A Timber Policy for Specifiers and Purchasers

In our work as architects, sustainability requires that we think not just of the present, but also of the future in our day-to-day decisions, in the expression of our intentions through design, and in our approach to the design of buildings, neighbourhoods and regions.

Many organisations are now implementing timber specification policies. Such a policy would ideally cover all projects where timber is specified. Having a policy about timber specification is a good way of ensuring that everyone working on a project is clear about what timber is acceptable for use.

Numerous groups involved in the construction industry and the timber trade can adapt the timber policy outlined on the next page.

FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES, THE FOLLOWING COULD BE USED:

PRACTICE: The local authority (NAME OF COUNCIL) will give preference to timber and timber products that have been independently certified by a credible, globally applicable forest certification scheme and can demonstrate that the products are derived from well-managed sources.

GUIDELINES:

1. If independently certified timber proves to be unavailable, contractors will, as a second resort only, use timber from a known source, and will attempt to gain as much assurance as possible that the forest is well-managed and will provide documentation of proof. Reliability in terms of species specification should be pursued. Documentation must be provided to prove that every attempt has been made to obtain independently certified sources before exploring alternatives.

2. Without group certification schemes, some small businesses may not be able to achieve certification. If they are growing or using local timber they should still be encouraged and given market opportunities. When group certification schemes are available in the area, suppliers should be encouraged to join such schemes.

3. People with responsibility for specifying timber should inform contractors of their organisation’s timber procurement policy. *Guidance should be given to contractors and suppliers as to the background environmental information, which the organisation considers to be the acceptable minimum in order to ensure that their policy is being adhered to.

4. EXAMPLE:

   FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES, THE FOLLOWING COULD BE USED:

   This local authority (NAME OF COUNCIL) will give preference to timber and timber products that have been independently certified by a credible, globally applicable forest certification scheme and can demonstrate that the products are derived from well-managed sources.

   FOR ARCHITECTS THE FOLLOWING SPECIFICATION CLAUSE CAN BE USED:

   All timber used should carry the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) trademark or other label from an equivalent internationally recognised, globally applicable, independent certification scheme for good forest management.

   * Please see Guidance Notes for Contractors on page 41.