

The Woodland Carbon Code in UK

Location

Country: United Kingdom

Scale: National

Region: All regions of the UK

Compensated /improved ecosystem services

CO₂ emissions removal and storage

Management

The Woodland Carbon Code (WCC), launched in 2011, is the UK's government-backed standard for woodland carbon projects. It applies similar standards to other global carbon initiatives, but is tailored to UK conditions and existing legislation. It provides the mechanism for landowners to engage in the carbon market in the UK, providing assurance that CO₂ removals through planting new woodlands are permanent and additional. The scheme is based on robust carbon prediction tools and monitoring protocols developed by Forest Research; new woodlands meeting the standard have to be third-party checked as being sustainably managed and meeting high carbon standards, giving confidence to buyers. There is also a project and carbon unit registry (provided by Markit Registry), which tracks the issuance, ownership and use of carbon units ensuring transparency and boosting confidence.

Contracts between landowners and buyers, including the carbon price to be paid, are negotiated on a case-by-case basis. Prices per tonne of CO₂ vary between projects and can be between £5 and £15 per tonne.

Stakeholders

Sellers or service providers:

Landowners and managers: Landowners can engage directly with the Code and find buyers, or they can work through project developers with experience of bringing projects to the market. To date, approximately 200 projects have been validated, brought forward by 24 different project developers – including Forest Carbon, the Woodland Trust, forest agents, other charities, local councils, a sawmiller and individual landowners. Together, these projects have created over 20,000 ha of woodland which are predicted to sequester approximately 6 million tonnes of CO₂ from the atmosphere over their lifetime, of up to 100 years.

Buyers and beneficiaries of services:

Businesses and other organisations: Of the projects already validated, around half of the carbon is already sold to over 70 different businesses. Companies who have already bought carbon units are mostly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) including retail sector (food & drink, furniture), paper & lighting manufacturers as well as the transport sector. They want to buy locally, like woodlands as they are 'tangible' and come with many other social and environmental benefits aside from carbon. BWOC, a fuel distribution company, state that one of the benefits of buying from a WCC project is that it has brought more business by helping them win public sector contracts. The Green Investment Bank really valued the opportunity to get their staff onsite to help with tree planting. See the WCC website for case studies of other WCC buyers. <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/carboncode>.

Knowledge providers:

Project developers provide an essential knowledge service, advising landowners and buyers on how to engage with the Woodland Carbon Code. The Government – through Scottish Forestry and the Forestry Commission (in England) - also provides advice and continues to develop the Code where further additions and changes are required. Forest Research (part of the Forestry Commission) provides the essential science and carbon models which underpin the Code.

Donors – funding agencies or sponsors:

Carbon finance comes from the buyers of carbon units under the scheme. Projects are also eligible to claim government grants to support the cost of woodland creation, as long as they meet the Code's additionality requirements concerning the input of carbon finance from buyers. Again, more details on buyers can be found at <https://www.woodlandcarboncode.org.uk/buy-carbon>

Intermediaries:

Project developers and Scottish Forestry (who runs the scheme) are the main intermediaries. These intermediaries are essential to the success and uptake of the Code. They provide technical advice, build confidence and trust, and raise awareness of the Code. Further details on the project developers can be found at <https://www.woodlandcarboncode.org.uk/buy-carbon/woodland-carbon-projects#verified>.

Timeline

Establishment year: The Code was launched in 2011

Time horizon: Projects vary in duration from 30 to 100 years

Status of PES: Active scheme

Availability of economic data

The latest statistics on the Woodland Carbon Code can be found at [Provisional Woodland Statistics: 2019 Edition](#)

References / Source of information

Further information can be found at www.forestry.gov.uk/carboncode