

Woodland Carbon Code advisory board minutes

Thursday 14 November 2024 on Microsoft Teams

Present: Pat Snowdon, Vicky West, Andy Baker, Susan Szymborski-Welsh (Scottish Forestry), Fiona Hay (Welsh Government), Ayse Selcuk (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs - Defra), Matthew Brander (Edinburgh University), Robert South (Institute of Chartered Foresters), Renée Kirkvliet-Hermans, Joe Anderson (IUCN - Peatland Code), James Russell (Marston Vale Trust), Andy Grundy, Rebecca Fairman (Soil Association), Bruce Kennedy (Boston Consulting Group), Mark Broadmeadow, Chris Waterfield (Forestry Commission), Graham Clark (Country Land and Business Association), Ewan Mackie (Forest Research), Areeb Arshad (ACT), Robert Guest (Foresight Group)

Apologies: Jamie Smith (Scottish Forestry), Ben Searle (Northern Ireland Forest Service), Roger Kerr, Steve Clarkson (Organic Farmers & Growers), Stuart Goodall (Confederation of Forest Industries - Confor), Nick Blyth (Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment), Anne Mari Cobb, Alex Hart (Soil Association), Peter Coleman (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero), Peter Wilson (Wilson Applied/ UK Woodland Assurance Standard), David Robertson (Scottish Woodlands)

1. Minutes of the last meeting

Vicky West provided updates on actions from the previous advisory board meeting.

Vicky will provide information about projects removed from the code during this meeting.

The secretariat worked with Nick Blyth to set up an online discussion on insetting.

2. Updates

Statistics - projects and carbon prices

Vicky shared statistics about the Woodland Carbon Code. Between 1 April and 30 September 2024 there were:

- 117 new projects registered with the code
- 169 other projects were removed from the registry
- 84 projects validated to the code
- 6 projects verified to the code

Vicky explained that the number of new projects and validations are similar to this time last year and that the number of verifications has increased. Projects which were removed from the registry tended to be projects less than 1 hectare which had mainly been combined into larger projects, although some were permanently removed.

Vicky also shared the latest carbon price data. The data, reported by Ecosystem Marketplace, shows the price of Woodland Carbon Code units rose from an average of £11 in 2020 to £23.30 in 2023. Units from broadleaf projects attracted an average price of £29.31 in 2023, while units from mixed conifer projects were sold for an average of £20.62.

Robert South asked if sales volumes could be added to the website alongside the prices by species.

Action 1: Vicky and Susan to add information about the sales volumes by species to the website.

Governance - Nature Markets Strategy Board

Pat provided an update on the Nature Markets Strategy Board. He outlined details about the role of the board and how it will operate.

The first meeting took place in June. The agenda included agreeing the new group's terms of reference and the work programme for the code. Minutes are available on the Woodland Carbon Code website.

James Russell asked how the new board links with other nature market governance groups and asked if the board name should reflect the fact it is related to forestry. Pat explained that the members sit on many other boards and groups so can help to create connections and agreed to discuss the name with members.

Action 2: Pat to discuss the Nature Market Strategy Board name with board members.

Improving efficiency

Pat provided an overview of work to improve the efficiency of Woodland Carbon Code operations. He highlighted how an increase in capacity has helped the team to complete validations more quickly.

Andy outlined how the team is also reviewing the application process to find ways to streamline it. Rebecca Fairman requested that validation and verification bodies should be involved in the review to ensure the process is as efficient as possible.

Vicky explained that the project to tender for a new registry platform and the code's involvement in the CivTech challenge also provide opportunities for efficiency through new technological solutions.

The team is working with the Scottish Government and Defra on a public procurement process to retender for a new registry. The Prior Information Notice is currently available on [Public Contracts Scotland](#) and we have promoted it on social media. The award will be made in the summer of 2025.

Robert South commented that the tender notice is not on the Welsh Government procurement site.

Action 3: Vicky to check where the tender document has been published (Update: it also appears on www.find-tender.service.gov.uk, but is not available on Sell2Wales).

CivTech is a Scottish Government programme which connects the public sector with inventive minds to solve problems and create transformative products. The team has selected four companies to work with during the exploration phase in November and will then select a company to work with in the accelerator stage in 2025. Companies will explore how they can use technology to administer, measure and predict the carbon performance of projects more coherently, efficiently and effectively.

ICVCM accreditation

Andy provided an update on work to prepare to apply for the code to be assessed by the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market.

He explained that the team will consult on and publish a new version of the code before submitting an application in April 2025.

Graham Clark commented that lots of overarching frameworks and principles are being developed for the carbon market which can make it confusing for landowners. He asked how they all link together.

Andy agreed there is a lot of development activity but explained that the frameworks and principles at Scotland, UK and Global levels generally align with each other.

Additionality

Pat provided an update on work to review the code's additionality test. The team is working with EY to consult on options to enhance the financial additionality test. The consultation period has been extended by two weeks until Friday 29 November.

Graham Clark and Robert South highlighted the importance of allowing appropriate time for market participants to provide feedback and welcomed the extension.

Communications

Susan Szymborski-Welsh, Woodland Carbon Code Communications Officer, provided an update on communications activity.

She worked with communications contacts and the Woodland Carbon Code team to develop a communications strategy and plan. The strategy is based on the strategic priorities of the Woodland Carbon Code and informed by customer feedback.

Activities have included updating the website, running a webinar series, developing key messages and helping to develop a consultation policy. The board were appreciative of the improved communication activities.

3. Biodiversity crediting

Joe Anderson gave an update on work to develop a procedure to measure and account for biodiversity alongside the Peatland Code and Woodland Carbon Code programmes.

The project team has consulted on the metrics which could be used to measure biodiversity uplift and has piloted verification on a number of sites. The team will consult on the standard and wider process for implementing it in January 2025. They are considering a soft launch in April 2025.

This project is being funded through the Facility for Investment Ready Nature in Scotland and will run until March 2025.

The group were supportive of the proposed methodology although expressed some concerns about the cost of monitoring. They also had questions about how the proposed framework would work with the Woodland Carbon Code. Pat explained that the team will consider this further, but no decisions have been made yet.

Action 4: Board members to provide any feedback to Joe by the end of November and to respond to the consultation in early 2025.

4. Policy updates from countries

England

Ayse Selcuk informed the group that BSI, the UK's National Standards Body, has launched a [public consultation](#) on its biodiversity standard and would be consulting on a community benefit standard in spring 2025. Both standards form part of the [Nature Investment Programme](#).

Scotland

Pat highlighted that the Scottish Government is working on a new climate change plan, is moving to a carbon budgeting system and recently launched a [Natural Capital Market Framework](#). He also mentioned that the ETS Authority ran a consultation about integrating greenhouse gas removals in the UK Emissions Trading Scheme.

Wales

Fiona Hay explained that a new [woodland restoration scheme](#) and a [forestry and timber skills fund](#) is open this month. She also highlighted that a timber industry strategy is being developed which will be published for consultation next year.

Northern Ireland

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



5. Any other business and date of next meeting

Robert South asked whether the use of a minimum intervention model in the carbon calculator would be reviewed. Andy responded that this could form part of the consultation before the next version of the code.

Next meeting: 9am to 11am on Wednesday 26 February 2025 via Microsoft Teams.