

Sustainable Buying Standard: Timber

(including paper products)



Introduction

It is Durham County Council's policy that **all** timber and wood-derived products are required to be purchased from independently verifiable legal & sustainable sources.

We recognise that the production and manufacture of timber based products has significant economic, environmental and social impacts. Sustainable forest management is about promoting the conservation and management practices which are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, and which generate and maintain benefits for both present and future generations. We believe that timber should be harvested in such a way that does not threaten the ecosystem services provided by forests that contribute to biodiversity, human wellbeing, poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods.

Our intention is to source all timber and paper products that we procure directly (and those procured on our behalf) from sustainably managed forests. Our policy recognises the responsibility of Durham County Council to ensure that we have a neutral, if not positive effect on the world's forests.

Compliance with this standard is mandatory for all Service Groupings.

Buying Standard

All timber and other wood products bought by, used by, or incorporated within any projects across Durham County Council must be from independently verifiable sustainable sources only and traceable from the forest to the final processor through a 'Chain of Custody'.

Recycled wood is preferable, if it meets the technical specification as set out in the UK Government's guidance note on the definition of 'Recycled'. Documentary evidence and independent verification will however still apply to recycled timber but will focus on the previous timber use rather than the forest source.

Contractors and suppliers are to be required to demonstrate compliance with this standard, and provide adequate supporting evidence upon request.

Durham County Council will:

- Procure products from legal and well managed forests which are certified under third party certification schemes which are in compliance with the criteria set in the document "*UK Government Timber Procurement Policy: Criteria for Evaluating Category A Evidence*". Schemes in compliance include the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification scheme (PEFC).
- Accept other documentary evidence that provides assurance that the source is sustainable as set out in the document titled "*UK Government Timber Procurement Policy: Framework for evaluating Category B evidence*". This document is available at:

- <https://www.gov.uk/timber-procurement-policy-tpp-prove-legality-and-sustainability>
- Also accept Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) licensed timber, when and where this is available.
- Specify that all paper products should contain a minimum 75% recycled content, to include only genuine recovered fibres (i.e. post-consumer waste). Of the non-recycled content (25% or less), all virgin fibre used must be from legal and well managed forests in accordance with the above.
- Specify that where paper products are manufactured using a chemical pulping process ("wood-free"), they must only be bleached using an elemental chlorine free (ECF) or total chlorine free (TCF) process.
- Refer all Durham County Council buyers and their suppliers to the Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET) for free advice and guidance to aid compliance with the policy. For further information, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/central-point-of-expertise-on-timber>
- Specify that timber should be '*fit for purpose*' rather than demanding particular species, wherever possible. This gives suppliers more flexibility in finding sustainable sources of timber.
- Approve subcontractors and suppliers on the basis of an assessment of their procedures and verification processes relating to the sourcing of timber.
- Maintain a transparent audit trail for all timber purchased.
- Ensure this standard is applied to all timber and wood products purchased directly and indirectly by Durham County Council.

Note: Short-rotation coppice is exempt from the requirements for timber and wood-derived products and falls under agricultural regulation and supervision rather than forestry.

Definitions

Timber and wood-derived products

Any product that contains wood or wood fibre, with the exception of "recycled" materials (see below). Such products range from solid wood to those where the manufacturing processes obscure the wood element (e.g. paper).

Timber and wood-derived products that have been recycled or reclaimed are referred to as "recycled" timber, which is defined below.

Timber and wood-derived products that are not recycled are referred to as "virgin" timber when the distinction needs to be made for clarity.

Legal and Sustainable

Production and process methods, also referred to as timber production standards, as defined by the document titled "UK Government timber procurement policy: Definition of legal and sustainable for timber procurement" (available from the Council on request and from the CPET website). The edition current on the day the contract is awarded shall apply.

FLEGT

Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade - a reference to the EU scheme to address the problem of illegally logged timber.

FLEGT-licensed

Production and process methods, also referred to as timber production standards, as defined by a bilateral

Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) between the European Union and a timber-producing country under the FLEGT scheme, where both parties have agreed to establish a system under which timber that has been produced in accordance with the relevant laws of the producing country, and other criteria stipulated by the VPA, are licensed for export by the producing country government.

This may also include any timber that has been independently verified as meeting all the producing country's requirements for a FLEGT licence, where a VPA has been signed but the FLEGT licensing system is not fully operational. Evidence from a country that has not signed up to a VPA which demonstrates that all of the requirements equivalent to FLEGT-licensed timber has been met will also be acceptable.

Recycled

Recovered wood that prior to being supplied to the Council had an end use as a standalone object or as part of a structure. The term "recycled" is used to cover the following categories: pre-consumer recycled wood and wood fibre or industrial by products but excluding sawmill co-products (sawmill co-products are deemed to fall within the category of virgin timber), post-consumer recycled wood and wood fibre, and drift wood. It also covers reclaimed timber which was abandoned or confiscated at least ten years previously.

Short-rotation coppice

A specific management regime whereby the poles of trees are cut every one to two years and which is aimed at producing biomass for energy. It is exempt from the UK government timber procurement policy requirements and falls under agricultural regulation and supervision rather than forestry. The exemption only refers to short-rotation coppice, and not 'conventional' coppice which is forest management and therefore subject to the timber policy.

Wood-free

Paper which is manufactured using a chemical, rather than a mechanical pulping process

Elemental chlorine free (ECF)

A bleaching process in which chlorine dioxide is substituted for the element chlorine, preventing the formation of dioxins and dioxin-like compounds

Totally chlorine free (TCF)

A bleaching process in which no elemental chlorine or chlorine compounds are used

Standard Specification Clause

The following wording should be inserted into the specification for any contract which involves the purchase of timber.

All timber (including paper products) supplied under this contract must be either 100% recycled, or sourced from independently verifiable sustainable sources only, traceable from the forest to the final processor through a clear chain of custody.

All virgin (non-recycled) timber supplied under this contract must be sourced from:

- (a) sources certified as legal and sustainable by the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC), the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), or licensed under the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) scheme, or:*
- (b) sustainable sources supported by documented "Category B" evidence as set out in the official*

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“UK Government Timber Procurement Policy: Framework for evaluating Category B evidence”.

The Council reserves the right to request evidence of compliance with these requirements at any point during the lifetime of the contract.

Additional Resources

The following tools / resources are available from Corporate Procurement on request:

- A standard **Essential Criteria** to be used in any Selection Questionnaire or Open Invitation to Tender, where timber purchasing is involved.
- A scored **Technical Question** on timber sourcing, to be used in tenders with a particularly high impact or risk in terms of timber.

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Last updated: 7th November 2018

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