



Bury Quay, Tullamore, Co Offaly, Ireland

Tel/Fax: 0506 23557/25297
Email: woodlife@justforests.org

FSC Contact in Ireland



Taking a livelihood approach to forest conservation since 1989

Email: fsc-info-irl@justforests.org

2 November, 2000

Ms. Bernadette Kinsella,
County Secretary,
Offaly County Council,
Courthouse,
Tullamore,
Co. Offaly.

RE. Timber Purchasing Policy for Local Authorities.

Dear Ms Kinsella,

At the recent Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) meeting held in the Council offices on Monday 23rd October 2000, which I attended as a member of the SPC, the committee agreed to consider adopting a timber purchasing policy for the council. I now have great pleasure in enclosing a copy of the policy for presentation to the members of Offaly County Council's SPC on *Housing Policy, Social and Cultural Development*.

Just Forests are the Irish partners of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Soil Association (SA), the pioneers of responsible forestry related initiatives. The enclosed *Timber Purchasing Policy* for Local Authorities aims to help Local Authorities obtain their timber from sources, which are environmentally, socially and economically sound. In particular, the project supports the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) whose principles and criteria encompass these aspects of forest management. Just Forests are the official contact for the Forest Stewardship Council in Ireland.

As you know Offaly Co Council are about to build a new headquarters. Adopting a *timber purchasing policy* that ensures all timber used in the new building comes from well-managed forests will place Offaly Co Council in a unique position. Offaly County Council will be the Irish leaders of responsible timber sourcing at Local Authority level. Furthermore, Offaly Co Council could actually pilot a *timber purchasing policy* for other Local Authorities to follow.

Local Authorities who work with Just Forests on this policy will be able to present their affinity in support of their Local Agenda 21, as well as in support of Local Authority EMAS. In the United Kingdom the Local Government Management Board (LGMB) has endorsed the Local Authorities Project for inclusion as part of a Local Agenda 21 Strategy. Offaly could be instrumental in pioneering such an initiative here.

The Forest Service of the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources have very generously provided Just Forests with funding to develop the project. World-wide forests are under immense pressure from human interventions. Responsible harvesting practices that take account of the environmental, social and economic aspects of forestry will need to be better enforced if forests are to continue to provide us with the array of services we need to sustain life.

As a newly elected member of Offaly County Council's SPC with responsible for endorsing the timber policy, I will be supporting the adoption of the policy at our next SPC meeting on Monday 27th November 2000. I also look forward to receiving the full support from all SPC members and yourself.

All Local Authorities on the island of Ireland have been informed of the project by this office. The enclosed documents will be creatively presented (with supporting colour photographs) in a full-colour publication and sent to all SPCs and all Local Authorities in Ireland in February 2001.

It will however take one Local Authority to set the standard-will it be Offaly?

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information regarding this project.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Roche

Enclosures:

Just Forests –creating a ‘wood culture’ in Ireland since 1989



Local Authority Timber Purchasing Policy

(A project of our •Renewable Resources from Sustainable Sources Programme)

Submitted to the
Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

HOUSING POLICY SOCIAL & CULTURAL
of
OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

31 October 2000

UPDATED: April 2002



**Funded by the Forest Service of the Department of the Marine & Natural Resources
under the National development Plan 2000-2006**

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Also enclosed:

Press release regarding EU ban on Brazilian Mahogany
FSC Chain-of-Custody Certificate Holders in Ireland

Suggested timber purchasing policy for Local Authorities

Forest management can be environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial, but it can also be environmentally and socially damaging. This policy recognises the responsibility of this Local Authority as a consumer of forest products to ensure that it has a neutral if not positive effect on the world's forests.

This 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. This certification scheme is the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or an equivalent certification scheme that meets all the requirements mentioned below.

A sound forest certification system should:

- be independent, and be based on independent third party audits;
- be participatory and acceptable to a large range of involved parties, including to consumers, social and environmental NGOs;
- be fully transparent to the parties involved and to the public;
- be built on consensus, to avoid unilateral measures and/or discriminatory trade impacts;
- provide objective and measurable criteria and performance standards;
- have transparent procedures including clear appeal mechanisms;
- ensure an active commitment of the managers/owners of a certified unit;
- have clear mechanisms that make reports and decisions available to the public;
- encourage transparent use of eco-labelling
- i.e. declarations that are precise and verifiable
- be operational at an international level and not discriminating against certain forest types, groups of forest owners, countries or regions.
- be institutionally and politically adapted to local conditions

Documentation must be provided to prove that every attempt has been made to obtain certified sources before exploring alternatives. Flexibility in terms of species specification should be pursued. All officers with responsibility for specifying timber will be required to inform contractors of the council's wood purchasing policy.

[Insert NAME OF LOCAL AUTHORITY here]

Guidance Notes for Contractors regarding Timber Purchasing.

From [insert DATE OF ENFORCEMENT], [insert NAME OF LOCAL AUTHORITY here] responsible Timber Purchasing Policy came into effect.

The policy states:-

With immediate effect, the Council will give preference to timber and timber products which carry the Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) trademark, or other label from an equivalent internationally recognised, globally applicable, independent certification system for good forest management.

This will take into account environmental, ecological, biodiversity, social and economic needs, showing the timber (tropical, temperate or boreal, hardwood or softwood) or timber product is from a credible, responsible source.

With immediate effect, if FSC (or equivalent) trademarked timber proves to be unavailable, (documentation will be provided to prove that every attempt has been made to obtain certified sources before exploring alternatives - flexibility in terms of species specification should be pursued) 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.

Please take note!

- The FSC trademark (below) is an internationally recognised symbol for responsible forest management.



- When asking Timber merchants if FSC timber is available, be sure you are not being misinformed of other “sustainably sourced timber”, which does not meet the strict criteria of the FSC. Many problems can be avoided by checking explicitly that FSC endorsed timber is available. If a merchant tries to tell you that other schemes are equivalent to the FSC such as ‘Forests Forever’ or ‘PEFC’ they are incorrect. There is currently no other equivalent scheme. The FSC system provides ‘chain of custody’ from the forest to the end use. Contractors must ensure that the timber merchant has the relevant chain of custody (COC) number for the FSC timber, this ensures that the timber has been checked from forest to timber yard and is an easy way to check that the timber you are purchasing is truly FSC certified. Ask to see the COC number and if necessary this can be checked with the FSC.
- Contractors should check at the **tender stage** if the timber merchant they propose to purchase from, stocks FSC endorsed timber and in what quantities. This can not be stressed strongly enough! Certified timber is not always as readily available as uncertified. The more notice that is given to a supplier, the better.

- As the timber once purchased may not physically carry the FSC trademark, check the invoice of the supplier, which should clearly state that FSC timber was supplied. There should be a code number that refers to the chain of custody certificate number, for example SA –COC-1022, or SGS/COC/0755/6525/0184. If the person invoicing you does not give a code number ask your supplier to provide the relevant information and to give it on future invoices.
- If you have difficulties sourcing FSC endorsed timber, please ring Tom Roche on 0506 23557/25297 or email: fsc-info-irl@justforests.org Tom works for the Tullamore-based forest conservation group Just Forests. He is also the endorsed contact person in Ireland for the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and has agreed to assist this Council (free of charge) sourcing FSC timber as part of their Local Authority Project. You can also speak directly to the FSC in Mexico 0052 9 516 2110 or email: fscoax@fscoax.org
- The FSC certification of timber covers not only environmental and biodiversity issues, but also community relations, the human rights and land rights of indigenous peoples, workers rights and conditions, and future management, maintenance and monitoring of future operations.
- The FSC IRELAND Working Group Helpline (0506 25297) can provide:-
 - Free factsheets for Architects and Specifiers
 - Lists of companies dealing in certified timber, boards and building materials.
 - Directories of certified forests, suppliers of certified products worldwide are available at a small cost and are updated every 6 months.
 - Assistance in searching for a particular timber or product.
 - A website can be found at www.fsc-uk.demon.co.uk, which has all the factsheets available, the latest news and links to other sites.

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

Guidance Notes for Contractors regarding Timber Purchasing.

From 1 JANUARY 2000, Offaly County Council's responsible Timber Purchasing Policy came into effect.

The policy states:-

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This will take into account environmental, ecological, biodiversity, social and economic needs, showing the timber (tropical, temperate or boreal, hardwood or softwood) or timber product is from a credible, responsible source.

With immediate effect, if FSC (or equivalent) trademarked timber proves to be unavailable, (documentation will be provided to prove that every attempt has been made to obtain certified sources before exploring alternatives - flexibility in terms of species specification should be pursued) 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.

Please take note!

- The FSC trademark (below) is an internationally recognised symbol for responsible forest management.



- When asking Timber merchants if FSC timber is available, be sure you are not being misinformed of other “sustainably sourced timber”, which does not meet the strict criteria of the FSC. Many problems can be avoided by checking explicitly that FSC endorsed timber is available. If a merchant tries to tell you that other schemes are equivalent to the FSC such as ‘Forests Forever’ or ‘PEFC’ they are incorrect. There is currently no other equivalent scheme. The FSC system provides ‘chain of custody’ from the forest to the end use. Contractors must ensure that the timber merchant has the relevant chain of custody (COC) number for the FSC timber, this ensures that the timber has been checked from forest to timber yard and is an easy way to check that the timber you are purchasing is truly FSC certified. Ask to see the COC number and if necessary this can be checked with the FSC.
- Contractors should check at the **tender stage** if the timber merchant they propose to purchase from, stocks FSC endorsed timber and in what quantities. This can not be stressed strongly enough! Certified timber is not always as readily available as uncertified. The more notice that is given to a supplier, the better.

- As the timber once purchased may not physically carry the FSC trademark, check the invoice of the supplier, which should clearly state that FSC timber was supplied. There should be a code number that refers to the chain of custody certificate number, for example SA –COC-1022, or SGS/COC/0755/6525/0184. If the person invoicing you does not give a code number ask your supplier to provide the relevant information and to give it on future invoices.
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Local Authorities Project (LAP)

Wood Purchase Policy Joint Initiative



Draft guidance for implementing the suggested timber purchasing policy written for Local Authorities by WWF/Soil Association.

Last updated August 2000

- 1 **Who is responsible?** A nominated person and department needs to be given the task of implementing the new timber purchasing policy.

 - 2 **Implementation.** Implementing this policy requires changes and adjustments in current procurement procedures within your Authority. The policy that we recommend has already been assessed to conform to international and national trade agreements, but we suggest that you take advice from your own legal department. Once you have been notified that the policy is legal, the nominated person will need to ensure that the following people are aware and understand the change in policy.
 - 1 The voting members (councillors) and the Chief Executive
 - 2 The specifiers, the Chief Architect, Chief Engineer and Chief Surveyor
 - 3 The purchasers; the Chief Purchasing Officer, Head of Property Services
 - 4 LA21 Officers and the Environment Officer
 - 5 Outside contractors

 - 3 **Cost.** Certified timber may cost more (but often there is no additional charge). Each Authority must decide under Best Value, parameters for supporting genuine "sustainability" in their timber purchasing. Across a range of products, our research has shown premiums between from 0 and 10 percent. This can be discussed with suppliers.

 - 4 **Informing other buyers of new policy.** The easiest way of informing key personnel about the policy change is to hold a meeting. DSO and outside contractors should be encouraged to attend. The LAP can assist with presentation material and by arrangement, suggest or contribute a speaker(s). It is vital at this stage that everyone is informed about the FSC and the reasons why this particular accreditation scheme is being supported. (See LAP 'Guidance notes for contractors' for more detailed information on what the FSC is).
- Lack of communication is one of the primary factors hindering the implementation of environmental policies.**
- 5 **Monitoring.** Once the suggested timber purchasing policy has been cleared by the legal department and staff have been informed of the policy change, a monitoring procedure can be inaugurated. For simplicity's sake, this might take the form of a pie chart which shows the following headings for timber and wood based products obtained by the Authority: (continued on next page)

General Information

Rachel Shotton, WWF-UK
Unit 6, 12 Great Oak Street, Llanidloes, Powys, SY18 6BU
Tel 01686 411 262 Fax 01686 411 262
email rachel@rshotton.demon.co.uk

WWF-UK Registered Charity No 201707

Technical Support

Rod Nelson, The Soil Association
Bristol House, 40-56 Victoria Street, Bristol BS1 6BY
Tel 0117 914 2433 Fax 0117 925 2504
email rmelson@soilassociation.org

The Soil Association Registered Charity No 206862

Local Support

Tom Roche, Just Forests, Bury Quay, Tullamore, Co. Offaly, IRELAND
Tel 0506 23557/25297 Fax 0506 23557 Email: fsc-info-irl@justforests.org
Just Forests-Irish Charity No CHY 10686



Local Authorities Project (LAP)

Wood Purchase Policy Joint Initiative



Draft guidance for implementing the suggested timber purchasing policy written for Local Authorities by WWF/Soil Association.

Last updated August 2000

- 1) Product from known well managed forest – certified
- 2) Product of unknown origin.
- 3) Product from forest areas where good management is probably the norm
- 4) Product from forest areas where good management is probably not the norm
- 5) Product from 'local sources'.

If it is to have any meaning, this chart should be revised (annually), and the proportion of wood in categories 1, 3 and 5 should be required to increase steadily as understanding of wood purchase policy issues spreads through the Authority.

Helpful suggestions from *Buying for the Future – Contract Management and the Environmental Challenge* - Kevin Lyons - ISBN 0-7453-1341-8

- **Leadership support.** If the leadership of the Authority does not go along with the new policy, it will not succeed, no matter how well the program is designed.
- **Clear and universal communication of the policy.** If your plan is not outlined and communicated to the entire Authority properly, it will take forever to implement!
- **Perseverance.** Long term persistence and patience are essential!

Remember: The Just Forests/WWF/SA Local Authorities Project provides advice, policy templates and will help source certified timber – all for no charge.

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Timber Purchasing Policy

Offaly County Council

1. Offaly County Council are committed to the principle that all timber and wood products sourced by them will be established as coming from well managed and sustainable sources as soon as is practicable.
2. Promotion of the purchase of timber from well managed and sustainable Irish sources.
3. Offaly County Council are committed to the principle and aspire to the objective that as much as possible of all timber and wood products sourced by them will, as soon as is practicable, be independently certified, preferably by a certifier accredited by The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), as coming from well managed and sustainable sources.
4. To gain acceptance of the principle of independent certification by the forest authorities in Ireland so that the purchase of timber in Ireland is compatible with the Council's objectives.
5. To promote public understanding of the need for consumers to support well managed and sustainable forestry in their lifestyles and buying practices.

Suggested timber purchasing policy for Local Authorities

Forest management can be environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial, but it can also be environmentally and socially damaging. This policy recognises the responsibility of this Local Authority as a consumer of forest products to ensure that it has a neutral if not positive effect on the world's forests.

This 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. This certification scheme is the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or an equivalent certification scheme that meets all the requirements mentioned below.

A sound forest certification system should:

- be independent, and be based on independent third party audits;
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- be fully transparent to the parties involved and to the public;
- be built on consensus, to avoid unilateral measures and/or discriminatory trade impacts;
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- have transparent procedures including clear appeal mechanisms;
- ensure an active commitment of the managers/owners of a certified unit;
- have clear mechanisms that make reports and decisions available to the public;
- encourage transparent use of eco-labelling
- i.e. declarations that are precise and verifiable
- be operational at an international level and not discriminating against certain forest types, groups of forest owners, countries or regions.
- be institutionally and politically adapted to local conditions

Documentation must be provided to prove that every attempt has been made to obtain certified sources before exploring alternatives. Flexibility in terms of species specification should be pursued. All officers with responsibility for specifying timber will be required to inform contractors of the council's wood purchasing policy.

Suggested Timber Specification Policy.

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. The following is a sample policy, which could be adapted for use in ANY County Council in Ireland:

“Forest management can be environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial, but it can also be environmentally and socially damaging. This policy recognises the responsibility of Offaly County Council as a consumer of forest products to ensure that we have a neutral if not positive effect on the world’s forests.

We will give preference to timber and timber products which carry the Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) Trademark, or other label from an equivalent internationally recognised, globally applicable, independent certification system for good forest management. This will take into account environmental, ecological, biodiversity, social and economic needs, showing the timber (tropical, temperate or boreal, hardwood or softwood) or timber product is from a credible sustainable source.

With immediate effect, if FSC (or equivalent) Trademarked timber proves to be unavailable, (documentation will be provided to prove that every attempt has been made to obtain certified sources before exploring alternatives - flexibility in terms of species specification should be pursued) 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.

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. Persons with responsibility for specifying timber will be required to inform contractors of this Local Authority’s wood purchasing policy and to devise a suitable method of monitoring contractors success in purchasing timber under this policy. Guidance will be given as to the information that should be provided to contractors working on, or proposing to tender for contracts. Guidance will also be given to contractors and suppliers as to the background environmental information which this organisation considers to be the acceptable minimum in order to ensure that its policy is being adhered to.”