Woodland Carbon Code executive board minutes

Wednesday 28 January 2026 via Microsoft Teams

Present: Pat Snowdon, Vicky West, Andy Baker, Susan Szymborski-Welsh (Scottish Forestry), Fiona Hay (Welsh Government), Mark Broadmeadow (Forestry Commission), Breandan Mulholland (Northern Ireland Forest Service), Rochelle Kennedy (IUCN Peatland Partnership)

Apologies: Jamie Smith (Scottish Forestry)

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: Ongoing. Andy has circulated a paper and will add it to the agenda for the next meeting.

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 discuss this when she returns to work.

Action 3: Vicky to arrange a meeting with Howdens on insuring units, copying in Mark.
Update: Ongoing. Vicky will progress this when she returns to work.

2. Conflicts of interest

No members declared a conflict of interest.

3. Biodiversity project update

Rochelle provided an update on the project to develop standardised biodiversity metrics and financial tools for the Woodland Carbon and Peatland Codes.

The first phase explored how biodiversity uplift could be measured, validated and monetised within the UK's evolving nature markets.

The current phase is exploring whether a similarity index could help to measure biodiversity uplift. This would involve measuring the similarity between a project's baseline and a reference site. The team is working to aggregate biodiversity data from reference sites across the UK and will also look at financial modelling.

Rochelle will deliver a webinar and publish an update before the current phase comes to an end on 31 March.

Mark highlighted that the woodland ecological condition tool will give low scores for new woodlands. Rochelle agreed this is something which the team should look at.

Breandan explained that the Northen Ireland Forest Service will be revising its grants schemes including how ecosystem services are handled. He suggested it would be useful for some of his colleagues to join biodiversity project meetings.

The team discussed what type of woodlands were being used as reference sites. Rochelle explained they are native woodlands of any age which are in good condition. Breandan felt it would be good to acknowledge the benefits of well managed non-native woodlands and Mark suggested it is important to consider how climate change may affect woodland sites in the future.

Mark asked how the model would account for open ground. Rochelle explained that users can sample different parts of a site, including areas of open ground.

Action 4: Susan to invite Rochelle to the next meeting to provide a further update.

4. <u>Project discussion</u>

The board discussed project-level commercially sensitive data.

5. <u>Forward look for 2026</u>

Pat outlined some of the priorities for the Woodland Carbon Code team during 2026. This includes aligning with international standards, improving efficiency and highlighting how the code makes permanent contributions to carbon removals.

Fiona reported there are lot of discussions around permanence and that it can sometimes be a barrier to landowners planting new woodlands.

6. <u>Updates</u>

Andy provided updates on the following topics:

Statistics

Almost 4,000 hectares were validated to the code and over 1,400 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 and there has been an increase in numbers over the last month.

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

UK Land Carbon Registry

The project to retender for a new registry provider is ongoing. There have been some delays. Pat hopes to be able to provide an update in the next few weeks.

ICVCM and BSI

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

The code was an observer for the Peatland Code as it went through BSI's Flex 701 nature investment standards early adopter process. Members of the Woodland Carbon Code team provided feedback on the standard and process ahead of formal assessments starting in 2027.

Project developer forum

Susan gave an update on the first project developer forum meeting. Topics included validation and verification timelines and the Pending Issuance Unit market. There were almost 50 attendees and 90% of respondents rated the session as helpful or very helpful. The next meeting will take place in April.

7. Clarification 1 to version 3.0

Andy highlighted work to release a clarification to version 3.0 of the code. The clarification will help project developers and validation and verification bodies interpret the standard. It will be effective from Thursday 29 January and covers aspects including documents needed at registration, accounting for grant uplifts and combining nutrient neutrality and carbon projects in England.

Members felt it was important to provide clear guidance on how to complete the income section of the cashflow for validation.