

Woodland Carbon Code advisory board minutes

Wednesday 21 February 2024 on Microsoft Teams

Present: Pat Snowdon, Vicky West, Andy Baker, Susan Szymborski-Welsh, Jamie Smith (Scottish Forestry), Emma Stewart (Forestry Commission), Fiona Hay (Welsh Government), Stuart Goodall (Confederation of Forest Industries - Confor), Julia Raybould (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs - Defra), Matthew Brander (Edinburgh University), Robert South (Institute of Chartered Foresters), Nick Blyth (Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment), Renée Kirkvliet-Hermans (IUCN - Peatland Code), James Russell (Marston Vale Trust), Steve Clarkson (Organic Farmers & Growers), Emma Kerr (Scottish Woodlands), Andy Grundy, Alex Hart, Anne Mari Cobb (Soil Association), Bruce Kennedy (Boston Consulting Group)

Apologies: Robert Guest (Foresight Group), Graham Clark (Country Land and Business Association), Areeb Arshad (South Pole), Roger Kerr (Organic Farmers and Growers), Bruce Auchterlonie (Scottish Forestry), Mark Broadmeadow (Forestry Commission), Ben Searle (Northern Ireland Forest Service), Peter Wilson (Wilson Applied/ UK Woodland Assurance Standard), Ewan Mackie (Forest Research), Peter Coleman (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero)

Welcome: Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive of Confor, and Susan Szymborski-Welsh who has joined the Woodland Carbon Code team as a communications officer and is taking minutes.

1. Minutes of the last meeting

Vicky West and Pat Snowdon provided updates the actions from the previous advisory board meeting:

- Vicky West and Emma Kerr are continuing to work on issues with downloading data from the S&P registry. Vicky West is working to clarify the normative framework.
- Considerations around thinned management scenarios will be considered when the carbon calculator is next updated.

2. Updates

Statistics - Over 2000 projects have now been registered. The group discussed why some smaller registered projects do not go on to be validated. It is hoped the project to explore new monitoring techniques may help with verification costs and there could be other ways to simplify the tools and process for small projects.

Action 1: The Woodland Carbon Code secretariat will review the 'small projects' process to make it as accessible as possible.

New team members - The Woodland Carbon Code has recruited six new fixed-term team members with funding from Defra. They include coordinators, a monitoring advisor, a communications officer, an operational manager and a geographic information systems officer. The team has also recruited a project manager to develop a standard buyer-seller contract (details in item 6).

Global registries - [The Climate Action Data Trust is developing a platform](#) to link, aggregate and harmonise carbon credit registry data to enhance transparent accounting. It hopes to incorporate all major carbon registries, including the Woodland Carbon Code. S&P, the company which provides the UK Land Carbon Registry, is also looking to develop a global registry. The Woodland Carbon Code team is exploring both registries and any data implications.

Pat Snowdon gave an update on work to explore new delivery models, market infrastructure, data strategies and financial forecasting. The investigation was conducted by EY and funded by Defra. The project is almost complete, but a second phase will consider additionality further and there will be another workshop with market participants to discuss options.

3. Resource/financial planning

Pat Snowdon provided an overview of work to ensure the Woodland Carbon Code is financially sustainable. Scottish Forestry charges a levy on credit issuances and there is an option to increase this to cover future operating costs associated with project registrations, validations and verifications. Scottish Forestry has examined charging structures across other carbon standards. The group discussed costs, revenue and the importance of running an efficient service. Bruce Kennedy suggested that new standards like [Isometric](#) and [Puro](#) had different pricing structures where the buyer contributes. Clarity on future costs for market participants is important.

4. Additionality - timing of assessment

Andy Baker presented future options about the version of the cashflow spreadsheet used for financial additionality assessments and when in the validation process it should be applied. He explained that the aim is to reduce financial uncertainty and provide investors, buyers and landowners with greater confidence.

There was general support for a change. Further work and discussion are needed to select the best option.

Action 2: The board were invited to provide any further thoughts to Andy before the proposals are put to the Woodland Carbon Code executive board on Tuesday 27 February.

5. Standard versions and interim clarifications

Vicky West outlined proposals for a new process to publish interim clarifications to the code between formal standard updates and summarised some clarifications that are required imminently.

Action 3: The board were asked to highlight any potential improvements or concerns by early March.

6. Woodland Carbon Code and Peatland Code FIRNS projects

Buyer/seller contract - The Woodland Carbon Code and Peatland Code teams have secured funding for a [project to develop a standard buyer/seller contract](#). The project aims to help landowners, tenants, community groups and buyers to participate in nature markets with greater



confidence. The project manager is engaging with a range of stakeholders and the contract should be ready in early 2025.

Biodiversity monitoring/crediting - The teams have also secured funding for a project to explore biodiversity monitoring and crediting. The first phase included reviewing existing schemes and frameworks, identifying challenges and meeting with partners. Phase two is focusing on stakeholder engagement and preparing to pilot monitoring in the summer of 2025.

Action 4: The board were invited to provide feedback on both projects or contact the project managers for more information.

7. Policy updates from countries

7.1 England

No representative was present to provide an update from England.

7.2 Scotland

The Scottish Government has released budget proposals which would reduce woodland creation grant funding by 40% in 2024-25. The Woodland Carbon Code team is working with the forestry grants team to consider how funding from the forestry grant scheme and Woodland Carbon Code can be blended to maximise woodland creation.

Action 5: Scottish Forestry will provide an update at the next advisory board meeting.

7.3 Wales

The [sustainable farming scheme](#) is out for consultation at the moment.

7.4 Northern Ireland

No representative was present to provide an update from Northern Ireland.

8. Any other business and date of next meeting

Emma Kerr raised the issue of projects on crofted land and is keen to resolve barriers to crofters using the Woodland Carbon Code. Pat Snowdon replied that Scottish Forestry is meeting with crofting representatives and will keep Emma informed of any developments.

Next meeting: 9am to 11am on Wednesday 24 April 2024 via Microsoft Teams.