

IEMA Acorn Scheme of Accredited Recognition
An International Scheme For Organisations Evaluating And
Improving Their Environmental Performance in accordance
with BS 8555
November 2010



iema
Institute of Environmental
Management & Assessment

IEMA Acorn Scheme Guidance Document

1 - Introduction

2 - Bodies Involved in the Acorn Scheme

3 - Participation in the Acorn Scheme

4 - Inspection System

5 - Acorn Register

6 - Review

7 - References

Annex A – Accredited Inspections

Annex B – Complexity

1 - Introduction

This document sets out the requirements of IEMA's Acorn Scheme of accredited recognition for organisations evaluating and improving their environmental performance.

The Acorn Scheme provides the opportunity for organisations to receive public recognition for achieving one or more of the phases specified in BS 8555 Environmental Management Systems – Guide to the Phased Implementation of an EMS including the use of environmental performance evaluation.

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.

The Acorn Scheme can help organisations meet the challenges of the low carbon economy, through reducing consumption, waste and improving resource efficiency.

To the present date over 600 organisations have been registered on the Acorn Scheme, with many using it as means to achieving ISO14001 certification.

2 - Bodies Involved in the Acorn Scheme

The principle bodies involved in the scheme are;

IEMA – is the scheme owner. 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. IEMA's Acorn activities are overseen by a committee which comprises a range of representative organisations.

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 ISO/IEC 17020) and the additional requirements set out in this scheme document, including relevant clauses in BS EN ISO 19011.

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.

Acorn Service Providers – provide IEMA approved support to organisations implementing one or more of the phases of the scheme in accordance with the requirements set out in the Acorn Service Providers scheme document.

Acorn Training Providers – provide IEMA approved Acorn Scheme training for organisations and individuals.

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 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 two 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 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.

Where an organisation wishes to register more than one site to a single certificate on the Acorn Scheme, a primary site (e.g. head office) must have attained registration to Phase 5 of the Acorn Scheme. The primary site will provide robust evidence of an internal audit and management process for all the sites to be included within the multi-site schedule.

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 IEMA's Acorn Committee, at least once a year. The meeting shall be organised by IEMA with the aim of facilitating consistency of approach and outcome of Acorn Inspections.

5 - Acorn Register

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

IEMA shall review the Acorn Scheme in the light of experience gained in its operation and international developments every five years.

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, Acorn Service Providers, Acorn Training Providers and UKAS.

7 - 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 ISO/IEC 17020:2004	General criteria for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection, BSI, London.
BS EN ISO/IEC 17021:2006	Conformity assessment. Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems, BSI, London.
BS EN ISO 9011:2002	Guidelines for Quality and/or Environmental Management Systems Auditing, BSI, London.
IAF MD 5:2009	IAF Mandatory Document For Duration of QMS and EMS Audits, IAF, Australia http://www.iaf.nu/
IAF MD1:2007	Multi Site Sampling http://www.iaf.nu/

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 IEMA's Acorn Scheme shall meet the requirements set out in BS EN ISO/ IEC 17020:2004 *General criteria for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection*. Bodies will also need to meet the requirements specified in Clause 6 of IAF/ILAC-A4:2004 *Guidance on the Application of ISO/IEC 17020*.

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.

Type of Inspection Body

Acorn Inspection Bodies shall meet the criteria set out in Annex A of BS EN ISO/ IEC 17020 regarding the independence criteria for Type A inspection bodies (additional guidance on this can be found in the IAF guidance document A4).

Scope of Acorn Inspection activities

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

- Types(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).

Contractual relationship

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

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

Personnel

Those staff responsible for Acorn Inspections shall have the appropriate qualifications, training and experience. For IEMA's 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 7 of BS EN ISO/IEC 17021:2006 Parts 7.1 and 7.2.

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 IEMA's 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 SME's.

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.

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 a single or multi-site organisation

If the organisation seeking registration under the Acorn Scheme is multi-site, the AIB shall use the guidance given in IAF MD1:2007 section 5. For the organisation to be eligible to register as a multi-site it will require the primary site to be registered to phase 5 of the Acorn Scheme. The primary site will provide robust evidence of an internal audit and management process for all the sites to be included within the multi-site schedule.

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. IEMA will monitor the time spent on Acorn Inspections and provide additional guidance as appropriate.

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.

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 up to 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]

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.

Fees

Acorn Inspection Bodies:

Inspection bodies shall pay an annual fee to 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.

Acorn Training Providers (ATPs) and Acorn Service Providers (ASPs):

ATPs and ASPs shall pay an annual licence fee to IEMA allowing them to operate as approved Acorn Training and Service providers. Non payment of licence fees to IEMA will result in ATPs and ASPs licence being revoked.

Participating organisations:

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.

Initial registration fee	£100
Annual renewal fee	£50
Multi-site initial registration fee	£100 for Primary Site £50 for each additional site added to the Acorn Scheme certificate
Multi-site renewal fee	£50 for Primary Site £25 for each additional site renewed to the certificate

Annex B – Complexity

Complexity according to IAF MD5
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 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
Organisations with environmental sensitive products or services financial institutions