

FSC® Chain of Custody for Project Certification

Willmott Dixon FSC Project Certification Case Study – **WWF UK**



The mark of
responsible forestry



The ability to prove that timber has been derived from well-managed sources is now a key factor in the specification of timber products.

But when it comes to individual construction projects, the construction industry faces specific challenges when proving that the timber specified and

supplied is from legal and sustainable sources. FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) Chain of Custody for Project Certification has been designed as a mechanism for independently verifying the use of certified timber in a construction project, and allowing the industry to use the certification trademarks to promote their responsibly sourced credentials.

In this case study, Steve Cook, Principal Sustainable Development Manager,

Willmott Dixon, and Richard Bartlett, Sustainability Manager, Willmott Dixon, explains how, when the construction group won a contract with WWF UK to construct a new £14million headquarters, the Living Planet Centre, for the international charity on a brownfield site in Surrey, it chose to work with leading multi-sector certification body **BM TRADA** to achieve FSC Project Certification.

WWF Living Planet Centre

Work commenced on the WWF Living Planet Centre development in October 2011 with an allotted 64 weeks' construction period. The project involved the redevelopment of Brewery Road car park in Woking, with a brief to provide a "highly sustainable" two-storey exemplar building with basement and car parking facilities, accommodating 300 staff, a 150-seat conference venue, education facilities and the WWF Experience exhibit.

Given the client's focus on tackling climate change and habitat loss, the design by Hopkins Architects showcased the latest thinking on sustainable design, including maximising on-site sustainable features. These have resulted in a 53 per cent reduction in energy requirements compared to that of a typical office building and have secured the building a BREEAM "Outstanding" certification.

From the start, WWF was clear about its needs regarding sustainability assessment, insisting on FSC certification for all timber products utilised during the project, including the impressive 837.5m curved timber grid shell that spans the building.

Why Project Certification?



For Willmott Dixon, one of the UK's largest privately-owned contracting, residential development and property support companies, obtaining FSC Project Certification was a prerequisite to winning the contract to build the new WWF HQ, as well as a standard that aligned closely with the company's ethos, reflective of the business's wider sustainability policy.

As a responsible business, the Willmott Dixon Group has been at the forefront in identifying and mitigating the negative impact of construction on the environment. In 2008, the firm committed to some of the most challenging targets in the sector, and in doing so became the first carbon-neutral

construction and support services company. It has also developed robust and comprehensive real-time systems for capturing and measuring the business's environmental performance. Sustainability is, therefore, a core component of the business model and the company is proud to work with forward-thinking customers and suppliers to achieve greater sustainability standards, and FSC Project Certification reflects this.

As with all operators within the construction sector, the company has seen rising interest in sustainability within the market and the general public. The spotlight is falling more and more on the provenance of building materials and companies are under increasing pressure from prospective clients, NGOs and government

agencies to prove their green credentials. Certification that can clearly satisfy these expectations is therefore essential to winning new business.



The journey to certification



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For FSC Project Certification to be awarded, close checks are maintained to ensure that sustainability claims about the project can be met.

This involves a project manager with responsibility and authority to implement and maintain the chain of custody being appointed to oversee the process.

Meticulous records are maintained to document the purchase, delivery, receipt, invoicing and volumes of all wood products received on site, and all personnel involved in the project with a defined responsibility within the system are fully trained in chain of custody procedures. Detailed records on this training are maintained.

The WWF HQ was Willmott Dixon's first FSC certified project and involved 25 different supply chain sub-contractors.

Richard Bartlett, Sustainability Manager, Willmott Dixon, was in charge of the project. He says that a key element in achieving FSC Project Certification was ensuring all parties were aware of, and met, their responsibilities so that all timber in the project was FSC certified.

He said: "The first step was to ensure that the supply chain was aware of the FSC requirements when we made our initial procurement enquiries. Once we were awarded the project, we developed a project-specific procurement policy which detailed all different items of procurement and what we were looking for to match the required standards.

"We also developed guidance notes, which were issued to our staff

and supply chain members. These included an easy-to-follow flow chart which went through the entire procurement process.

"We then moved to training. The procurement policy and certification notes went out with enquires and orders. Once we had chosen the sub-contractors we had a pre-order meeting where we provided them, including primary site operatives, with extensive training on the FSC requirements and what we were expecting.

"Overall, it was quite straightforward. The FSC standard calls for knowing the direct supplier of the timber, the exact volume supplied, the type of timber and what elements are covered by the certification scope

"We developed forms to track this, which all sub-contractors were issued with and were required to return to us prior to any site deliveries. We got the message across that there was no way of getting around this requirement and that if the delivery tickets were not presented with the right information then the delivery was not allowed off the truck and onto the site. Occasionally we had to be hard-nosed about it and refuse a delivery until suppliers got it right.

"By putting these measures in place, we were able to manage everything down to the last detail and ensure that no illegal timber was used."

The project was completed in July 2013, with BM TRADA awarding full FSC Project Certification to Willmott Dixon (TT-PRO-004022). The WWF Living Planet Centre opened in October 2013.

The Benefits of FSC Project Certification

According to Cook, the experience of achieving FSC Project Certification brought many positives to the Willmott Dixon group.

He said: "Willmott Dixon has always set out to demonstrate leadership with the whole agenda of sustainable development. It is seen as a market differentiator and something that increases a company's reputation while reducing cost, risk and adding value to the client.

"The WWF building was a fantastic project to be involved with from an environmental perspective. Because of the third-party auditing and robust checks carried out, undertaking FSC Project Certification provided us with the ability to understand where there were weak links in the supply chain, and also test internal processes.

"Going through certification is a test and to come out the other end and achieve the standard is a feather in our cap.

"It provides reassurance of our supply chain capability, reassurance to the client that the building is 100 per cent legal with no reputational risk from being party to deforestation, and demonstrates our ability to deliver high-profile and challenging projects of this nature."



WILLMOTT DIXON

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Richard Bartlett, Sustainability Manager,
Willmott Dixon



Advice for certification

Bartlett says that certification should be seen as a joint effort between contractor and sub-contractor, and that collaboration and awareness-building are essential to achieving certification.

He said: “It’s all about collaboration and engagement early on with your supply chain. Though final responsibility rests with us as the contractor, those in the supply chain are the ones who have to be providing timber so you need to actively talk to people and make sure everything is fully understood.”

Why BM TRADA?

According to Steve Cook, Principal Sustainable Development Manager, Willmott Dixon – who sits on the group’s central in-house sustainability consultancy, ‘Re-Thinking’ – a number of certification bodies were approached to conduct the FSC audit process, but **BM TRADA** impressed the most with

its credentials. Cook said: “The name ‘TRADA’ is very well known. We reached out to a number of organisations to check their competencies, prices, and availability, and our choice was to go with **BM TRADA**. “We always found their auditors to be robust and professional.” Bartlett added: “The auditing was

incredibly stringent and **BM TRADA** showed a good understanding and knowledge of what they were looking for. It felt worthwhile that all the effort we were going to was being checked, and checked correctly.”

BM TRADA provides independent certification, testing, training and technical services. We help customers large and small to prove their business and product credentials and to improve performance and compliance. With an international presence across many industry sectors, we offer a special focus and long history of technical excellence in chain of custody certification, product certification, and testing and technical services.



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