

## UKWAS Interpretation Note 7 – Wind farm development on certified forest land

**PLEASE NOTE: THIS INFORMATION NOTE RELATES TO THE SUPERSEDED SECOND EDITION OF THE UK WOODLAND ASSURANCE STANDARD**

**Key words:** Wind farms, development, conversion to non-forest land.

**Relevant requirement references:** 3.5.1 Conversion to non-forest land, 6.1.3 Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, 1.1.5 Commitment by owner, tenant, manager to conformance with the Standard.

**Date:** The issues were discussed by the Panel via e mail between March and August 2008. Guidance was also provided by the UKWAS Steering Group and Forestry Commission GB.

### Questions:

The following questions were posed by a certifying body.

1. If a wind farm is developed within a certified FMU, what are the criteria that would allow:
  - a. the timber to be felled for the wind farm to be classed as UKWAS certified timber?
  - b. the residual part of the FMU to remain certified?
2. In this context is there any % limit on how much of the FMU can be felled and converted to a wind farm and the felled timber to be certified/the residual part of the FMU still to be certified? Is it possible for an FMU to be 100% felled for a wind farm and all the timber to be sold as certified?

### Discussion:

#### 1. Certification of timber felled from sites for wind turbines and associated infrastructure.

Requirement 3.5.1 Guidance Note states: *timber felled from areas cleared for construction which is not related to the management of woodlands may not be sold as sourced from certified woodland.*

In the context of wind farm development this requirement applies to timber felled on land which will be occupied by wind turbines and associated infrastructure. The restriction does not apply to timber felled in the course of wind farm development where the harvested areas will be restocked or will meet the criteria for conversion to non-forest land specified in this Requirement (enhanced ecological value, improved landscape, cultural /archaeological restoration)

Requirement 6.1.3 Guidance Note refers to *small scale restoration within a woodland habitat to (inter alia) heathland, bog and other open habitats.* Such restoration might be accompanied by the erection of wind turbine(s). Timber from sites occupied by wind turbines and associated infrastructure may not be sold as UKWAS certified material.

#### 2. Certification of the residual part of the FMU

Requirement 3.5.1 stipulates that conversion to non-forest land shall only be carried out where there is no evidence of substantial dispute. Planning consent and a favourable EIA report would normally be considered as evidence of lack of substantial dispute.

Additionally Requirement 3.5.1 stipulates that conversion to non-forest land is only permitted if the new land use:

1. will be ecologically more valuable in terms of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, or
2. will contribute to an improvement in the landscape, or
3. is required for cultural or archaeological maintenance or restoration.

It follows that forest areas which will be occupied by wind turbines and their associated infrastructure may not retain certified status. FMU boundaries may need to be redefined to excise the affected areas in order for the residual part of the FMU to retain certified status. The Standard places no limit on the percentage of FMU area that can be excised.

Forest management plans may need to be revised following excision.

Requirement 1.1.5 commits the woodland owner, tenant or manager to conform to the Standard and to declare an intention to protect and maintain the ecological integrity of the woodland in the long term. The certifying body must be satisfied that a wind farm development on forest land does not infringe these requirements.

Details of wind farm developments will vary from case to case and it is the duty of the certifying body in each case to take full account of the terms of Requirements 3.5.1; 6.1.3 and 1.1.5.

**Conclusions:**

1. Timber felled from areas where wind turbines and their associated infrastructure will be located may not be sold as UKWAS certified timber.
2. Timber harvested from areas which are felled as part of e.g. wind farm development but which will subsequently be restocked or will otherwise meet the provisions of Requirement 3.5.1 (enhanced ecological value; improved landscape; cultural /archaeological restoration) may be sold as certified timber.
3. Areas of woodland cleared for occupation by wind turbines and their associated infrastructure may not retain certified status.
4. Areas of forest cleared during e.g. wind farm development but which will be restocked or will otherwise meet the provisions of Requirement 3.5.1 (enhanced ecological value; improved landscape; cultural /archaeological restoration) may retain certified status
5. The continued certification of all areas of the FMU affected by e.g. wind farm development will be determined by the certifying body taking full account of Requirements 3.5.1; 6.1.3 and 1.1.5.
6. Planning consent and a favourable EIA for e.g. wind farm development would normally be considered sufficient evidence of lack of substantial dispute about the development.
7. Specific reference should be made to wind farm development on forest land in the next UKWAS revision.