

**Timber Transport Forum Meeting**  
**Confor**  
**59 George Street**  
**Edinburgh,**  
**10.30 15th January 2016**  
**Agreed Minute**

**Attending:** Robin Pope, Keith McDowell, Chris Campbell, Colin Mackenzie, Kirsty Robb, Claire Glaister, James England, Hazel Newman, Neil Dyson, Ken Sinclair, David Sulman, Derek Nelson, Jamie Farquhar. [Planned phone link to Crispin Thorn and Martin Bishop failed]

**Apologies:** Athole McKillop, Alasdair Ferguson, Neil Stoddart, Margaret Horn, Margaret Watson, Simon Oldham, Alistair Speedie, Fergus Tickell

1. Welcome

David Sulman chaired the meeting in Alistair Speedie's absence. Keith McDowell introduced himself as Freight Grants Team Leader for Scottish Government.

2. Previous minutes

The minute of the meeting of 2nd October 2015 was agreed.

Action points

- The Executive Group met in November and reviewed the status of the Forum resources noting the expected cessation of Welsh funding from NRW. FC Scotland and England expect to continue funding the post subject to forthcoming departmental budgets. The substantial reliance on public funding (national and council) for project officer posts was recognised. The Executive Group will review once status of STTS and FC (Scotland and England) funding known.
- Timber transport issues have been highlighted at workshops reviewing FCS consultation processes.
- John Lyons will consult Irish FITG to see if there is interest in a reciprocal visit.
- Action to request a Forum submission to Heads of Planning Scotland, will be carried forward.
- A gift was sent to Ian Farmer with thanks for his contribution to the Forum and the STTS panel.

3. Flooding

The impact of recent flooding was discussed, noting damage to and closure of Stroan Bridge in D&G (now re-opened) where FCS has been providing a diversion for local residents. In Deeside, a section of the A93 washed away and the Invercauld bridge was closed; Aboyne sawmill was temporarily closed. In Angus there were quicksand conditions on the Glen Prosen road and in Argyll, further landslips on the A83.

Generally short term local road closures and diversions will impact on timber transport and agreed routes. The full scale of the damage to public and private culverts, bridges and roads will likely take longer to assess. Emergency funding is available from Scottish Government for public infrastructure. Derek Nelson said that STTS underspend could not be made available to the private sector for emergency repair, given the state aid constraints of the fund.

- **ACTION Alistair Speedie to consider whether it is appropriate to formally write to Scottish Forestry minister Dr Aileen Macleod MSP to note the short and likely longer term impact of flooding on the timber industry transport infrastructure.**

#### 4. Conference Programme and arrangements

The draft conference programme was presented and generally endorsed. Time to be allowed for questions and discussion. Potential to refer to the A9 and A96 dualing and related opportunities and constraints. Plan a restaurant meal the evening before in Perth. James England offered to manage presentations etc. Recognise there is little content specifically on England and Wales but the themes and most presentations are GB relevant.

#### 5. Draft Guidance: Loading timber from roadside forests.

A draft of the guidance, incorporating changes suggested at the previous meeting, was circulated for final comment together with a draft designed layout. We need better images of appropriate, good practice showing roadside stacking and loading infrastructure. Aim to launch at conference. Print 100 or so copies for launch but otherwise plan to distribute as online pdf.

#### 6. Funding

- STTF STTS

Derek Nelson noted that FCS is still finalising details of the forest budget in Scotland and that details of the implications for project officers and the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme will be shared as soon as possible.

- England

Crispin Thorn noted (after the meeting) that there is still capital support under the Woodland Improvement Grant for road infrastructure within the Countryside Stewardship scheme providing 40% intervention in priority areas.

- FFG

Keith McDowell explained that Freight Facilities Grant funding sits within the Future Transport Fund in the draft Scottish budget. The draft FTF budget is set at £20.2m for 2016-17 with the allocation of FFG to be announced at a future date. Mode Shift Revenue Support has a draft budget line of £0.8 million for 2016/17 and confirmed both FFG and MSRS remain open for new applications. The draft budget details will be voted on again and finalised on 24<sup>th</sup> February. He also noted that Freight Policy is included in the refresh of the National Transport Strategy to be launched on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016

#### 7. Gaist ARM website hosting

Gaist has agreed to hold the cost of hosting the Agreed Routes Map for a further two years. A contribution towards this is coming from STTS and the remaining cost will be recovered from regional timber transport groups.

#### 8. Engaging with governments

Draft responses had been circulated to both the

- Land Use Strategy (Scotland) requiring a response by 29<sup>th</sup> January 2016

- Rail Freight Strategy (Scotland) requiring a response by 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2016

Any comments received before the submission dates will be incorporated into the final submissions.

#### 9. Regional Updates

##### **North Yorkshire**

Victoria Hutchinson noted (by email) that they will be updating data on planned timber production.

## **North East England**

Hazel Newman said that Andrew Douglas, the Northumberland County Council timber liaison officer no longer has this role and while there is still a contact name for timber transport there is no resource for active engagement with the timber sector. Athole McKillop (chair of NE TTG) has met with Hazel and John Patterson of Egger and they are arranging to meet with Cllr Ian Swithenbank with a view to re-engaging with the council. Hazel has agreed to take on the secretarial role for the group on a temporary basis.

The current focus on flooding in the north of England highlights the role for managed woodland and suggests scope for significant new areas of afforestation. A continuing timber transport group will be invaluable in enabling such proposals, providing agreement on how timber transport infrastructure is managed and targeting investment in specific areas where required.

## **Cumbria**

Allan McNicoll, who had taken on the timber transport role for Cumbria County Council, no longer has capacity to deal with timber transport issues.

## **ACTION Roland Stiven to liaise with Richard Scott to review workings of Cumbria Timber Transport Group**

## **Highland**

There are several STTS projects worth a total of around £3m being completed in Highland; Polloch, South Loch Ness in-forest, Ruthven Bridge; Timberlinks Flow Country and the Branchliner project being led by HITRANS. A meeting of the forest owners in the flow country is taking place soon to consider collaborative working to address flow country road constraints and rail opportunities.

Colin Mackenzie said that while management companies are signing up to existing timber transport management plans in the Flow Country, the agreements are not being followed by all of the hauliers and it is proving difficult to control this. It would be useful to have the two main local processors involved in discussion (Norbord and Balcas) to help regulate haulage.

Sustainability certification such as UKWAS, does expect forest managers to follow good practice in relation to timber haulage contracts.

Robin Pope noted that the council has authority to impose weight restrictions, allowing use by only specifically permitted vehicles within agreed parameters. GPS tracking of all timber vehicles using the road may be necessary to control road use. Number plate recognition cameras may be another option to control road use. Roland Stiven noted that David Leslie of James Jones & Sons will be presenting their experience of vehicle tracking to a meeting at UHI in the early summer – details will follow.

The Forum supported the HTTG in its efforts to ensure that the agreements put in place to allow a sustainable level of timber transport on the A897 and B851 are respected and followed by the various elements of the supply chain.

## **Argyll**

Kirsty Robb noted that, following further closures of the A83 at Rest & be Thankful, and only partial opening of the old military road bypass, the Argyll TTG has written to Derek Mackay the Transport Minister asking that the Scottish Government take forward plans for a new trunk road on the opposite side of the valley and requesting various interim measures to

improve use of the current diversion and allow use of the existing forest road as a timber haulage bypass. An A83 task force meeting is set for 25<sup>th</sup> January.

Some changes have been made to the Agreed Routes Map.

The 'design charrette' being taken forward by Scottish Canals for Ardrisaig Pier is considering timber requirements and has input from FCS.

STTS projects: the upgrade to the Ormidale section of the SW Cowal haul road is ongoing; Lochgoilhead public road improvements are complete; the Sgurr report on sharing energy and forestry access infrastructure is going very well and will be reported on at the conference. The landing craft has transported 30,000 tonnes to date making use of access bunds at Colbruach and Ardoran. Two other bunds have been delayed.

### **Stirling & Tayside**

A timber traffic management plan has (after 2 years) been finalised for a complex of roads and multiple forest owners at Balquhiddy.

Following the presentation to the group about the planned dualling of the A9, there has been a useful meeting between group members and AECOM to highlight issues of access routes and journey times.

The exit point software was presented to TACTRAN promoting interest in tool and suggestions for developing it further.

Claire Glaister presented on timber transport issues to a meeting of Perth and Argyll Conservancy woodland officers. She also went with Perth and Kinross Council to review the capacity of the road serving the Barracks plantation at Rannoch.

The S&T and Grampian good practice leaflet on timber transport continues in development with draft 10!

Chris Campbell noted that RHA has negotiated for drivers working hours to be relaxed for hauliers who can demonstrate that their route would previously have taken them over the Forth Road Bridge.

Keith McDowell said the Traffic Scotland [website](#) has up to date information on the bridge and on the [temporary relaxation](#) of the enforcement of the EU drivers' hours rules.

### **Grampian**

There have been two STTS projects this year. Pre-emptive drainage works in Moray are now complete and drainage improvements to a public road on Deeside are largely complete with a small element left to deliver.

### **Scottish Borders**

Flooding has had considerable impact in the Borders resulting in diversions and delays. In November a sub group reviewed the Agreed Routes Map taking account of new exit point information, road condition indicators and GIS analysis. Some additional routes have been specifically marked as consultation routes.

### **Ayrshire**

The most recent meeting was cancelled due to flooding.

A subgroup of the Ayrshire group met to review the Agreed Routes Map.

There is ongoing harvesting along a new powerline route bringing timber onto minor roads not covered by the ARM.

Roads authority and planners have differed over a required design specification for a new bell-mouth for forestry access. James England is drafting local guidance on this for Ayrshire.

### **Dumfries & Galloway**

The flooding has resulted in various bridges, roads and other structures being damaged leading to forest access problems and diversions from the Agreed Routes Map. There are a number of areas where the council and communities are reporting road damage arising from timber transport.

### **Ireland**

No report

### **Wales**

No report [Martin Bishop was not able to dial in].

## 10. FISA

Roland Stiven and Claire Glaister met with FISA haulage working group representatives in November to discuss the gap in training provision for timber hauliers, specifically lorry-mounted timber crane operators. Roland will be meeting with FISA again on 28<sup>th</sup> January to consider opportunities for shared working.

## 11. Date of next meeting

15<sup>th</sup> April at Silvan House, FCS Edinburgh