

Response to UKWAS 5 Consultation Round 2

Institute Response

As an independent certification standard for woodland management, the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) is a pillar of sustainable forestry practice. Trees will shoulder a significant proportion of mitigating the environmental crisis and helping us to adapt to a changed future climate. Certification is a crucial to UK forestry and UKWAS has contributed hugely to raising the standards of woodland management. As the UK body representing tree professionals, we actively support UKWAS and endorse the hard work of the Steering Group and drafting group.

As an Institute with a diverse membership, we leave it to individual members, other users of the standard and stakeholders to comment on points of detail and have made this response deliberately brief. That said, we are pleased to express our overall support for the revisions, for the structure of UKWAS and for the formats in which it is available. With this revision it is clearer and more relevant to current issues.

The greater emphasis on climate change and forest resilience is welcome. It is always a challenge to strike the right balance of environmental, social and economic objectives as these will vary for each woodland. With climate mitigation driving many government policies, it is important not to lose emphasis on productive forests as our use of wood and wood products grows to replace plastic and concrete in the long term.

We agree that planting stock should be UK-grown for biosecurity and economic reasons. However, there can be resilience reasons for choosing seed from more southerly sources, so wording about a preference for UK origin needs to take this into account.

We suggest the review group might consider more mention of different options of silvicultural systems. In many (though not all) circumstances, the adoption of continuous cover approach can be well suited to meeting a range of public and private objectives. However, with some of the additions there is a risk of reinventing terminology without adding much in the way of sense, for example using Low Intensity Forest Management Approaches instead of LISS.

Finally, we want to emphasise the importance of following best practice guidance. The standard cannot and does not try to determine the best course of action in advance for individual woodlands. Crucially, there is a need for the work to be managed by professionals with the right skills and expertise.

About the Institute

The Institute of Chartered Foresters is the Royal Chartered body for tree professionals in the UK. Its membership covers the full range of tree professionals, and this range of expertise is one of its greatest strengths. It has 2,000 members who practise forestry, arboriculture and other related disciplines in the private and third sectors, central and local government, research institutions, universities and colleges throughout the UK.

The Institute regulates standards of entry to the profession. It provides support to members, guidance to professionals in other sectors, information to the general public, and educational advice and training to students and tree professionals seeking to develop their careers.

We are represented on the UKWAS Steering Group by our member representatives and are committed to supporting the UKWAS team with this and future revisions and with raising awareness of the standard and its benefits.