

Operations Note 022

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> June 2011

# Enabling Woodlands to Comply with Government Timber Procurement Policy

## Purpose

This Operations Note provides woodland owners, managers and forestry agents in England, and timber suppliers using, or processing wood products sourced from English woodlands, the background and knowledge needed to meet the requirements of the UK Government's Timber Procurement Policy.

This Operations Note is specific to the **Category B option** for timber procurement only, and may not be directly relevant to those owners or agents who are using the EWGS Woodland Planning Grant (WPG) management plan for other management or grant funding purposes.

## Timber Procurement Policy

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 there was a change to the UK Government's Timber Procurement Policy. Since then, all central government departments, their executive agencies, and non-departmental public bodies are now required to purchase either legal and sustainable timber, or Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) licensed timber, when procuring timber products.

Local Authorities in England are reviewing their position with regard to the timber procurement policy, and some have already adopted a similar procurement policy in their area.

The Government's policy presently only applies in England, but it is expected that the devolved authorities in Wales and in Scotland will adopt a similar approach to timber procurement in due course.

In respect of the timber procurement policy, the term 'timber' covers any wood based product. By definition, this includes all solid wood products, furniture (whether solid or chipboard based), paper, firewood and wood chips for woodfuel.

The Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET) is an organisation funded by Defra to provide free, and impartial, advice and guidance to all public sector buyers and their suppliers, to aid compliance with the timber procurement policy.

For further information regarding the procurement protocol go to the CPET web site at: [www.proforest.net/cpet](http://www.proforest.net/cpet).

## Demonstrating compliance with the Policy

In order to demonstrate that timber is from a legal and sustainable source, it is necessary to prove:

- **The source of the timber (chain of custody).** As the policy applies to legality and sustainability *in the forest*, it is necessary to know where the timber originated.
- **That the forest source was legally and sustainably managed.** Once the source of the timber is known, it is necessary to show that the forest is being managed legally and sustainably.

Therefore, evidence related to both management of the forest, and the chain of custody is required. There are two main types of evidence that are accepted:

**Category A evidence.** Where woodlands are managed under an independent certification scheme, such as Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC), they will automatically meet the new procurement requirements.

**Category B evidence.** This is documentary evidence (other than Category A evidence) that provides assurance that the source is legal and sustainable. Timber growers may also be able to supply timber through: **Supply of controlled wood or FLEGT Timber.**

## Category B evidence

Forestry Commission England (FCE) provides an alternative (Category B) route to that of the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) for woodland owners who do not have full Certification. This route allows woodland owners to provide the necessary evidence to meet the Category B criteria on legality and sustainability, as laid down in the policy.

To establish the criteria required, the Category B route is only available through the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) Woodland Planning Grant (WPG). The WPG template and guidance has been amended so it more fully meets the requirements of the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS)<sup>1</sup>. CPET has confirmed that the revised WPG and associated monitoring process, set out in this note, fully meets the legal and sustainable criteria for supplying timber using the Category B option.

The WPG process receives grant funding through EWGS. The application form, management plan template and other relevant guidance documents can be viewed online and downloaded from [www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs-wpg](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs-wpg). The WPG Category B option is open to owners with less than 100 hectares of woodland, and more than 3 hectares, and whose woodlands are not certified.

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<sup>1</sup> UKFS is currently being reviewed, with an agreed updated version due summer 2011.

It is envisaged that owners with more than 100 hectares will pursue the Category A, full certification option, if they wish to supply any timber through a Government timber procurement contract.

The WPG Category B route is not compulsory, and owners may opt to meet the requirements of Category B by gathering and providing their own evidence in order to meet the legality and sustainability criteria.

It is down to the main supplier of the Government contract to decide if the evidence provided is adequate and sufficient for this purpose.

Additionally, the Government department, or agency offering the contract, may ask for independent checks to be made if they have any concerns about either the legality or sustainability aspects of any timber being supplied.

## How do I use the FC process?

To become Category B compliant, the policy requires evidence that shows the source of timber is legal and sustainable.

We will do this using the Woodland Planning Grant (WPG) to support production of a management plan. Once approved, the management plan will demonstrate the sustainable and legal management required. Subsequent work proposals, such as felling or other grant work, will be linked to the management plan using a unique Contract Number. The process is set out in a flowchart at [Appendix 1](#).

**For Category B compliance, all WPG contracts using the WPG template, and with a claim year of 10/11 or later, must use the latest version of the template available on our website [www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs-wpg](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs-wpg).**

(We will accept other management plan templates for use with WPG, but they must be approved by the FCE National Team before they are used).

### Make the WPG application

You should make a EWGS application for WPG (and Woodland Assessment Grant (WAG) if appropriate) using the standard EWGS 1 and 2 forms.

To identify the application as being for Category B compliance, on the EWGS 1 form you must tick the **Yes** box for gaining Category B approval in *Section 11 - Woodland Certification* (see below).

<b>11. Woodland Certification</b>		
Is your woodland certified to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Who is the certifying body or resource/group manager? _____		
When does your Certificate or your Group Manager's Certificate expire? _____		
If you are not certified, are you applying for EWGS to gain category B approval and meet government sustainable timber procurement requirements?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

(If you are completing your EWGS application online, you should tick 'Yes' in the Government Procurement question on the Property Details tab).  
Complete the forms and return them to your regional office.

When submitting your WPG application, you will need to ensure the application has a valid Single Business Identification (SBI) number, and that the land is registered on the Rural Land Register (RLR). If you require details on either of these, go to [www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgscustomerregistration](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgscustomerregistration).

When we receive the WPG application, we will confirm that the application is complete, and that sufficient grant funds are available. We will then register it as a new EWGS case and process it to contract stage. Once processed, we will issue an EWGS contract for the Woodland Planning Grant to you for signing.

In this contract, you need to agree when you will make the claim for your WPG grant. You should think carefully about how long it will take to write and review the management plan. Once you have signed and returned the contract, and we have approved it, you will begin gathering information for your management plan.

### **Write the woodland management plan**

You will draft the management plan using the current WPG template (or a previously agreed alternative template format), in line with the WPG template guidance document. There are worked examples of management plans on the EWGS web site to assist you with this process.

For Category B cases, you must detail the felling and other grant work you wish to undertake in the next few years in Section 10 – Table B of the management plan template.

### **Review of the management plan**

When the draft plan has been completed, it should be returned to your regional office for agreement and approval by your woodland officer. You may be asked by the woodland officer assessing the plan to provide additional information, or clarify some of the content you have included.

Therefore, we recommended that you submit the management plan for review at least 3 months before the end of the WPG claim year. This will allow sufficient time to gather any additional information, make amendments etc, and agree them with the woodland officer, and still afford time to make the claim for your WPG grant.

Any work proposals detailed in Section 10 – Table B of the management plan must match with the content of the management plan programme of work (template Section 7), and must be UKFS complaint.

Once the management plan has been assessed and agreed with the woodland officer, you will be able to submit the claim for the WPG grant using the claim form ([EWGS 8](#)). We will pay this claim straight away.

### Management plan felling proposals: Section 10 – Table B

Following approval of the WPG management plan, the detailed felling and thinning proposals contained within Section 10 – Table B are used to create a new linked EWGS case (see detail in Section 6 below).

The new Linked EWGS case will have its own EWGS case reference, but it will also be linked to the original WPG management plan case, and will share the WPG case number on its documentation. This link between the cases will create the Category B evidence of legality and sustainability.

When this new case of fully processed and approved, the felling permission issued with it will be granted for 10 years.

### New EWGS applications - Felling proposals

You are also able to make subsequent EWGS applications for felling permissions, as well as for grants, if that work requires Category B compliance. These applications need to be supported by, and match with, the approved WPG management plan.

To identify the new EWGS application as being for Category B compliance, on the EWGS 1 form you must tick the *Yes* box for gaining Category B approval in *Section 11 - Woodland Certification* (see below).

<b>11. Woodland Certification</b>	
Is your woodland certified to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Who is the certifying body or resource/group manager?	_____
When does your Certificate or your Group Manager's Certificate expire?	_____
If you are not certified, are you applying for EWGS to gain category B approval and meet government sustainable timber procurement requirements?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

(If you are completing your EWGS application online, you should tick 'Yes' to the *Government Procurement* question on the Property Details tab).

You should note the WPG management plan agreement number on your application, so that we can easily link the work proposals EWGS case to it. Ideally, you should also provide a copy of the management plan as well.

### Review of new felling proposals against existing management plan

You need to ensure that any felling and work proposals submitted through subsequent EWGS applications match with the agreed / existing WPG management plan. The management plan is likely to need updating so that it covers a period of at least 10 years, particularly where felling and thinning proposals are included. This will ensure that when a 10 year felling permission is granted, there is the appropriate documentary evidence to support its sustainability and legality, and compliance with UKFS.

If the proposals and the management plan do not match, you will be asked to amend the proposals, or the management plan, and any changes made will need to be agreed with the woodland officer before we will proceed with the new EWGS application.

### Processing new felling proposals

Assuming the work proposals submitted in subsequent EWGS applications are acceptable, we will process them in the usual way, and where necessary, new EWGS cases will be placed on the **Public Register** for consultation on felling proposals. Provided there are no comments or issues that need to be addressed, we will then produce a new EWGS contract, linked to the original WPG management plan, and send it to you for signing and final return to us.

When new EWGS cases, linked to the Original WPG management plan, are fully processed and approved, any felling permissions granted within the new EWGS contract will be granted for 10 years.

### Chain of custody

In order to help prove the chain of custody, it is essential that all management planning and work proposals are referred to by a single reference number.

To achieve this, your WPG case number will act as a Original case for all other EWGS cases linked to it. You can add as many additional EWGS agreements to your Category B option as you wish. They will all be linked to the original WPG case, and share its unique reference number.

## Can I use my existing plan?

If your existing management plan is based on the WPG management plan template (version 3.0), and it is not currently set up to be Category B compliant, then yes, you can. However:

- You will need to advise us that you want this plan to be considered for the Category B option.
- The management plan is likely to need updating so that it covers a period of at least 10 years, particularly where felling and thinning proposals are included.
- You will need to agree with the woodland officer that the existing management plan meets the latest UKFS requirements. This might mean having to provide more up to date information than the plan currently contains. If we have not agreed to pay for a new WPG agreement, you will have to pay for this work to be undertaken.

You need to ensure that any work proposals seeking Category B approval match with the management plan. If they do not match you will be asked to amend the proposals, or the management plan, and any changes made will need to be agreed with us before we proceed.

## Inspections

- Category B WPG schemes, and all linked grants and felling approvals for the property, will be subject to a slightly enhanced Forestry Commission inspection process.
- If selected for inspection (e.g. as a result of submitting a claim for payment), our inspector may visit any part of the property, and may undertake checks on items such as health and safety, or correct use of herbicides. This is necessary to be able to verify compliance with the UKFS.
- If an inspection highlights a compliance problem, we will write to the main contact. Our letter will make it clear where the failings are perceived to be. No other action will be undertaken, unless the inspection result materially affects a claim for grant.

In addition, our administration of Category B option schemes may also be subject to an 'independent verification' regime. This may involve a desk review of the application, management plan, and any other relevant paperwork, as well as a field inspection. This independent review process will be paid for by us.

## Chain of custody

The WPG Category B process only provides evidence that the woodland is a legally and sustainably managed source. Suppliers will still need to provide additional chain of custody evidence to connect actual supplied timber products to that woodland source.

Being at the beginning of the chain, it is easy for woodland owners to achieve this. We provide a simple form that should accompany each load of timber or wood product that leaves the forest (see [Appendix 2](#)). This can then be used further down the supply chain as necessary.

## Sources of further advice

The [Grants and Regulations website](#) contains all the information you need to apply for grant support. Alternatively, you can request this information from your local [Forestry Commission office](#).

## Versions

Version 1.0 issued 100624

Version 1.1 issued DRA

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**e.wgs**

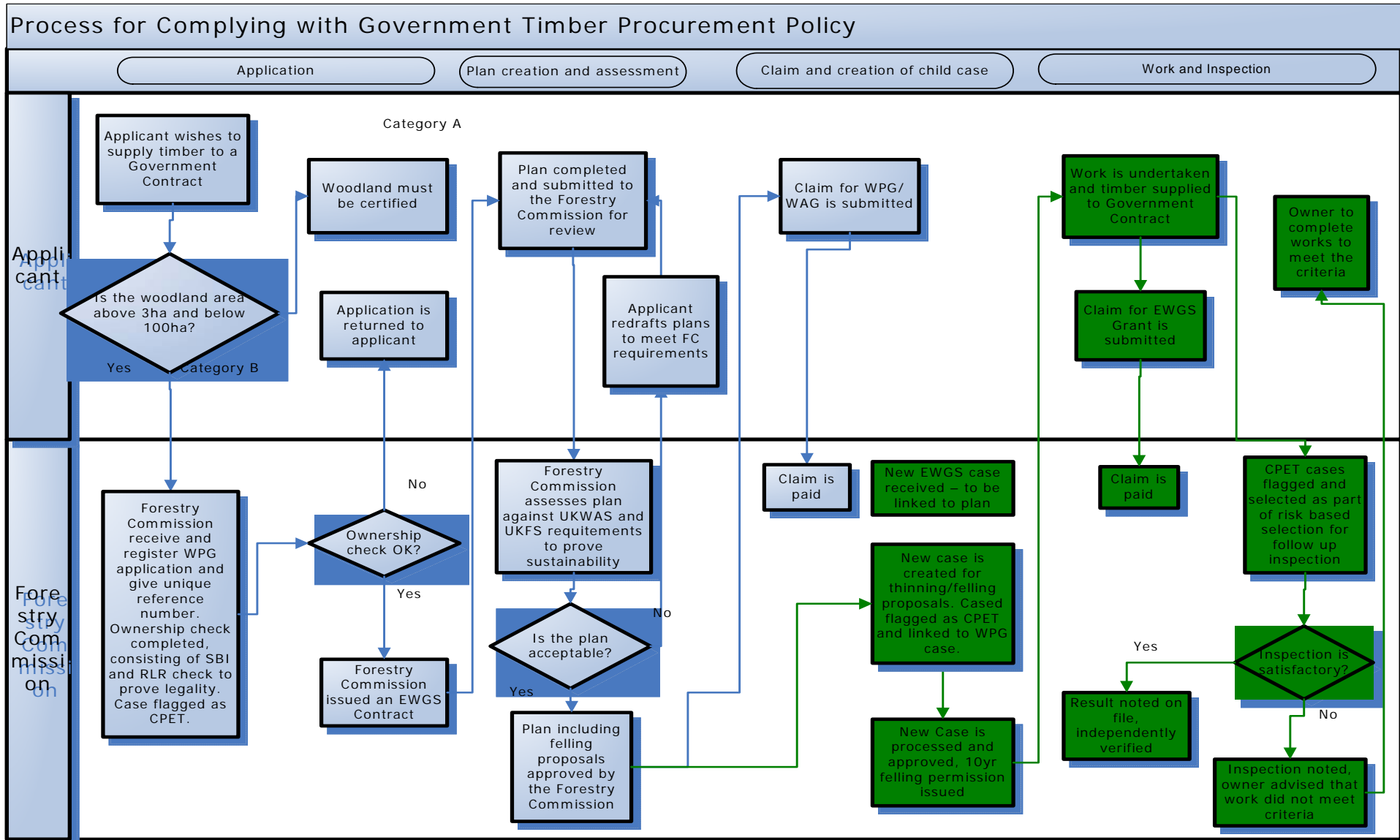


The scheme is supported with European Union and Defra funding

**English Woodland Grant Scheme**



# Appendix 1 Process Flowchart



**Appendix 2 Supply chain information** (To be sent with each timber dispatch)

Product			
Name of supplier		Name of Purchaser	
Contact person		EWGS case number	
Contact Details		Date of dispatch	

Supply chain stage	Supply chain description			Controls for preventing mixing or substitution	Mechanism for verification	Evidence available or provided
	Species description	Volume in m <sup>3</sup>	Felling site (Cpt name / number)			
Forest <i>(example)</i>	<i>Scots Pine</i>	<i>16.00</i>	<i>10a</i>	<i>None required. No risk of illegally felled timber from this woodland entering the supply chain.</i>	<i>Forestry Commission Approved Management Plan and Grant Scheme.</i>	<i>Copy of plan and EWGS available to view, along with chain of custody evidence</i>
Forest Stage 1						

## ON022 – Government Timber Procurement Policy

Supply chain stage	Supply chain description		Controls for preventing mixing or substitution	Mechanism for verification	Evidence available or provided
	Description	Location			
Stage 2					
Stage 3					
Stage 4					
Stage 5					
Stage 6					
Stage 7					

Note: Please use as many 'Stages' as necessary. One checklist should be completed for each forest source. A composite product will require the completion of more than one Checklist. Please refer to *Practical guides: supply chain information* for information on how to complete the above Checklist.