



# CAPITAL OFFENCE

## IS LONDON FAILING THE FORESTS?

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# 1. Executive summary

In 2004, the UK consumed 45 million cubic metres of timber, pulp, paper and panels<sup>1</sup>. These wood products are all too often imported from regions where poor forestry practice, illegal logging and forest destruction are widespread. Indeed, it is estimated that the UK imports more than two million cubic metres of *illegal* wood products each year<sup>2</sup>.

Procurement by Local Authorities is believed to account for as much as a quarter of the total amount of timber the UK consumes<sup>3</sup>.

This is the third in a series of surveys, conducted by WWF every four years, on the responsible purchasing of forest products by Local Authorities in the UK. The latest survey was conducted online, and focuses on the procurement of forest products, both timber and paper, by the 33 London boroughs, as well as the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Association of London Government (ALG). WWF sought information on the actual purchasing practice of councils, such as tender specification and the use of forest certification systems, but did not ask them to quantify their actual consumption of forest products since few, if any, would have been able to supply such details.

This survey was completed by more than three quarters of London's Local Authorities (the GLA and 26 of the 33 London boroughs)<sup>4</sup>. The key findings were as follows:

- Just over half of councils responding had a policy relating to responsible purchasing of both timber and paper; most as part of a general “green purchasing” policy as opposed to a thorough, systematic approach to forest product procurement. However, only up to a quarter appear to be fully implementing this policy.
- Just under half of councils responding included environmentally responsible purchasing criteria in their tender specifications for forest products and were using forest certification systems, with a strong endorsement of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified products or equivalent.
- Only a third of councils that responded requested documentary evidence of certified product status from contractors and suppliers. This calls into question whether they are really getting what they ask for.
- Only three councils (one in nine) collected any information on the amount of timber they purchase; and this was both piecemeal and not followed up. In the longer term, such information will be essential to assess whether or not procurement policies are working.

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<sup>1</sup> *Forestry Statistics 2005*, Office of National Statistics.

<sup>2</sup> *Failing the Forests: Europe's illegal timber trade*, WWF-UK, November 2005. Figure based on trade data for six key timber-producing regions – the Amazon Basin, the Baltic States, the Congo Basin, east Africa, Indonesia and Russia.

<sup>3</sup> Environmental Audit Committee (EAC), July 2002.

<sup>4</sup> While these 27 responded to the questionnaire, not all of them completed every section. So figures on timber policy are out of 27, whereas on paper policy they are out of 26, and purchasing practice results are based on 24 responses.

### **Results of WWF's survey**

The GLA and 26 of the 33 London boroughs completed the online survey – a response rate of nearly 80 per cent.

#### ***Timber***

Half have a policy relating to responsible purchasing of timber (52%, 14/27).

Fewer than a fifth stated that they are fully implementing a policy (19%, 5/27).

Only 15 per cent are monitoring the implementation of a policy (4/27).

A third stated that they are in the process of developing a policy (33%, 9/27).

#### ***Paper***

Half have a policy relating to responsible purchasing of paper (54%, 14/26), most are the authorities that also have a timber policy.

Only a quarter are fully implementing a policy (27%, 7/26).

Fewer than a fifth are monitoring the implementation of a policy (23%, 6/26).

Thirty-one per cent stated that they are in the process of developing a policy (8/26).

#### ***Purchasing practice***

Half include responsible criteria in their tender specifications for forest products (54%, 13/24).

Forty-six per cent used forest certification systems (11/24), with a strong bias towards FSC-certified products ("or equivalent").

However, only 33 per cent ask for documentary evidence of certified status from contractors and suppliers (8/24).

### 1.1 Recommendations

It appears that more than half the Local Authorities in London still do not take a responsible approach to procurement of timber and paper. As democratic institutions, signed up to international commitments on sustainable development, they are responsible for furthering sustainable development locally. Councils must ensure that they do not inadvertently contribute to forest destruction, damaging important wildlife habitats overseas and robbing some of the world's poorest people of vital resources on which their livelihoods depend. Local Authorities can work to avoid this by introducing and implementing effective policies to purchase only credible, independently certified products from well-managed forests, and using recycled paper from post-consumer waste.

Given the UK government's focus on sustainable procurement and "legal and sustainable" timber purchasing<sup>5</sup>, it has never been easier for Local Authorities to implement responsible timber and paper procurement policies. WWF has also developed a model policy on forest product procurement which can be found in Appendix 1 at the back of this report.

In addition, WWF's report, *Responsible Purchasing of Forest Products*<sup>6</sup>, details the approach and steps that council specifiers should take to move towards obtaining only

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<sup>5</sup> For example the Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET) for central government, managed by Defra.

<sup>6</sup> *Responsible Purchasing of Forest Products*, Global Forest & Trade Network, WWF International, Feb 2004.

The report can be downloaded from: <http://assets.panda.org/downloads/finalrpg.pdf>

credible, independently-certified forest products from well-managed forests. Currently the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is the only certification system to meet WWF's own criteria for responsible forest management.

WWF is now inviting Local Authorities to join the WWF-UK Forest & Trade Network, through which we can help members to adopt a stepwise, monitored approach that enables them to identify and move away from materials deriving from unknown or unacceptable sources, towards products from credibly certified forests.





## 2. Introduction

Background to WWF's work on forest product procurement

WWF is working with governments, industry and civil society throughout the world to protect, manage and restore the world's forests. WWF has worked since 1997 on the issue of local government procurement of forest products – timber, wood products such as furniture, and paper. We advise and support UK public sector bodies, including Local Authorities, from our unique perspective on responsible forest management. We have provided extensive, dedicated support to many Local Authority staff to improve their purchasing policies and practices, to ensure wood products are sourced in an environmentally responsible manner (see Box 1).

### **Box 1. WWF-UK FTN: working with Local Authorities**

The mission of the WWF-UK Forest & Trade Network (FTN) is to improve the management of the world's production forests by using the purchasing power of UK businesses. Members of the WWF-UK FTN have committed themselves to tracing their timber and paper products back to the forest source to ensure that their supplies come from well-managed forests, and do not contribute to forest destruction and illegal logging practices.

The WWF-UK FTN currently has 50 members, two of which are Local Authorities – the London Borough of Lambeth, and Horsham District Council. Both authorities have committed to adopting a stepwise approach to improving the integrity of their wood procurement, eliminating any illegal practices from their supply chains and increasing the volume of credibly certified timber purchased.

The FTN plans to engage with other Local Authorities over the next few months with the aim of recruiting at least 50 into FTN membership by 2008. Local Authorities should adopt a forest products procurement policy that aims to eliminate the procurement – either directly or through contractors or subcontractors – of forest products from unlicensed sources. In the first instance, the policy should also eliminate procurement from uncertified forests in protected areas, those of high conservation value, or forests being inappropriately converted to other uses. The long-term aim should be full, credible certification. The policy should be backed by a SMART action plan that will ensure it is delivered, and by effective monitoring of progress.

The WWF-UK FTN was founded as the WWF 1995 Group, with 20 member companies, in 1991. Its current membership represents approximately 20 per cent of the total annual UK consumption of forest products by volume. It is estimated that almost 60 per cent of the material being traded by group members is FSC-certified.

For more information: [wwf.org.uk/ftn](http://wwf.org.uk/ftn)

One of the biggest threats to forests is the global trade in illegally extracted timber. The world market for illegal timber is worth an estimated \$15 billion a year<sup>7</sup>. It is estimated that 12 per cent of softwood and 17 per cent of hardwood entering the international market comes

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<sup>7</sup> House of Commons EAC "Sustainable Timber", Second Report of Session 2004-05.

from illegal sources<sup>8</sup>. Although generally portrayed as a problem restricted to countries with tropical forests, illegal logging also occurs in developed countries and economies in transition. Up to 65 per cent of WWF's Global 200 forested ecoregions – areas of the world identified as being of exceptional biological importance – are threatened by illegal logging<sup>9</sup>. Indonesia, one of the most biodiverse countries on Earth, currently suffers the highest level of illegal logging seen anywhere in the world – in excess of 80 per cent of all logging is deemed illegal<sup>10</sup>. The illegal timber trade also affects human communities through loss of natural forest resources and sometimes through intimidation and violence by organised criminals or timber barons. Illegal logging and other forms of forest crime are part of a larger problem that includes issues of forest governance and corruption.

WWF believes that responsible forest management and forest product purchasing can and must play a role in eliminating illegal logging and drive improvements in forest management. One way of doing this is by promoting and encouraging the use of procurement policies among national and local governments, as well as industry, to specify timber that has been certified as coming from well-managed forests, and which is thus legal and sustainable (See Box 2).

#### **Box 2. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)**



WWF played a leading role in establishing the FSC, which lays down strict international standards for forest management. WWF and the FSC have the common goal of promoting good forest management practice and ensuring that it is environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable. The FSC is currently the only credible certification system recognised by WWF and other major environmental organisations such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and the Woodland Trust. The UK government's Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET) recently announced that FSC certification fulfils the government's own criteria for legal and sustainable timber. Today, 70 million hectares of the world's forests in 67 countries are FSC-certified – including more than one million in the UK alone. Forest products derived from FSC-certified forests are allowed to carry the FSC trademark.

For more information: [www.fsc-uk.org](http://www.fsc-uk.org)

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<sup>8</sup> "Illegal Logging and Global Wood Markets" by Seneca Creek Associates LLC/Wood Resources International (AF&PA), November 2004.

<sup>9</sup> "Global 200", WWF International, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> House of Commons EAC "Sustainable Timber", Second Report of Session 2004-05.

## 3. Public sector consumption of forest products

### 3.1 Overview

Public procurement currently accounts for around 16 per cent of the EU GDP<sup>11</sup>. In 2002, purchasing of wood products accounted for 19 per cent of total government procurement spend<sup>12</sup>. In July 2000, the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) identified the UK government as the single largest procurer of timber in the UK. Central government, it said, was responsible for 15 per cent of all timber procurement in the UK. The EAC believed that this figure rose from 15 to 40 per cent when the consumption of all public sector departments, including Local Authorities, is taken into consideration<sup>13</sup>. Based on today's consumption figures, this means combined central and local government purchases of timber could be more than 7 million cubic metres<sup>14</sup>.

UK production of roundwood totalled 8.6 million cubic metres in 2004. A further 52 million cubic metres of wood and wood products were imported to the UK and 15.6 million cubic metres were exported, giving an apparent UK consumption of 45 million cubic metres. This consumption may be broken down into: timber 18.4 million cubic metres, pulp 7.1 million cubic metres, panels 8 million cubic metres and paper 18.4 million cubic metres<sup>15</sup>.

The Forestry Commission manages 40 per cent of the UK's forest cover. These forests are FSC-certified using the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS), which has been endorsed by the FSC. However, UK domestic forests only satisfy about 30 per cent of the UK's annual demand for timber, paper and other wood products; 70 per cent of the wood required to meet our consumption needs comes from forests outside of the UK<sup>16</sup>. Other estimates suggest as much as 85 per cent of our demand for wood is met by imports<sup>17</sup>. The value of wood products imported into the UK in 2004 was £9 billion<sup>18</sup>.

The UK's overwhelming dependence on imports presents a problem. If we are to reduce the possibility of purchasing illegally logged or traded timber, we must rely heavily on laws being effectively enforced in the countries from which we procure our wood. In many cases,

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<sup>11</sup> *Growth and Opportunity Prioritising economic reform in Europe*, HM Treasury, February 2005:

[www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/261/64/Growth\\_and\\_Opportunity-381MB.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/261/64/Growth_and_Opportunity-381MB.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> *The Timber Footprint of the G8 and China: Making the case for green procurement by Government*, WWF, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> *Buying Time for Forests: Timber Trade and Public Procurement*, Environmental Audit Committee, July 2000:

[www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmsselect/cmenvaud/792/79204.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmsselect/cmenvaud/792/79204.htm)

This figure represents the last official estimate and may well have increased. In the absence of more recent estimates, this figure has been used to provide an indication of government consumption of wood products.

<sup>14</sup> Forty per cent of total UK consumption of timber. This was determined to be 18.4 million cubic metres in 2004, *Forestry Statistics 2005*, Office of National Statistics.

<sup>15</sup> *Forestry Statistics 2005*, Office of National Statistics. All figures given in WRME underbark.

<sup>16</sup> Timber Trade Federation, 2005; House of Commons EAC, *Sustainable Timber*, Second Report of Session 2004-05.

<sup>17</sup> *Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry – Financial Statistics Yearbook 2005*, Office of National Statistics:

[www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_compendia/UK2005/UK2005.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/UK2005/UK2005.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> *Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry – Financial Statistics Yearbook 2005*, Office of National Statistics:

[www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_compendia/UK2005/UK2005.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/UK2005/UK2005.pdf)

wood products are imported from regions where poor forestry practice, illegal logging and forest destruction are widespread.

A recent WWF report identified the UK as Europe's single biggest importer of illegal timber (from six regions), fuelling the destruction of the world's most important forests and exacerbating poverty in some of the poorest countries. Up to 26 per cent of the UK's imports from six key timber-producing regions could be illegal<sup>19</sup> – more than 2 million cubic metres of illegal wood products annually, equivalent to forest loss of nearly three times the area of Luxembourg<sup>20</sup>. An earlier analysis of the UK's total imports estimated that 4 million cubic metres of illegal forest products entered the country each year<sup>21</sup>. As a major wood buyer and commissioner of projects, the UK government has a significant role to play in ensuring it is not a key driver of illegal forest destruction around the world.

The construction and refurbishment industry is by far the greatest end-use sector of the wood bought by the government. In 2003, the construction industry accounted for 85 per cent of the UK's total wood consumption<sup>22</sup>. The sector is, therefore, a key audience for WWF's One Million Sustainable Homes campaign (see Box 3).

**Box 3. Towards sustainable construction – WWF's One Million Sustainable Homes Campaign**

More than half of all resources consumed globally are used in construction, and 50 per cent of energy generated across the world is used to construct, heat, light and ventilate our buildings. More than 85 per cent of the timber the UK consumes each year is used by the construction industry, with around 55 per cent used for housing. In addition to the direct environmental impacts, such as generating carbon emissions, waste and using natural resources, the way homes and communities are developed determines our lifestyle decisions and our overall impact on the environment. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in August 2002, WWF launched a groundbreaking campaign to bring sustainable homes, those that minimise impacts on the environment and offer social and economic benefits, from the fringes to the mainstream across the UK. WWF is working with government, industry and consumers to ensure that one million sustainable homes are developed across the UK by 2012, including refurbished as well as new homes.

For more information: [wwf.org.uk/sustainablehomes](http://wwf.org.uk/sustainablehomes)

### 3.2 Central government procurement of forest products

The last few years have seen an increase in political will nationally and internationally, although not necessarily at the local level, to tackle the issue of responsible procurement of forest products. Since the previous WWF survey of Local Authorities, in 2001, the UK

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<sup>19</sup> *Failing the Forests: Europe's illegal timber trade*, WWF-UK, November 2005. Figure based on trade data for six key timber-producing regions – the Amazon Basin, the Baltic States, the Congo Basin, east Africa, Indonesia and Russia.

<sup>20</sup> The UK imports 2.2 million cubic metres of illegal timber each year. A standard industry equation was used to convert the volume into the equivalent area of forests. Luxembourg's area is around 215,000 hectares.

<sup>21</sup> *The Timber Footprint of the G8 and China: Making the case for green procurement by Government*, WWF, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> *Statistics of the production, import, export and consumption of timber by the UK during 2003*, James Hewitt for WWF-UK, 2004.

government has risen to the top of a WWF list which compares the measures that 19 EU countries have announced to combat illegal logging and the trade in illegal timber<sup>23</sup>. This improvement is due in part to highly public actions and consistent lobbying by a number of major environmental groups, including WWF. However, previous surveys have shown that the UK government has not always matched its rhetoric on green procurement with actual policy implementation or effective communication of the policy across its departments.

In 2000, in an effort to curb its purchases of illegal timber, the UK government announced that it would introduce a “green” timber procurement policy, to ensure that the UK would buy and use timber only from “legal and sustainable” sources in future projects<sup>24</sup>. Despite the Environment Minister’s good intentions, progress made in implementing this policy effectively in the years that followed has been terribly slow.

The UK government has been publicly embarrassed on a number of occasions. A year after its announcement, no government department had intentionally purchased any certified timber (timber that is credibly verified as legal and sustainable). This wasn’t because of a lack of projects. In fact, WWF learned of several projects, including the St Pancras section of the channel tunnel rail link, the redevelopment of Wembley Stadium<sup>25</sup>, the Scottish Parliament building in Holyrood and the Millennium Arts Centre in Cardiff, where contractors had offered certified wood but were turned down by the government. In 2002, the UK government signed a memorandum of understanding with Indonesia – a joint agreement to improve forest law enforcement and governance in Indonesia to combat illegal logging and the international trade in illegally logged timber and wood products. In June 2003, illegal timber from Indonesia was used on the site of the new Home Office headquarters<sup>26</sup>. A year earlier, illegal sapele wood from central Africa was used in the refurbishment of the Cabinet Office<sup>27</sup>.

In 2002, WWF estimated that central government purchased around 10 million cubic metres of wood products, at a cost of £2.5 billion. Of this annual total, 748,000 cubic metres of timber, pulp and paper was considered to have originated from illegally felled forests<sup>28</sup>.

In November 2004, four years after the government’s initial green timber procurement announcement, Environment Minister Elliot Morley announced steps to strengthen the public sector’s efforts to buy legally harvested timber from sustainably-managed forests. An independent assessment for the UK government’s Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) of five different forest certification schemes, was undertaken to establish which schemes could provide assurance to government buyers that their timber

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<sup>23</sup> The UK government achieved the highest score in April 2004 and again in September 2004. *The Government Barometer: WWF rating of the EU governments’ commitments and actions to combat illegal logging and trade*, WWF, April 2004; September 2004; new survey due in April 2006. More information: [www.panda.org/barometer](http://www.panda.org/barometer)

<sup>24</sup> “Action to halt illegal timber imports – Meacher”, DTLR press release, 28 July 2000: [www.press.dtlr.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn\\_id=2000\\_0516](http://www.press.dtlr.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2000_0516)

<sup>25</sup> The project directors for the new Wembley Stadium site, Multiplex, later signalled their commitment to specifying timber from FSC-certified forests.

<sup>26</sup> Greenpeace: [www.saveordelete.com](http://www.saveordelete.com)

<sup>27</sup> Greenpeace: [www.saveordelete.com](http://www.saveordelete.com)

<sup>28</sup> *The Timber Footprint of the G8 and China: Making the case for green procurement by Government*, WWF, 2002.

comes from “legal and sustainable” sources. It showed that only two schemes did so – the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA)<sup>29</sup>.

The report was produced for the government’s Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET), a new body that will advise central government departments on timber procurement and deliver the central government policy on timber procurement.

The CPET also offers free advice and guidance to Local Authorities on an ad hoc basis, as well as updates via the database of Local Authorities provided by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC). Local Authorities are free to use the CPET helpline, but it is not mandatory for Local Authorities to follow central government policy and guidance on legal and sustainable timber procurement. Provided that adequate awareness of this service is raised among Local Authorities, there is scope for them to assist central government in becoming significant drivers of markets for legal and sustainable timber and wood products. WWF’s 2005 survey of Local Authorities in London shows that four in five were keen to use the government’s CPET advice service on “legal and sustainable” timber procurement, with the remainder indicating a significant interest<sup>30</sup>.

WWF hopes this move by central government will drive increased awareness among public authorities of the need to procure timber from well-managed forests. We would like to see each Local Authority develop a robust policy on timber procurement which delivers both legal and sustainable timber. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the Local Government Association (LGA) could provide invaluable assistance in coordinating and assisting in the uptake of such green procurement policies. It is hoped that this would, in turn, apply increased and more focused pressure on the private sector to implement similar policies.

### 3.3 Local Authority procurement of forest products

Procurement by Local Authorities is believed to account for as much as a quarter of the UK’s total timber consumption – around 4.6 million cubic metres<sup>31</sup>.

In 2001, a DETR<sup>32</sup> report indicated that 86 per cent of Local Authorities had a general environmental policy in place, and that this policy made reference to procurement issues in 84 per cent of councils. According to the study, over three-quarters of Local Authorities (78 per cent) took environmental considerations into account when evaluating tenders, 67 per cent when considering the best procurement option and 64 per cent when awarding contracts.

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<sup>29</sup> The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC) appealed the decision and committed to make the changes necessary to be recognised as both legal and sustainable. On this basis the scheme was given six months’ “provisional” recognition by the CPET, subject to a formal reassessment in January. Defra is due to make an announcement shortly on the results of this reassessment.

<sup>30</sup> For more information on the Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET), please see the CPET website: [www.proforest.net/cpet](http://www.proforest.net/cpet)

<sup>31</sup> Twenty-five per cent of total UK consumption of timber. This was determined to be 18.4 million cubic metres in 2004, *Forestry Statistics 2005*, Office of National Statistics.

<sup>32</sup> The environmental remit of the UK government’s Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) was subsumed by Defra in 2001.

In 1997 and 2001, WWF conducted its own extensive surveys on the responsible procurement of timber by UK Local Authorities. The results told a different story from the DETR study. In 1997 and 2001 respectively, we found that 36 per cent, then just 19 per cent of councils had a policy which specified that timber purchased must come from an independently certified source. Furthermore, in 2001 our survey revealed that only 10 per cent of all councils were at least partly implementing their policies, and just 5 per cent were monitoring them – a disturbingly poor record<sup>33</sup>.

In 2001, 40 per cent of Local Authorities responding had no policy specifying criteria about the nature of their timber supply, and therefore had no means of knowing whether the timber may have been from a suspicious source – i.e. illegally logged or illegally traded. This was worrying, not least because of the commitment by Local Authorities, under Local Agenda 21, to sustainable development – of which the use of natural resources, including forest products, is an integral part. It was also disturbing in light of the “green procurement policy” announced in 2000 by Michael Meacher, then Environment Secretary, which committed the UK government to sourcing legal and sustainable timber.

Clearly, the commitment by central government had not filtered down to local government level. To illustrate this point, in stark contrast to what was being said at central government level, one third of the Authorities that responded to the WWF survey in 2001 felt that they did not have a timber policy because it was not considered to be an issue. A quarter cited a lack of political commitment.

Not surprisingly then, in September 2004, Glasgow City Council was the target of Greenpeace protestors over the use of non-certified Indonesian timber in the refurbishment of the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow, the most visited museum in the UK outside London. The £13 million project was financed by the National Lottery, the Department of Culture Media and Sport in London, and the Council, and was heavily criticised for using merbau timber flooring. Merbau is sourced from the last rainforests of South-east Asia and is at risk of extinction<sup>34</sup>. Other blunders include the Cardiff Millennium Stadium – for which uncertified timber decking was sourced from central Africa, where illegal and destructive logging is rife<sup>35</sup> – and the Kennet and Avon Canal, where money was spent on lock gates made from Liberian rainforest timber. The logging company supplying timber was also responsible for illegal arms smuggling into the country, fuelling Liberia’s civil war<sup>36</sup>. A whole host of other projects were blacklisted for using non-certified timber from regions suffering high levels of illegal logging and trade. Some have since committed to sourcing FSC timber, while others continue to be monitored<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> “Central and local government failing to deliver on responsible timber commitment”. WWF press release, 23 November 2001.

<sup>34</sup> “Greenpeace activists occupy prestigious National Lottery funded Scottish art gallery”. Greenpeace, September 2004.

<sup>35</sup> Greenpeace: [www.saveordelete.com](http://www.saveordelete.com)

<sup>36</sup> Greenpeace: [www.saveordelete.com](http://www.saveordelete.com)

<sup>37</sup> Greenpeace: [www.saveordelete.com](http://www.saveordelete.com). The projects being monitored include: Arnolfini, Bristol; Town Hall, Birmingham; City and County Museum, Lincoln; National Centre for Children’s Books, Newcastle; National Waterfront Museum, Swansea; The Public, West Bromwich; St Georges Hall, Liverpool; Shoreditch Town Hall:

However, despite Local Authorities apparently consuming higher quantities of timber, central government does appear to have taken more initiative to address the procurement of illegal timber.



## 4. The survey

### 4.1 Introduction

The latest WWF survey focused specifically on the procurement of forest products by Local Authorities in London. In the 1997 survey, around 40 per cent of the London Authorities that responded had a timber procurement policy – higher than the national average, but clearly not nearly enough. However, in 2001 only half this number, just 21 per cent (seven boroughs) had a policy, while another 12 per cent (four boroughs) were developing one.

### 4.2 Methodology

WWF's latest electronic questionnaire was designed to be directly comparable with the questions posed in our 1997 and 2001 surveys, while expanding the focus beyond timber to include paper procurement, given its significance in forest product consumption by Local Authorities<sup>38</sup>. Identical questions and directed responses were provided on procurement policies for both product groups in the recent survey, including additional questions to better understand the nature of the policies, their implementation and monitoring. Information was also sought on those policies under development but not yet approved concerning timber and paper procurement, and we sought reasons for the absence of a relevant policy in other cases.

For the first time, our survey looked beyond procurement policies to examine council practice in the purchasing of forest products generally – including, critically, the nature of tender specifications and use of forest certification systems. Questions were also posed about council recycling and facilities provision.

The online questionnaire format was designed to be as straightforward and simple to complete as possible, in order to promote wide participation. Additional support was offered by WWF to help individuals to complete the questionnaire.

WWF contacted a named individual at each of London's Local Authorities, as well as the GLA and ALG, in September 2004 to introduce the survey's aims and establish the most relevant individual at each authority to complete it. We launched the survey online to London's Local Authorities jointly with the Green Group of the London Assembly in October 2004, following consultation with, and feedback by, selected Local Authority partners. Councils that did not respond after a month were followed up, resulting in a high response rate of 77 per cent – with a total of 26 of the 33 London boroughs, as well as the GLA, submitting completed electronic questionnaires by the beginning of 2005.

WWF analysed the results of each electronic questionnaire response. Each participating Local Authority was awarded an overall rating, based on the sum of individual scores assigned to each response in the three main sections of timber procurement (policy), paper procurement (policy) and purchasing practice for forest products. Responses on different elements of purchasing policy and practice were weighted according to their relative importance towards achieving environmentally responsible procurement. For each individual

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<sup>38</sup> Paper is considered to account for as much as 50 per cent of total consumption of forest products by Local Authorities.

section, as well as the overall rating, a “traffic light” system was used – from a poor or non-existent approach to environmentally responsible purchasing of forest products (red), through to a relatively thorough focus being pursued (green). Intermediate councils which were trying to address this issue and making some progress were given an amber rating. Scores could only be assigned based on each council’s self-certificated response, with no independent evaluation of the accuracy of the information provided; thus errors may exist in the survey ratings according to the information provided.

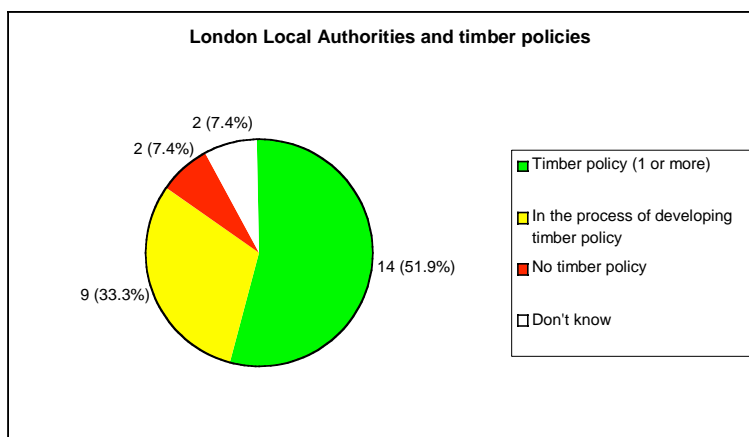
## 5. Results of WWF’s London survey

### 5.1 Overview

Our survey found rather mixed policy and practice across London Local Authorities on procurement of forest products, with less than half the authorities generally taking an acceptable approach to ensure that virgin products come from well-managed forests, or that products are derived from post-consumer recycled waste.

### 5.2 Timber procurement

Just over half the councils responding (14 individual authorities) had an environmentally responsible purchasing policy for timber products, with a minority having more than one policy or strategy for this product group. In nearly all instances<sup>39</sup> these policies covered the whole council, as opposed to individual directorates or departments. In most cases<sup>40</sup> timber is covered as part of a general “green purchasing” policy that commonly focuses on procuring “sustainable” timber without adequately defining this much used and abused term. Two Local Authorities relied on their procurement strategy alone to purchase sustainable timber, although a strategy may carry less weight in its application than an approved policy. Four authorities additionally had a sustainable construction policy that included standards for timber provenance. One council relied solely on this policy to govern its approach to timber procurement, although it is unlikely to cover all the council’s timber use. Just four boroughs, in contrast, had adopted a specific policy for timber, with Lambeth and Sutton standing out as good examples. Another nine councils, a third of respondents, claimed to be in the process of developing a relevant policy for timber procurement, or to be doing so soon, but only two were able to back this up with detailed information indicating an adequate approach.



When it comes to putting council policy into practice, however, the figures for London are not quite so encouraging. Only five boroughs, less than a fifth of respondents, said that their responsible timber procurement policy was being fully implemented, although a further six stated that their policy was being implemented for some projects or in some departments at least. Eight councils – just under a third – gave some support to individual purchasers to

<sup>39</sup> 12/14 Local Authorities.

<sup>40</sup> 10/14 Local Authorities.

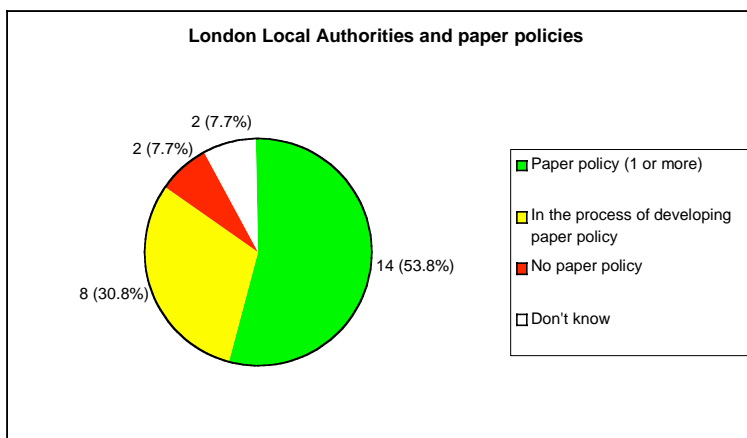
encourage policy implementation, for example through the provision of advice, training and details of local suppliers of certified timber.

Monitoring of purchasing practice also emerged as a major issue of concern, with just four councils (a lowly 15 per cent) monitoring policy implementation. Furthermore, environmental management systems are not being used by councils for the purpose of monitoring timber procurement – a wasted potential opportunity. Indeed, only three boroughs (one in nine) were collecting any information on the amount of timber that they purchase, and this was both piecemeal and not followed up. In the longer term, such information will be essential in assessing whether or not procurement policies are working.

Lastly, nearly two thirds of boroughs responding to our survey (17 councils) provided public recycling facilities for waste wood, although it is thought that there are often problems in then finding a secondary use for the material collected.

### 5.3 Paper procurement

Paper presented a similar picture to timber, albeit with slightly more widespread action, perhaps reflecting the fact that this product area is more tangible for Local Authority staff and more easily controlled. Three councils had a policy approach on paper but not timber, and three vice versa – thus 14 councils again had at least one environmentally responsible purchasing policy for paper. These policies covered the entire Local Authority in each instance. Again, most took the form of a general “green purchasing” policy (approximately one third, or nine councils); some were in combination with a (sustainable) procurement strategy. A good example of a responsible paper purchasing approach was that of Southwark as part of its sustainable procurement strategy. Of concern is the optional nature of selecting better environmental paper purchasing alternatives, as well as the vague wording used in several councils’ procurement strategies to source paper from “sustainable forests” without defining these. Just three boroughs, one in nine, had a specific policy for environmentally responsible procurement of paper. A further eight boroughs (almost a third of respondents) said that they were in the process of developing a paper policy or doing this soon, i.e. at the beginning of 2005. However, only three of these provided additional information supporting an adequate approach to this issue.



Seven councils, half of those with a policy but just a quarter of all Local Authorities responding, claimed to be fully implementing a responsible paper procurement policy. Of the remainder of Local Authorities with a policy, the majority (six councils) stated that they were implementing this in some departments, with one council only implementing it for some projects. Ten councils provided some support to purchasing officers to implement an environmentally responsible approach to paper buying, corresponding to just over a third of all respondents – a marginally better situation than for timber. In the better-performing councils such as Croydon, 100 per cent post-consumer waste recycled paper is set as the default option and promoted through both paper and electronic purchasing systems.

Six authorities, less than a quarter of all respondents, principally limited to those councils claiming to be fully implementing a paper policy, said that they were monitoring policy implementation. Five councils, in contrast, were not carrying out any monitoring of implementation and another three stated that they did not know. Two councils were using an internal environmental management system to monitor paper purchasing, whereas others follow this through the use of quarterly reviews, the setting of key performance indicators in their corporate procurement strategy, and collation of information from buyers, suppliers and photocopying contractors. In marked contrast to the situation for timber buying, a third of councils responding were collecting information on the quantity and type of paper that they bought, indicating the greater ease with which boroughs are able to keep track of paper consumption. The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames stands out as an example of good practice, in which 86 per cent of paper supplies are recycled paper. Fewer than a third of London's Local Authorities, seven boroughs and the GLA, were able to estimate how much of their paper for internal use they recycle – all claiming to recycle more than half, and as much as 90-100 per cent in the cases of Lewisham, Sutton and the GLA.

#### 5.4 Obstacles to procurement policy development

A limited number of boroughs provided clues as to why they have no policies on responsible procurement of forest products. One borough responded saying that they did not have a policy on responsible purchasing for either timber or paper, and another two didn't have a policy for one of timber or paper. Ealing Borough Council, a borough with no policies, cited the reasons for not having any policies as a "lack of time" and responsible procurement not being "considered a current issue". Other boroughs stated that they had not yet developed an overall procurement strategy and had concerns over perceived additional costs for certified timber and paper<sup>41</sup>.

#### 5.5 Purchasing practice

Almost half of Local Authorities participating in our survey (12 boroughs and the GLA) do include responsible purchasing criteria in their tender specifications for forest products, although many were patchily applied, vaguely worded or not fully elaborated upon by respondents. Eleven councils use and accept forest certification systems as evidence that virgin products come from well-managed forests, with the majority seeking products certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) "or equivalent". However, fewer than a

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<sup>41</sup> FSC timber need not necessarily cost more than non-FSC timber. Two of the largest builders' merchants – WWF-UK Forest & Trade Network members Jewsons and Travis Perkins – do not charge a premium on any of their FSC-certified softwood timber products.

third of councils (eight Local Authorities) were asking for documentary evidence of certified status from contractors and suppliers, and most of these were not consistently applying this approach either, although the London Borough of Sutton presented a notable positive exception. Another third of respondents, eight boroughs, were uncertain whether they used forest certification systems, and about a fifth (five councils) certainly did not use certification. WWF is keen to highlight the benefits of sourcing products from credibly certified forests. A recent WWF report, written with council specifiers in mind, highlights the environmental and economic benefits of specifying certified timber window frames (see Box 4).

#### **Box 4. Timber windows, more sustainable than PVC**

Twice as many PVC window frames are sold each year than timber frames. Public concern over contributing to deforestation and biodiversity loss has led to a negative image of wood. The plastics industry has largely exploited these concerns by spending millions of pounds on marketing initiatives such as the *Save a tree: use PVC* campaign of the 1990s, aimed at improving the perception of plastics as a better alternative to wood. However, the environmental impacts of PVC are many, including:

- A product that uses a non-renewable resource cannot be sustainable: oil makes up 43 per cent of the raw material required to make PVC.
- PVC windows generate 43 per cent more waste than timber windows: 82 per cent of total PVC waste goes to landfill, 15 per cent is incinerated. Only three per cent is recycled.
- PVC waste will rise to 6.4 million tonnes by 2020, when the capacity to recycle it will be a fifth of what will be required.
- It takes eight times more energy to manufacture a PVC window than an equivalent timber frame.
- Throughout the use and disposal of the product, the overall environmental burden is significantly less for timber windows than for PVC windows.
- Hazardous chemicals are released into the environment during the incineration process of PVC.

In addition to the negative environmental impacts of PVC, there are many examples of research that show timber window frames to be between 14 and 25 per cent less expensive than PVC windows, when considering the “whole life” cost.

WWF’s report: *Window of Opportunity: the environmental and economic benefits of specifying timber window frames*, can be downloaded from the WWF website:

[wwf.org.uk/filelibrary/pdf/windows\\_0305.pdf](http://wwf.org.uk/filelibrary/pdf/windows_0305.pdf)

Just over 40 per cent of respondents, 11 councils, were uncertain about their position on using tree species listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the legal instrument designed to control such international trade. A further five boroughs do nothing to address this. Only one third of London Local Authorities, eight councils, do consider this issue to some degree, usually as an integral part of their responsible timber procurement policy. Therefore, not only do the majority of London councils not have a timber procurement policy, but they also do not even appear to be alerted to the risks of using CITES-listed tree species. It is imperative that all councils have a position forbidding the sourcing of timber if trade in that product contravenes national or international laws to which the UK is a signatory.

## 6. Comparison with results from previous WWF surveys

WWF was able to compare the situation on timber procurement, but not paper, for 19 London boroughs who had also responded to our surveys in 1997 and/or 2001. Our analysis found somewhat mixed results. Five boroughs had since developed a relevant policy and another four were considering developing one by 2005. Seven councils showed no change, whereas three actually stated that they were considering developing a policy, having declared in 1997 that they had one! This is a matter of considerable concern as it suggests that policies have been developed but not upheld over time.

In WWF's 2001 survey, councils were also asked about the degree of policy implementation and their monitoring of this. Unfortunately, few comparisons of individual councils could be made because of the patchy nature of responses. However, two boroughs have apparently improved on implementation and monitoring – the London Borough of Greenwich having done both. Two boroughs showed no significant change in implementation, and one had reversed its ability to monitor timber purchasing policy.



















































































In WWF's previous national surveys, London authorities performed slightly better than the average for the whole of the UK. In 1997, 39 per cent of London boroughs had a responsible timber procurement policy, versus 36 per cent nationally. In 2001, albeit with a lower response rate, these figures dropped significantly to just 21 per cent of boroughs with such a policy, against a national average of 19 per cent. At that time, another 12 per cent of London boroughs were registered as “in the process” of developing a policy, in contrast to 9 per cent nationally. Fortunately, according to our 2005 London survey this reverse has now been countered, with 42 per cent of London authorities having a timber policy and another 27 per cent developing one. Thus there has been some progress since 1997 overall in London, although it is of great concern that less than half of boroughs are taking responsible procurement of forest products seriously, and that eight years have elapsed in reaching this stage.





## 7. League table of London boroughs

The following table shows both the overall rating, score (%) and individual ratings for the sections on timber and paper procurement and general purchasing practice obtained by each of the London Local Authorities responding to our survey. Those organisations that declined the opportunity to respond to our questionnaire are listed separately, below the results.




Local Authority	Overall rating	Score (%)	Timber procurement	Paper procurement	Purchasing practice
<b>“Forest-friendly” Local Authorities</b>					
Sutton		60			
Croydon		53			
<b>“Forest-fair” Local Authorities</b>					
Lambeth		49			
Greater London Authority		47			
Islington		46			
Greenwich		43			
Wandsworth		43			
Camden		38			
Richmond upon Thames		29			
Southwark		25	ITP		
<b>“Forest-failing” Local Authorities</b>					
Lewisham		23			
Westminster City Council		21		ITP	
Newham		17			
Merton		16	ITP	ITP	
Enfield		13	ITP		
Havering		13		ITP	
Haringey		11	ITP	ITP	
Redbridge		11	ITP	ITP	
Brent		10	ITP	ITP	
Tower Hamlets		5	-		
Corporation of London		4			
Kensington and Chelsea		4	ITP	ITP	
Barnet		3	ITP	ITP	
Bromley		2	ITP	-	
Hackney		0	-	-	
Hounslow		0	-	-	
Ealing		0	-	-	-

ITP = “In The Process” of developing a policy

**Local Authorities that failed to respond:**

- Association of London Government (ALG)
- London Borough (LB) of Barking and Dagenham
- LB Bexley
- LB Hammersmith and Fulham
- LB Harrow
- LB Hillingdon
- LB Kingston upon Thames
- LB Waltham Forest

**Scoring:**

-  = 50-100%  
**Good approach to issue generally, but still room for improvement**
-  = 25-49%  
**Reasonable approach to issue in some areas, but much more still needed**
-  = 0-24%  
**Poor or non-existent approach to issue, a long way to go**

As can be seen from our league table of London Local Authorities, much work remains to be done if most of them are to attain a “Forest-Friendly” rating by WWF. Just two councils achieved this status in our 2005 survey: the London Boroughs of Sutton and Croydon. A further eight boroughs and the GLA were making significant efforts to address their organisational impacts as consumers of forest products, according to their questionnaire responses. However, the majority of the remaining 17 boroughs weren’t doing nearly enough to address their responsibilities as large public organisations using considerable quantities of timber and paper products. Many of these stated that they were in the process of developing a policy approach on timber or paper, in many cases both product groups, and thus it is to be hoped that their poor or non-existent approach in this area will be rectified in due course.

As found in individual questionnaire responses, paper was generally better addressed than timber in environmentally responsible procurement policies. Too few examples of general good purchasing practice of forest products were encountered in our survey, the London Borough of Sutton being a singular exception.

## 8. Conclusions and recommendations

We are certain that Local Authorities in the UK have a critical role to play in supporting the sustainable management of forests worldwide and in helping to eliminate the scourge of illegal and destructive logging that undermines attempts to conserve and manage these forests in perpetuity. As democratic institutions, responsible for furthering sustainable development locally, councils should ensure that they are not, however inadvertently, contributing to destructive and illegal logging elsewhere on the planet and depriving some of the world's poorest communities of vital resources on which their livelihoods depend.

UK councils have an extensive “forest footprint” resulting from their diverse uses of forest products – from construction timber to copying paper – sourced from a wide range of forest ecosystems in different countries. It is imperative that through their purchasing power, these same councils improve the environmental performance not only of their own suppliers and contractors, but also more widely, as well as demonstrating leadership on this issue to their local constituencies.

However, half the Local Authorities in London still do not have an environmentally responsible approach to procurement of forest products in policy or practice, and this proportion is likely to be higher than the overall national picture.

Therefore, Local Authorities must, as a matter of urgency, introduce effective policies to purchase only credible, independently-certified, products with guarantees that the forests they are sourced from are well-managed, and use recycled paper from post-consumer waste.

Given the UK government's focus on sustainable procurement and “legal and sustainable” timber purchasing, as well as central government's CPET process, it has never been easier for Local Authorities to implement responsible timber and paper procurement policies. A model policy on forest product procurement can be found in Appendix 1 at the back of this report.

WWF is encouraging specifiers or buyers of wood to choose wood that has been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). This guarantees the wood has been sourced from a well-managed forest or other controlled wood source, and ensures that the timber is legal and not from a controversial source. The FSC is currently the only credible certification system recognised by WWF and other major environmental organisations.

WWF's report, *Responsible Purchasing of Forest Products*, details the approach and steps that council specifiers should take to move towards obtaining only credible independently-certified forest products from well-managed forests.

Download the report: <http://assets.panda.org/downloads/finalrpg.pdf>

In addition, WWF is now inviting Local Authorities to join the WWF-UK Forest & Trade Network, through which WWF can help members to adopt a stepwise, monitored approach that enables them to identify and move away from materials deriving from unknown or unacceptable sources, towards products from credibly certified forests.

Now is the time for Local Authorities to take action and help drive demand for legal and sustainable wood products.

# Appendix 1

WWF's suggested timber and wood product purchasing policy for Local Authorities

This policy applies to the procurement of timber and wood products by all departments of this Local Authority. *[Insert name of Local Authority]* is committed to reducing the impacts of its timber procurement on the world's forests, and to implementing a systematic programme to ensure that all timber and wood products used in the course of its activities have been responsibly sourced. As a minimum, we will require suppliers to provide visibility of supply chains, such that all products can be shown to originate from legal sources.

In order to encourage good forest management, the long-term objective for *[Insert name of Local Authority]* is to be able to demonstrate that all timber and wood products used in the course of its activities are sourced from forests that are independently certified, under credible internationally-recognised schemes.

These commitments are being progressively implemented through a supplier assessment programme. This programme will enable us to ensure that we improve our performance by gradually increasing the proportion of our purchases that originate from certified sources.

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 we have a neutral if not a 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 which can demonstrate that the products are derived from well-managed sources.

The following criteria must be met within the certification scheme: recognition of indigenous peoples' rights, long-term economic viability, protection of biodiversity, conservation of ancient woodland, long-term responsible management, regular monitoring, chain of custody and a logo or label which can be used on the products originating from forests that have been certified and which provides the guarantee to the final customer.

If independently certified timber is unavailable, contractors will, as a second resort only, use timber from a known legal source, and will attempt to gain as much assurance as possible that the forest is well-managed, and will provide documentation of proof. 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.

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.

All officers with responsibility for specifying timber will be required to inform contractors of Council wood purchasing policy and to devise a suitable method of monitoring contractors' success in purchasing timber under this policy. Guidance will be given by the Council to relevant officers as to the information they should provide to contractors working on, or proposing to tender for Council contracts. Guidance will also be given to contractors and suppliers as to the background environmental information that the Council considers to be the acceptable minimum in order to ensure adherence to its policy.

The mission of WWF is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- reducing pollution and wasteful consumption



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