

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Scope & purpose

Effective date

Document history

KEY DOCUMENTS

TERMS & DEFINITIONS

A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

A1 Independence

A2 Territory

B. PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

B1 Introduction

B2 Steering Group

B3 Working Group

- B3.1 General
- B3.2 Balance of interests
- B3.3 Identification of Stakeholder Groups
- B3.4 Selection of Working Group members
- B3.5 Working Group Chair
- B3.6 Decision-making
- B3.7 Decision to revise the standard
- B3.8 Decision to confirm the Pre-approval Draft of the standard

B4 Transparency

- B4.1 Transparency of process
- B4.2 Contact point
- B4.3 Public announcements
- B4.4 Ongoing transparency

B5 Consultation

B6 Records

B7 Forest testing

B8 Regional

C. GOVERNANCE

C1 General

C2 Duties and responsibilities of the Chair of the Company

C3 Decision-making

C4 Decision to approve the Pre-approval Draft standard

C5 Dispute resolution

- C5.1 Interpretation of the standard
- C5.2 Standard-setting process
- C5.3 Confirmation of the Pre-approval Draft

D. REVIEW AND REVISION OF THE STANDARD

D1 Review and revision cycle

D2 Participation of certification schemes

D3 Elements of the review

D4 Elements of the revision

D5 Amendments induced by certification schemes

D6 Publication of the standard

D7 Implementation of the standard

INTRODUCTION

The UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) is a certification standard which sets out the requirements which woodland owners and managers and certification bodies can use to certify woodland management in the United Kingdom. The standard is the product of an inclusive and transparent process which has involved a balanced representation from the UK forestry and environmental community.

It has been designed to reflect the requirements of the governmental UK Forestry Standard (and through this the guidelines adopted by European Forestry Ministers at Helsinki in 1993 and Lisbon in 1998), the Forest Stewardship Council's Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification's Sustainable Forest Management Requirements.

SCOPE & PURPOSE

This document sets out the UKWAS Steering Group's procedures and process requirements for the development, maintenance and revision of the United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard as the national forest certification standard for the UK.

The procedures have been developed to ensure alignment with the requirements of the FSC and PEFC forest certification schemes. To ensure their continued alignment, these procedures should be subject to review, as a minimum, a year prior to the commencement of a formal revision of the UKWAS standard.

A draft of the standard-setting process shall be made available for stakeholder comment prior to approval by the Steering Group.

The roles, responsibilities and authorities of the UKWAS Steering Group and other parties are defined.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This version of the Standard-setting Process document was approved by the Steering Group on 3rd June 2026.

Document History

Version 1 – approved by Steering Group (18.01.07)
Version 1.1 – Section B2 amended by Board to incorporate revised Steering Group constituency list approved by Members at AGM in November 2007 (07.04.09)
Version 2.0 – approved by Steering Group (12.03.13)
Version 3.0 – approved by Steering Group (21.11.19)
Version 3.1 - approved by Steering Group (13.09.23)
Version 3.2 - approved by Steering Group (03.06.26)

KEY DOCUMENTS

The UKWAS documents relevant to the standard-setting process are:

- UKWAS - Memorandum of Association (Amended 25 November 2002)
- UKWAS - Articles of Association (Adopted 25 November 2002)
- UKWAS - Steering Group Rules (Version 2.0: adopted 19.09.13)

The main governmental standards document is:

- The UK Forestry Standard (5th edition 2023)

The main FSC document relevant to the standard-setting process is:

- FSC-STD-60-006 V1-2 EN Process requirements for the development and maintenance of National Forest Stewardship Standards

Other relevant FSC documents are:

- FSC-STD-60-002 V1-0 EN Structure and Content of National Forest Stewardship Standards
- FSC-STD-01-001 V5-3 EN FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship
- FSC-STD-60-004 V2-1 EN International Generic Indicators
- FSC-POL-30-001 V3-0 EN FSC Pesticides Policy

The main PEFC document relevant to the standard-setting process is:

- PEFC ST 1001:2017 Standard Setting – Requirements

Other relevant PEFC documents are:

- PEFC ST 1003:2024 Sustainable Forest Management - Requirements
- PEFC GD 1007:2017 Endorsement and Mutual Recognition of National Systems and their Revision

Other relevant documents are:

- ISO/IEC Guide 59:2019 ISO and IEC recommended practices for standardisation by national bodies
- ISEAL Standard-Setting Code of Good Practice v6.0 (December 2014)

TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Certification schemes – the forest certification schemes which have approved or endorsed the UK Woodland Assurance Standard as the certification standard in their UK schemes – currently the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).

Company – the company known as ‘United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS)’ established to own and manage the standard.

Members – Members of the Company.

Sponsoring Members - any Member making an appointment to the UKWAS Steering Group will be referred to as the ‘Sponsoring Member’ for the person or persons they appoint.

Standard – the UK Woodland Assurance Standard.

Steering Group – the representative group established by the Company as its governing body.

Steering Group members – members of the UKWAS Steering Group.

United Kingdom or UK – ‘United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland’.

Working Group – the working group established by the Steering Group to review and revise the standard and which is broadly equivalent to a national-level FSC Standards Development Group or PEFC Standardising Body.

A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

A1 INDEPENDENCE

A not-for-profit company, 'United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS)', was established in 2002 to own and manage the standard. The Company is constituted as a 'Company Limited by Guarantee And Not Having A Share Capital' (registered in Scotland: Company Number SC199337). The Company is managed by the Members.

The Company's Objects are:

To own, interpret, develop and promote a certification standard for forest management in the United Kingdom on behalf of United Kingdom forestry and environmental communities, and bodies which represent the interests of people working in woods and forests or using them for the purpose of recreation, for the general benefit of people.

The Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association do not provide for the Company to undertake certification or accreditation thereby ensuring that the certification standard shall be developed independently from the certification or accreditation processes.

A2 TERRITORY

The UKWAS standard-setting process is applicable solely to the development of a certification standard covering the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland¹.

B. PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

B1 INTRODUCTION

The first edition of the standard was the product of an inclusive and transparent process which involved a balanced representation from the UK forestry and environmental community. The standard was designed to reflect the requirements of the UK Government's 'UK Forestry Standard' (and through this the guidelines adopted by European Forestry Ministers at Helsinki in 1993 and Lisbon in 1998) and the Forest Stewardship Council's Principles & Criteria for Forest Stewardship.

All stakeholders were invited to participate in the development of the standard and associations representing the UK's forest and woodland owners and managers were fully supportive of the process and were active participants. The first edition of the standard was approved by FSC and published in 1999; PEFC Council endorsed the standard in 2002. A second revised edition was published in 2006 and a third edition in 2011. A Fourth Edition was agreed by stakeholders in 2016 and adopted for use in FSC and PEFC certification from 1 April 2018. A fifth edition was published in 2024.²

The Company's Members appoint a broadly-based Steering Group which has responsibility for interpreting the standard and ensuring its periodic review and revision to take account of experience from its application and new information that arises.

¹ **Note:** The Channel Islands and Isle of Man are Crown Dependencies which are not part of the United Kingdom and therefore the UKWAS standard is not applicable to these territories nor to the UK's Overseas Territories. Given the Crown Dependencies' proximity to the UK and their physical, cultural and legal similarities, the Steering Group recognises that the UKWAS standard might provide a useful starting point for developing a certification standard in these territories. The UKWAS standard is protected by copyright but any group in the Channel Islands or Isle of Man considering developing a certification standard is encouraged to discuss with the Steering Group how they might make use of the UKWAS standard.

² At the time of writing, UKWAS 5.0 has been endorsed by PEFC and the FSC approval process is ongoing.

B2 STEERING GROUP

The first edition of the standard was developed by an independent and broadly-based Technical Working Group and launched in May 1999 prior to the establishment of the Company.

Articles 38 to 40 of the Company's Articles of Association provide for the establishment of a Steering Group and define its terms of reference and operating procedures:

- Article 39 requires that the Steering Group shall maintain, amend and interpret the standard. A Steering Group was first appointed in November 2002.
- Article 38 requires that "Steering Group Rules" shall be adopted (and can be amended from time to time) by Members in a General Meeting. The Steering Group Rules shall regulate, *inter alia*, the number, appointment, retirement and removal of Steering Group members. The Steering Group Rules were adopted in December 2003 and revised in 2013.

The Steering Group comprises economic, environmental and social stakeholders with twelve defined stakeholder constituencies and an agreed maximum representation for each:

Woodland owners (6), forestry practitioners (5), country forestry authorities and forestry enterprises (8), environmental organisations (6), forest-user organisations (2), wood processing industry (3), wood products trade (2), forest workforce (2), UK countryside, environment & heritage agencies (3), local government & national park authorities (2), forestry standard-setting bodies (6 non-voting) and education, research & training (3 non-voting).

In addition, there is an independent Chair and a Company Secretary.

All Steering Group decisions are made on the basis of consensus so that all stakeholder views will be considered fully and no single interest group can dominate proceedings. The second, third and fourth editions of the standard were developed by the full Steering Group supported by a smaller drafting working group.

In 2019, the steering group reviewed the standard-setting process and established revised arrangements for subsequent revisions.

In relation to the standard-setting function:

- Sponsoring Members³ shall be invited to reconfirm their appointees to the Steering Group or to make new appointments prior to the standard-setting process commencing.
- The Steering Group is responsible for the drafting and revision of the standard and shall:
 - Prepare a detailed step-by-step UKWAS Review and Revision Plan & Timetable to include the phases of the review, revision and timetable, and
 - Establish a Working Group to undertake the review and revision of the standard on a task-and-finish basis.

B3 WORKING GROUP

B3.1 General

In establishing the Working Group and in preparing the detailed UKWAS Review and Revision Plan & Timetable, the Steering Group shall take full account of the certification schemes' detailed process requirements for standard-setting.

³ Steering Group Rule 3.

The Working Group shall undertake the detailed review, and if deemed necessary, the revision and drafting of the standard as set out in the detailed UKWAS Review and Revision Plan & Timetable with the objective of preparing a Pre-approval Draft of the standard for consideration and, if thought fit, approval by the Steering Group.

The Working Group shall keep the Steering Group fully informed of progress throughout the review and revision process.

B3.2 Balance of interests

A chamber-balanced approach shall be adopted for the Working Group with separate chambers for economic, environmental and social interests. The aim shall be to achieve balance in terms of the number of members for each chamber so ensuring that affected stakeholders are represented by an appropriate proportion of participants.

B3.3 Identification of Stakeholder Groups

The Steering Group shall undertake a stakeholder-identification mapping exercise to identify stakeholders relevant to the objectives and scope of the standard-setting exercise.

Stakeholder groups to be considered shall include:

- UKWAS stakeholder constituencies as defined in the Steering Group Rules
- Major stakeholder groups as defined by Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992⁴
- The list of interests for each chamber defined by FSC⁵
- Stakeholder representatives from neighbouring territories - Ireland, Isle of Man and Channel Islands.

Other groups shall be added if relevant to the scope of standard-setting activities.

The inclusion or exclusion of each defined stakeholder group shall be justified.

For each stakeholder group, the Steering Group shall identify the likely key issues, key stakeholders and which means of communication would be best to reach them.

The Steering Group shall identify disadvantaged and/or marginalised stakeholders and key stakeholders and address any constraints to their participation in standard-setting activities.

The outcome of the stakeholder identification exercise shall be made publicly available on the UKWAS website.

B3.4 Selection of Working Group members

The Steering Group shall issue an invitation for stakeholders to nominate persons to participate as Working Group members.

In order to achieve balanced representation, the Steering Group shall strive to have all identified stakeholder groups represented, shall set targets for the participation of key

⁴ At least the following groups shall be included in the stakeholder mapping: forest owners, business and industry, indigenous people, non-government organisations, scientific and technological community, workers and trade unions.

N.B. The full list of nine major stakeholder groups defined by Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development is: (i) business and industry, (ii) children and youth, (iii) forest owners, (iv) indigenous peoples, (v) local authorities, (vi) non-government organisations, (vii) scientific and technological community, (viii) women, and (ix) workers and trade unions.

⁵ The list of interests for each chamber is set out in FSC-STD-60-006 (V1-2) EN Annex A: Economic interests: owners/managers of large and medium sized forests; owners/managers of small forests; owners/managers of operations where there is a low intensity of timber harvesting; forest contractors; timber producer associations. Environmental interests: biological diversity; water; soils; ecosystems and landscapes. Social interests: forest workers; indigenous peoples; local communities; forest recreation; consumers.

stakeholders and proactively seek their participation by using outreach such as (but not limited to) personal emails, phone calls, meeting invitations, etc.⁶

To enable efficient working, the aim shall be to have a small but representative Working Group with three members in each chamber but a minimum of two members and a maximum of four in each chamber.

In selecting individual Working Group members, the Steering Group shall take account of their:

- Expert knowledge and/or experience of the issues under consideration
- Up-to-date knowledge and experience of the UKWAS standard
- Up-to-date knowledge and experience of certification systems and procedures
- Ability to represent points of view from the corresponding stakeholder group, and the points of view of small, medium and large enterprises affected by the standard
- Understanding of the potential impact of the standard on affected stakeholders
- Understanding of and support for the UKWAS Objects⁷
- Understanding and support for the certification schemes' vision and objectives.

Acceptance and refusal of nominations shall be justified in relation to the requirements for balanced representation of the Working Group, considerations of relevance of the nominating organisation, an individual's competence, an individual's relevant experience, an appropriate gender balance, and the resources available for the revision standard-setting process.

The Working Group chair shall invite participating certification schemes to nominate representatives to attend the Working Group meetings in an advisory and non-voting capacity. Participating certification schemes are those which have accepted the Steering Group's invitation to participate in the review and revision process (see D2).

Additionally, the Working Group chair can invite external experts to participate in the review and revision process as he/she considers necessary; such experts would not be members of the Working Group but would provide advice and/or attend Working Group meetings in an advisory and non-voting capacity.

B3.5 Working Group Chair

A Working Group chair shall be appointed by the Steering Group.

The chair shall be independent i.e. not representing a stakeholder.

So as to ensure that both the Steering Group and the Working Group are content with the appointee, the Steering Group shall propose a nominee for chair and before doing so shall request and consider any suggestions from the Working Group – the Working Group must endorse any nominee before they can be appointed chair.

The chair shall be responsible for:

- a) Ensuring that the documented standards-development procedures and detailed UKWAS Review and Revision Plan & Timetable are implemented.
- b) Ensuring that the views of all stakeholder groups are properly and fairly represented in the standards development process and in subsequent decision-making.
- c) Facilitation of Working Group meetings and the smooth running of the standards-development process.

⁶ N.B. When a stakeholder group is not represented and key stakeholders cannot be encouraged to participate, the Steering Group may consider alternative options.

⁷ The UKWAS Objects are set out in Section A1.

- d) Representing the overall interests of the standards-development process rather than any particular stakeholder group.
- e) Keeping the Steering Group fully informed of progress throughout the review and revision process.

The chair shall not cast a vote.

B3.6 Decision-making

The quorum for the transaction of the business of the Working Group shall be two-fifths of all the persons who at the commencement of the meeting are Working Group members with at least one member from each chamber.

Decisions of the Working Group shall be made on the basis of 'no sustained objection' and will therefore require the unanimous vote of those attending and voting at a duly convened meeting of the Working Group. Any member attending the meeting but abstaining from voting shall not be counted.

In order to expedite the standard-setting process, Working Group members shall be encouraged not to re-open decisions already made unless there is new information to be considered.

B3.7 Decision to revise the standard

The Working Group shall be responsible for undertaking the review process which should include as a minimum the elements set out in section D3. The review should conclude with a decision on whether or not the standard needs to be revised.

Should the Working Group decide that a revision is necessary, it shall proceed with the revision.

Should the Working Group decide that a revision is unnecessary, it shall make a reasoned recommendation to the Steering Group not to proceed with the revision of the standard but to reaffirm the existing standard. Should the Steering Group decide after due consideration to reaffirm the existing standard, it shall provide a justification for its decision and make it publicly available on the website.

B3.8 Decision to confirm the Pre-approval Draft of the standard

The Working Group shall be responsible, if deemed necessary, for revising the standard in accordance with the detailed UKWAS Review and Revision Plan & Timetable to be developed by the Steering Group.

The Working Group's aim is to prepare a Pre-approval Draft of the standard and confirm that it has undergone sufficient consultation and any necessary testing, meets the aims and objectives of the revision, and so merits approval by the Steering Group.

The Working Group shall aim to agree the Pre-approval Draft by a unanimous vote of those attending and voting at a duly convened meeting of the Working Group. Any member attending the meeting but abstaining from voting shall not be counted.

When there is sustained opposition to a substantial issue, the Working Group shall seek a compromise through discussion and negotiation within the Working Group. Where unanimity cannot be achieved but there is at least a majority support in each chamber, the Working Group should prepare a note setting out the areas of concern or disagreement.

Once confirmed, the Working Group chair shall remit the Pre-approval Draft and any note on outstanding areas of concern or disagreement to the Steering Group for its consideration.

In the event that it proves impossible to achieve the necessary majority to confirm a Pre-approval Draft, the Working Group chair shall remit the latest draft and a note on the outstanding areas of concern or disagreement to the Steering Group for its consideration.

B4 TRANSPARENCY

B4.1 Transparency of process

The publication of this document on the UKWAS website ensures transparency of process.

Feedback on this standard-setting process document and its scope is welcome from all stakeholders via the contact point in B4.2 below.

For each revision, a detailed step-by-step UKWAS Review and Revision Plan & Timetable document shall be prepared by the Steering Group to include the phases of the review and timetable.

B4.2 Contact point

A contact point for the review and revision process shall be identified on the relevant section of the UKWAS website and shall include contact details for email, telephone and mail. This contact point shall remain as a permanent mechanism for receiving feedback on the UKWAS standard.

B4.3 Public announcements

The Steering Group shall publicly announce the commencement of the review and include information on:

- The aims, objectives and scope of the review
- How standard-users can submit feedback
- A contact point for the review process.

The Steering Group shall publicly announce a decision on whether or not it is to undertake a revision of the standard and, if so, the commencement of the revision including information on:

- The aims, objectives and scope of the revision
- The standard-setting process
- The detailed revision plan and timetable
- A contact point for the revision process.

Stakeholder representatives shall be notified directly of the announcement in a timely manner. In addition, the announcement shall be publicised through the UKWAS website, certification schemes' websites and via trade media.

This will allow all stakeholders an opportunity to contribute to the process. Key documents including this standard-setting process document, revision plan & timetable and related documents, the consultation drafts and the formal responses to comments received shall be available to all interested parties by publication on the website and direct notification of stakeholder representatives.

B4.4 Ongoing transparency

Steering Group and Working Group members shall receive all relevant papers and minutes of meetings and shall be responsible for keeping their constituents informed. Summary progress reports shall be publicly issued following Steering Group meetings whenever appropriate.

No information on the development of the standard shall be withheld unreasonably.

B5 CONSULTATION

A list shall be maintained of those to be consulted at each stage of the standard-setting process and thereafter kept informed of progress; the list shall be based on the outcome of the stakeholder-identification mapping exercise and inclusion on the list shall be open to any additional stakeholder on request.

The process for developing and revising the standard shall include provision for consultation through notifying a wide range of stakeholders and publicising the availability of the following documents as a minimum:

- a) An 'Initial Revision Draft' - an invitation to comment on an initial revision of the current standard which should identify any other aspects already identified as requiring review and on which stakeholder comments would be particularly helpful (minimum consultation period of 60 days).
- b) A 'Second Revision Draft' which should include a synopsis of the stakeholders' initial comments and clearly identify and explain the proposed changes (minimum consultation period of 60 days).

In addition, and at its discretion, prior to submitting the revised standard to the certification schemes for approval, the Steering Group may issue its 'Pre-approval Draft' for further stakeholder comment. This should include a synopsis of the previous stakeholder comments received and clearly identify and explain the proposed changes (minimum consultation period of 60 days).

Additional drafts may be issued at the discretion of the Steering Group.

NOTE: The Steering Group may at its discretion adopt a 'fast track' process for adapting the standard for use in limited applications. In considering what process to adopt, the Steering Group shall take account of the requirements of the certification schemes.

B6 RECORDS

The Steering Group shall keep the following records of the standards-development process:

- a) List of all consultants or other individuals who have been involved in drafting the standard, together with their affiliations.
- b) List of all stakeholders invited to participate in the standard-setting process.
- c) List of all stakeholders sent specified drafts of the standard and invited to comment.
- d) List of stakeholders that have participated in the standard-setting process through other means, together with a note of the nature of such participation.
- e) Records of Working Group members attending each meeting.
- f) Summary progress reports issued following Working Group and/or Steering Group meetings.
- g) Copies of each draft of the standard which was prepared during the development process.
- h) Copies of all comments submitted in writing with respect to the specified draft standards.

- i) Summaries of comments on each draft, together with a brief explanation of the way in which those comments were responded to in the draft.

The Steering Group shall provide the certification schemes with a copy of the complete set of records specified above in support of their approval/endorsement processes; these shall include a copy of the Working Group's recommendation to the Steering Group that the Pre-approval Draft of the revised standard be approved and the Steering Group's decision including the wording of the Motion put to the vote and a record of the voting thereon.

The Steering Group shall keep a copy of the records for a minimum of seven years; if the revision of the standard to which they relate has not been completed after seven years, the records must be kept until their revision has been completed. These records will also be made available on the website and, on request, to all interested parties.

B7 FOREST TESTING

The drafting of the first edition of the standard was informed by the results of testing the standard in the forest. In revising the standard, any necessary additional pilot testing and/or experience gained from the application of the standard shall be used to inform the revision process.

B8 REGIONAL

In developing the first edition of the standard, account was taken of accredited standards in neighbouring territories and those with similar geographic or ecological scope and this shall continue to be done when undertaking a revision.

C. GOVERNANCE

C1 GENERAL

The operation of the Company is governed by its Memorandum & Articles of Association together with the Steering Group Rules. These are available on the website.

C2 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIR OF THE COMPANY

Article 63 provides for the Members of the Company to appoint a Chair of the Company as recommended by the Steering Group. By convention the Chair shall also chair the Steering Group.

The Chair shall:

- a) Have overall responsibility for ensuring that the documented standards-development procedures are implemented.
- b) Have overall responsibility for ensuring that the views of all stakeholder groups are properly and fairly represented in the standards-development process and in subsequent decision-making.
- c) Have overall responsibility for ensuring that arrangements are made for the facilitation of Working Group meetings and the smooth running of the standards-development process.
- d) Represent the overall interests of the standards-development process rather than any particular stakeholder group.

All Steering Group decisions are made on the basis of consensus and by convention the Chair shall not cast a vote.

C3 DECISION-MAKING

The quorum for the transaction of the business of the Steering Group shall be two-fifths of all the persons who at the commencement of the meeting are Steering Group members (Article 40.2).

Decisions of the Steering Group shall require the unanimous vote of those attending and voting at a duly convened meeting of the Steering Group. Any member attending the meeting but abstaining from voting shall not be counted (Article 40.3).

In order to expedite the standard-setting process, Steering Group members will be encouraged not to re-open decisions already made unless there is new information to be considered.

C4 DECISION TO APPROVE THE PRE-APPROVAL DRAFT STANDARD

The Steering Group shall be responsible for considering and, if thought fit, approving the Pre-approval Draft standard remitted by the Working Group, or any revision thereof.

When the Working Group has been unable to reach a conclusion on a substantial issue due to sustained opposition, the Steering Group shall seek a solution through direct negotiation between the stakeholder(s) making the objection and other stakeholders with different views on the disputed issue. The Steering Group can initiate additional rounds of public consultation where it considers that further stakeholder input can help to achieve consensus on unresolved issues. The Steering Group shall determine the scope and duration of any additional public consultation.

The Steering Group shall remit any revised Pre-approval Draft to the Working Group and seek its endorsement.

Approval of the standard by the Steering Group shall require the unanimous vote of those attending and voting at a duly convened meeting of the Steering Group. Any member attending the meeting but abstaining from voting shall not be counted (Article 40.3).

C5 DISPUTE RESOLUTION

C5.1 Interpretation of the standard

Any query relating to the interpretation of the meaning of the standard shall be remitted to an Interpretation Panel which shall be appointed by the Steering Group to provide it and users of the certification standard with advice on its interpretation. The Steering Group shall appoint an independent chair of the Interpretation Panel and shall publish its rules, procedures and advice on the website.

C5.2 Standard-setting process

Any grievance relating to the standard-setting process should be addressed to the Company Secretary who shall acknowledge its receipt to the complainant.

The Steering Group shall:

- a) Gather and verify all necessary information to validate the complaint.
- b) Evaluate the subject matter of the complaint impartially and objectively and make its determination in accordance with the provisions of Articles 40.2 and 40.3 (see C3 above).

c) Formally communicate the decision to the complainant and describe the handling process.

In the event of a complainant wishing to appeal against the Steering Group's determination, the matter shall be remitted to the independent chair of the Interpretation Panel for consideration and whose decision shall be final.

C5.3 Confirmation of the Pre-approval Draft

Should it prove impossible to agree a Pre-approval Draft as set out in sections B3.8 and C4 due to sustained opposition, the Steering Group shall initiate the dispute resolution process.

Under the dispute resolution process, the Steering Group shall ask the independent chair of the Interpretation Panel to determine any outstanding issues.

He/she shall appoint a panel of three persons to provide him/her with advice on the outstanding issues. The panel members shall be selected so as to ensure that the panel is independent and chamber-balanced with representation of economic, environmental and social interests; it shall not include members of the Steering Group or Working Group. The panel shall provide advice to the independent chair who shall determine the matters at issue and whose decision shall be final.

D. REVIEW AND REVISION OF THE STANDARD

D1 REVIEW AND REVISION CYCLE

The standard shall be reviewed and, if deemed necessary, revised on a five-year cycle so that the revision process is concluded no later than the fifth anniversary of the Effective Date for the previous version.

N.B. The certification schemes' requirements relating to the review cycle and revision timetable differ significantly. The certification schemes shall advise the Steering Group of any changes that occur, and the Steering Group shall review this element in light of those changes. Where expeditious, the Steering Group, in consultation with the certification schemes, shall determine a revised timetable or call a pause until such time as there is sufficient clarity to determine a revised timetable.

D2 PARTICIPATION OF CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

The Steering Group shall invite the national offices of the certification schemes to participate in the review and revision process by:

- a) Notifying them of its intention to begin a review process and providing a projected timeline to be discussed and agreed with them.
- b) Requiring them to confirm that these standard-setting procedures will meet their requirements.
- c) Requiring them to undertake internal consultation at national level throughout the standard-setting process and to complete it prior to the issue of an agreed Pre-approval Draft.

(N.B. It would be helpful if certification schemes could seek guidance from their international organisations on the acceptability of the proposed revisions throughout the process.)

The Steering Group shall ensure effective communication with the nominated member of staff within each certification scheme's national office.

The national offices of the certification schemes shall be responsible for all communications with their international organisations and, as necessary, for registering the revision process and submitting all documentation required for the certification schemes' approval processes.

D3 ELEMENTS OF THE REVIEW

The review process should include as a minimum the following elements:

- a) An Interpretation Review – a consideration of any advice developed by the Interpretation Panel.
- b) A Technical Review – a consideration of any new scientific or technical knowledge.
- c) A Standard Users' Feedback Review
 - a consideration of all recorded feedback made directly to the UKWAS Steering Group through all channels including at meetings and the contact point
 - a consideration of feedback made to the certification schemes from certificate holders and accredited certification bodies. (To be provided by the certification schemes.)
- d) A Risk Review
 - a consideration of the impact and applicability of the standard for different scales and intensities of operation
 - a consideration of potential impacts on areas and features of high conservation value.
- e) A Certification Schemes' Requirements Review – a consideration of advice (to be provided by the certification schemes based on a gap analysis) on any new or revised policies, procedures or guidance that is relevant to the revision and any learnings from equivalent accredited standards of a similar geographical or ecological scope of application and similar forest conditions. National certification schemes should seek advice and guidance from their international body when compiling their advice.

These elements shall be reviewed in consultation with the certification schemes in developing the detailed Review and Revision Plan & Timetable.

D4 ELEMENTS OF THE REVISION

The revision process should include preparation of revision drafts for consultation following, as a minimum, the steps set out in section B5.

These elements shall be reviewed in consultation with the certification schemes in developing the detailed Review and Revision Plan & Timetable.

D5 AMENDMENTS INDUCED BY CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

In the event that a certification scheme requires a revision to be made to the standard or the standard-setting process prior to the normal revision period, the Steering Group shall consider the requirement and make any such amendment as it considers appropriate. A certification scheme requesting such a revision shall submit a written proposal setting out why the revision is needed, the changes sought and/or a proposed methodology to develop new or revised text.

D6 PUBLICATION OF THE STANDARD

The approved standard shall be made publicly available on the website within 14 days of approval. Thereafter, printed copies of the standard shall be made available free of charge as soon as is practicable.

The following shall be stated in the published document:

- a) Steering Group approval date
- b) Effective date
- c) Commencement date of next periodic review.

D7 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STANDARD

The period between the Steering Group approval date and the effective date of the standard shall not exceed one year.

Certified entities shall have a one-year transition period in which to conform to the new standard from the effective date set by the Steering Group.

UKWAS Steering Group
3rd June 2026