

Position Statement

Forest certification

October 2022



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The Trust's view

- Forest certification by the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) provides independent assurance that we are operating to the highest woodland management standards we have set ourselves.
- The Trust is committed to supporting initiatives which assist everyone accessing forest certification. We are keen to see that small woodland owners in particular are not disadvantaged by forest certification.
- There are numerous forest certification schemes operating internationally, each with its own logo, and the list is growing. The Trust, together with other environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs), considers the FSC, although not perfect, still to be the only credible forest certification system available that truly balances the economic, social and environmental aspects of woods and forests internationally.
- Most Woodland Trust woods are certified to FSC® standards by the Soil Association. Ask us for details of our certified woods. Certificate number SA-FM/COC-001270, Licence code FSC-C009406.

The Trust will

- Continue to remain committed to the concept of forest certification and have its UK-wide estate certified to the FSC's Principles and Criteria and/or the United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS).
- Hereby declare an intention to protect and maintain all its woodlands and their ecological integrity in the long term.
- Continue its policy to practise sustainable forestry and seek to maintain good relations with local communities and involve them in the management of our sites.

The evolution of forest certification

The environmental and social impacts of forest management, especially logging, in primary forests have long been a major concern. During the 1980s, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and others highlighted that many claims made about sustainable management of forests were misleading. In response, with responsible retailers, they set up the [Forest Stewardship Council \(FSC\)](#) as an international NGO, to develop an independent system for certification of timber and timber products from tropical and temperate forests. This provides a market mechanism to reward responsible forest management and uses a label, the FSC tick-tree logo, allowing consumers to make an informed choice.

The FSC drew up 10 principles defining well-managed woodland and a "chain of custody" which regulates subsequent processing of the wood product to its final form. Under each principle, criteria set out the requirements in more detail. Together, these are the FSC's [principles and criteria](#) for sustainable forest management.

The FSC intends each country should convert these into national forestry standards. In 1998 the UK was among the first to have a national forestry standard endorsed by the FSC, the [UK Woodland Assurance Standard \(UKWAS\)](#). This is accepted by the UK forest industry and stakeholders as the benchmark document against which sustainable forestry is assessed. The Trust was a founding member of the UKWAS and has been involved with the standard-setting process right from the start. It continues to be an active environmental sector representative. The UKWAS is reviewed on a five-yearly cycle.

The Woodland Trust was the first major landowner to achieve FSC certification in the UK with England and Wales certified in 1998 and Scotland and Northern Ireland added in 1999. Other major landowners such as the Forestry Commission, National Trust and RSPB followed. A random sample of woodlands is audited annually and non-conformances addressed. Summaries of these annual audits are available from the FSC via a [database](#). The Trust's certificate number is SA FM/COC-001270.

The Woodland Trust view

Our primary aim is protection and management of native broadleaved woodland for public access and conservation, but we also generate a significant volume of timber each year as a result of safety and conservation work. It has always been our policy to practice sustainable forestry and we seek to maintain good relations with local communities and involve them in the management of our woods. FSC certification provides independent assurance that we are operating to the high standards we have set ourselves.

Some concern has been expressed that certification may be too expensive for small-scale timber producers. To combat this problem, methods to simplify group and individual certification for small woodlands have been developed. The Trust is encouraged by and supports these developments, as we are keen to see that small woodland owners are not disadvantaged by certification.

A growing number of forest certification schemes operate internationally, each with its own logo and therefore the potential to confuse the consumer. The Trust, with others such as WWF, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and the RSPB consider the FSC still to be the only credible forest certification system available that truly balances the economic, social and environmental aspects of woods and forests internationally. It is not perfect but has a transparent and effective complaints procedure and evidence to date confirms that issues of concern are investigated thoroughly.



The mark of
responsible forestry
FSC® C009406



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