

Woodland Carbon Code advisory board minutes

Wednesday 26 August on Microsoft Teams

Present: Pat Snowdon, Leon DeBell, Anna Brand, Pippa Lewis (Scottish Forestry), Fiona Hay (Welsh Government), Robert South (Institute of Chartered Foresters), Andy Grundy (Soil Association), Nick Swinburn (Woodland Trust), Alex MacKinnon (Tilhill Forestry), Chris Waterfield (Forestry Commission), Steve Clarkson (Organic Farmers & Growers), Ewan Mackie (Forest Research), Joachim Halfdan Kruger (Cresco), Bruce Kennedy (Boston Consulting Group), Natalia Dorfman (Kita Earth), Matthew Doran (Country Land and Business Association), Renée Kerkvliet-Hermans (IUCN - Peatland Code), Kate Palmer (Confederation of Forest Industries - Confor), Craig Mackenzie (University of Edinburgh), Breandan Mulholland (Northern Ireland Forest Service), Lauren Dorricott (DEFRA).

Apologies: Vicky West (Scottish Forestry), Jamie Smith (Scottish Forestry)

1. Welcome and conflict of interest

Pat Snowdon welcomed in the meeting and asked for members to declare conflict of interest. No conflict of interest was declared.

2. Outstanding actions

Pat Snowdon provided updates to outstanding actions from last meeting

Action 1: Andrew Baker to follow up with Natalia regarding support over data consistency, sharing and automation.

Update: Ongoing. Andrew has left the Woodland Carbon Code; this action will be taken up by another WCC team member.

Action 2: Members to continue to discuss ways to reduce cost around validation/verification.

Update: Ongoing.

Action 3: Pat to highlight key issues about the Woodland Water Code project with the Woodland Nature Markets Strategy Board.

Update: Ongoing (Pat), aim to raise this at the next meeting of the Strategy Board.

Action 4: The Woodland Carbon Code team to explore the possibility of setting up an in-person meeting.

Update: Ongoing. The WCC team will set up an in-person meeting with auditors to discuss previously mentioned issues.

Action 5: Clara and Pat to discuss developing a paper on carbon market integrity frameworks.

Update: Ongoing (Pat). This is held over while Clara is on maternity leave.

3. Updates

Statistics

Anna Brand shared statistics on the Woodland Carbon Code

The average time required to validate projects has reduced compared to the previous year. There have been some slightly longer WCC team processing times due to recent staff shortages, but these will be resolved in September.

Clarification 2 to Version 3

We made minor changes in the latest clarification:

- Clarifications to the standard were minor and included definition of submission dates, and order of rules and requirements.
- We published an update to the survey plan. The main change was guidance on what to do if it is unsafe to survey a particular area.
- We published an update to the year 15 monitoring report.

We also published the annual update to the cashflow.

Alex MacKinnon suggested that it would be useful in future to reduce the need to refill out the PDD twice when clarifications/updates are made, as specifically this document is very time consuming to complete. Anna agreed to investigate a process that would remove the need for the entire document to be completed again between versions, instead only completing the section(s) which have been changed. Anna highlighted that for future changes in documents, the WCC will ensure that all developers/landowners will have advance notice.

Robert South asked about a potential solution for plots where the trees have grown so well that this impedes carrying out the survey. It was noted that the research into using remote sensing as part of the verification survey will eliminate this issue.

Carbon prices

Carbon prices reported in 2025-26 have shown a modest increase to approximately £28 per tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent, but there was a significant reduction in the volume of price data reported (i.e. a lower response rate to the survey).

The board discussed potential 'self-selection' of the carbon price reporting; for example, those achieving higher prices being more willing to disclose. The board discussed how this risk could be reduced. Mandatory price disclosure allows markets to function better, but further discussion is needed to consider the merits of this approach. It was also suggested that it would be beneficial to align the publication of carbon price data with the annual cashflow update.

Action 6: Pat to feed the above points to the Executive Board for discussion.

ICVCM Update

Pat provided an update on the ICVCM.

- WCC applied to ICVCM at the end of July 2025
- The completeness check was passed in early 2026
- ICVCM has recently sent a detailed “Programme Clarification Request” which the WCC team is currently examining.

UK Land Carbon Registry (S&P)

Pat confirmed that a new contract has been signed with S&P to provide the registry function.

Discussions are taking place about a suitable set of criteria to be applied when awarding trading accounts.

Action 7: WCC team to share proposed criteria for trading accounts with the Board for comment.

4. Discussion with ReThink Carbon

Leon DeBell led a discussion on the potential funding options for the future operation of the ReThink Carbon platform. CivTech funding for the development of the platform will be ending this year.

The Board discussed the implications of making part or all of the platform mandatory for WCC projects, the procurement process for the platform, whether the platform could be separated into “sub-products” and which parties should make a financial contribution. It was acknowledged that care will be needed to navigate the “hybrid” private sector/government aspects of any funding model.

Action 8: Further discussion and proposals will be shared with the Board, either at the next meeting or earlier by correspondence.

5. Emerging permanence solutions: Insurance and the Permanence Trust.

Natalia Dorfman from Kita presented an outline of upcoming insurance and permanence options for the voluntary carbon market. The aim was to provide information to the WCC advisory board to allow a discussion on whether this is something that could be applicable to the WCC in the future. Work has been ongoing in recent months to develop a Permanence Trust concept that could secure ongoing permanence during and/or beyond the contract period through a warranty on carbon credits.

The Board discussed the timing and funding of a Permanence Trust model, and its relationship with the buffer. Natalia emphasised that the warranty would be attached to the credit and would continue to apply in perpetuity, regardless of who paid for it and any subsequent owners of a project.

The discussion also covered the type of credits that would be offered as replacements should a future loss occur. The durability and price of replacement credits would be key factors.

6. Woodland Carbon Purchase Fund

Lauren Dorricot (DEFRA) gave a presentation on Woodland Carbon Purchase Fund asking for feedback from the Advisory board to help inform the next steps in the development of the fund.

The Board raised questions about the proposed 500 hectare threshold for investments to be eligible, given the potential challenge of aggregating a sufficient number of WCC projects to meet this threshold.

In response to a query about the use of the fund rather than existing funding options, Lauren confirmed that the funding had been offered by Treasury on the condition of being an innovative financial mechanism to attract additional investment.

7. Any other business

Action 9: Pat to send an email to the Advisory Board members asking for feedback on the frequency and content of the board meetings.