

UKWAS Revision

Initial Stakeholder Consultation

So, what is this all about?

The latest UKWAS standard revision process is under way and this is your chance to feed your ideas into the review right at the outset.

What we are looking for is your ideas on what is good or bad about the current UKWAS standard and how it might be improved.

There is no formal format required, simply read the background information below and then send us your issues in a clear and concise format identifying and explaining each issue you wish to raise and any suggested solution for each.

Please email them to the UKWAS Support Unit on ukwas@confor.org.uk by **March 31st 2014**.

February 3rd 2014

1. Introduction

The UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) is reviewed every five years and the next revision is due to be completed in 2016 but the process is starting now with this initial call for input from stakeholders.

What we are looking for is your ideas on how to improve the standard: what is good or bad about the current UKWAS standard, what is missing and what might be omitted.

But first it is important that you understand the UKWAS partnership's role in the certification process and the objectives and constraints to which the UKWAS partners must work.

Understanding the role of the UK Woodland Assurance Standard partnership

The UKWAS standard is owned and managed by a partnership of member bodies representing economic, environmental and social stakeholders working together and taking decisions on the basis of consensus. The UKWAS partnership has only a limited role – it sets and publishes the certification standard. It is not a full-fledged certification scheme nor does it define forestry practice standards, set the certification process rules or accredit or oversee certification bodies.

What the UKWAS partnership does do is to take the requirements set by government and the two major international forest certification schemes and fashion them into a certification standard, or audit protocol, that reflects the requirements of each. In practice this means that the UKWAS standard is designed to reflect UK law, the UK Government and devolved administrations' forest practice requirements set out in the UK Forestry Standard and Guidelines, the Forest Stewardship Council's Principles & Criteria for Forest Stewardship and the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes' requirements.

The upside of this is that both the FSC and PEFC schemes have incorporated the UKWAS standard into their UK certification programmes and this provides UK growers with access to certification to the two leading global certification brands through a single certification standard. The UKWAS is the only certification standard in the world to be endorsed by more than one certification scheme.

However, the downside which is not always understood is that meeting all these requirements limits the scope for radical action when reviewing the UKWAS standard.

The UK Woodland Assurance Standard was first launched in 1999. A revised second edition was released in 2006 and further amended in 2008 following a review which tried to make greater provision for smaller woodland owners. The third edition was concluded in 2011. Under the UKWAS standard-setting process which conforms to FSC and PEFC requirements the standard must be revised every five years by means of a three-year revision process.

The revision and consultation process will be taken forward in three main phases:

- **Phase 1 in 2013/14** is an **evidence gathering** phase including this initial stakeholder consultation and results in an Issues Paper setting out the information to be taken into account during the main revision drafting phase.
- **Phase 2 in 2014/15** is the **main revision drafting** phase leading to a Revision Draft for consultation
- **Phase 3 in 2015/16** is the **conclusion phase** including further revision and preparation of a pre-approval draft for a final consultation. After further amendment, FSC UK and PEFC UK will be invited to submit the standard to their international parent bodies for approval.

You can see that there will be three opportunities to make your input but this initial stakeholder consultation gives you an important opportunity to raise issues proactively right at the beginning of the review process.

The full revision process and timetable documents are available on www.ukwas.org.uk/documents

2. Invitation to make comment on the current standard

This Initial Stakeholders' Consultation forms just one part of our evidence-gathering phase. The other elements are listed in the box on page 4 where a number of issues already identified by the Steering Group are noted.

You are free to make any input you wish but the Steering Group would be particularly interested to hear your comments on:

- The format and layout of the standard
- The content of the standard.

You might wish to highlight what you like as well as your ideas for improvements.

Maybe you think there are omissions or perhaps you think some areas could be cut or trimmed.

Whatever you think, the Steering Group wants to hear!

But please do remember that the UKWAS Steering Group is only responsible for preparing a certification standard, not for the content of government guidance or the requirements set by the FSC and PEFC certification schemes.

3. How will the UKWAS Steering Group consider the input received?

To begin with all the evidence received from all the elements of the review will be brought together in an Issues Paper for consideration by the UKWAS Steering Group. Following its discussions the Steering Group will prepare a Revision Draft of the standard which will be made available in September 2015 for a 60-day public consultation.

A note of the issues raised will be placed on the UKWAS website to show how each issue has been considered and the outcome of the Steering Group's discussions.

4. How should I respond and what is the deadline for making my input?

Your comments are required by March 31st 2014.

There is no formal format required, just send us your issues in a clear and concise format identifying and explaining the issues you wish to raise and any suggested solution for each.

Please email them to the UKWAS Support Unit on ukwas@confor.org.uk.

Other evidence being gathered as part of this initial phase of the review

An Interpretation Review

Advice developed by the Interpretation Panel will be considered. To date the Panel has considered wind-farm development on certified forest land (IP Note 8).

A Technical Review

This will involve the consideration of any new scientific or technical knowledge including, for example, any new or revised guidance produced by government.

An International Benchmarking Review *(To be provided by FSC UK and PEFC UK.)*

A comparison with any equivalent accredited standards of a similar geographical or ecological scope of application, and an evaluation of whether there are any substantial differences in the overall cost/benefit balance of compliance for similar types of enterprise with similar forest conditions.

A Standard Users' Feedback Review *(To be provided by FSC UK and PEFC UK.)*

A consideration of feedback received from certificate holders and accredited certification bodies.

A Small and Low Intensity Managed (SLIM) Woodlands Review

A consideration of the impact and applicability of the standard for small and low intensity operations in light of any new evidence received will also be considered.

A Certification Schemes' Requirements Review *(To be provided by the FSC UK and PEFC UK.)*

A consideration of advice on any new or revised policies, procedures or guidance that is relevant to the revision.