and non-wooded areas to be managed and this is expected to be on a long term basis in accordance with 2.1.1. Possible adjustment of the WMU area is a matter for certification scheme rules on excision and the advice note in 1.1.5 Guidance column refers readers to their CB or group scheme manager for further advice. (Also relevant to 6.1.3.)**
- **3.5.1** Guidance (advisory note): more specific guidance might improve clarity e.g. through reference to FSC/ PEFC excision policies. **Rejected. Possible adjustment of the WMU area is a matter for certification scheme rules on excision and the advice note in 1.1.5 Guidance column refers readers to their CB or group scheme manager for further advice.**
- **3.5.1** Requirement: add a definition of scale and/ or proportion of holding allowed to be cleared. **Possible adjustment of the WMU area is a matter for certification scheme rules on excision and the advice note in 1.1.5 Guidance column refers readers to their CB or group scheme manager for further advice.**

Deletions proposed:

- **3.5.1** Requirement: remove all reference to exceptional circumstances – without defining exceptional circumstances this is just creating additional areas for argument and debate. **New wording adopted – 'certain limited circumstances as set out in this requirement'**.
- **3.5.1** Requirement: remove the additional "test" clause, regarding any woodland cover. The proposed deforestation will have been subject to a significant investigation by a range of formal authorities – additional hurdles within UKWAS will not deliver any additional value. **Rejected. The standard is about owners committing to protecting and maintaining the woodland in the long term – see 1.1.5.**

In relation to the question - *Should 'compensatory planting' be acceptable to mitigate conversion to non-forested land?*

A wide range of responses was received from 14 respondents and the reader is referred to Annex1 for the full comments.

There was no unanimity of view on the desirability or otherwise of UKWAS accepting conversion provided there was compensatory planting. There was a widely held concern at the conversion of so much woodland over recent years and the loss of timber production forests but this was balanced by concerns that restoration of habitats through conversion should not be made contingent on compensatory planting. Several respondents held that compensatory planting was better than nothing in the event of conversion but could not compensate for loss of ecologically valuable woodland habitat.

The fundamental question is whether this is an issue for the UKWAS standard or is fundamentally a planning issue.

FSC UK commented usefully on the FSC's requirements:

Under FSC's current principles & criteria, conversion in the first place is only allowed when it entails a very limited portion of the WMU, does not occur in HCVFs and has to show clear, substantial, additional, long-term conservation benefits across the WMU. At the moment, we do not know how the revised principles and criteria will address this issue, but it is likely that the relevant criterion will be rewritten in some way – at the very least to remove the measure of interpretation required for the term 'very limited', but there may be more fundamental changes than that.

Hence my first reaction to this proposition is that, first and foremost, the existing criterion must remain as a cornerstone of Section 3.5.1. If forest managers wishing to convert follow the criterion to the letter, then, of course, compensatory planting would be a bonus.

However, we could not accept that compensatory planting be used as an excuse to justify conversion that does not meet the aforementioned criterion.

Issue: should the UKWAS standard take any account of compensatory planting?

Steering Group response: the issue of compensatory planting is a planning issue and outwith the scope of the certification standard.

Section 4 Operations

Only aspects relating to harvesting operations received comment with concerns expressed over vegetation burning and damage to buried archaeological remains.

A detailed summary of points raised is given below for each sub-section and the reader is recommended to refer to each respondent's full comments given in Annex 1. These often contain important elaboration on the summary point.

Sub-section 4.1: General

No comments received.

Sub-section 4.2: Harvest operations

Additions proposed:

- **4.2.3** Guidance: add *Sites at high risk from wildfire incidents must have an agreed Vegetation Fire Management Plan before burning operations commence* **Rejected. See 5.1.5.**
- **4.2.x** Proposed new criterion: *Where prescribed burning operations are considered a site must have a Vegetation Fire Management Plan with the risk of wildfire is high plus MoV & Guidance* **Rejected. This section is on harvest operations not management planning requirements.**

- **4.2.4** Guidance: add *Damaging archaeological & historic monuments and deposits* as stump removal can devastate underlying archaeological & historic sites. **Agreed. Additional bullet point added: *Damage to historical features and archaeological deposits.***

Sub-section 4.3: Forest Roads

No comments received.

Section 5

Protection and Maintenance

Suggestions to improve planning centred on contingency planning for incidents and emergencies including vegetation wild fire and to cover tree pest and disease risks. The major issue is Section 5.2 on pesticides and the Steering Group's draft proposals seem to have been well received; helpful comments to improve the section further are noted.

Other sub-sections were uncontroversial save for query on whether the proscribing of GMOs was evidence-based.

A detailed summary of points raised is given below for each sub-section and the reader is recommended to refer to each respondent's full comments given in Annex 1. These often contain important elaboration on the summary point.

Sub-section 5.1: Planning

Additions proposed:

- **5.1.1** MoV: add neighbours - *Discussion with the owner/ manager/ neighbours* **Rejected – this is a MoV whereby an auditor can verify the fulfilment of the requirement through discussion with the owner/ manager.**
- **5.1.1** Guidance: include *Vegetation fire management plan* **Covered by reference to planning to minimise risk from fire in the requirement and to 'management planning documentation' in MoV – also covered in 5.1.5 and reference is made to Vegetation Fire Management Plan in Section 2.1.1 on management planning documentation.**
- **5.1.x** Add new criterion on contingency planning for incidents and emergencies **Reject.**
- **5.1.2** Several amendments proposed to cover planning for tree pest and disease risks **Agreed. Changes made in line with suggestions made and grazing aspects and browsing now covered in new separate Criterion 5.1.x.**
- **5.1.5** Proposed rewording of criterion to provide more comprehensive treatment of vegetation fire management planning **Minor changes made and references added to bibliography to provide guidance on fire planning.**
- **5.1.6** Requirement: include reference to biosecurity protocols. **Agreed.**

Sub-section 5.2: Pesticides, biological control agents and fertilizers

Comments noted:

- 5.2 Colin Palmer (CP) made detailed comments on this section and his views were endorsed by a number of other respondents: *Overall, I believe that the revised section strikes the right balance*

between encouraging growers to avoid or minimise the use of pesticides without the downsides associated with an overly prescriptive framework.

- 5.2.1 The Biosecurity Programme panel support the proposed change to an integrated pest management strategy approach and suggest that one of the key guidance documents for this could be International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) No 14 – “The use of integrated measures in a systems approach for pest management”.
- 5.2.4 CP suggests the changes here strike the right balance to cover both FSC and PEFC requirements.

Clarifications sought:

- **5.2** Background: in relation to terminology suggested that the separation of pesticides, fertilisers and BCAs is appropriate but Colin Palmer suggests:
 - that pesticides are, by definition, chemicals which control undesirable flora & fauna. Reference to “chemical pesticides” does therefore have a rather quaint feel about it which tends to detract from the otherwise highly professional information. I suggest that the prefix “chemical” is therefore removed **Agreed**
 - similarly “... the use of pesticides”. There is no need to qualify pesticides as “including herbicides and rodenticides” as they are internationally accepted to do so. If it is felt necessary to add a list of types of pesticides then insecticides, fungicides, growth regulators, molluscicides, acaricides should also be noted - but on balance best not to list any **Agreed**
 - “... may require the use of a limited range of pesticides” - I feel that “limited” is conveying the wrong message, and would suggest a more targeted sentence such as: “... may require the use of pesticides carefully selected and applied to minimise or eliminate adverse effects on the environment or operator”. **Agreed**
- **5.2.1** Requirement: CP proposes that “*Integrated Pest Management strategy*” may be better defined as “*Integrated Crop Management Strategy*” since this concept allows for anticipating and remedying many problems including weeds and insects which may otherwise require pesticide applications **Rejected as suggested term does not always convey the intended meaning e.g. when used in Section 2.1.1.**
- **5.2.2** CP notes that the COSHH assessment will aid the protection of the operator but queries whether an environmental risk assessment might also be required before a new pesticide is applied **Rejected. Adequately covered in 5.2.2 b**
- **5.2.4** Requirement (a): CP proposes to clarify: “*they are approved for forest use by the UK regulatory authorities*”. **Agreed**

Additions proposed:

- **5.2.3** CP suggests:
 - reference should be made to best practice provided in “Pesticides: Code of Practice for using plant protection products (Defra / HSE PB11090) or “Pesticides: Code of Practice for using plant protection products in Scotland (Scottish Executive / HSE) **Agreed. Added to references in Bibliography.**
 - reference be made for operators to be trained and competent, and hold pesticide operator certification? This may become mandatory for all towards the end of 2011. **Agreed**

Deletions proposed:

- **5.2.4** Guidance (advisory note): deletion of advisory note to owners/ managers as unnecessary.
Rejected

Sub-section 5.3: Genetically modified organisms

Clarifications sought:

- **5.3.1** Requirement: query as to why GMOs shall not be used and whether this is evidence-based.
Rejected. This conforms to FSC and PEFC requirements.

Sub-section 5.4: Fencing

No comments received.

Sub-section 5.5: Pollution

No comments received.

Section 6

Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity

A major focus for respondents' concerns was what constituted High Conservation Value (HCV) woodland with the degree to which BAP priority habitats and species should inform the classification of HCV woodland identified as an area requiring more consideration. The issue of deadwood also raised issues relating to the use of volume targets and stem diameters.

A detailed summary of points raised is given below for each sub-section and the reader is recommended to refer to each respondent's full comments given in Annex 1. These often contain important elaboration on the summary point.

Sub-section 6.1: Protection of rare species and habitats

Comments noted:

- Reworded section welcomed
- Question as to whether timber can be sold as certified is now clear.

Clarifications sought:

- **6.1.1** Requirement (a): suggested to replace 'field survey' by 'assessment on the ground' as allows more flexible approach **Agreed**
- **6.1.3** Guidance: concern over interpretation of "*Woodland removal to facilitate infrastructure or built development which is not integral to the management of the rest of the woodland cannot meet this requirement*" – this could restrict e.g. recreational development, housing provision within woods for coppice workers **Rejected**

- **6.1.3** Guidance: concern about proposed removal of the guidance about scale (*'small scale habitats'*) having the potential to be expensive and lead to further deforestation and loss of timber resource. **Agreed – the text was removed in error.**

Additions proposed:

- **6.1.3** Guidance: suggested additional text on vegetation fire management planning where conversion to new habitats (e.g. grass, heath and moor) increases fire risk. **Rejected. This section is about restoration of habitats not protection.**
- **6.1.3** Guidance: need additional guidance on continued certification of WMU **Requirement 6.1.3 relates to small scale habitats within a woodland matrix, both wooded and non-wooded areas are expected to be managed and this is expected to be on a long term basis in accordance with 2.1.1. Any possible adjustment of the WMU area is a matter for certification scheme rules on excision and the advice note in 1.1.5 Guidance column refers readers to their CB or group scheme manager for further advice. (Also relevant to 3.5.1.)**
- **6.1.3** Guidance (advisory note): more specific guidance might improve clarity e.g. through reference to FSC/ PEFC excision policies. **Any possible adjustment of the WMU area is a matter for certification scheme rules on excision and the advice note in 1.1.5 Guidance column refers readers to their CB or group scheme manager for further advice.**

Issues:

- **6.1.1** Requirement: suggested that PAWS cannot be regarded as HCV until they have only a low proportion of non-native species present **Rejected**
- **6.1.1** Guidance: as there are >1,100 BAP species, it is not a very differentiating criterion to class areas as HCV if they support priority habitats and species listed in the UK BAP **Rejected. The figure cited is not relevant as it contains all species from all habitats including e.g. marine habitats.**
- **6.1.1** Guidance: suggested that in combination with section 6.3 (*'Woodland identified in section 6.1.1 shall not be converted to plantation or non-forested land'*) this section seems to mean that any woodland with a UK BAP species cannot be converted. Section 6.3 focuses on ASNW but woods with UK BAP species may be entirely conifer, e.g. in the case of red squirrels and certain types of bats. Respondent proposes teasing apart ancient and native woodlands from woods with UK BAP species and amending guidance to read *'These areas and features of high conservation value can include:'*. **Rejected**

Sub-section 6.2: Maintenance of biodiversity and ecological functions

Clarifications sought:

- **6.2.1** Suggested that there are lots of minimum thresholds in UKWAS but no maximums. Here, for example, would it be a good thing (for woodlands, users, neighbours, etc.) for an owner to put all of the woodland into Natural Reserves? Suggests throughout UKWAS, maximum thresholds (both percentages and absolute area figures) should be set to ensure that what would seem to be reasonable minimum requirements are not taken to excess. **Rejected.**
- **6.2.2** Need to define deadwood in the glossary - is it just stem wood and branches or does it include brash (presumably not)? **Agreed. UKFS Glossary definition adopted.**

Issues:

- **6.2.2** Guidance: suggestion to amend volumes to >20m³/ ha rather than ‘about 20m³’ and to increase proposed stem diameters in light of evidence relating to hole-nesting birds’ requirements ‘about 20m³’ retained but proposed change to 10cm stem diameters reversed back to original 20cm.
- **6.2.2** Guidance: suggestion that deadwood target is flawed and setting specific targets or maximum levels is unnecessary – the key is to increase deadwood provision over time and avoid uniform distribution. Revised guidance text proposed and reference to FC Ancient Woodland Practice Guide suggested. **Rejected. Indicative targets are considered helpful.**

Deletions proposed:

- **6.2.2** Guidance: Remove “avoid uniform distribution” as is repetitive. **Rejected**

Sub-section 6.3: Conservation of semi-natural woodlands and plantations on ancient woodland sites

Clarifications sought:

- **6.3.1** A respondent queries whether if woods fall within 6.1.1 (including AW) because they contain BAP species, then none shall be converted to plantation or non-forested land. He notes that this section (6.3), which appears to be only about conservation of SN woodlands and PAWS, includes (in 6.1.1) woods with BAP species which may be entirely conifer - red squirrel, bats, etc. This needs some further clarification. **No changes made.**
- **6.3.2** Guidance: define the ‘precautionary approach’ in the glossary. **This is a well understood term.**

Issues:

- **6.3.2** Suggested this section in particular is unnecessarily detailed and prescriptive about process yet it applies to only 8% of the total woodland area in England. **Rejected**

Additions proposed:

- **6.3.3** Requirement: suggested it be specified that restocking can take into account climate change and pest & disease resilience - therefore provenance can be wider. **Guidance already refers to ‘climate change adaptation’ but pest & disease resilience now added.**

Sub-section 6.4: Game management

No comments received.

Section 7

The community

The main issues of concern were the appropriateness of proposed new requirement to provide communities with equitable opportunities for employment, etc. and to require re-contacting of all stakeholders at recertification. In addition, it was proposed that there are too many exemptions where public access can be denied in this section. Otherwise, this section proved to be largely uncontentious.

A detailed summary of points raised is given below for each sub-section and the reader is recommended to refer to each respondent's full comments given in Annex 1. These often contain important elaboration on the summary point.

Sub-section 7.1: Consultation

Clarifications sought:

- **7.1.1** Guidance: 'certifier' – should it be certification body? **Agreed.**

Issues:

- **7.1.1** Requirement: suggested deletion of "*and subsequent recertifications*" as it should be discretionary as to whether it would be useful to re-contact all stakeholders at recertification. **Agreed. Text deleted. Guidance makes clear that the frequency and level of consultation should be justified.**

Sub-section 7.2: Woodland access and recreation including traditional and permissive use rights

Issues:

- **7.2.2** Guidance: suggested there are too many exemptions where public access can be denied in this section. Queries whether this is appropriate. **Rejected**

Sub-section 7.3: Rural economy

Clarifications sought:

- **7.3.1** Guidance: suggestion that 'non-timber forest products' better termed 'non-wood forest products' **Rejected, they are synonymous terms.**
- **7.3.1** Guidance: suggestion that 'regional forestry frameworks' likely to be defunct and should be deleted. **Agreed, reference is now to 'country or regional forestry strategies'.**

Issues:

- **7.3.2** Requirement: suggested that proposed new requirement to provide communities with equitable opportunities for employment, etc. is unnecessary and ill defined. **Rejected. Public bodies, for example, are required to provide equitable opportunities (i.e. fair access to all groups) but cannot favour unduly any one group including local communities. MoV and guidance amended by changing 'reasonable' to 'equitable' to improve clarity.**

Sub-section 7.4: Minimising adverse impacts

Additions proposed:

- **7.4.2** Requirement & Guidance: include risks to the emergency services in requirement and proposed revisions to list of examples in guidance. **Rejected. Section relates to public health & safety and adverse impacts from woodland operations on local people.**

Deletions proposed:

- **7.4.3** MoV: delete new verifier – '*A complaints process and public contact point*' - as unnecessary and overly bureaucratic. **Rejected.**

Section 8

Forestry workforce

This section proved to be largely uncontentious but with points raised including querying the need for displaying public liability insurance and proposals to improve coverage of H&S issues.

A detailed summary of points raised is given below for each sub-section and the reader is recommended to refer to each respondent's full comments given in Annex 1. These often contain important elaboration on the summary point.

Sub-section 8.1: Health and safety

Clarifications sought:

- **8.1.1** Guidance: query as to whether advisory note on H&S functional roles uses current terminology **Latest HSE terminology on management roles adopted.**
- **8.1.1** Guidance: suggested to simplify guidance to focus the manager's attention on his responsibility for H&S at all levels for all operations within the certified area **Text amended to clarify that an owner/ manager may have one or more responsibilities in relation to management roles.**
- **8.1.1** Suggested that the requirement is covered in 8.1.2 - duplication. **Agreed. Section 8.1.2 deleted and relevant guidance and MoV incorporated in 8.1.1.**

Additions proposed:

- **8.1.2** Guidance: add more specific guidance on first aid – suggestions made – and refer to FC new guidance document **New documents will be added to bibliography when available.**
- **8.1.2** Requirement & MoV: include references to biosecurity protocols. **Rejected. This section relates to health & safety of people.**

Sub-section 8.2: Training and continuing development

No comments received.

Sub-section 8.3: Workers' employment rights

No comments received

Sub-section 8.4: Insurance

Deletions proposed:

- **8.4.1** Requirement: suggested delete '*and display adequate*' in reference to PL insurance – not a legal requirement **Agreed. The word 'demonstrate' adopted instead.**
- **8.4.1** Requirement: suggested that 'display' replaced by 'demonstrate'. **Agreed**

Glossary of terms - See detailed points in Annex 1.

Appendix (Bibliography) - See detailed points in Annex 1.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Full list of respondents

Appendix 1

Full list of respondents

Id #	Respondent	Organisation	Nature of interest	Location
Woodland owners & forestry practitioners				
1	Jane Karthaus	ConFor	Trade association	UK-wide
2	Colin Palmer	Rural Services on behalf of ConFor	Trade association	UK-wide
3	Francis Fulford	ConFor (SW England)	Trade association/ woodland owner	Devon, England
4	Phil Tidey	Small Woods Association	Trade association	UK-wide
5	N/A	Englefield Trust Estate	Woodland Owner	Berkshire, England
6	Tim Shardlow	Nicholson Nurseries Limited	Forest nursery	Oxfordshire, England
7	John M Monaghan	Shiellow Wood Ltd	Woodland owner of previously certified woodland	Northumberland, England
8	John Martin	Sole trader	Coppice worker and woodman	Surrey, England
9	D J Williams	Individual	Woodland owner	Aberdeenshire, Scotland
10	Rob Gazzard	Individual	Chartered Forester and Surveyor, District Forester - Forestry Commission	England
11	John Jervoise	Herriard Estates	Traditional estate	Hampshire, England
State forest enterprises				
12	John Hair	Forestry Commission Scotland	Government department/ national forest service	Scotland

13	Moira Baptie	Forestry Commission Scotland	Government department/ national forest service	Scotland
14	Mariska van der Linden	Forestry Commission England	Government department/ national forest service	England
Environmental and heritage organisations				
15	Mike Wood	RSPB	Woodland owner/ environmental NGO	UK-wide
16	Gordon Pfetscher	Woodland Trust	Woodland owner/ environmental NGO	UK-wide
17	Jonathan Wordsworth	Archaeology Scotland	Environmental NGO	Scotland
Wood processing industry				
18	David Sulman	UK Forest Products Association	Trade association	UK-wide
Certification bodies and group scheme managers				
19	Meriel Robson	Soil Association Woodmark	Certification Body	UK-wide/ worldwide
20	Andrew Heald	UPM Tilhill	Forest management company/ group scheme manager	UK-wide
21	Rob Shaw	Scottish Woodlands Ltd	Forest management company/ group scheme manager	UK-wide
22	Name withheld on request	Name withheld on request	Certification manager	UK-wide
Forestry standard setting and labelling bodies				
23	Charles Thwaites	Forest Stewardship Council UK	Standard-setting body	UK-wide

Other				
24	Paul Hedley	England and Wales Wildfire Forum	Multi-stakeholder partnership	England and Wales
25	Trevor Johnson	Scottish Wildfire Forum	Multi-stakeholder partnership	Scotland
26	Roger Cooper	Individual	Chair of UKWAS Interpretation Panel	UK-wide
27	Stewart Snape	On behalf of the Forestry Commission/ Forestry Sector UK Biosecurity Programme Panel	Tree health and biosecurity	UK-wide

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