

**Timber Transport Forum Meeting**  
**Silvan House**  
**Edinburgh**  
**10.30 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016**  
**Agreed Minute**

**Attending:** Crispin Thorn, Keith MacDowell, Kirsty Robb, Derek Nelson, Alistair Speedie, Roland Stiven, Hazel Newman, David Sulman, Martin Bishop (by phone), Ken Sinclair, Chris Little, Jamie Farquhar

**Apologies:** Robin Pope, Colin Mackenzie, Margaret Horn, Neil Stoddart, Athole McKillop, Gillian Clark, Victoria Hutchinson, James England, Graeme Alison, Simon Oldham (Claire Glaister)

1. Welcome

Alistair Speedie chaired the meeting. Alistair introduced Chris Little who is now representing the Road Haulage Association on the Forum. The post of project officer for Stirling & Tayside & Grampian is currently out of contract and being retendered, so Claire Glaister was not attending.

2. Previous minutes

The minute of the meeting of 15th January 2016 was agreed.

Action points

- Alistair Speedie decided it was not necessary to write to Dr Aileen McLeod MSP regarding the flooding impact on timber transport as she was fully aware of the wider situation.
- The Land Use Strategy (Scotland) has been published and can be found at [www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/03/5773](http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/03/5773). The strategy does not specifically take on board the Forum's plea for infrastructure requirements to be considered but it does include plans to better relate the LUS to national planning and development planning. A regional framework structure is being considered where wider issues relating to land would be covered. There will be a Scottish Forestry Strategy review.

It was agreed we need to continue to make the case for the need to reshape infrastructure in rural Britain to meet the needs of current land uses. In some areas the Road Condition Surveys are showing continued decline and in Highland, for example, the roads budget is about half that required to maintain condition.

In Scotland there will be an opportunity to reinforce the message through the review of National Planning this year. The farming sector could be an ally in this regard particularly as the potential for forestry to support farming communities is becoming more recognised.

**ACTION: Alistair Speedie will discuss with colleagues regarding opportunities to influence national planning and land use infrastructure.**

- The Rail Freight Strategy (Scotland) report has been published [www.transport.gov.scot/rail/rail-freight](http://www.transport.gov.scot/rail/rail-freight). Timber is mentioned, as is the STTS funded Branchliner initiative. Derek Nelson reported on recent discussions regarding rail haulage from the Flow Country with Frank Roach (of HITrans) and representatives of Norbord. FCS will continue to facilitate opportunities arising from branchliner and will be meeting with Network Rail colleagues and Freight Operating Companies but the

private sector partners (growers, buyers and freight operators) need to come together to develop realistic projects.

### 3. Conference Review

The Forum Conference was held at Battleby on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016. Alistair Speedie thanked Roland, James, Jamie, David, D&W AGRI (for the lorry) and the speakers for delivering what was generally agreed to be a successful conference. The venue was good and we had around 120 people attending. The afternoon session might have worked better in terms of timing with one less presentation and no afternoon break. The presence of the two Scottish Borders councillors was welcomed.

### 4. Funding

- STTF STTS

A budget of £2.85m for 2016-17 was announced at the Conference. With ~£800k earmarked for Timberlink this leaves £2.05m to be allocated through the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme. A call for projects has been made with a deadline of 5pm on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2016 with the Panel meeting to consider the bids on 16<sup>th</sup> May. Projects need to be completed by February 2017 which may restrict some larger scale projects. Ideally we need a three year budget.

The STTS was subject to internal audit during 2015 and while the aims and objectives of the scheme have not changed there have been minor changes to the guidance and the application form to encourage more focus on the social and environmental benefits of projects. The need for permissions (planning EIA, servitudes etc.) to be in place before any STTS support is given, has been reinforced.

A brief review of STTS project outcomes was done looking at the actual volumes of timber delivered through STTS funded projects compared with the volumes predicted in the applications. Timber volumes tend to be used as a proxy measure for the social and environmental benefits arising from more sustainable transport. In general the applications are on track and most are in the first few years of the project so it is an early point to be evaluating. For some of the in-forest haul roads there is a suggestion of optimism in the forecast of timber volumes, with actual volumes being less, or at least taking longer to be realised, than had been expected. This may be market related and volumes may catch up over the course of the projects. In future the assessment of STTS applications will only consider outcomes that can realistically be delivered within a ten year period. STTS will monitor outcomes more closely.

The current Timberlink contract ends next year (March 2017) and an EU-wide retendering exercise will take place later this year if longer term funding can be confirmed by the Scottish Government. FCS will commission a 3<sup>rd</sup> party review of the environmental and economic benefits of the service this year.

Funding for Project Officer posts (in Scotland) will be continued for 2016-17. Crispin Thorn expected FC England contribution to Forum budget to continue for 2016-17 [now confirmed]. New procurement rules are coming into place this year which may require a review of funding of the Forum and regional posts. Alistair Speedie said it was critical to retain the STTS and resources for project officers – ‘spend to save’.

Kirsty Robb noted that the Argyll group has developed a strong role and function beyond the STTS and Crispin Thorn similarly said that the English groups have value despite there being no comparable fund.

Jamie Farquar asked if there are examples of where timber transport efforts have benefitted wider rural agendas and could the groups thereby attract a wider range of members and funding? There may be scope to get more involvement from regional transport partnerships in this regard.

- FFG

Keith McDowell noted a Freight Grant budget for 2016-17 of £2.25m. Following the Rail Freight Group Conference there had been some interest from rail freight operators. Projects can receive both capital Freight Facilities Grants and mode shift revenue support but the overall intervention rate is likely to be around 50%. Freight Grants are state aid approved so can be offered to individual businesses.

- Wales

Martin Bishop [written submission]. All funding in Wales is now competitive through the environment directorate and Martin will continue to look for opportunities to support timber transport. Owners could potentially get funding for capital schemes that benefit several owners.

- 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.

#### 5. Closer Working with FISA Haulage Working Group

Roland Stiven reported on a meeting with Gillian Clark and Mick Bottomley where it was proposed that the Forum and the FISA Haulage Working Group

- Appoint representatives to one another's groups
- Pool resources where appropriate in developing relevant training and safety material e.g. for driver safety, crane operation etc.
- Consider joint publication of relevant good practice – such as future editions of the Road Haulage of Round Timber Code of Practice.

The Forum agreed the principle of this to avoid duplication, though specific projects should be brought to the Forum for discussion.

#### 6. Business Plan

The Forum Business Plan needs updated for the coming year and the Forum members were asked to suggest priorities for work. It was agreed that having raised the profile of community/social engagement this needs to be followed up with outcomes that recognise the role of businesses, community representatives, regional timber transport groups and the Forum. Chris Little noted that the RHA's annual National Lorry Week in October aims to change the public perception of lorries.

Other priorities include funding, carbon footprint (re-communicate), and continuing to provide support to regional groups.

**ACTION: Roland Stiven to map out business plan priority themes and outputs for 2016-17 and circulate.**

Executive Group can meet to review if required.

#### 7. APF Show / Truckfest

Confor's biennial [APF show](#) is 15<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> September in Warwickshire. The Forum will again share a stand with James Jones and Tireboss, and be joined by Michelin. James Jones will

provide a state-of-the-art lorry. Confor is willing to host a talk on the features of the lorry by a James Jones representative. Forum or regional group members are welcome to help host the stand over the three days.

Truckfest Scotland is 30/31<sup>st</sup> July at Ingliston. The Forum will support the industry, if requested, to put on the timber lorry display, as last year.

## 8. Regional Updates

### **Wales**

Martin Bishop noted that Welsh Government interest in Timber Transport has declined since Chris Edwards retired. The Royal Welsh Show is the 18-21<sup>st</sup> July and the Confor stand will host timber transport literature and banners.

### **North Yorkshire**

Crispin Thorn reported on the recent meeting. There was a good turnout of industry representatives and continued commitment from local authority representatives with active discussion of issues. The chair had previously met with the councillor chairing the relevant roads infrastructure committee and received support for the work of the group. The meeting received a presentation from the Local Enterprise Partnership representative regarding interest in innovation relating to wood and timber processing.

### **North East England**

Hazel Newman reported that together with Athole McKillop (Chair) and Roland Stiven, she met with Paul Jones, the head of local services and Ruth Bendle of Northumberland County Council and received positive support from the local authority for the work of the group. However the council is not expecting Andrew Douglas to be back in the timber liaison officer role.

The group met recently for the first time in a year and there was good attendance. There are new council representatives who will need to gain a better understanding of the role of the group and the approach to managing timber transport. The National Park is building a new visitor centre alongside an agreed route leading out of Kielder Forest and is now concerned about the impact of timber traffic which continues to be discussed. Could there be an opportunity to promote the importance of commercial forestry in the national park?

### **Cumbria**

Rob Lewis of Cumbria County Council has taken on the council liaison role. He attended the timber transport conference.

### **Highland** [from Colin Mackenzie by email]

The Branchliner project in the Flow country has identified the volume of timber needing to come out as some 140,000tpa for each of the next 5 years. This compares with the current limits agreed with the Council of six trucks per day south and four trucks per day north, releasing 50,000tpa to market. To resolve this problem a Timber Haulage Group of owners/agents has been set up to share out the 50kt/yr allocation, in accordance with the timber traffic management plan, on an equitable basis. This group has met on three occasions, with owners agreeing to take out approximately a third of what they would wish. So far this has worked reasonably well but does not resolve the underlying problem.

The Norbord decision to spend £95M on a doubling of capacity at Dalcross is to be welcomed. However it will put more focus on the supply side and emphasises the need for the HTTG to keep ahead of the problems.

The 2016/17 tranche of STTS is most welcome but it is difficult to develop complex projects in the limited time available before the closing date. Could it be suggested that the Forum press FCS to see if a stream of future STTS funding can be identified early in the new Parliament, so that adequate time can be given to preparing strategic projects for 2017/18 and beyond.

Derek Nelson added that the Branchliner report is being revised and finalised and will be presented at a seminar to owners, agents and purchasers. There remains a need for a collective entity to prepare and take forward a business plan for a rail solution.

### **Argyll**

Kirsty Robb reported on the Argyll group which met on 29<sup>th</sup> March with 29 people. There is a lot of local activity. The group has another 6 traffic management plans in development taking the total to 30, which covers most of the severely restricted routes. There have also been some positive changes to the Agreed Routes Map.

The stalemate on the West Loch Awe haul road is now resolved allowing much needed maintenance and improvement work to get underway which, when complete, will take much of the haulage off the public, lochside road.

There are a few projects suitable for STTS developing, but these may not be ready for a May 2<sup>nd</sup> deadline.

The Forestry & Renewables shared infrastructure report has been finalised (available from Roland Stiven) providing lots of ideas for future projects. The group are keen to roll the methodology out to other groups and will look to develop a follow-on project to cover at least the desk-based data collection phase for all of rural Scotland.

**ACTION: Roland Stiven to report back to forestry minister in due course on outcome of forestry and energy shared infrastructure project.**

A 'design charrette' is being held by Scottish Canals for the Crinan Canal and Ardrisaig Pier and has open days on 27<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> April.

### **Stirling & Tayside & Grampian** [from Claire Glaister by email]

Meetings were held on 16 & 17 March 2016. There are two potential STTS projects being considered in GTTG and S&TTTG areas.

Claire produced a summary of key outputs from the groups for the end of the project officer contract, which is available to those interested.

A local good practice Guide to Managing Timber Transport leaflet is now available to download from the [group pages of the Forum website](#). This has also been circulated to the group members with the invitation for them to forward to anyone who they consider may find it useful.

There have been requests for industry engagement/comments on the A96 dualling project and also engagement with Fife Council over timber haulage in Fife.

## 9. AOB

- Forum business is shared with an email group of around 50 people. Forum meetings currently attract around 17 regular attendees. All Forum members are encouraged to attend meetings and to have an identified colleague who can stand in for them if required. For reasons of business continuity it would be good to ensure continued strong representation and to involve new people in the work of the Forum.
- Confor has produced
  - a new video 'Our Forests, Our People'  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XM5AA-6DTIA>
  - a new animation on the importance of wood in our lives  
<https://vimeo.com/159958998>

please watch and share...

## 10. Date of next meeting

The next planned meeting in late June conflicts with the forestry day of the Highland show so a new date has been scheduled.

The meeting will take place on **17<sup>th</sup> June 2016** at **Egger**, Anick Grange Road, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 4JS. The meeting will start at 10.30am until lunch and after lunch there will be the option of a tour of the Egger site which makes board material for high quality kitchens etc.

## Addendum

**D&G Update (by email)** - A number of STTS bids are been looked into and particular Laverhay where timber access has been a long running issue.

Issues still arising with new planting schemes whereby to gain approval FCS are wanting changes made to the Agreed Route Map. Despite this not being the intention of the ARM map is being applied in this way and the sheer number of applications coming in is challenging. Approval is often given in writing from the Local Roads Dept but this isn't satisfying FCS for new planting applications. JE felt that is important to consider roads in new planting applications but if letters of approval have been received am not sure that there is a need to go further. Longer term the ARM map may needs changing but this is always the case.

JE has had complaints arising from the failures to consult with the Roads Department on restricted routes and consultation needs to be a key part of planning any haulage operations. JE circulated Confor Consultation document with a mixed response on the content.

A number of seminars planned with Forestry Companies to highlight best practice and to show what can happen if careless timber operations are undertaken.

**Borders Update (by email)** – Have had more engagement with Police Scotland which is greatly welcomed and shared initiatives proposed where Timber Transport Issues arise.

Meeting held to review the Agreed Route Map and this will be presented at the next meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> May.

Complaints over timber lorries using the B709 have been made over timings and driver behaviour – have spoken with hauliers over and they are now looking at what they can do jointly with the other operators in the area.

**Ayrshire Update (by email)**– Councils in the region are looking into STTS bids and need to ensure that they fulfil the scheme requirements. It is unclear if these will meet the deadline.

Lots of Felling licences & Forest Plans coming in with good dialogue with Councils over consultations. Site visits by all parties has proved an effective way of dealing with issues discussing practicalities on site instead of exchanging e-mails.

Challenges are still over multiple operators all starting at short notice due to market forces and all wanting their share of road usage. These kinds of operation are difficult to pre plan and even with the exit point data it is still not easy to predict.