



Wood Protection Association

Quality Scheme for Wood Treated with Preservative by Impregnation ("the Scheme")

SCOPE

This quality scheme relates specifically to the durability (resistance to biological degradation) of wood treated with preservative by an industrial impregnation process.

Requirements relating to the visual quality/grade of timber, machining and moisture content at the time of delivery/collection are not covered and, if relevant to the application of the treated commodity, should be specified separately by the customer.

1. PRINCIPLES OF THE SCHEME

1.1 Confidence in performance

Wood treated and installed in accordance with the Wood Protection Association (WPA) manual *Industrial Wood Preservation: Specification and Practice* (WPA manual) is a durable and sustainable material appropriate for the specified desired service life¹.

1.2 Service life¹

Specifications in the WPA manual are based on default service lives for wood in a range of end uses. A choice of three service lives is available – 15, 30 and 60 years – and the default recommended in the WPA manual reflects normal commercial and regulatory requirements for particular commodities. Unless the specifier or customer indicates or agrees otherwise, in writing, treatment will be in accordance with the default service life¹ requirement as specified in the WPA manual.

¹ Note:

It should be noted that desired service life is indicative based on an assumption of best practice design, installation and maintenance, rather than being a guarantee of the performance of individual components. As the definition of service life in the WPA manual relates solely to the resistance of the wood to biological degradation, other factors, which could limit the life of the complete commodity, such as mechanical damage or failure of other elements of the construction, have to be taken into account.

1.3 Traceability

Wood treated in accordance with the Scheme must be identified by marking, pack labeling or accompanying documents complying with clause 2.5.

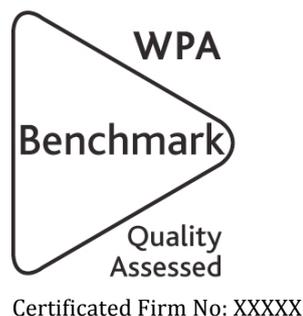
1.4 Scheme name and visual identity

The Scheme shall be known as the WPA **Benchmark** treated wood quality scheme and this will be represented visually by the design ("Scheme logo") in Figure 1. Figure 2 shows a single colour version of the logo for use on pack/product labels as required along with accompanying information as described in paragraph 2.5 of this document.

Figure 1. Benchmark scheme logo



Figure 2. Product label logo



The Scheme logo will be supplied by the WPA to Scheme members who may use the logo and Certification number in accordance with these Scheme rules as may be amended by WPA from time to time. For label applications see paragraph 2.5.

Please Note: WPA Benchmark quality accreditation applies to a specific treated wood product and the process involved in that products production to deliver a service life in accordance with WPA specifications.
WPA Benchmark does not apply to the whole of the certificated firm's treated wood output or management systems – see 1.6 below.

1.5 Promotion of the Scheme

The WPA undertakes to promote the Scheme through the trade press, in collaboration with individual Scheme members and through other organisations in the timber supply chain as may be appropriate, in order to raise awareness and understanding of the Scheme and its relevance to those specifying or buying preservative pre-treated components. The WPA will publish a list of Members and products Certificated under this scheme.

1.6 Material outside the Scheme

Scheme members who also supply wood that has been treated other than in accordance with the Scheme requirements must not mark, link or imply in any way that these materials have been treated in accordance with the WPA Benchmark scheme.

2. OPERATION OF THE SCHEME

2.1 Eligible treaters

WPA Benchmark has been developed to help build confidence in the ability of treated wood to perform and is applicable to the whole of the UK timber treatment industry. Any business that operates an industrial wood preservation plant is eligible to apply to join the Scheme.

2.2 Requirements for wood preservation plants

Plants must:

- a) Be capable of maintaining positive and negative pressure sufficient to ensure impregnation of wood to the required standard.
- b) Be equipped with devices to measure and record the impregnation process.
- c) Be equipped with systems to measure, record and maintain the correct preservative solution strength.
- d) Be maintained and tested in accordance with WPA Quality Guidance Note 2.

- e) If operated on an indirect testing basis, have that relationship verified by the chemical supplier or another body approved by WPA at intervals appropriate to the wood type, dimensions, end use, use class, service life and AQL, in any case at least every 12 months.

Where a change of preservative supplier takes place then WPA must be notified within a period of no more than 3 calendar months following the change of supplier that New Safe Relationships have been established and verified in accordance with 2.2 e) for the components covered by the Scheme.

Notes:

1. Indirect testing

Indirect testing involves first demonstrating a consistent relationship (known as a Safe Relationship) between the penetration and retention requirements and the more easily measurable parameters of the treatment process, such as preservative concentration and pressure cycle, and then controlling these parameters in subsequent treatment activities.

2. Guidance on plant design, installation and operation can be found in WPA Code of Practice: Timber Treatment Installations.

2.3 Requirements for plant operatives

Plant operatives must:

- a) Be competent to operate the plant they are employed to operate.
- b) Be competent to implement treatment appropriate to the wood type and condition, dimensions, end use, use class and service life stated in the customer order process operated by the Treater.
- c) Be competent to operate relevant equipment and record results from tests of wood moisture content and treatment quality control systems.
- d) Have written evidence of refresher training at intervals of no more than five years.

Notes: Requirements 2.3 a), b) and c) are deemed to be satisfied by either:

- 1. Operative(s) having written evidence of training in plant operation provided by a person or organisation approved by WPA with a statement by the employer that he is satisfied the named operative is competent or,*
- 2. Operative(s) holding the NVQ Level 2 Diploma in Wood Preserving – Industrial Pre-treatment and listed on the national register of NVQ qualified plant operators maintained by the WPA as a service to UKAS Certification Bodies in accordance with the National Highways Sector Scheme 4.*

NVQ Delivery

WPA is approved by the awarding body PIABC (part of IOM3) to carry out NVQ Wood Preservation assessments. Information about this work place assessment qualification is available on request.

For firms in Scotland, there is no SNVQ equivalent but both WPA Benchmark and the National Highways Sector Scheme 4 recognises the NVQ Wood Preserving as the appropriate qualification for treatment plant operators throughout the UK.

2.4 Treatment requirements

The preservative treatment must:

- 2.4.1 Comply with the WPA Manual specification for each wood type, end use, use class and service life relevant to each batch of wood being treated either by:
- a) achieving the penetration and retention requirements within the appropriate acceptable quality limit (AQL) in accordance with and conforming to the procedures in the WPA manual as demonstrated by written records of analysis of samples from each batch, or
 - b) being treated in conformance with the process determined as providing a safe relationship between the WPA Manual penetration and retention requirement and the process (wood species, wood moisture content, preservative solution strength, vacuum and pressure periods) as demonstrated by written records of process parameters traceable to each batch.
- 2.4.2 Be carried out in compliance with WPA Quality Guidance Note 2 including a written quality system with records.

2.5 Identification of wood treated under the Scheme (traceability)

Wood treated with preservative under the Scheme must be identified with the Scheme logo and the Treater's name.

Scheme members may add additional information for example the end use, the use class(s) and the service life(s) against which treatment was carried out. Examples of labels used under this scheme and any changes thereto must be lodged on the firms Benchmark scheme file with the WPA.

Examples of labels can be found in Appendix 1.

Notes:

1. Identification:

Each piece of treated wood should preferably carry the Scheme markings on a durable label or directly on the wood surface. This is most desirable for performance-critical end uses in use classes 4 and 5.

If appropriate to the end use and the customer's own practices, however, the marks may alternatively be applied to an individual batch. Examples of batch marking include labels attached to batch packs, accompanying documents or data sheets displayed at point of sale. Additional information may be added to piece labels or markings and/or be included in batch markings.

2. Batch:

Clearly identifiable units of timber treated with the same preservative to the same use class/application and desired service life specification, e.g. UC4 fence posts 15 years

2.6 Audits

The following site audits shall be carried out by a WPA-appointed expert:

- a) An initial verification audit to establish if an applicant meets the criteria for membership of the Scheme;

- b) After admission, Scheme members will be required to demonstrate compliance by audit or other procedure approved by the WPA at intervals of no greater than 12 months;
- c) An extraordinary audit, at the sole discretion of the WPA, in the event of a complaint or if considered necessary for any other reason.
- d) At the auditor's discretion, a pack of treated wood produced under Benchmark certification may be selected for additional sampling and testing. The treater is obliged to assist the auditor in removing piece(s) from a treated pack and cutting samples under the auditor's direction. The treater may keep duplicate samples for independent testing if desired. The auditor will assess the samples on site for penetration where possible, and/or arrange for laboratory analysis. The result and any follow up action required will be recorded in the audit report and communicated to the treater.

Note: If the subsequent 12month annual compliance audit is satisfactory, treaters who hold BS EN ISO 9001 (or other WPA-approved third party quality assurance) certification for their treatment operations, which includes WPA Quality Guidance Note 2 as a controlled document in their quality manual shall be eligible for reduced audit requirements under the Scheme at the discretion of the WPA in consultation with the WPA scheme auditor.

2.7 Non-conformances

The Scheme member is responsible for the treated wood they produce. If a non-conformance is identified during an audit, the non-conformance shall be notified to the Treater with the corrective measures. Corrections shall be implemented to the satisfaction of the auditor, within a stated time limit.

If, following an investigation by a panel including an independent person, a Scheme member is found to have:

- a) Misused the Scheme logo
- b) Supplied treated wood under the Scheme that is improperly treated
- c) Refused to implement corrective action for audit non-conformances
- d) Acted in any other way that brings the Scheme and/or the WPA into disrepute

then the WPA may exclude or suspend a Treater from the Scheme. In all cases the Treater will be invited to provide reasons for such non-compliances. Treaters will have the right of appeal against exclusion.

Notes:

1. An independent person is a person with knowledge of industrial wood preservation practice but free of a commercial interest in the matter under consideration.

2. If an appeal against exclusion is made, a panel with an independent person, different from the investigating panel, will be convened by WPA. The decision of the appeal panel will be final and binding on the WPA and the scheme member.

2.8 Withdrawal from the Scheme

A Treater may withdraw from the Scheme by giving 60 days notice by letter or e-mail to the WPA. All fees due to the WPA or any Scheme operator appointed by the WPA up to the date notice was given shall be paid in full

3. SCHEME SUPERVISION AND COSTS

3.1 Supervision

The Scheme shall be supervised by the WPA Benchmark Quality Scheme's Steering Committee (BST) which operates under Terms of Reference approved at the inaugural meeting of this committee on 27 April 2010. This committee is made up of: six timber treaters, four preservative manufacturers, an independent chairman, scheme operations manager and an independent advisor from BRE.

Day to day activities and liaison with companies accredited to, or applying for accreditation to WPA Benchmark are the responsibility of the WPA which operates from 5C Flemming Court, Castleford, West Yorkshire WF10 5HW, Tel: 01977 558274.

3.2 Costs

It is an objective of the BST to create a viable and credible quality scheme for treated wood that also keep the costs of Scheme participation at a level that will not preclude any treater from involvement, with individual Scheme members deciding which process, end use category and product identification procedures to follow based on their own commercial priorities.

All costs associated with membership of the Scheme, third party auditor fees and travel, identification of components etc shall be borne by the Treater. These costs will vary depending on whether a treater is already a member of the WPA or not. Travel expenses or additional time or costs of activities associated with compliance are variable and will be quoted separately and are subject to the approval of the individual Benchmark scheme member prior to the visit or actions being carried out.

The base fee structure payable each year for treaters operating within mainland UK is set out in the Figure 4 below. WPA members are eligible for the concessions set out in the Notes under the table. The fees include the visit to site, completion of an audit report, including all discussions relating to compliance with the treater, chemical supplier or other third party nominated by the treater. For audits conducted outside of mainland UK or where the site involves considerable travel time over and above the 7 hours included in the fee then the rate below applies but additional travelling time and expenses incurred by the auditor will be charged at cost.

Fees may be adjusted from time to time depending on prevailing circumstances and site locations but for companies joining Benchmark the costs in Fig.4 are applicable. The fees are subject to VAT at the prevailing rate.

Figure 4. Table of Benchmark Certification Costs

Scheme Membership ^{Note 1}	£1,500
Verification audit (base fee) ^{Note 2}	£1,900
Surveillance audit (annual base fee)	£1,600
Auditor expenses	£ variable – charged at cost

Discounted costs for treaters who are Members of the WPA

- 1. Benchmark Scheme membership fees are deemed to be included within the current annual subscription paid for WPA membership.*
- 2. WPA members benefit from a 50% discount on purchases of WPA owned products and services therefore the base fee applicable for verification and surveillance audit visits is £950 and £800 respectively for audits carried out in mainland UK. Where an applicant is outside of England, Wales or Scotland or excessive travelling time is involved then a supplementary fee will be charged at the rate of £50 per hour.*

WPA will be responsible for costs associated with the administration and operation of Benchmark and associated activities; origination of promotional materials and national communications. Local customer communications entered into in collaboration with a specific Treater may be subject to charge depending on the scope of input the WPA is required to give.

4. LIABILITY

The WPA Benchmark provides assurance that a component will be produced by a manufacturer who has been subject to an audit as set out in this document. Any treated wood commodity produced in accordance with the Scheme should meet the service life guidance set out in the WPA Manual for that particular commodity.

Benchmark certification is based on an initial verification audit of the treatment plant and the preservative application procedures and data established by the treater and the chemical supplier used to produce the commodity. Surveillance of scheme membership compliance is carried out on an annual basis.

Neither the WPA, nor any agent acting on its behalf, can accept any liability for the accuracy of data provided to achieve Benchmark certification or for any variation in the manufacturing or treatment process outside of those approved and monitored annually under the Scheme

The Benchmark Quality Scheme Steering Committee and any director or officer of the WPA:

- 4.1 have and accept no liability whatsoever for any failure of the Scheme or any system or systems assessed under this document or for the quality, fitness for purpose, or safety of any product or service which is subject of such assessment,
- 4.2 do not provide any representation or warranty as to the Scheme or any aspect of any such system, product or service, and
- 4.3 hereby expressly exclude all and any liability or responsibility (however alleged to arise) for or in connection with the provision of any service or product or any use of any product, all and any such, liability or responsibility attaching exclusively to the producer (or user as the case may be) thereof. The Scheme member has sole responsibility for the treated wood they produce and market under the Scheme.

A failure of those using treated wood produced under the Benchmark scheme to follow best practice design, installation and maintenance and/or the manufacturer's recommendations will seriously compromise the durability performance of the product.

ENDS

Attached: Appendix 1: Examples of Scheme Label content

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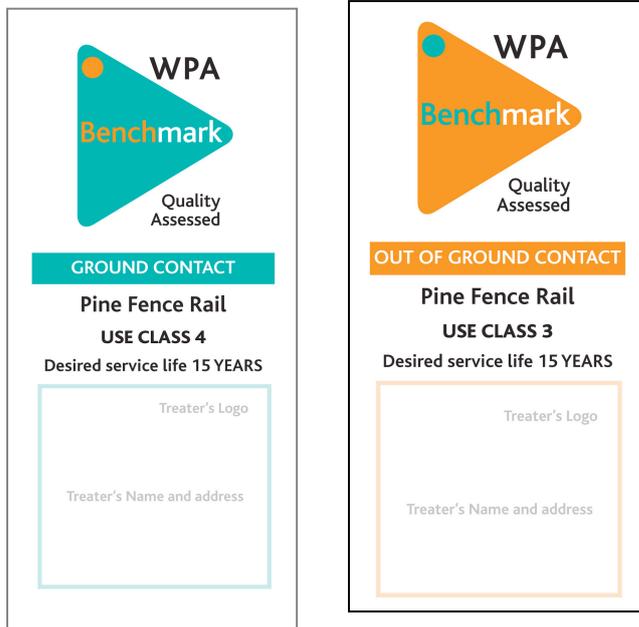
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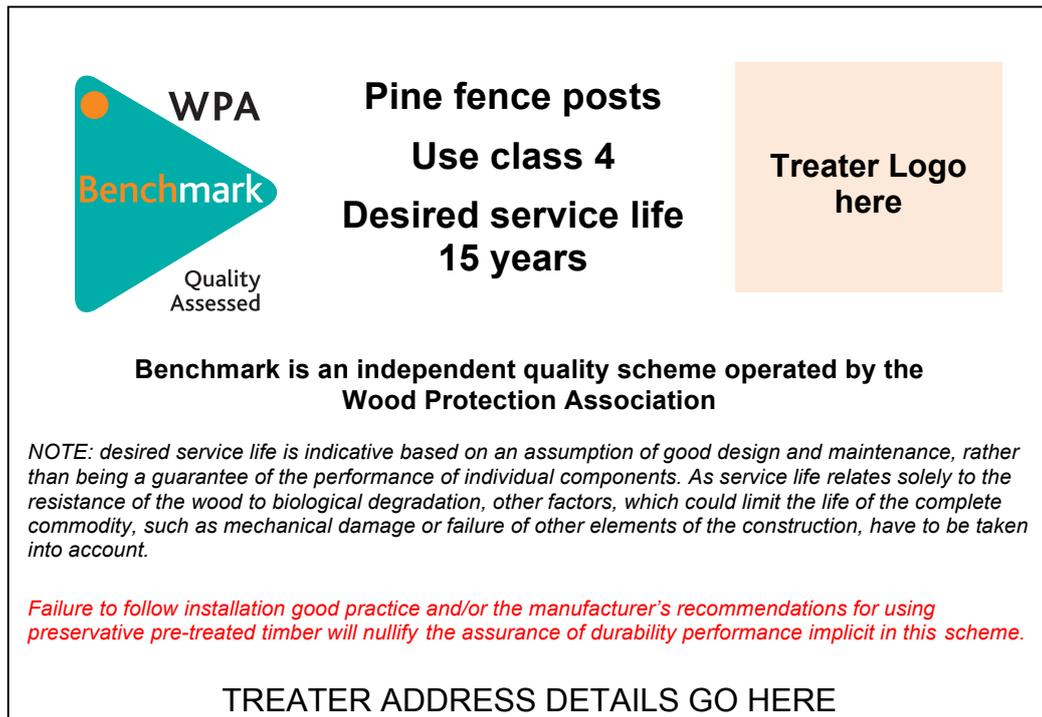
WPA Benchmark treated wood quality scheme

Appendix1: Examples of Scheme label content

Example 1: Product Label



Example 2: Batch label



Please Note:

The label examples above are illustrated in colour but the scheme allows treaters the flexibility to reproduce the logo in a single colour e.g. black - see Fig 2 on page 2. In this instance a line version of the logo can be supplied by WPA for artwork purposes