

Woodland Carbon Code executive board minutes

Wednesday 10 December 2025 via Microsoft Teams

Present: Pat Snowdon, Vicky West, Andy Baker, Susan Szymborski-Welsh (Scottish Forestry), Fiona Hay (Welsh Government), Mark Broadmeadow (Forestry Commission)

Apologies: Jamie Smith (Scottish Forestry), Breandan Mulholland (Northern Ireland Forest Service)

1. Outstanding actions

Pat provided an update on outstanding actions:

Action 1: Andy to prepare a paper on compensatory planting for a future meeting.

Update: This is ongoing.

Action 2: Vicky to add units which are being held in inactive accounts as an agenda item for the next executive board meeting.

Update: Ongoing. Vicky will add this to the next executive board meeting agenda.

2. Conflicts of interest

No members declared a conflict of interest.

3. Updates

Pat and Vicky provided updates on the following topics:

Feedback from the Nature Markets Strategy Board

The Nature Markets Strategy Board met on 10 December. The board agreed to change its name to Woodland Nature Markets Strategy Board.

The meeting covered topics including nutrient neutrality projects, validation and verification processes and resources and financial planning.

Statistics

Almost 4,000 hectares were validated to the code and over 400 hectares were verified to the code from 1 April to 30 September 2025.

The registration rate over this period is lower than the rate for the previous 12 months. However, registrations are very seasonal, with many of them taking place in December and January last year.

The average time it takes for projects to complete validation and verification has been significantly reduced over the last year.

Fiona asked if validation and verification bodies have targets on this. Vicky explained the process is not entirely in their control and relies on prompt responses from project developers too. We are working on key performance indicators with the validators. The new Rethink Codes platform will help improve efficiency and clarity too.

UK Land Carbon Registry

Updated platform: S&P Global moved the UK Land Carbon Registry to a new platform in August. The Woodland Carbon Code team is working with S&P Global to log and address outstanding issues and ensure good communication with users.

Retender: The project to retender for a new registry provider is ongoing. There have been some delays.

ICVCM and ICROA applications

The Woodland Carbon Code team has submitted an application to be assessed by the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM). The team has provided additional information as part of the initial completeness checks and hopes to receive more information soon.

The International Carbon Reduction and Offset Alliance (ICROA) has announced it will be closing next year. The Woodland Carbon Code's ICROA endorsement will remain in place until late 2026.

Mark asked what would happen if the code wasn't eligible for ICVCM accreditation. Pat explained the team would look at necessary changes and re-apply.

SBTi consultation

Pat highlighted that the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) is consulting on an updated draft of its revised Corporate Net-Zero Standard.

There are concerns that the section on double counting and corresponding adjustments could have a negative impact on the voluntary carbon market. Pat has contacted SBTi about this.

Action: Pat to share his correspondence to SBTi with the board.

UK Emissions Trading Scheme

Pat reminded members that the UK Emissions Trading Scheme Authority is exploring whether greenhouse gas removals should be integrated into the UK ETS. The authority ran a consultation last year and is expected to make a decision in 2026.

Working groups and project developer forum meetings

Vicky explained that the Woodland Carbon Code team is keen to encourage collaboration and engagement with the nature market sector.

The team is establishing a monitoring working group and project developer forum meetings to help gather insights from the sector and promote mutual understanding.

4. Woodland Carbon Purchase Fund

The UK Government is exploring establishing a Woodland Carbon Purchase Fund.

The fund would buy Pending Issuance Units to help landowners generate revenue at an early stage in projects. It is hoped this would encourage more people to develop Woodland Carbon Code projects, helping to increase woodland creation across the UK.

The project is currently in the research and design phase and includes stakeholder consultation. If the plan is viable, the fund would be launched in autumn 2027.

The group discussed some of the details which will need to be explored and that strategic communication will be important through the project.

Action: Vicky to arrange a meeting with Howdens on insuring units, copying in Mark.

5. Nutrient neutrality projects in England

Andy provided an update on work to explore how the code could accommodate projects which are taking part in nutrient neutrality schemes in England.

This could include updating the information required in the project design document, updating guidance on using the woodland benefits tool and making an update to the cashflow.

The Nature Markets Strategy Board agreed that nutrient neutrality projects that are required to stop all fertilised agricultural activity should reduce their income forgone value to zero when applying the Woodland Carbon Code additionality test.

Mark expressed a preference for a clear and simple process and the need for a register of nutrient neutrality projects.

Executive board members agreed to send a proposal to the Nature Markets Strategy Board on what to do when a nutrient neutrality contract stipulates a reduction in fertilised agriculture rather than a complete cessation.

Action: Andy and Susan to share a proposal with the Nature Markets Strategy Board on what to do when a nutrient neutrality contract stipulates a reduction in fertilised agriculture rather than a complete cessation.

6. Strategic planning

Vicky shared draft vision and mission statements with the board. Members suggested improvements. The team will work to finalise the statements as part of a wider strategic planning process.