

# **United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard**

**UKWAS Revision 2013-16**

**Consultation Paper**

**1<sup>st</sup> September 2015**

**[www.ukwas.org.uk](http://www.ukwas.org.uk)**

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## Section 1: Introduction

The first edition of the UK Woodland Assurance Standard was published in January 2000 since when there have been two full revisions.

The UKWAS standard is designed to reflect the UK Forestry Standard and the requirements of the two leading global certification schemes, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC).

Forestry knowledge and practice is constantly evolving as is society's interpretation of the economic, environmental and social context within which woodland managers must work. It is important, therefore, that the certification standard is regularly reviewed and updated using a process that is thorough and open.

## Section 2: The revision and consultation process

The UKWAS standard-setting process is aligned with the latest FSC and PEFC requirements and is set out in the document: *UKWAS Standard Setting Process (Version 2.0)*. The review process is based on evidence gathering and thorough consultation with stakeholders.

A detailed document sets out the arrangements for this revision: *UKWAS Revision 2013-16: Process and Timetable*.

The revision and consultation processes are being taken forward in three main phases:

- Phase 1 (Dec 2013-Sept 2014): an evidence gathering phase including initial stakeholder consultation (60 days) to take place Feb-March 2014
- Phase 2 (Oct 2014-Oct 2015): a main revision drafting phase leading to a revision draft consultation (60 days) to take place Sept/Oct 2015
- Phase 3 (Nov 2015-Nov 2016): a conclusion phase including a further revision and pre-approval draft consultation (30 days) to conclude early February 2016 prior to any further amendment and final submission to FSC UK and PEFC UK by the end of April 2016.

### Key documents

- UKWAS Standard-setting process (Version 2.0): [www.ukwas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/UKWAS-Standard-Setting-Process-Version-2.0-12.03.13.pdf](http://www.ukwas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/UKWAS-Standard-Setting-Process-Version-2.0-12.03.13.pdf)
- UKWAS Revision 2013-16: Process and Timetable: [www.ukwas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/UKWAS-Revision-Timetable-2013-16.pdf](http://www.ukwas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/UKWAS-Revision-Timetable-2013-16.pdf)

### **Section 3: Summary of the issues**

An Issues Paper contains the findings of Phase 1 of the standard-setting process – evidence gathering – and can be downloaded here: [www.ukwas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/UKWAS-Revision-Issues-Paper-Sept-2014.pdf](http://www.ukwas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/UKWAS-Revision-Issues-Paper-Sept-2014.pdf)

### **Section 4: Revision of the Standard**

The Consultation Draft of the UKWAS 4<sup>th</sup> Edition represents six months of intensive discussion and work by the UKWAS Steering Group and a drafting sub-group.

The drafting group included a full range of stakeholder interests including several individuals who use the standard in the field on a daily basis. So, in addition to the evidence gathered in the Issues Paper, the drafting group included those who understood very well where the standard needed improving.

It is fifteen years since the first edition of the UKWAS standard was published so the steering group was very open to making a substantive revision. The primary objective to make UKWAS more succinct, logical and therefore user-friendly.

It is the Steering Group's hope that this has been achieved: if adopted the proposed changes represent the most comprehensive revision in the history of UKWAS. This revision goes far beyond a 'tweaking' exercise. Instead comprehensive changes have been made.

Highlights of the changes include:

- The 'Guidance' column in the standard now contains only advice, none of the guidance will be 'normative' i.e. the owner/manager needs only to meet what is set out in the 'Requirement' column. The guidance is simply there to assist them in doing that by providing examples and further information. This represents a major simplification of the standard.
- 'Means of Verification' have been renamed 'Example Verifiers' to clarify that these too are not 'normative' elements of the standard and are only examples of how compliance with the requirement might be demonstrated.
- The standard has been restructured with the original eight sections consolidated into five new sections:
  - 1. Legal compliance and UKWAS conformance
  - 2. Management planning
  - 3. Forestry operations
  - 4. Natural and historic environment

- 5. People, communities and workforce.
- The biggest change within this restructuring is that all requirements relating to the management planning process can now be found in Section 2. Previously, while much of this information was in Section 2, many more planning requirements were scattered throughout the standard.
- In a similar vein, all the aspects within the standard that call for monitoring have been consolidated into a single requirement at the end of Section 2. Whilst this makes for a longer requirement we believe it represents a great simplification and makes it much easier to understand the monitoring requirements.
- Where it aids clarity, many other requirements have been merged and consolidated.
- In a minority of cases, overly-complex requirements have been split into two or even three separate requirements with the aim of improving the ease of application and comprehension.
- The standard has been made 'size-neutral'. This means that you will no longer see differing requirements or example verifiers for different-sized woodlands e.g. for 'SLIM Woodlands'. In previous versions of the standard there were very few requirements that applied only to small woodlands and instead it was considered that smaller and low intensity managed properties could demonstrate compliance through use of less burdensome verifiers. It is still the case that certification bodies will be looking for 'appropriate', and therefore different verifiers, from different woodland sizes and those managed at a lesser intensity. However, instead of including the guidance on how certification bodies should do this in the verifier column of each requirement, overall clarification about applying the standard to different scales and intensities of woodland management is now given in an expanded section in the Introduction.
- The presentation of the requirements for the restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) has been greatly simplified.
- Section headings have been clarified and the terms used throughout the standard consolidated and more clearly defined in the glossary.
- Much information has been removed from the 'Introduction' section in order to simplify the standard. This is principally information that was aimed at the certification bodies and it will now be provided in a separate document.

Because the draft standard is so different to the current version and because of the complications of text being moved as well as deleted, there is no version showing 'tracked changes'.

Instead, two versions of the draft standard are available:

- The **short version** which includes requirements only so making it easy to understand the overall shape of the draft: [www.ukwas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/UKWAS-4-Consultation-Draft-Short-Version-Requirements-only-01.09.15.pdf](http://www.ukwas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/UKWAS-4-Consultation-Draft-Short-Version-Requirements-only-01.09.15.pdf)
- The **full version** which includes the full text plus a consultation feedback column: [www.ukwas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/UKWAS-4-Consultation-Draft-Full-Version-01.09.151.doc](http://www.ukwas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/UKWAS-4-Consultation-Draft-Full-Version-01.09.151.doc)

## Section 5: Questions for stakeholders

This Consultation Draft is just that: it presents the Steering Group's initial ideas on how to improve the standard. The UKWAS Steering Group now welcomes further comments from stakeholders and standard-users on all aspects of the draft standard.

In particular we request consultees to answer the following questions:

1. Does the new structure of the standard assist use and comprehension of the standard?
2. What might be done to further improve the new structure?
3. Are there further opportunities to amalgamate or simplify requirements?
4. From the perspective of medium-sized estates, do the changes made assist in the ease of applying the standard?
5. From the perspective of small woodlands and all woodlands managed at a low intensity:
  - a. Does the revision simplify the application of the standard?
  - b. What further guidance or tools might make using the standard easier?
6. Is the shorter Introduction comprehensive enough?
  - a. Is anything now missing?
  - b. Is further guidance needed?
7. Please make any additional comments on the draft standard citing the relevant Section and Requirement numbers as appropriate.

## **Section 6: How should I respond and what is the deadline for making my input?**

This Consultation Paper contains information on the revision process and summarises in outline the changes proposed.

You will also need to refer to the following documents:

- **UKWAS Consultation Drafts:** see the links at the end of Section 4 to download these documents.

There is no formal format required but please:

- Identify yourself clearly and describe your status (e.g. woodland owner, woodland manager, certification body, forest contractor, timber processor, etc.)
- Answer the questions set out in Section 5
- Set out any additional issues in a clear and concise format identifying and explaining the issues you wish to raise and any suggested solution for each. You can do this using the UKWAS 4 Consultation Draft if you wish using Column 4 to make your remarks. Alternatively, you can simply write them out on a separate sheet.

**This is a 60-day consultation and your feedback is required by 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015.**

Please send all your responses to [ukwas@confor.org.uk](mailto:ukwas@confor.org.uk).

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