

UK Woodland Assurance Standard (Second Edition) – Summary of Main Changes

Background

The UK Woodland Assurance Standard was launched in May 1999 and is superseded by a revised second edition with effect from 1st November 2006.

This paper provides summary information on the main changes incorporated in the second edition but it is not a full list of all the changes made. It will be particularly helpful for those owners and managers whose woodlands are already certified and who will need to align their practices with the new requirements in accordance with the rules of their certification programme – you should refer to your certification authority for further details.

New certification audits will be made against the revised standard immediately following its accreditation by the relevant accreditation authority - you should refer to your certification authority for further details.

Notes on changes to the UKWAS

Introduction

- There has been a general updating, re-ordering and consolidation of the information into five parts.
- Part 3 now includes an important clarification of the status of the guidance column. This makes clear that certification authorities shall take full account of the 'guidance notes' given for each 'requirement' when assessing conformance with the standard.
- Part 4 covers procedures for the use of the standard and includes additional advice on accreditation, disputes procedures, area specificity, peer review, periodic monitoring, stakeholder consultations, transparency and flexibility in meeting requirements.

Certification Standard

Section 1: Compliance with the law and conformance with the requirements of the certification standard

- The guidance in sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 on compliance and conformance now includes information previously listed in the Means of Verification column.
- Section 1.1.3 on proof of ownership or tenure has been separated into two requirements: one for ownership and a second (now section 1.1.4) for disputes.
- Examples of declarations of commitment to conform to the requirements of UKWAS under section 1.1.5 (previously 1.1.4) will be made available via the UKWAS Support Unit or direct from the UKWAS website.

Section 2: Management planning

- In section 2.1.1 on documentation, the requirement includes additional points to be covered in a management plan, such as elements to be monitored and special measures for sensitive sites. Forestry Commission or DARD scheme documentation is no longer suggested as a Means of Verification and more detailed guidance is given on management planning.
- Sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 are new. They require that a public summary of the management plan is made available on request and that the plan is reviewed at least every five years.

- Section 2.2 (renamed 'productive potential') includes a new requirement (section 2.2.1) to take account of the full environmental, economic and social impacts of proposed operations and to aim to secure the investment necessary to maintain the ecological value of the woodland.
- Section 2.2.4 (previously 2.2.3) on traceability includes Chain of Custody codes for all invoices and delivery documents as an additional Means of Verification.
- Section 2.3.2 on monitoring includes additional requirements on monitoring procedures (b) and minimum monitoring requirements (c).
- Section 2.3.5 requires annual monitoring of the effectiveness of measures taken to maintain and enhance features of special significance.

Section 3: Woodland design: creation, felling and replanting

- Additional guidance in sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 on assessment of environmental impacts includes reference to relevant UK Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs), Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and Species Action Plans (SAPs).
- Reference to 'an approved FC or DANI plan' has been removed from Means of Verification in sections 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.2.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3.
- Section 3.3.1 includes an additional requirement to prefer planting of native species in new woodlands unless it can be shown that non-native species can better meet the management objectives. Additional guidance on parental material is given in both sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2.
- Section 3.4.1 requires that lower impact silvicultural systems should be increasingly favoured in windfirm conifer plantations; additional guidance is given.
- Section 3.5.1 includes additional clarification on when conversion of woodland to non-forested land can be justified.

Section 4: Operations

- Section 4.1.1 includes an additional requirement for the planning of woodland operations to include measures to maintain and, where appropriate, enhance the value of identified services and resources such as watersheds and fisheries.

Section 5: Protection and maintenance

- **5.2 - This section of the standard has undergone significant revision and should be read carefully and in full.**
- Section 5.2.1 requires owners and managers to minimise the use of pesticides and biological control agents. A written strategy on how to achieve this will be required as a Means of Verification.
- Section 5.2.2 includes extra guidance on keeping records in a format which will allow comparisons between different time periods.
- In section 5.2.4 on pesticides the requirement has been changed so that, in addition to WHO Type 1A and 1B pesticides, the following shall not be used:
 - "Any pesticides banned by international agreement"
 - Pesticides classed as "highly hazardous" by the Forest Stewardship Council unless specifically derogated by them for use in the UK.The guidance column indicates how to obtain the latest information on FSC derogations.
- Section 5.2.5 on fertilizers is new. Part of the requirement refers to bio-solids, where, if used, an environmental impact assessment would be required (see section 3.1).
- Section 5.4.2 includes additional guidance for owners and managers to take account of existing users of woodland when new fences are erected.
- Section 5.5.1 has been amended to require waste disposal to be in accordance with current waste management legislation and regulations.

Section 6: Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity

- The requirement in section 6.1.1 has been expanded to encompass a wider range of features of particular significance for biodiversity and a requirement to maintain and, where possible, enhance these. The guidance has been revised.
- Section 6.1.3 now covers valuable woodland habitats as well as non-woodland habitats.
- The former section 6.2 on game management has been moved to form section 6.4 to aid continuity.
- The requirement in section 6.2.1 (previously 6.3.1) now makes reference to conservation areas and features identified in section 6.1.3 as well as section 6.1.1.
- Section 6.2.2 (previously 6.3.2) on deadwood has been significantly revised to give clearer guidance on the provision of deadwood. Interim guidance has been provided but this section may be further updated when the FC Forest Practice Guide on deadwood is published.
- Section 6.3.1 (previously 6.4.1) includes an additional requirement to prevent conversion of woodland identified in section 6.1.1 to plantation or non-forest land; areas converted from semi-natural and ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) after 1985 shall not normally qualify for certification.
- **Section 6.3.2 (previously 6.4.2) on plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) has undergone significant revision. It includes a new requirement for progressive improvement of PAWS. This section should be read carefully and in full.**
- Section 6.3.3 (previously 6.4.3) on sourcing material for restocking of semi-natural woodlands, ASNW and PAWS has been revised to take account of the Forest Reproductive Material (FRM) regulations.
- Section 6.4.2 (previously 6.2.2) on game management now includes guidance on the UK BAP.

Section 7: The community

- Section 7.1.1 on consultation has a new requirement that **at least 30 days shall be allowed** for people to respond to notices, letters or meetings before certification. This is in line with ISO requirements. Guidance has also been added to allow the certifier and owner/manager to work together on aspects of consultation.
- Section 7.2.2 on provision of public access includes improved guidance and takes account of new legal access rights in Scotland and England and Wales.
- Section 7.3.1 on the rural economy includes an additional requirement that management and marketing operations should encourage making the best use of the woodland's potential products consistent with other objectives. The guidance makes reference to country forestry strategies, regional forestry frameworks and engagement with local woodland and community forest initiatives which may highlight opportunities to fulfil this requirement.

Section 8: Forestry workforce

- A clearer distinction has been made between section 8.1 on health and safety and section 8.2 on training and continuing development.

Glossary and Bibliography

The glossary and bibliography have been updated. All references that were previously in the body of the standard are now gathered in the bibliography and a reference is denoted by the book icon against the relevant section of the standard.