



The Woodland League

DEDICATED TO RESTORING THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN PEOPLE & THEIR NATIVE WOODLANDS

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8th July 2005

Irish Forestry Certification Initiative Ltd.,
c/o No. 4 Enterprise Centre (Phase 2),
Ballintogher,
Co. Sligo

Dear IFCI,

The Woodland League, at a meeting in Gort, Co. Galway, on the 18th of June 2005, voted in favour of rejoining the FSC process in Ireland.

However, we have some comments to make about the way the FSC process should proceed. These are listed in no particular order.

- We see it as vitally important that the process have an independent mediator/chairman that has no vote in motions. This person will need to be compensated for their time.
- We see it as important that the issue of who funding comes from is looked at. We feel that the Forest Service/State should not fund the process, as it leaves the process in a vulnerable position should decisions be made that are against the wishes of the Forest Service/State. Perhaps Lottery funding should be investigated.
- We need the terms of reference of IFCI clarified. From *Developing FSC Standards – A Survival Guide*: “To avoid confusion about the relationship of the standard to the FSC, the ToR can state that the process is linked to FSC and is not a unique national process that some members are linking to FSC while others are not. It is important that the ToR state that the intention is for the standard to comply with the FSC’s P&C, although obviously the standard may be used for other purposes than certification under the FSC. In addition to the ToR, some Working groups have asked all participants to sign a letter of commitment to the process and to the aims of FSC. The ToR also need to state the relationship of the Standard Committee and any subcommittees to the FSC Working Group.” In parallel, the Memorandum and Articles of Association should be altered to clearly demonstrate the commitment of the IFCI to the FSC principles. Currently, they state only a commitment to the production of an FSC based standard.
- We see it as vitally important that the IFCI Second Draft is scrapped, as this does not give priority to, nor does it follow, the FSC Principles and Criteria. Thus, as the draft stands it cannot be accredited, and all future drafts will be weakened by it. A new draft needs to be prepared under the new three chamber structure.
- We need verification of IFCI’s independence from the state. The State’s and Governmental organisations’ roles in the process needs to be clarified, with due regard to FSC rules. From *Developing FSC Standards – A Survival Guide*: “Government organisations cannot become voting members of the FSC, but FSC

Working Groups are encouraged to welcome and involve government officials with specific expertise in national Working Groups either as participants or as observers.” In our opinion, the Heritage Council’s position in IFCI needs to be examined, as does the position of Woodlands of Ireland. We would welcome them in an advisory and observatory role.

- The name of the process, Irish Forestry Certification Initiative Ltd., needs to be changed. There are many groups and individuals that have been alienated from the process. A name change such as this would help de-alienate these people.
- The membership fee, however nominal, needs to be removed as a matter of principle for an open process. The EU recently ruled that fees to participate in development processes is illegal. We feel that this *could* apply to an FSC process. In any case, environmental developments should be free and open to all.

It is important to note that these are not demands for our reengagement. However, we cannot see the process proceeding in any meaningful way without at the above suggestions being implemented.

Furthermore, the Woodland League will not tolerate:

- Abuse from any chamber, in particular the economic chamber, and especially if it continues unchecked by the chair. (Ref: Dr. Ann Behan’s letter of resignation from I.F.C.I. Ltd.).
- Lack of clarity regarding accounts. Transparency and clarity are the building blocks of Local Agenda 21, and we must not forget that FSC is derived from Local Agenda 21.
- Refusal to accommodate NGOs with regard to meeting times. A reasonable number of meetings must be held at weekends.
- Refusal to accommodate NGOs with regard to funding, where applicable. When available, funding shall be given with a minimum of hassle and evenly distributed. Sweden is a country with an excellent environmental record because it actively and directly funds NGOs. They consider the views of genuine NGOs important and an investment in the future. Other countries should follow their example.

With all the above points in mind, the Woodland League would like to meet with IFCI to discuss our reengagement.

Please send confirmation of the receipt of this letter.

With regards,

Ciarán Hughes
Secretary of the Woodland League

Copied to:
Kevin Jones, Soil Association/Woodmark.
Liviú Amariei, FSC Europe.
Woodland League Website. www.woodlandleague.org.

Please note that the book, *Developing Forest Stewardship Standards— A Survival Guide* by Anders Lindhe and Hanna Scrase will shortly be available on the website above.