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University & College Land for Carbon Business Case

University and College Land for Carbon Business Case

This business case aims to give an overview of the project requirements, stages and funding opportunities to create a woodland and register with the Woodland Carbon Code. This can be used to communicate with senior management team (SMT), board members and governors, committees and any other stakeholder who are decision makers to obtain approval.

Institutions can use this template along with the presentation template for their own use and branding but please recognise EAUC as the source.

Summary

The [University and College Land for Carbon](#) project aims to encourage universities and colleges to create woodland on their land and register with the [Woodland Carbon Code](#) (WCC). A verified UK-government-backed carbon credit which can help institutions achieve their net-zero targets through carbon sequestration. The carbon credits created can be used to offset institutions' own residual emissions or traded on the carbon market via the [Carbon Coalition](#). Institutions can create woodland without registered with the WCC but they will not be able to use this as part of their offsetting or net-zero strategy.

There are the following resources which can further support institutions:

- 1) Business Case
- 2) Template Presentation
- 3) Institutions Guidance for Registration
- 4) Financial Modelling Guidance and Tools
- 5) Grants and Funding support
- 6) Case Study: University of Leeds - Gair Wood
- 7) Glossary

Facts and figures

- Institutional estates of approximately 52,000 hectares in England could be used for WCC registered woodland
- A conservative potential to sequester 2.08m t/CO₂e at a value of £92.37m across the sector

Objectives for creating a WCC registered woodland

- a) Optimise biodiversity and provide wider community benefits and access to staff, students and the public
- b) Engage with stakeholders to build knowledge on the climate crisis
- c) Use staff expertise and students to collect and monitor data to gain practical green skills
- d) Develop good practice across the sector
- e) Develop Woodland Carbon Code (WCC) credits which your institution can use as part of their net-zero targets
- f) Future proof your institution on the increasing costs of offsetting

- g) Universities and colleges need secure supply of carbon credits to ensure sustainability targets are met
- h) Education institution specific guidance has been developed by the EAUC

Project requirements for registration with the WCC

- Institutions must show proof of ownership or tenancy for the land.
- The minimum land size of 0.5 hectare and minimum width of 20 meters to be classified as woodland and therefore would be under UK woodland protection.
- Compliance with the requirements of the [UK Forestry Standard](#) and UK law.
- Project site has not been wooded on in the last 25 years and have peat depth if present of over 30cm in England and 50 in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- Project must [register with the WCC](#) if the institution wishes to create carbon credits.
- A defined project time commitment between 40 to 100-years:
 - o 40 years for conifer projects
 - o 65-70 years for native woodland species
- Be validated within three years of registration and maintain verification for the duration of the project.
- Verification from the WCC every 5 years for calculating carbon sequestration and carbon credits.

Stakeholder Engagement

A list of stakeholders involved within your institution whose engagement is essential to ensure approval and support for a WCC project includes:

- Senior management team
- Governors and board of trustees
- Landowners (legal and compliance team)
- Environmental team (sustainability, ecology, climate change department, environmental scientists)
- Estates team (property services)
- Facilities and operations team
- Finance department
- Student (student union/committees)

External stakeholders to consider:

- Local community groups – local, community, youth-led groups
- Local authorities and local nature partnerships

Grants and funding opportunities

A list of funding and grants support to apply for institutions to support the delivery of woodland creation as well as planning and design planning to support the Woodland Carbon Code Credits. For further details on grants and funding, refer to grants and funding support document found on the [University and College Land for Carbon](#).

The benefits of creating a WCC verified woodland

- Provide teaching, learning and research opportunities for your institution

- Student enhancement - providing real life experience for students. This can be through woodland creation, data monitoring, analysis, biodiversity impact assessments etc. This directly contributes to the green skills agenda.
- Using your academic and research staff – utilising the expertise and skills you have within your academic and research staff on biodiversity, analysis, data monitoring etc.
- Providing a green space to benefit physical and mental wellbeing for staff, students and community
- Provide a connection for staff, students and the community with nature
- Biodiversity benefits includes planting native tree species to support biodiversity net gain, promote habitat restoration and conservation, enhance ecosystems and supporting wildlife populations
- Carbon credits validated and verified by the WCC can be used to offset residual emissions to achieve your net-zero target or can be used to sold on carbon markets.
- Future proofing and budgeting for your net-zero target. Economic benefits are carbon credits will become a financial investment for institutions, as demand will surpass supply whereby it is estimated an average project can claim £35,000 in from carbon credit.
- Developing a WCC can support local/county authority biodiversity strategies and recovery nature programs and net-zero strategies
- Can support wider environmental aims and objectives on a regional, national, and local level
- Potential to partner with local communities or other agencies to develop larger projects with combining land such as woodland trusts, wildlife trusts etc.
- A clear and transparent route to offsetting
- Opportunities to engage and contribute to the [Department for Education Nature Park initiative](#)
- Ensures long-term guardianship of areas of land, protecting vital natural spaces from alternative development.
- Potential income generation if excess carbon credits are created which can be sold to other education institutions via the Carbon Coalition or on the carbon market.
- Financial modelling available to show the extent of the return both financial and carbon based.

The barriers and risks associated with creating a WCC verified woodland

- Legal risks: As a woodland, it will be protected by UK woodland forestry, therefore, to make changes to the land, institutions will need to be compliant with the relevant laws and regulations.
- Regulatory risks: Carbon markets and regulations may evolve, and the value of carbon credits could be impacted by new policies or international agreements.
- Maintenance and operational risks: Woodlands require ongoing maintenance and monitoring, including pest control and disease management.
- Natural risks: Woodlands can be vulnerable to natural hazards such as storms and droughts and this can affect the carbon sequestration rates.
- Difficult to obtain sign off due to the project's long-term commitment

- Potentially alternative uses for the land such as new buildings, infrastructure or commercial value
- Changes in the use of the land can cause concerns for the local community and residents. Consult with external stakeholders as they will influence the design plan.
- Capacity and expertise to take on as a project as a large undertaking or the alternative is to contract a 3rd party to deliver
- WCC credits cannot be used to offset international travel or supply chain emissions

Additional information

- [University and College Land for Carbon Resources](#)
- [Woodland Carbon Code](#)

This guidance has been developed by EAUC, in partnership with MyCarbon, as part of the Environment Agency NEIRF project – Universities and Colleges Land for Carbon.

For full details please visit https://www.eauc.org.uk/university_and_college_land_for_carbon

