

IEMA Acorn Scheme of Accredited Recognition

**For Organisations Evaluating And Improving Their
Environmental Performance in accordance with BS 8555**

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iema
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1 Introduction

This document sets out the requirements of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Acorn Scheme of accredited recognition for organisations evaluating and improving their environmental performance. The scheme has been developed following the success of Project Acorn, a DTI funded initiative, and the subsequent publication of *BS 8555 Environmental Management Systems - Guide to the Phased Implementation of an EMS including the use of environmental performance evaluation*.

The development of the scheme is part of an ongoing process to encourage organisations to demonstrate that they are proactive in their approach to the management of their environmental impacts and are committed to improving their environmental performance.

A key aspect of the scheme is that of environmental performance improvement and that over time, participating organisations should be able to demonstrate reduced environmental impacts of their activities, products and services. The scheme embeds this in the framework of environmental management systems (EMS) and links this with an ongoing requirement for environmental performance evaluation.

2 Bodies Involved in the Acorn Scheme

The principal bodies involved in the scheme are: the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA); the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS); Acorn Inspection Bodies; and participating organisations.

- a) IEMA - is the scheme owner. The IEMA's primary function is to set the scheme criteria and to operate a register of organisations that have been inspected against the stage profiles and achievement criteria defined in BS 8555. The IEMA's Acorn activities are overseen by a committee which comprises a range of representative organisations.
- b) UKAS – is responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of an accreditation service for inspection bodies participating in the scheme. UKAS accreditation confirms that inspection bodies meet the requirements of the appropriate accreditation standard (BS EN 45004: 1995) and the additional requirements set out in this scheme document, including relevant clauses in BS EN ISO 19011.
- c) Acorn Inspection Bodies – undertake inspections against the stage profiles and achievement criteria defined in BS 8555 and in accordance with the requirements set out in this scheme document.
- d) Participating organisations – implement the requirements set out in the different phases of BS 8555 and demonstrate to Acorn Inspection Bodies that the stage profiles and achievement criteria have been effectively met.

3 Participation in the Acorn Scheme

The Acorn Scheme is open to the participation of all types and sizes of organisation wanting to demonstrate their commitment to environmental performance improvement.

In order for an organisation to be registered under the Acorn scheme it shall:

- a) Implement the stage profiles as described in the relevant phase(s) of BS 8555;
- b) Undergo an inspection by an accredited Acorn Inspection Body to confirm that all of the stage profiles and achievement criteria set out in each of the relevant phase(s) of BS 8555 have been met;
- c) Pay the appropriate registration fee.

In order for the organisation to maintain its registration under the Acorn scheme it shall:

- d) Undergo re-inspection by an accredited Acorn Inspection Body to ensure that the organisation continues to meet the achievement criteria. The frequency of re-inspection shall be no longer than every 12 months
- e) Pay the appropriate re-registration fee.

Participating organisations shall have flexibility in how they choose to deploy the services of an accredited Acorn Inspection Body. The organisation may be inspected after implementing all of the stage profiles in a given phase, before progressing to the next phase. Alternatively, an organisation may implement 2 or more phases before being inspected, in which case achievement of all relevant phases shall be inspected during one inspection. In all cases, Acorn Inspections for Phase 2 or higher, shall require inspection of all previous phases.

There is no requirement for participating organisations to progress or provide a commitment to achieving higher phases of BS 8555. They may remain at any Phase of Acorn, for an indefinite period, provided that points (d) and (e) above are met.

4 Inspection system

The accreditation of Acorn Inspection Bodies shall be undertaken by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) or any other recognised national accreditation body, e.g. one that is a signatory to the relevant European co-operation for Accreditation (EA) multilateral agreement.

The accreditation of Acorn Inspection Bodies and inspections by Acorn Inspection Bodies shall be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of Annex A.

Representatives from each Acorn Inspection Body shall meet with UKAS and the IEMA Acorn Committee, at least once a year. The meeting shall be organised by the IEMA with the aim of facilitating consistency of approach and outcome of Acorn Inspections.

5 Acorn Register

The IEMA shall be responsible for maintaining a central register of participants in the Acorn Scheme. The register shall be in a format prescribed by the IEMA and shall be publicly available.

Each accredited Acorn Inspection Body shall maintain a register of organisations that it has registered. Each Acorn Inspection Body shall notify the IEMA, in a format prescribed by the IEMA, of all registrations for inclusion on a central register. The decision on whether the accredited Acorn Inspection Body's register shall be made publicly available shall be at the sole discretion of the Acorn Inspection Body.

6 Review

The IEMA shall review the Acorn Scheme in the light of experience gained in its operation and international developments not more than 2 years after the date on which the scheme comes into effect.

The IEMA retains the right to amend the Acorn Scheme requirements at any time, provided that it consults with appropriate organisations, including Acorn Participants, Acorn Inspection Bodies and UKAS.

References

- BS 8555:2003 **Environmental management systems – Guide to the phased implementation of an environmental management system including the use of environmental performance evaluation**, BSI, London.
- BS EN 45004:1995 **General criteria for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection**, BSI, London.
- EA-7/02: 2004 **EA Guidelines for the Accreditation of Certification Bodies for Environmental Management Systems**, European co-operation for Accreditation (EA), Paris.
- IAF/ ILAC-A4: 2004 **Guidance on the application of ISO/IEC17020**, IAF/ILAC, Australia.
- BS EN ISO 19011:2002 **Guidelines for Quality and/or Environmental Management Systems Auditing**, BSI, London.

Annex A- Accredited Inspections

Organisations wishing to register under the Acorn Scheme shall be inspected by an accredited Acorn Inspection Body, to confirm that all of the stage profiles and achievement criteria for each relevant phase of BS 8555 have been met. The Acorn Inspection Body shall be accredited by UKAS to provide Acorn inspections for the relevant business sector of the organisation.

Bodies wishing to become accredited under the IEMA Acorn scheme shall meet the requirements set out in BS EN 45004: 1995 *General criteria for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspections*. In addition, they shall also adhere to the following IEMA Acorn scheme requirements.

Acorn Inspection Bodies may undertake inspections for phases 1-5 of BS 8555. Organisations progressing beyond Phase 5 should seek accredited certification to ISO 14001 and/or registration to EMAS.

A1 - Type of Inspection Body

Inspection bodies shall meet the criteria set out in Annex A of BS EN 45004 regarding the independence criteria for Type A inspection bodies (additional guidance on this can be found in the IAF/ ILAC guidance document A4).

A2 - Scope of Acorn Inspection activities

Inspection bodies shall operate within a defined scope. The scope shall be defined according to:

- type(s) of activity of the Acorn Inspection Body's clients, specified according to NACE codes.
- location of the Acorn Inspection Body's potential clients, based on country boundaries.

(Note: Limiting factors include knowledge and understanding of all relevant national and local laws and regulations relating to the protection of the environment, and language capability).

A3 - Contractual Relationship

Acorn Inspection Bodies shall operate under a contractual relationship with the IEMA.

Participating organisations shall operate under a contractual relationship with an accredited Acorn Inspection Body.

A4 - Personnel

Those staff responsible for Acorn Inspections shall have the appropriate qualifications, training and experience. For the IEMA Acorn scheme these are defined as the competence criteria for EMS auditors as set out in clauses (and all relevant sub-clauses) of 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4 of ISO 19011:2002 Guidelines for Quality and/or Environmental Management Systems Auditing, and section

4.2 (and all relevant sub-clauses) of EA-7/02 Guidelines on the accreditation of certification bodies for environmental management systems.

In addition, all staff responsible for inspections shall have undertaken training to develop their knowledge and understanding of the different phases of BS 8555 (and in particular the focus on environmental performance improvement) and the requirements of the IEMA Acorn scheme. Inspection staff shall also undertake training as appropriate to ensure inspection activities are proportionate to the size and nature of participating organisations, in particular taking into account the nature of SMEs.

Staff responsible for inspection shall ensure that they undertake and can demonstrate continuing professional development in accordance with Clauses 7.5.1 and 7.5.2 of ISO 19011.

A5 – Acorn Inspection activities

Inspection activities shall be undertaken in accordance with the audit activities described in ISO 19011 (clauses 6.1-6.8). These are:

- a) Initiating the audit (6.2)
- b) Conducting the document review (6.3)
- c) Preparing for the on-site audit activities (6.4)
- d) Conducting the on-site audit activities (6.5)
- e) Preparing, approving and distributing the audit report (6.6)
- f) Completing the audit (6.7)
- g) Conducting audit follow-up (6.8)

In determining the amount of time required for an Acorn Inspection Body to carry out the initial inspection activities of an organisation, consideration shall be given to:

- a) The size of the organisation, and in particular whether or not the organisation is an SME;
- b) The complexity of the organisation's activities, products and services (see annex B);
- c) The nature and severity of the organisation's actual and potential significant environmental impacts arising from its activities, products and services;
- d) The scope and extent of applicable environmental legal requirements and other environmental requirements to which the organisation subscribes.
- e) Whether the organisation is single or multi-site. If the organisation seeking registration under the Acorn scheme is multi-site, the Acorn Inspection Body shall use the guidance given in EA-7/02 G.5.3.6 – G.5.3.13 to determine whether a sample based approach may be used and if so, the issues to consider.

For medium and low risk small and medium sized organisations operating from one site, the inspection will normally be 1-2 person days. Larger organisations and organisations with a greater risk to the environment will normally require additional time for the inspection, except where this can be justified. The IEMA will monitor the time spent on Acorn Inspections and provide additional guidance as appropriate.

A6 – Acorn Inspection Report

On completion of an Acorn Inspection, the organisation shall be provided with a written Acorn Inspection Report. The Acorn Inspection Report shall specify:

- a) The name and contact details of the organisation and the Acorn Inspection Body
- b) The scope of the inspection
- c) The phases(s) of BS 8555 against which the organisation has been inspected
- d) Which of the stage profile and achievement criteria have been met and which, if any, of the stage profile and achievement criteria have not been met.
- e) Observations regarding the organisation's environmental performance, in particular the relevance and applicability of the environmental performance indicators and the organisation's performance relating to these.

For inspections issued for Phase 2 (Identifying and Ensuring Compliance with Legal and Other Requirements) and subsequent phases, an annex to the Acorn Inspection Report *may* be added at the request of the participating organisation, and be validated by the inspector. The information included in the Annex must be environment-specific, and may relate to the performance of the organisation or relate to its activities, products and/or services. The aim of this is to facilitate organisations producing credible environmental information for interested parties, in particular for use in supply chains.

A7 - Issuing Acorn Certificates

Certificates of Registration to the Acorn Scheme shall be issued to participating organisations that have been successfully inspected against defined phases of BS 8555 and whose inspection reports demonstrate that they have met **all** of the appropriate stage profile and achievement criteria and paid the appropriate registration fee. The Acorn Inspection Body shall be responsible for issuing certificates. The Acorn Inspection Body shall not issue a certificate if the inspection report states that the organisation is not in compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

If the Acorn Inspection Report identifies that one or more of the achievement criteria or stage profiles have not been met, the organisation shall be given

upto 3 months to meet the requirements. Depending on the nature of the non-conformity, the inspector at his/her sole discretion shall determine whether the non-compliance can be closed out remotely or whether a visit to the organisation will be required.

If compliance with all the achievement criteria and stage profiles cannot be demonstrated by the organisation within 3 months, a complete re-inspection will be required.

Certificates of Registration shall be issued by the accredited Acorn Inspection Body that undertook the inspection, on behalf of the IEMA. Certificates shall include the following information:

- Phase(s) of BS 8555 that has/ have been achieved by the participating organisation
- Name of the organisation and a description of the scope of the certificate
- Name of the accredited Acorn Inspection Body and an original signature of an individual authorised to issue certificates on the Acorn Inspection Body's behalf, and the date of the signature.
- Re-inspection due date, not being more than 12 months after the date of the last inspection.
- Registration number of the organisation registering. The registration number shall be in the format: Acorn-xxxx-yyyyyy [xxxx will be an inspection body identification code, yyy a unique reference number for the organisation]

The IEMA will provide blank certificates of registration for use by accredited inspection bodies. Inspection bodies will be permitted to include their own corporate logo on the certificate, provided that it does not dominate the IEMA or Acorn logos.

The certificate for each phase will include a re-inspection due date. Organisations will need to be re-inspected to maintain a current certificate and entry on to the register. Organisations without a valid certificate shall be removed from the register.

A8 - Fees

Inspection bodies shall pay an annual fee to the IEMA for an Acorn Inspection Body Licence. The licence will allow accredited Acorn Inspection Bodies to issue Acorn certificates to participating organisations that meet the scheme's requirements. Non payment of licence fees to the IEMA will result in an Acorn Inspection Body's licence being revoked.

Participating organisations shall pay a registration fee. The registration fee shall be collected by the accredited Acorn Inspection Body and paid to the IEMA. Failure by an organisation to pay the appropriate registration fee, shall result in organisation's registration being refused. Failure by an Acorn Inspection Body to pass on registration fees it has collected, shall result in an organisation's registration being refused.

Annex B – Complexity

Complexity according to EA7-02
HIGH
mining and quarrying
oil and gas extraction
tanning of textiles and clothing
pulping part of paper manufacturing including paper recycling processing
oil refining
chemicals and pharmaceuticals
primary productions - metals
non-metallics processing and products covering ceramics and cement.
coal based electricity generation
civil construction and demolition
hazardous and non hazardous waste processing e.g. Incineration etc.
effluent and sewerage processing
MEDIUM
fishing/farming/forestry
textiles and clothing except for tanning
manufacturing of boards, treatment/impregnation of wood and wooden products
paper production and printing excluding pulping
Non metallics processing and products covering glass, clay, lime etc.
surface and other chemically based treatment for metal fabricated products excludes primary production
surface and other chemically based treatment for general mechanical engineering
production of bare printed circuit boards for electronics industry
manufacturing of transport equipment - road, rail, air, ships
Non coal based electricity generation and distribution
Gas production, storage and distribution (note extraction is graded high)
water abstraction, purification and distribution including river management (note commercial effluent treatment is graded as high)
fossil fuel whole sale and retail
food and tobacco - processing
transport and distribution - by sea, air, land
commercial estate agency, estate management, industrial cleaning, hygiene cleaning, dry cleaning normally part of general business services

recycling, composting, landfill (of non hazardous waste)
technical testing and laboratories
healthcare/hospitals/veterinary
leisure services and personal services excludes hotels/restaurants
LOW
hotels/restaurants
wood and wooden products excluding manufacturing of boards, treatment and impregnation of wood
paper products excluding printing, pulping and paper making
rubber and plastic injection moulding, forming and assembly - excludes manufacturing of rubber and plastic raw materials which are part of chemicals
hot and cold forming and metal fabrication excluding surface treatment and other chemical based treatments and primary production
general mechanical engineering assembly excluding surface treatment and other chemical based treatments
wholesale and retail
electrical and electronic equipment assembly excluding manufacturing of bare printed circuit boards
LIMITED
corporate activities and management, HQ and management of holding companies
transport and distribution - management services with no actual fleet to manage
telecommunications
general business services except commercial estate agency, estate management, industrial cleaning, hygiene cleaning, dry cleaning
education services
SPECIAL CASES
nuclear
nuclear electricity generation
storage of large quantities of hazardous material
public administration
local authorities
organizations with environmental sensitive products or services