

Timber Transport Forum Meeting
Silvan House,
10.30 hrs, 26th January 2012

Agreed Minutes

Present

Alistair Speedie (Chair), Colin McNicol, David Sulman, Andy Leitch, Roland Stiven, James England, Claire Glaister, Colin Mackenzie, Alasdair Ferguson (after 12.00), Jamie Farquhar, Margaret Watson, Ian Farmer (for Margaret Horn), Crispin Thorn, Mike Green, Cameron Kemp, Neil Stoddart, Simon Oldham, Fergus Tickell, Kirsty Robb

Apologies

Chris Edwards, Phil Flanders/David Eaglesham, Neil Dyson, Ian Ross, Kath McNulty, John Paterson,

1. Welcome and Apologies

2. New members

Alistair Speedie welcomed Colin McNicol, chair of Stirling and Tayside and James England the South Scotland Project Officer.

3. Previous Minutes

The draft minutes of 22nd September 2011 were approved.

Matters Arising

- **ACTION** Road closures information. In Scotland all road closures are on <http://www.roadworksscotland.org> and in England and Wales, local authorities can opt into <http://www.elgin.gov.uk> or provide the information on their own websites. It is proposed that TTGs consider whether to add value to this by sorting the information and directly emailing group members.
- **ACTION:** To share the lessons learned from the Timber Traffic Management Plan approach. Kirsty Robb and Callum Robertson will present to conference

ACTION: To see if SRDP support to new planting is being held up by timber traffic issues. Roland Stiven asked this of FCS Conservators in connection with the Forum's submission in early January to the Woodland Expansion Advisory Group which will report in due course. The general view of conservators was that to date it has not been a criteria for rejection of applications but it is being taken into consideration. Jamie Farquhar said that applicants were being put off applying in certain areas. Fergus Tickell noted that the Timber Traffic Management Plans had been used to support new planting and long term forest plans on sensitive roads. Simon Oldham noted that SRDP guidance suggests that planting will only be supported on agreed routes. However John Dugan (in his SRDP role) had clarified that this means routes that have been agreed (rather than 'Agreed Routes') and includes both 'Agreed Routes' and 'Consultation Routes' particularly because the latter includes by default all B,C and unclassified roads that have not yet been given a category by the timber transport groups. There would still be a requirement for consultation with the local authority over proposed new planting on consultation routes.

There was agreement that the Forum and groups should strive towards and establish a consistent terminology and approach.

- **ACTION:** Issues regarding timber security. It was agreed that timber security is not a priority area for the forum. David Sulman noted that it was a live issue being addressed by the industry.
- The [STTS update report to 2011](#) is now on the FCS website
- The Department for Transport has responded to the consultation process on longer lorries by allowing a trial of 1800 lorries <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2011-06/summary-of-responses.pdf>
- The planned visit to Corpach by SG Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Richard Lochhead has been postponed again.
- It had been suggested that Confor be asked to see if there was scope to influence the Scotland Bill Committee regarding borrowing to invest in rural infrastructure. However, by then, the Committee had completed its work for the session and held its final meeting. A loan availability has been offered to Welsh local authorities for roads. Kath McNulty is investigating further.

4. Funding

Strategic Timber Transport Fund (STTF) budget for 2011-2012 Andy Leitch reported a £500k underspend by the Scheme because some projects have dropped out or been delayed. Some was offered to the Laverhay project in D&G but this project could not use the funds in the period remaining of the financial year. In addition the TimberLINK subsidy spend will be around £300k less than the £1m set aside for it. So far there has not been the weather to justify an extreme winter damage fund. The scheme is not looking to reallocate underspend to other projects in the remainder of the financial year due to the time constraints.

That said, discussions are ongoing regarding a possible project for a forest road alternative to a stretch of the A83 in Argyll at 'rest and be thankful' that has had closures due to landslips. Andy and the Argyll TTG are in discussion with Transport Scotland and may be able to redirect the unspent funds towards suitable works that would avoid long diversions for timber haulage. The Forum agreed this would be a good use of the available funding.

Jamie Farquhar asked that if the fund was underspent the Scottish Government be made aware of the reasons for this, i.e. the difficulties of delivering civil engineering projects within one financial year; there is no lack of demand or suitable projects.

STTF 2012-2015 Following the Forum's meeting with Stewart Stevenson in September the STTF was allocated £3m/yr (including up to £1m/yr for TimberLINK) for the period 2012-2015. The continued support for the scheme was specifically identified by the minister. A letter of thanks was sent to the minister but the Forum would like to formally minute their appreciation to Stewart Stevenson and Richard Lochhead for the on-going support.

FCS has issued a [call for applications](#) by 13th April 2012. Project officer applications will be considered before this.

ACTION: Roland Stiven to work with FCS press Office to issue formal press release on STTS

TimberLINK has been retendered and FCS is currently considering tenders.

Freight Facilities Grant. Ian Farmer reported that the Scottish Government FFG has been reduced to the £1.1m required for revenue support of current projects. However a [Future Transport Fund](#) has been announced with £2.75 capital grants to disburse to freight modal shift in the next two years and increasing funds thereafter. Applications will be invited shortly.

The **North Yorkshire Timber Freight Quality Partnership** has submitted an expression of interest to the Growing Places Fund for the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), as the first stage of an application for a £500k project (£350k grant plus £150k from industry) for selective upgrading of public and forest roads and support for CTI etc. FC England can also, for the first time, support in-forest road infrastructure through woodfuel grants.

5. Regional Updates

Highland Cameron Kemp and Colin Mackenzie submitted a written update – attached below. Neil Stoddart noted that the Glenelg floating pier had been repaired following storm damage and lessons have been learned regarding design of landward works.

HTTG is also updating the ARMS map with exit points. Discussions will be held next week with FCS GIS team regarding showing these on the online maps. Colin McNicol asked if the definition of 'severely restricted' routes was applied consistently across the groups. There is a formal definition but it remains open to interpretation.

ACTION: Project Officers to clarify Agreed Routes Maps classification – particularly consultation /severely restricted definitions

Argyll Kirsty Robb reported progress on a number of STTS projects with Brenachoile road upgrade now complete and ongoing works at Cowal and Mull. The group is liaising with SSE regarding the roading and possible pier requirements of installing a subsea cable running from East Kintyre to the mainland. There may be implications for timber traffic and opportunities to develop infrastructure. A group met to discuss Furnace Pier as a possible shipping point for timber and Argyll Estate is considering opportunities.

The Argyll TTG formally approved the Timber Transport Management Plans that have been prepared for selected severely restricted routes in Argyll. These will be available online through a timber transport page on the Argyll & Bute Council website together with links to guidance and protocols for Agreed Routes Maps. Applicants for felling licenses and long term forest plans are now expected to show evidence of consultation with A&BC on timber transport constraints.

Cumbria James England reported that following the consultation process, the ARMS map is about to go live on the council website. Drivers will be issued maps and media coverage will be prepared.

Scottish Borders Simon Oldham reported ongoing complaints regarding convoys of timber vehicles and problems of hauliers using consultation routes as through routes. The updates from the project officer on road works and road closures were noticeably missed and it is hoped can be re-started by James England. STTS funded work on the Potburn Road is nearly complete.

Dumfries and Galloway has had substantial community engagement on the subject of timber lorries with letters of complaints and media coverage focusing on particular hotspots. The group plans to engage further with MSPs and councillors.

James England sees scope to work with wind farm developments to develop infrastructure solutions for timber transport. The successful experience on West Loch Awe in Argyll was noted. Jamie Farquhar proposed the following;

ACTION: Alistair Speedie and Roland Stiven to approach Scottish Renewables with a request that developers look for opportunities to link windfarm /timber access projects.

Ayrshire Neil Dyson is now chair of Ayrshire TTG

Northeast England The group met again in November and agreed a series of working group meetings to start to draft an Agreed Routes Map. Crispin Thorn is now FC Regional Director for the Northeast and Yorkshire and will promote synergy between these two timber transport groups. The Regional Advisory Committee will be updated on timber transport.

Grampian & Stirling and Tayside Claire Glaister noted a successful joint meeting of the groups in Banchory focusing on CTI, forest roads and on communications and protocols for timber transport consultation.

Colin McNicol reported on a working group (Argyll, S&T and Grampian) that met to discuss consultation process and communications. The group are proposing improvements to both the various council and TTF websites and using the felling license or LTFP process to trigger timber transport consultation. A timber transport checklist is being drafted to draw out the relevant information for local authorities. The FCS felling license website has been revised to include a reference and link to timber transport issues see <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fellinglicences>. Both groups are updating ARMS websites for forthcoming volumes being extracted from exit points.

A report on the Crianlarich railhead commissioned by Forestry Commission Scotland was undertaken by Deltix Transport Consulting [*and was submitted in late January 2012*].

The group is proposing a temporary re-categorisation of an A road to consultation status while it experiences substantially increased timber transport associated with clearance of a windfarm site. This would enable the various parties to manage traffic better to reduce the impact on other road users.

S&T is working on a potential STTS application linking to access works associated with power grid improvements in the area.

Wales Roland Stiven reported that the Wales group met recently and picked up the action points following the May conference (attention had been drawn away from timber transport by the ongoing plan to merge FC Wales with other agencies). The group has written to the Minister for Transport and Local Government regarding funding for infrastructure and the need for a Wales Freight Group.

North Yorkshire The group expect to adopt a new Terms of Reference at meeting on 1st March. The internal consultation on ARMS map is now complete and external consultation now being undertaken. James Gilroy and Roland Stiven presented the work of the group and Forum to elected members (councillors) in December 2011.

6. Code of Practice

David Sulman reported that a final proof of document is being prepared. It is hoped we can launch the document at the conference in March.

7. Conference draft programme

A draft programme for the conference was discussed, It was suggested we invite the Member for Cumbria Rory Stewart MP [*He is not available that day*]. Programme to be finalised leaving time for discussion. Local press and radio to be invited.

8. Refresh of Partnering Charter

A draft of the partnering charter was tabled and discussed. It was agreed that the values statements of the previous charter should be retained. Group chairs should be asked to sign on behalf of all group partners. The map could be left off to provide space for signatures. An A1 version of the charter should be prepared for a signing photo opportunity at the conference.

ACTION: Roland Stiven to progress Partnering Charter and circulate before finalising

9. Do not Convoy

A draft of promotional material was tabled. It was agreed this message would be progressed as a poster and a leaflet/postcard. In addition we should investigate branded thermo mugs with 'Wait a Minute'. STTS could fund such promotional material.

ACTION: Roland Stiven to progress 'Do not Convoy' material and circulate before finalising

10. SRDP funding of forest roads

The information provided by Gordon Inglis FCS on Scottish Rural Development Programme grant allocation towards forest roads was discussed. It was agreed this grant opportunity should be promoted more widely and we should give consideration to how the grant is presented in the next period of SRDP funding.

ACTION: Jamie Farquhar to take forward the promotion of SRDP funding for forest roads and inclusion in future SRDP round.

11. Forest Regulation Task Force

The recommendation on the Highways Act in the [report](#) from the task force was discussed. This report has been submitted to England's forestry minister, Jim Paice who will respond shortly. Alistair Speedie noted that while the text on the issue promoted the partnering approach to timber transport, the actual recommendation did not reflect the existing legislation on extraordinary traffic. It was agreed the Forum would write promptly to the minister restating the Forum's position on this.

ACTION: Alistair Speedie to send letter to Jim Paice England's forestry minister regarding the Forest Regulation Task Force recommendation on the Highways Act- restating the Forum's position.

12. Woodland Expansion Response

See item 3

13. Public Access and Timber Haul Roads update

Kirsty Robb noted that the issue was still being discussed in Argyll with a robust position taken by the Argyll TTG whose members are concerned that promotion of haul roads as designated Core Paths will create inappropriate public expectations of their suitability for informal access and place burdens on land managers. Jamie Farquhar noted that an Access Forum subgroup will contribute to FCS Health and Safety guidance regarding access and that the position of haul roads should be considered in this.

ACTION: Project Officers to check with local access officers regarding the incidence of inclusion of haul roads in core path networks.

14. Forum Business Plan 2012-2015

Alistair Speedie recognised the role of Roland Stiven in taking forward the business of the Forum over the past year and thanked Andy Leitch for his oversight of this. With continued funding being made available for the Forum's project officer post he expressed the need for a straightforward business plan for the coming period 2012-2015. This should demonstrate professionalism, have a clear vision of the Forum's role and describe an appropriate work programme. It would be helpful if the business plan could encompass the relationship of the

Forum with the timber transport groups and the project officer resources available to these groups, with a view to continuing the effective working partnership.

ACTION: ALL to identify key issues and highlight to Roland priority areas of work for the Forum in the coming period.

ACTION: Roland Stiven to prepare a draft business plan and circulate for discussion at the next meeting.

15. AOB

The Forum was approached by Steve Knowles, Road Services (Mid Fife) regarding the development of the Fife Woodland Strategy. He is keen that timber transport issues in Fife are identified and addressed by the strategy. Claire Glaister noted that the Stirling and Tayside Group action plan included scope to address issues in Fife.

ACTION: Claire Glaister to take forward discussions with Fife council regarding timber transport

16. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Forum will be on **29th March 2012** (and subsequently 14th June and 20th September).

Highland Timber Transport Group: Activity summary at January 2012

Rathad na Mara (Glenelg): This very successful trial project has suffered a setback with considerable damage to the landing facilities during the gales over Christmas. A Phase 2 project is anticipated in 2012 to provide more a more robust landing point suitable for long term use at this location.

Rathad na Mara (Sound of Mull): This highly desirable project, which was awarded STTS for 2011/12, has been beset by problems with gaining landowner agreements and a suitable agreed landing point. Efforts are continuing but if this cannot be achieved a landward solution may be possible, although brokering multi-owner agreements may prove difficult. This project has emphasised the difficulties of getting agreements where different landowners have different priorities and timescales in mind, as well as the costs to those trying to develop a solution.

Flow Country Strategy: Work continues to try to develop an agreed strategy to access the 2M tonne of timber in this area served only by weak roads and the Far North Line. Again, changing owner priorities and market conditions mean that there is no fixed target, but progress is being made. John G Russell are pressing on with their trials of flatracks although this has been delayed by an unexpected slump in harvesting. It is currently hoped extraction by rail will start in the summer of 2012.

The HTTG is liaising closely with the RSPB and other agencies involved in plans for extensive additional peatland restoration aimed at gaining UNESCO World Heritage Site status. RSPB have recently acquired two forests from FCS and this may result in a sudden increase in timber production rather than the extensive felling to waste which has taken place in recent years.

River Snizort Timber Route, Skye: A multi-owner agreement to use an existing FCS "in forest" route in preference to a weak public road is close to agreement, with an STTS application expected.

Killiechonate Link Roads: This private sector initiated project lies on the south side of the A82 between Spean Bridge and Fort William. The proposal would be to link the forest road network within Killiechonate Estate to the existing FES Leanachan Forest network, mainly by way of a new bridge across the River Cour, and to take traffic off a fragile road into Spean Bridge. This project is at an early stage but it does access large volumes of timber and is hoped to provide a candidate STTS project.

Loch Arkaig and Glen Dessary: This remote area west of the Great Glen is accessed by an extremely weak and narrow public road some 15 miles long beside Loch Arkaig. A meeting has been arranged with the Council, FES and two private sector estates to see if a joint strategy can be agreed by way of minor improvements to the road, diverting in-forest where possible and barging across the loch if feasible. It is hoped an STTS project can come out of this, provided the objectives of all parties can be reconciled.

South Loch Ness: The start of increasing and major extraction from this area has been met by community concerns over control and consultation procedures. Discussion is ongoing about whether this should properly be picked up at the formal Felling Licence consultation stage or whether Community Councils deserve a greater level of involvement, possibly even control, when extraction is taking place. FES are planning to engage in closer consultation locally on a trial basis. However, the difficulty of informing and cooperating with the large number of Community Councils that might claim to be affected by timber extraction on a wider scale, does not need to be spelt out.

Other 2011 STTS projects: The major works to Logie Bridge on the A939 near Nairn and the passing place enlargements on the B871 in the Flow Country are progressing.

CJTM 24.01.12