

Revision of the UKFS & Guidelines: Consultation Briefing and Questions

Background

1 The United Kingdom Forestry Standard (UKFS) sets out the approach of the governments in the UK to sustainable forest management. This approach is based on internationally recognised science and good forestry practice. The UKFS defines standards of management, and provides a basis for regulation and monitoring based on agreed principles and criteria for sustainable forestry.

2 The UKFS has been developed specifically for forestry in the UK. A principal role of the UKFS is to demonstrate that international protocols on sustainable forest management, agreed at a European and a global level, are applied in an appropriate way to the management of forests in the UK. Together with the national forestry strategies in the four constituent countries of UK, the UKFS is the key element of the National Forest Programme. This is a national overview of forestry and statement of intent that links the delivery of the UK's international obligations on sustainable forest management with policies on implementation. (See pages 8-14 of the UKFS)

3 Linked to the UKFS, and also available for consultation, The Forestry Guidelines capture the essence of the various elements of forest management in further detail. The topics covered in the guidelines are; biodiversity, climate change, historic environment, landscape, people and soils. (A new edition of the Forests and Water Guidelines will be available for consultation later in the year.)

The UKFS & Guidelines Approach

4 The proposed standard is divided into two levels of requirements.

- Legal requirements set out what a forest manager must do to comply with the main existing statutes of relevance.
- Good forest practice requirements set out further requirements that should be met or addressed, depending on the context, to secure wider benefits from forestry and receive government support. The purpose of the Guidelines is to show how the

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requirements can be met, and provide advice on forest management. This approach is aligned with, (but not bound by); the cross compliance requirements for other EU funded land uses. Forestry incentives are based on the provision of grant-aid (mainly through rural development programmes, RDPs) to private owners for appropriate planting and management actions.

5 The UKFS & Guidelines are aimed primarily at woodland managers and owners, but will be of interest to anyone concerned with UK woodlands. The new UKFS & Guidelines do not involve new government regulations, but they set out to explain existing regulations and guidance in a more explicit way. In common with the principles of better regulation, the approach is geared to ensuring government policies are achieved whilst minimising regulatory costs and the burden on woodland owners and managers.

Why Revise the UK Forestry Standard and Guidelines?

6 The existing UKFS & Guidelines are out of date. A consultation exercise, carried out by the Forestry Commission in 2004, demonstrated that forestry practitioners and others with environmental, social and regulatory interests in UK valued the Guideline series and supported the idea of renewal. Once the revision process got underway the need to strengthen the links between the UKFS and the Guidelines was identified. The UKFS itself was reviewed with a light touch in 2004, principally to reflect devolution of forestry policy. The 2009 revision of the UKFS & Guidelines is a more significant revision to:

- i. provide an explicit statement of all the forestry requirements for land-managers, in common with statements for other land uses supported by EU rural development measures;
- ii. clarify the status of the UKFS, and the assurances provided by meeting the sustainability standard through the regulatory process;
- iii. strengthen the role of forest planning;
- iv. incorporate recent developments in the scientific understanding of forestry, in legislation and international agreements, and in the way forestry activity is monitored and reported;
- v. include domestic and international initiatives on climate change and the role woodlands can play in mitigation and adaptation;
- vi. incorporate forest management requirements from the new versions of the Guidelines and thus link UKFS & Guidelines more closely.

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7 For the first time, the UKFS will address ways in which sustainable carbon benefits can be secured in forest management as a means of maximising forestry's contribution to climate change mitigation. This is underpinned by a new Guideline, which provides advice on managing woodlands in a changing climate.

8 The UKFS & Guidelines have been developed by the Forestry Commission working with the Northern Ireland Forest Service, colleagues in other parts of government and various experts in the fields covered. Having undertaken a preliminary consultation in November 2007 and sought the views of an external reference group, they are now ready for wider consultation and comments from other interested parties and the general public.

How does the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) relate to the UKFS & Guidelines?

9 The UKFS & Guidelines set out the approach of the governments in the UK to sustainable forest management. This is informed by both forest research conducted in the UK and by the policy directions and priorities of forestry ministers. The UKFS provides the basis for forest regulation under the various forestry acts and other relevant legislation.

10 International concern over deforestation and degradation of the world's forests prompted the development of a range of voluntary certification schemes from the 1990s onwards; these provide independent assurance that timber bearing a certification label is sourced from forests which have been responsibly and sustainably managed. These voluntary schemes are market-driven and develop their own sustainable forest management certification standards. These standards are independent of governments and provide a basis for independent third-party auditing.

11 The UKFS & Guidelines, as a statement of good forest practice, are important as source material for developing the UKWAS certification standard for the UK. UK Woodland Assurance Standard provides the basis for voluntary certification in the UK; it is managed by a partnership of member bodies representing economic, environmental and social stakeholders working together and taking decisions on the basis of consensus. The UKWAS partnership draws on the requirements set by government in the UKFS & Guidelines and by the two major international forest certification schemes, (Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)). These requirements are then fashioned into an audit protocol or certification standard.

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How will the UKFS be Implemented and Monitored?

12 The main bodies responsible for promoting and regulating the UKFS & Guidelines are the Forestry Commission (in GB) and Forest Service (in Northern Ireland); however the UKFS & Guidelines will also be applied by other bodies with responsibilities for trees including local authorities and agricultural / environment departments. Within the framework of the UKFS, the FC in England, Scotland and Wales and the Forest Service in Northern Ireland will develop their own approaches to approval and monitoring. There will be differences in detail to take account of the nature of woodland in each country and risk factors associated with UKFS compliance. The approval of forestry proposals and payments of grants will be based on checks against the UKFS requirements and guidelines. More detail on implementation and monitoring is given in section 6 of the UKFS.

Equality and Diversity

13 Equality is concerned with creating a fair society and diversity is concerned with recognising and respecting the differences between groups in society. As public bodies, the Forestry Commission and Forest Service have legal responsibilities to tackle discrimination and promote equality in delivering services and devising policies. The six strands of diversity are race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age. An equality impact assessment (EqIA) has been prepared as part of the consultation exercise and we would be grateful for any comments on the impacts of the revisions in relation to the various groups of diversity. (Question 4 below)

Consultation Questions

14 The following questions have been prepared to structure the consultation exercise and help stimulate comments. Questions start from a general perspective and then turn to more specific issues associated with individual publications. After each question there is space to add further comments and make suggestions. Other views, outside the scope of the questions, would also be welcome.

All the documents have numbered paragraphs so please refer to these when making comments and be sure to make it clear which one of the documents your comments relate to.

Please submit suggested text changes in the form below. Boxes can be expanded if you are replying using MS Word or please use additional sheets if replying on paper.

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The following documents are available from – www.forestry.gov.uk/ukfs

UK Forestry Standard
Forests and Biodiversity Guidelines
Forests and Climate Change Guidelines
Forests and the Historic Environment Guidelines
Forests and People Guidelines
Forests and Soils Guidelines
Consultation Briefing and Questions
Respondent Information Form

If you do not have access to the internet, hard copies of all the documents above can be posted to you.

Please contact Amanda Campbell, 0131 314 6358 –
amanda.campbell@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Deadline for Responses

Please ensure your comments are with us by **Friday 30th October 2009**.

UKFS
Forestry Commission
231 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh
EH12 7AT

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CONSULTATION QUESTIONS (boxes can be expanded if necessary)

Please ensure you complete the respondent information form on page 10

Your name:	
Your organisation (if any):	
Date:	

No	Question.
General Approach	
1.	Looking at the revision project as a whole, does the approach taken meet the objectives, set out in para 6, above ?
Yes/No	
Comments	
Scope	
2.	Does the UKFS & Forestry Guidelines series adequately address the elements of sustainable forest management, as identified by internationally agreed principles and criteria? (UKFS page 12)
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Comments:	

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Requirements

3. Does the range of UKFS Requirements in the table capture the essentials of sustainable forest management?

Yes No

Comments: If no, please state what you think should be added or omitted.

Clarity and Detail

4. In general, are the UKFS and Guidelines clearly written and adequate in terms of their length and detail?

Yes No

Comments:

Additional Guidance

5. Some of the new Guidelines have less practical detail than previous versions, this will now be covered in supporting publications. Are there particular topics that you can identify where you would like further practical information or guidance?

Yes No

Comments:

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Equality and Diversity

6. In relation to para 13 above, do you feel the UKFS and Guidelines will have positive and equitable impacts on all groups in society?

Yes No

Comments:

The UKFS - General

7. Do you have any general comments about the scope and content of the UKFS?

Yes No

Comments:

The UKFS - Scope

8. Do you feel there are any omissions, or un-necessary inclusions?

Yes No

Comments:

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The UKFS – Detail

9. Do you have comments about the level of detail contained in the text of the UKFS (excluding sections 5 & 7)?

Yes No

Comments:

UKFS – Detail Requirements Table and Forest Practice (Sections 5 & 7)

10. Do you have comments about the level of detail contained in the text of sections 5 & 7: the UKFS requirements table and the forest planning and general forestry practice section?

Yes No

Comments:

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Guidelines: Please complete a separate sheet for each Guideline publication you wish to comment on.

Comments on the Forests and **INSERT TITLE** Guidelines

GQ 1 General

Do you feel The Forests and **INSERT TITLE** Guidelines are adequate in terms of length and detail?

Yes No

Comments:

GQ 2 Content

Do you feel there are any omissions, or un-necessary inclusions?

Yes No

Comments:

GQ 3 Technical

Bearing in mind the function of the Guideline publications described in the diagram inside the front cover, do you feel the information is pitched at an appropriate level in terms of technical content?

Yes No

Comments:

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GQ 4 Guideline Bullet Points

Do you have any comments on the guideline bullet points set out under each factor?

Yes No

Comments (please include the bullet point reference number)

Other Comments

Other Comments: please use this space to submit any other comments you wish to make on the UKFS & Guidelines

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RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

CONSULTATION ON THE UK FORESTRY STRATEGY (UKFS) AND GUIDELINES

Please complete the details below and return it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately. Thank you for your help.

Name: **Amanda Campbell, Corporate and Forestry Support**

Postal Address: **Silvan House, 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh, EH12 7AT**

Are you responding: (please tick one box)

- (a) as an individual
- (b) on behalf of a group/organisation

2a. Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (on the Forestry Commission website)?

- Yes (go to 2b below)
- No, not at all We will treat your response as confidential

2b. Where *confidentiality is not requested*, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis (please tick one of the following boxes)

- Yes, make my response, name and address all available
- Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address
- Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

SHARING RESPONSES/FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

We will share your response internally with other Forestry Commission policy teams who will be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Forestry Commission to contact you again in the future in relation to this consultation response?

- Yes
- No