

Natural England

Sustainable Timber

Procurement Policy

Government Mandated Policy

Date: January 2009

www.naturalengland.org.uk



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Statement of intent

Natural England is the public sector organisation responsible for the conservation, enhancement and management of the natural environment across the whole of England. Although the environment is our primary concern there is also a social dimension to our work, through our relationships with suppliers and the local communities in which we operate. We are therefore committed to understanding and managing the environmental and social impacts of our operations, including the procurement of timber.

Ensuring sustainability is embedded across every function, including procurement, is essential to our goal of making a sustainable contribution to society. This policy explains how Natural England will integrate environmental and social considerations into its procurement of timber. We recognise that improving our procurement performance is an ongoing process and that our suppliers, both large and small, are important partners in our journey to become more sustainable.

Our aims and objectives are to:

- Minimise our environmental impact and deliver community benefits through better selection and improved usage of the timber we procure;
- Actively communicate our sustainable timber requirements to the supply market in order to stimulate demand thus improving the availability and variety of options available to us;
- Provide suppliers with practical advice on sourcing and evidencing sustainable timber products so that the risks of protracted lead-in times and perceived capital premiums are removed;
- Encourage our suppliers to adopt practices that minimise their environmental impact and deliver community benefits in relation to their own operations and throughout the supply chains in which they operate;
- Work in partnership with suppliers and communicate good news stories to enhance the reputations of both Natural England and those suppliers who provide a positive contribution to the environment.
- Deliver against Natural England's corporate target – to be in the top quartile of public sector organisations for sustainable working practices, and the Government Timber Policy.

What do we require and why?

Legal and Sustainable Timber

The UK Government Timber Procurement Policy, announced in 2000, requires central departments in England to seek to procure wood and wood derived products from legal and sustainable sources. The policy is mandatory for all central Government departments, executive agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs). It presents a staged approach, such that by 2015 all timber bought by, or on behalf of government is legally and sustainably sourced.

As a conservation organisation, Natural England welcomes Government commitment to buying only legal and sustainable timber. However, Natural England has been tasked by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act *'to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.'* In order to honour this remit, Natural England believes it cannot afford to delay its contribution to realising the agenda. Therefore, **as of the 1st April 2008, Natural England will only accept legal and sustainable timber** in all contracts relating to the provision of construction, rural services and furniture.

Rural Communities

Natural England recognises the importance of investing in rural communities. It is by improving the economic infrastructure of these areas that we ensure facilities exist for visitors. This in turn supports our campaign to provide greater access to the natural environment, offering preventative health solutions to obesity and fostering greater knowledge and understanding of the country in which we live.

Natural England is committed to encouraging a diverse supplier base which enables us to contribute to increased social inclusion, whilst tapping into alternative sources to define the needs of the countryside. We recognise that small to medium sized business (SMEs) may assess the requirement to evidence all timber purchase for legality and sustainability as an undue financial and/or resource encumbrance. Natural England recognises there is a perception that SMEs incur high costs to achieve and maintain chain of custody (CoC) certification, which is not offset by the extra orders resultant of an enhanced reputation. Moreover, preparing evidence when not CoC certified is a lengthy and difficult process. (For more information on CoC certification, please read the Government Timber Procurement Advice Note available from www.proforest.net/CPET)

To remove these barriers, **Natural England will require all contractors either to be CoC certified or to ensure that they have sourced any timber and wood derived products from a CoC certified supplier (1st tier only). The Contractor shall provide Natural England with a copy of the supplier's chain of custody certificate and records of measures taken to avoid contamination with non-sustainable timber such as records of storage and transportation from the contractor's supplier to Natural England.** The format by which this evidence shall be conveyed is as follows:

Contractor's Name	Contractor's Supplier	Supplier's CoC code	Copy of Supplier's Certificate and Delivery Note	Measures taken to avoid contamination
The Picket Fencing Corporation	Prefab Pickets	TT-COC-1234	Supplied	Separate Storage Area on Site (Photo Evidence Supplied). Delivered directly to customer site etc.

Example

Natural England will only accept CoC certification if it is from a Government approved programme. These are from the Forest Stewardship Council, Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification, Sustainable Forestry Initiative and Canadian Standards Association.

Coppiced Material

Natural England understands that coppicing plays an important role in improving the quality of woodland and perpetuating the biodiversity of habitats. It also sustains rural traditions and links with historic land management practices. As coppicing is inherently carbon neutral (lost CO₂ from coppiced wood is recapture by new growth encouraged by increased availability of space) and does not alter woodland sufficiently as to disrupt forest dwelling communities, **coppiced material will not require chain of custody certification for its use in Natural England projects. However, evidence of compliance with the UK Forestry Standard (including associated guidelines) for coppicing, legal rights to, and the source of the coppiced wood must be provided.**

Tropical Hardwoods

The work that Natural England undertakes has traditionally involved softwoods or temperate hardwoods. However, with the increasing awareness that our marine environment is just as important as our land-based ecosystems. In conserving our marine environments Natural England understands softwoods are susceptible to rotting in saltwater environments. However, the length of time it takes for tropical hardwoods to reach maturity, and the levels of corruption in the regions they grow means sustainability certification is difficult to achieve. **Natural England will therefore not require a CoC certificate for tropical hardwoods. However, evidence of legality and forest source will be still be required. Moreover, a business case must be submitted, justifying the need to use tropical hardwood.**

Delivery and support

We understand that sourcing and evidencing legal and sustainable timber may still prove to be a new and complicated experience for our contractors. To ensure we are able to meet our aims and objectives, Natural England will:

- Deliver training to all project officers and procurement staff responsible for letting construction, rural services and furniture contracts;
- Put in place specialist approver routing on the Oracle Business Suite to ensure all contracts are checked by the sustainable procurement specialist;
- Run monthly reports to track the type, value and number of contracts let which include the provision for legal and sustainable timber. Underpin this with a 10% audit regime to ensure staff are correctly following procedure;
- Ensure our timber policy and conditions of contract are formally communicated in the tenders we send out;
- Run workshops at the behest of suppliers to ensure they understand our requirements, where to source certified timber and what evidence is required to verify legality and sustainability.
- Maintain a database of COC suppliers and up-to-date information on workshops on the NE/FC/RSPB/CCW supported ECOLOTs website.

If you have any further questions, or would like us to hold a workshop with your organisation, please contact:

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