



**TIMBER
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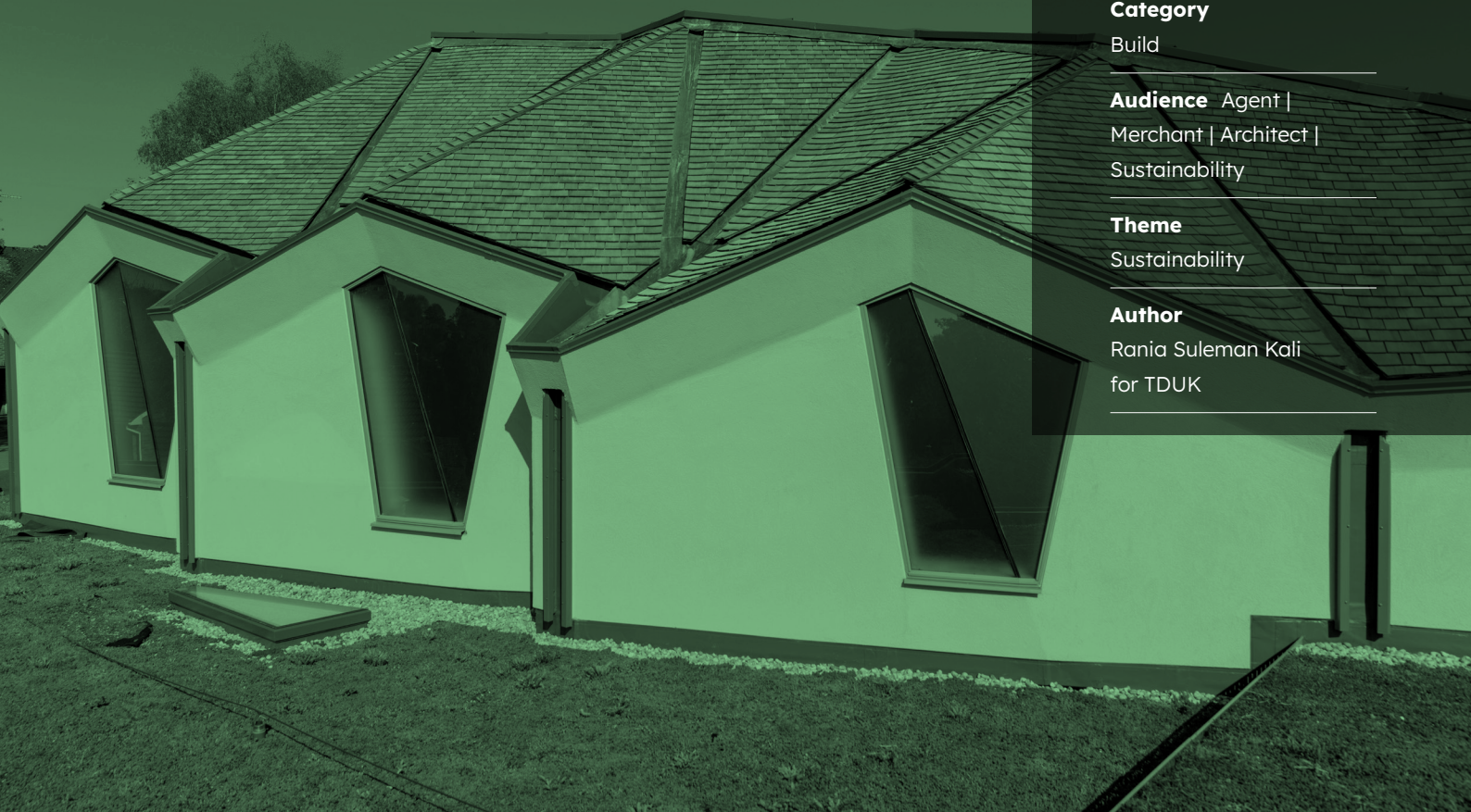
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Certifications

Certifications like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), and Grown in Britain prioritise small-scale forests, are verified against international benchmarks, and aim to improve livelihoods and conserve ecosystems while mitigating negative environmental impacts.



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Certifications

Certification of sustainably sourced timber for construction provides assurance of responsible sourcing, addresses illegal logging and deforestation, and aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Forestry Commission in England, Forestry and Land Scotland, Natural Resources Wales, and Forest Service Northern Ireland enforce the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS), while the United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) is a voluntarily adopted management standard that is compatible with FSC, PEFC, and Grown in Britain certifications, offering a widely recognised way to demonstrate responsible forest management.

There are also national requirements for timber sustainability, such as **UK Timber and Timber Products (Placing on the Market) Regulations**, sometimes referred to as the **UK Timber Regulations (UKTR)**, which set minimum requirements for due diligence when importing or first placing timber on the market in the UK.



IMAGE: FSC, PEFC, and Grown in Britain certification logos

While both FSC, PEFC, and Grown in Britain are independent, voluntary certifications, national standards such as UKFS and UKWAS must be followed by companies operating in the country.

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Advantages of Independent Certification

Independent certification of timber products has several economic, ecological, and social advantages:

- The demand for sustainably sourced construction materials has risen because of increased consumer awareness and concern for environmental impacts. Certification provides assurance that these materials have been responsibly sourced.
- Woodland owners can demonstrate their social responsibility through certification, meeting requirements set by external organisations.
- Certified products have a higher demand and open more markets.
- Certification addresses critical issues such as illegal logging, deforestation, and global warming.
- There is traceability from forest to end-user through Chain of Custody certification.
- Carbon can be sequestered through sustainable management practices.
- Deforestation threatens biodiversity, as 80% of terrestrial species inhabit forests. Without certification, this loss of biodiversity will continue.

Certification aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 15, which aims to protect and restore terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, and halt biodiversity loss.

The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)

PEFC is an independent, non-profit organisation that aims to promote ethical, social, and ecological standards throughout the forest product supply chain. As the largest forest certification body, PEFC prioritises small-scale forests by addressing specific challenges unique to these areas. Operating on a global scale, PEFC certifies sustainable forest management practices and provides labelling for products sourced from sustainable forests. PEFC works in collaboration with national and regional certifications to tailor requirements and priorities to meet the specific needs of different stakeholders, ecosystems, and cultural backgrounds.

The PEFC certification system is stringent, with each benchmark undergoing a comprehensive and thorough development process, which takes a minimum of 5 years of revision and review. The process is designed to ensure impartial decision making by including a diverse range of stakeholders with balanced representation at every step. The system outlines all aspects of forest management and leaves nothing to assumption; for instance, it clearly defines what constitutes a stakeholder, the minimum area considered a forest, and the scope of management system planning. The certification follows the **PEFC ST1003 standard**, which encompasses the entire supply chain from management to operations, with detailed requirements and continuous improvement practices outlined.

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PEFC certification covers a wide range of benchmarks that companies must meet:

- Planning:** PEFC certification requires a comprehensive planning process for the company, including assessing risks and opportunities, understanding the size and scope of operations, mapping an inventory of the forest and its resources, and creating periodic management plans. The plans must include considerations for the uses and benefits of different portions of the forest, cost justifications, and long-term goals for the forest. The management plan must be made publicly available, excluding confidential information.
 - Legal:** The company must comply with all relevant forest management regulations and legislation, including compliance with international agreements such as the **EU's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan**. It must also ensure adherence to national and local laws and regulations related to forest practices, nature protection, community land-use rights, tax laws, health and safety, labour rights, anti-corruption, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Additionally, the company must clarify property rights to the land and have measures in place to prevent illegal logging and land use. It must also comply with minimum legal standards for wages paid to local and migrant forest workers and operators and promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination.
 - Support:** Documentation demonstrating compliance with sustainable forest management practice must be maintained and regularly updated.
- All employees and contractors must receive training on these practices, and all stakeholders, including indigenous communities, must be kept informed of the organisation's efforts. This documentation system must be continually improved and documented for ongoing evaluation.
- Operation:** The organisation must aim to maintain or increase the contribution of forests to the global carbon cycle and maintain ecosystem services. Harvesting and growth rates should be kept at equilibrium so that the carbon footprint is balanced. Climate positive activities should be pursued without destroying areas with high carbon stocks.
 - Biodiversity:** Mapping and planning must be in place to avoid harvesting in ecologically significant areas so that endangered species are protected. No genetically modified trees should be used, and a diverse range of tree species should be maintained in the landscape. Sensitive soils and erosion-prone areas should be protected to avoid flooding, and negative impacts on animal populations and water sources should be prevented.
 - Socio-economic:** Considerations such as public access to forests for recreational use should be allowed in accordance with local laws and ownership rights. Historical or spiritual sites important to indigenous people should be protected, and the long-term health of local communities should be promoted by considering local economies and providing opportunities for training and employment.

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Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

The FSC is a non-governmental international organisation promoting responsible forest management practices. Certification bodies accredited by the FSC evaluate FSC-certified forests to verify compliance with the standards outlined in the FSC forest management protocol.

The FSC certification process is stringent, inclusive, and transparent, involving interpretation panels, cyclical reviews, and international benchmarking that considers all stakeholders. The certification is independently verified and aligns with **ISO 14001**, which requires organisations to implement environmental management systems.

Conformance with certification standards is voluntary, although some requirements are mandated by law or the Forestry Commission.

Organisations seeking FSC certification must adhere to all applicable legal and regulatory frameworks, including international treaties. To achieve this, a systematic approach to improvement must be in place, along with the protection of workers' socioeconomic well-being and the rights of indigenous communities and local populations. Ecosystems must be sustainably conserved and restored, and negative environmental impacts must be proactively mitigated. An effective risk management plan must be implemented to analyse and assess environmental hazards, prioritise high conservation values, and align with social policies and objectives.

The requirements of the FSC certification are:

- **Compliance with legal requirements and FSC standards:** Forest management must abide by all relevant national laws, international agreements, and FSC Principles and Criteria.
- **Land tenure and usage:** The long-term rights to land and forest resources must be clearly defined, documented, and legally established.
- **Recognition of indigenous peoples' rights:** The legal and customary rights of indigenous peoples to own, use, and manage their lands and resources must be recognised and respected.
- **Wellbeing of communities and workers:** Forest management operations must improve or maintain the social and economic well-being of forest workers and local communities.
- **Use of forest benefits:** Efficient use of forest products and services must be encouraged to ensure economic viability and environmental and social benefits.
- **Environmental preservation:** Forest management must conserve biodiversity, water resources, soils, and unique ecosystems while maintaining ecological functions and integrity.

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- **Effective management plans:** A written and updated management plan appropriate to the scale and intensity of operations must be implemented, with clear long-term objectives and means of achieving them.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Monitoring must be conducted to assess forest conditions, yields, chains of custody, management activities, and their social and environmental impacts.
- **High conservation value forests:** Management activities in high conservation value forests must maintain or enhance their attributes, and decisions must be made with a precautionary approach.
- **Sustainable plantations:** Plantations should promote the protection, restoration, and conservation of natural forests and should not increase pressures on natural forests.
- **Socio-economic and ecological benefit:** Diversity in the composition of plantations is preferred to enhance social, ecological, and economic benefits.

Grown in Britain

Grown in Britain is the standard for the certification of timber and timber products originating from timber grown in the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales). A key element of Grown in Britain's ambition is to increase the number of existing forests and woodlands which are actively managed to a recognised forest management standard to create a healthier future for UK forests and woodlands. The standard is designed to increase the visibility of home-grown timber and timber products by certifying woodlands, producers and traders where the timber element is grown in the United Kingdom.

The Grown in Britain certification mark provides the visible assurance of a brand that can be trusted. Grown in Britain standards and certification are bespoke to the UK, in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard, with compliance verified by their team of specialist independent auditors. The Grown in Britain logo guarantees that timber has been grown legally in the UK in accordance with the UK Government Timber Procurement Policy by promoting best practice and the implementation of forest management plans in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS). In addition, the Grown in Britain Woodfuel (GiBW) claim aligns itself with the Timber Standard for Heat and Electricity (TSHE).

Grown in Britain fully recognises existing, and well-proven, international forest certification schemes such as FSC and PEFC schemes and does not wish to compete with or replicate them.

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United Kingdom Woodland Association

The UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) is a voluntary assessment standard endorsed by FSC, PEFC, and Grown in Britain.

The UK branch of the FSC is responsible for submitting the UKWAS standard to its international parent body for assessment.

The UKWAS standard is deemed to conform with the FSC and PEFC requirements and provides a certification standard for these schemes.

UK Forestry Standard (UKFS)

The approach to sustainable forestry in the UK is guided by international and national agreements and regulations. The Forestry Commission in England, Forestry and Land Scotland, Natural Resources Wales, and Forest Service Northern Ireland are responsible for enforcing and creating the standards.

The process to ensure sustainable forestry is as follows:

- Before felling trees, preservation orders in conservation areas must be considered, and the Plant Health Act of 1967 must be followed to prevent the spread of pests and diseases. A forest management plan, including measures for environmental threats, must be in place. The plan should aim to maintain forest resilience, diversity, and a balanced distribution of tree species and ages. Deadwood should be left in each management unit.

- Operations should aim to use renewable resources and minimise energy use, considering the carbon impact of reforestation and products such as timber and wood fuel. Soil disturbance and removal of stumps should be minimised, and durable products should be felled to maximise carbon sequestration.
- Areas of historical significance and public access to historical monuments must be managed responsibly, and the public should be engaged in the planning process. The visual diversity of the landscape should be emphasised, and woodlands should be used for recreation, education, and local livelihoods.
- Soil erosion risks should be addressed, and soil disturbance on organic soils should be minimised. Pesticides and fertilisers should be applied with care to prevent soil pollution and surface water contamination. The planting of woodland can help intercept sediment runoff and protect against soil erosion and flooding. The management plan should be coordinated with local authorities, such as water regulatory agencies and fishery bodies, to minimise risk factors.