



Because
Forests
Matter



Timber is the perfect building material: versatile, taking little energy to produce, and renewable – so long as you can be sure that it comes from a responsibly managed forest. The best way to achieve this is to make sure that the timber you use comes from forests which have independent third-party certification to a global, credible and widely accepted standard: the Forest Stewardship Council's forest certification and timber tracing system.

Why should the Construction Industry care about forests?

Every year an area half the size of the UK is cleared of natural forests: temperate and tropical, North and South and on every continent. These forests, which once covered half of the planet, are irreplaceable and their loss has profound economic, social and environmental impacts. Sixty million indigenous people and countless species of plants and animals are wholly dependent on forests to live, and forests support up to 1.6 billion of the poorest people in the world. Forests have a beneficial effect on regulating the climate. They also protect watercourses, improve water quality and prevent erosion. Deforestation is a major contributor of CO₂ emissions.

The construction industry uses around 60% of all timber in the UK, the majority of which is imported. Currently there is little control over the import of illegally and irresponsibly produced timber. The products of this appalling trade, effectively illegal and stolen goods, can be found throughout the UK, from major building sites to private homes. This is unacceptable and FSC exists to make sure that timber can be used with the confidence that its production has a positive effect on the world's forests.

The **Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)** is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation whose mission is to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests. The FSC runs a global forest certification system with two key components: **Forest Management** and **Chain of Custody** certification. This system allows consumers to identify, purchase and use timber and forest products sourced from well-managed forests. It gives forest managers a market for timber and a reason to continue caring for the forests rather than clearing them for agriculture and fuel crops. Buying FSC products gives assurance that you are not running the risk of using illegally logged timber. The certification is carried out on behalf of FSC by accredited **Certification Bodies**.

FSC Certified forests are managed to standards which cover legal, social and environmental issues as well as a comprehensive, long term forest management plan. There are nearly one hundred million hectares of FSC certified forests in 75 countries.

FSC and your environmental commitment

FSC offers a real and measurable way of making a claim about your company's environmental performance. Rather than an unsubstantiated claim about commitment to sustainable timber, FSC certification enables independently verified statements such as 'We used X cubic metres of FSC timber last year' or 'Our developments X,Y and Z are FSC certified projects'

Chain of Custody

The timber is tracked from the forest to the building site by **Chain of Custody (COC) certification**. Everyone who takes legal or physical possession of the timber – sawmills, importers, processors, distributors or contractors – must have their own FSC Chain of Custody certificate to prove that the timber really is FSC certified. This requires an audit by an accredited Certification Body to ensure that a robust system is in place to segregate FSC timber and keep records of sales and purchases.

Each company is issued with a unique **COC certificate number**. Examples are SW-COC-1234 and TT-COC-456. The letters at the beginning are the code of the CB which issued the certificate. FSC has special standards for

- Multi-site operations such as builders' merchants who have one number to cover all branches
- Group COC schemes for small businesses with 15 or fewer employees who have a shared number for the group with an additional letter code (e.g. SA-COC-1728AB)

When a company with COC sells FSC products, they are identified by their unique COC number on invoices and delivery notes. Check carefully to make sure that it is the supplier's own number and that they are not an uncertified company which is buying FSC wood from another COC holder. Copies of certificates are not sufficient without an invoice for the specific purchases as most sell both FSC and non-FSC products. You can check certificate validity and what products are covered by the scope of the certificate on www.fsc-info.org and FSC UK will help if you have any questions.

Chain of Custody in the Construction sector

FSC Chain of Custody (COC) certification is now widespread among timber suppliers, including major builder's merchants and timber importers, but is only just beginning to be taken up by contractors, specialist subcontractors, manufacturers of engineered timber components and so on. So all too often the chain is broken and there is no guarantee that FSC timber has been used.

A construction site can be a very complex operation, with several subcontractors each responsible for timber purchasing and with some elements perhaps being fabricated off site. It is easy for the message about buying FSC timber to get watered down or confused, and subcontractors may or may not be willing to pass on the evidence as invoices will include cost of the timber – or they may have bought timber with no certification and by the

time this is realised it is too late to do anything about it. Even with tight control, where contractors and subcontractors do not have COC, you will not be able to make any verifiable claims about the use of FSC timber. This is because FSC Trademark rules insist on unbroken COC to protect the integrity of the system.

Project Certification – the solution

FSC developed the Project Certification Standard in response to the construction industry's wish to be able to promote their successful use of FSC timber and to help eliminate breaks in the Chain of Custody caused by lack of certification among contractors. It is a one-off certificate which covers only the specified project and does not relate to any other project carried out by any of the parties involved. It can be put in place speedily once contracts have been awarded and subcontractors can be included at short notice.

There is no reason why a contractor should not achieve permanent Chain of Custody if there is demand for several projects using FSC timber. Project Certification can be a useful 'trial run' and once the system you set up has been proven you will be well placed to apply for permanent COC.

Project Certification is the ideal solution for ensuring that your site does not use any illegal timber, and for promoting your company's environmental and Corporate Social Responsibility policies.

Note: companies cannot make FSC promotional claims about themselves, only about the project. Only when they have Chain of Custody can they make promotional claims about their company and FSC.

What types of projects can be certified?

Project certification can cover any kind of building or structure:

- New build
- Refurbishment
- Commercial/industrial properties
- Schools
- Housing (single/multiple units)
- Sports facilities
- Boats, temporary festival stages etc.

How much FSC timber must be used?

There are two options:

Full Certification, with a minimum 50% of the cost or volume of FSC timber and/or verified post consumer reclaimed timber, with the balance meeting FSC Controlled Wood standard (see Controlled Wood fact sheet); and **Partial Certification**, where named elements only (such as doors or windows, cladding, flooring) are FSC certified, and there is no requirement for controlling the remaining timber. The FSC timber in both cases can be either 100% FSC, Mixed Sources (produced under a Chain of Custody standard that allows the controlled inclusion of some non-FSC wood) or FSC Recycled (which must be verified as post-consumer reclaimed timber).

Existing certified projects have managed to achieve over 90% FSC timber.

Product availability

Construction and joinery softwoods and sheet materials are widely available. Temperate and tropical hardwoods are also available but may take a little more time to source. Certain tropical hardwoods are not possible to get with FSC and we advise that it is best to allow for flexibility in the specification. Many lesser-known tropical timber species are available with FSC certification and have been successfully used, for example Massaranduba decking, and Tatajuba for door frames. FSC can not advise on the suitability of species and you should either talk to the suppliers or contact one of the timber technology organisations such as BRE or TRADA.

Machined, assembled and engineered timber products such as fire doors, windows, glulam beams, decking, staircases and entire timber frames are also available with FSC certification.

Potential for use of FSC Trademarks to promote projects

With full Project Certification, the FSC Trademarks may be used subject to the requirements in the Standard to promote the building as an FSC certified project in reports, publicity and on signs. With partial certification, it must always be stated which are the FSC items included, e.g. 'This hotel has FSC certified floors and windows'.

Services and support from FSC

FSC UK can provide training courses and has a technical help line. We charge for these, as we are a registered charity and have limited funding. Please contact us for details.

Our training courses have proved popular with many major UK construction companies. They are ideal when embarking on a project, when the inclusion of suppliers and subcontractors can ensure that everyone knows what is expected to achieve maximum use of FSC timber.

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FSC-SECR-0068



The design and printing of this factsheet was kindly sponsored by Bovis Lend Lease and supported by Defra's Environmental Action Fund.



The paper used in this publication is 9lives supplied by The Paper Company.



Registered Charity Number 1060072