



# FSC UK STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 - 2027

Summary Document



# FSC® UK STRATEGIC PLAN

The FSC UK 2024–2027 strategic plan builds on our previous three-year plans and is developed in the context of FSC’s global vision and mission and our own charitable objectives.

Whilst we will always need to react to new challenges and opportunities, we need to have clarity in terms of our overarching priorities and to translate these priorities into objectives, deliverables, and key performance indicators.

## **FSC’s Mission**

### **Forests For All Forever**

The Forest Stewardship Council AC shall promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world’s forests.

## **FSC’s Vision**

The true value of forests is reflected in our understanding of forest stewardship, which is based on the knowledge and experience of the different interests in our membership and of our network and staff around the world. Recognising the true value of forests enables the holistic notion of forest stewardship, where the world’s forests are used, cared for and protected.

# FSC UK’S CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES

The Charity’s objects (the Objects) are to promote for the benefit of the public the protection and conservation of the world’s forests. In particular, but not exclusively, by:

- 1) *raising awareness of the value of responsibly managed forests.*
- 2) *promoting and supporting a programme of voluntary forest management certification and chain of custody certification.*
- 3) *developing consensus around standards for good forest management.*
- 4) *increasing public awareness about independent forest certification.*

The Charity works to promote the FSC system in the UK by:

- Raising awareness of the value of responsibly managed forests<sup>1</sup>.
- Supporting certificate holders and retailers to maximise the market for FSC products and thus increase the demand for certified forests.
- Encouraging maximum participation from the UK in FSC's global objectives.
- Protecting the integrity of the FSC logo.

<sup>1</sup>which includes providing an FSC approved national forest stewardship standard and other woodland related guidance.

## PRIORITIES FOR FSC UK

The following priorities are proposed for 2024-27:

- Promote the value of forests and the products, ecosystem services and social benefits they provide.
- Encourage stakeholder engagement and support FSC globally to ensure that the FSC system is fit for purpose, accessible, relevant, and trusted.
- Improve forest management in the UK for all sizes and types of forest.
- Provide support and guidance to UK based licence holders and enable them to realise the full potential of their FSC licence.
- Promote the FSC system, FSC certification and the specification of FSC-certified products.

These strategic priorities are underpinned by our work to:

- Ensure that FSC UK pursues its objectives as a registered charity, meets its legal and charitable obligations and operates as a professional organisation that values its people.

Annual deliverables and Key Performance Indicators will be agreed for each Objective.

## PROMOTE THE VALUE OF FORESTS AND THE PRODUCTS, ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND SOCIAL BENEFITS THEY PROVIDE

Forests play a vital role in enabling and maintaining life and help to mitigate global challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. At the same time, forest products are increasingly important as renewable materials that can be a main factor in enabling the bio-based and circular economy which the world needs to develop.

### FSC UK has a clear vision for UK forests

A clear vision for UK forests will help us to be more impactful in our work, more relevant and powerful in our advocacy and communication, and better able to inspire people. The development of this vision will also provide opportunities for FSC UK to bring stakeholders together to discuss key issues.

### **The value of forests and the role of certification are recognised in Government policies**

FSC UK needs to engage with the UK and devolved Governments to ensure that the value of forests and FSC certification are recognised in policies, including those related to meeting commitments to climate change mitigation and adaptation under the Paris Agreement. We need to promote the role of FSC certification in assuring responsible land management and of Ecosystem Services verification in the delivery of public goods. We also need to be actively engaged in discussions on issues such as afforestation, biodiversity, climate mitigation and Environmental Land Management.

### **The use of wood and paper as sustainable materials in a bio-based economy is promoted**

There is increasing recognition of the benefits of using wood (and wood-based products), particularly in terms of its renewable and low carbon nature, but also the social and mental well-being aspects of using wood in construction. FSC UK is well-placed to highlight the role that wood and paper can play in a bio-based economy, driving demand for sustainable forest products.

### **FSC certification and Ecosystem Services verification are promoted to forest owners and managers**

Convincing forest owners and managers of the importance and benefits of certification remains a key part of delivering FSC's mission and the Ecosystem Services Procedure enables us to broaden our conversations with owners and managers to promote the potential benefits of validating and verifying Ecosystem Services impacts.

### **Emerging market opportunities for Ecosystem Services are identified and developed into robust business models for responsible forest management**

There is growing interest in sustainable investments and payments for protecting and restoring ecosystems. The Ecosystem Services Procedure can provide access to these market opportunities for forest managers, and there is a role for FSC UK to identify and promote these.

### **The positive impact of forests, FSC certification, products and services are communicated**

In order to realise FSC's vision that the true value of forests is recognised and fully incorporated into society, it is vital that we communicate the positive impacts of forests, including the products, ecosystem services and social benefits they provide. Alongside this, we should promote the impact that FSC certification and Ecosystem Services verification can play.

## **ENCOURAGE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT FSC GLOBALLY TO ENSURE THAT THE FSC SYSTEM IS FIT FOR PURPOSE, ACCESSIBLE, RELEVANT AND TRUSTED**

The Global Strategy recognises the FSC's core strength is to co-create solutions. FSC convenes members and other partners from diverse interests to set a global benchmark for forest stewardship and deliver results that matter for the forests and the people who depend on them. FSC UK can play an important role on encouraging UK stakeholder engagement.

FSC is widely recognised as a credible forest certification scheme and maintaining this credibility is fundamental to the scheme's success. As a long-established National Office, FSC UK is well placed to support FSC as it works to deliver a trusted, accessible, fit for purpose system, providing input on the potential implications of proposed activities, and encouraging stakeholders to engage as appropriate as well as working to maintain FSC's integrity and credibility in the UK.

### **UK stakeholders are encouraged to participate in all aspects of FSC development including revision of normative documents**

The FSC system is under constant development and FSC UK plays a crucial role in representing UK stakeholder views and passing on information regarding new projects and changes to normative documents. There is a risk that, due to stakeholder fatigue, direct participation in FSC consultation processes is relatively low. FSC UK aims to encourage participation and to garner input from UK stakeholders through other means, including stakeholder events.

### **FSC's policies and standards are fit for purpose, accessible, relevant, trusted and outcome oriented**

As FSC seeks to streamline policies and standards towards outcome orientation, whilst also strengthening requirements as appropriate, FSC UK is well placed to highlight any technical issues and the potential impacts on UK stakeholders of changes to the normative framework. We can also alert colleagues at FSC International of issues with current standards, to inform future interpretations, directives, and standard revisions.

### **FSC has an engaged and active growing membership in the UK**

As a member-based organisation, FSC is dependent on robust, balanced representation from the three chambers. A vibrant and engaged membership, balanced across its three chambers, can help drive FSC forward nationally and internationally. The membership has increased in recent years in the UK, but we need to attract new members, particularly from the social and environmental chambers, which are currently under-represented in comparison to our economic chamber. We need to promote the benefits of membership and ensure that we engage with our existing UK members. A vibrant and engaged membership, balanced across its three chambers, can help drive FSC forward nationally and internationally.

## **Environmental and social NGOs as well as trade associations and industry bodies, in the UK understand the role of FSC and recognise FSC as a credible forest management certification scheme**

The support of environmental and social NGOs gives reassurance to our stakeholders and their continued engagement is fundamental to our success as a scheme that promotes environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial, as well as economically viable, management of the world's forests. Many of these organisations do not fully understand the role of FSC and there is work to be done to improve awareness of the organisation's work.

The positive engagement of relevant trade associations and industry bodies with FSC is important in building industry confidence in, and uptake of, the FSC system. By working with key industry organisations (and not just directly with their members), FSC UK can more easily disseminate and interrogate FSC news and developments.

## **FSC is accurately and fairly assessed in external evaluations and its contributions to meeting relevant requirements and legislation are effectively communicated**

When FSC is assessed against other schemes in external evaluations it is important that we perform well in these assessments, demonstrating how our requirements meet the criteria. The role that FSC can play in helping companies comply with requirements, whether these be voluntary or legislative, needs to be clearly communicated.

## **Systems are in place to minimise threats to FSC's integrity and credibility**

As the FSC system grows, the threats to its integrity also increase and it is vital that any such threats are identified, and mitigating measures taken. FSC UK has a role to play in minimising the threats to our system and ensuring that consumers, businesses, and government recognise FSC as a credible scheme. We are also required to ensure that the Controlled Wood National Risk Assessment for the UK is reviewed and updated in line with FSC requirements.

## **IMPROVE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE UK FOR ALL SIZES AND TYPES OF FOREST**

It is a fundamental requirement, in terms of both FSC UK's charitable objectives and our role as an accredited National Office, that we have an approved national forest stewardship standard. We need to identify mechanisms to reduce the financial and administrative burden on smallholders whilst ensuring that FSC's high forestry standards are maintained. We also have a wider role to play in promoting better forest stewardship in all forests.

### **An approved UK national forest stewardship standard is maintained**

Maintaining a national forest stewardship standard is the main way we ensure FSC forest management certification is workable and meaningful in the UK. Regularly revising the standard through engagement with UK stakeholders is key to keeping it relevant and making sure that our pursuit of FSC's mission leads to real benefits for the UK's forests and people.

### **Owners and managers of small and community woods are supported to improve the management of their woodlands and their access to forest management certification in the UK is improved**

Access to certification can be challenging for owners and managers of smaller woodlands, especially if they are not commercially motivated and struggle to justify the costs of certification. We want to continue to explore options to try to make sure that those who want to access certification can, but we also recognise that certification might not work for everyone and that we must consider other ways of supporting improvements in the management of small woods.

### **Forest owners and managers are supported to improve the management of their forests**

Even for owners and managers of larger forests, there might be challenges in meeting FSC standards. We are open to providing whatever support we can to help owners and managers reach the highest possible standards of responsible forest management.

## **PROVIDE SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE TO UK BASED LICENCE HOLDERS AND ENABLE THEM TO REALISE THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THEIR FSC LICENCE**

It is essential that the relationship we have with our licence holders is proactively managed and that we support those companies committed to the FSC system. As well as providing updates and guidance on the FSC system, we also want to encourage licence holders to make the most of their FSC status and promote their FSC-certified products. Alongside this, it is important that we address unauthorised use of our trademarks which potentially undermines both our credibility and the market advantage that our licence holders should benefit from.

### **All licence holders receive support, updates, and advice on the FSC normative framework**

The FSC UK enquiry service is widely utilised by licence holders, providing guidance on a range of FSC related questions and our monthly newsletter provides updates on the FSC system as well as general FSC news article. Through our direct contact with licence holders, we hope to foster closer relationships. Online training material is developed, updated, and made freely available to licence holders. We also support licence holders through events and provision of resources.

## **Licence holders use the FSC trademarks correctly and are encouraged to maximise their promotion of FSC**

Correct use of FSC trademarks both on and off product helps to improve levels of consumer awareness and understanding to drive market demand. Licence holders will be encouraged to better promote their FSC status and FSC certified products and to engage in activities or events that support this.

## **An efficient and effective Trademark Service is provided to Promotional Licence Holders**

As an authorised Trademark Service Provider, FSC UK administers the Promotional Licence Holder Programme in the UK, enabling eligible companies, primarily brands and retailers, to use the FSC trademarks to promote the FSC status of their products. It is vital that the service provided is efficient and that we develop positive working relationships with these companies, beyond their trademark use.

## **Unauthorised use of the FSC trademarks is addressed to ensure those working within the FSC system benefit appropriately from the market differentiation**

With the growing recognition of the FSC logo in the UK, there is an associated growth in the number of companies seeking to benefit from this without holding certification or a trademark licence. This directly undermines the credibility of the system and acts as a disincentive for those operating within the system and abiding by our strict trademark standards. By becoming more proactive in our fight against trademark infringements and misuse we not only reduce the risk of inaccurate claims, we can also seek to bring companies into the system.

# **PROMOTE THE FSC SYSTEM, FSC CERTIFICATION AND THE SPECIFICATION OF FSC CERTIFIED PRODUCTS**

As a strong market country, the UK can have a significant impact on uptake on FSC certification of forests globally by driving demand for certification and certified products throughout the supply chain. Raising public awareness of FSC and, in turn, driving consumer demand is one aspect of this but FSC UK recognises that this can be best achieved in conjunction with businesses and NGOs. In many cases, it is the procurement policies of retailers and other businesses and organisations that creates the demand rather than the consumer and emphasis will be placed on this business-to-business work.

## **FSC is positively and accurately portrayed in the media and by other organisations**

FSC owes it to its members and other stakeholders to position itself as a credible forest certification scheme and to highlight its unique benefits. FSC UK needs to take full advantage of opportunities to reaffirm this position and to promote those committed to our system and to respond accordingly to any negative publicity.



### **Potential licence holders are supported to join the FSC system**

Certificate numbers in the UK have remained fairly stable in recent years, with promotional licences being the greatest area of growth. Interest in FSC is high, and we will continue to support those wishing to engage with the FSC system.

### **Procurers of forest-based products are encouraged to specify FSC-certified products and advised how to do so correctly**

Demand for certified products is driven by many different sectors, from retailers and brands to the construction industry and procurers of printed material. We are aware of many businesses and organisations that support FSC and/or wish to promote their environmental credentials but may not be currently specifying FSC certified materials. We will support and encourage those in a position to do so, including those in the public sector, to specify FSC certified materials and we will highlight the benefits of doing so.

### **Consumers in the UK recognise the FSC logo, understand what it means and choose FSC certified products over alternatives**

We will measure consumer recognition and understanding of the FSC logo and their purchase preference in relation to FSC certified products. We will work with key consumer-facing amplifiers to ensure that they communicate accurately about FSC and utilise the FSC system fully and appropriately, disseminating the FSC message and demonstrating best practice.

### **Knowledge of forests and sustainable forestry among children and young adults is improved**

Through the provision of appropriate educational materials, FSC UK aims to instil an appreciation of forests and the importance of acting as a responsible consumer in the younger generation. As well as updating and developing resources for use in schools and youth groups, we will also seek to target those on further education courses such as forestry, architecture, and sustainable development.