

Timber Transport Forum Meeting
FC, Silvan House,
10.30 3rd October 2014
Agreed Minute

Present Bob Bridges (for Margaret Horn), Neil Dyson, Robin Pope, Derek Nelson, David Sulman, Ken Sinclair, Jamie Farquhar, Colin Mackenzie, Roland Stiven, Alistair Speedie, Crispin Thorn, Chris Campbell, Kirsty Robb, Claire Glaister, James England, Margaret Watson, Simon Oldham

Apologies Andrew Bainbridge (NYCC), Steven Herriott, Richard Scott, Hazel Newman, Fergus Tickell Alasdair Ferguson

1. Welcome and apologies

Alistair Speedie introduced Bob Bridges of Scottish Government freight team

2. Previous minutes

The minute of the April meeting had been agreed previously by email. Two actions points were noted under matters arising.

- Steven Herriott and James England presented the aims and work of the Forum to the SCOTS Road Group in Perth on the 1st August 2014.
- The action to develop a proposal for a 'roads workshop' has been carried forward.

The minute of the June meeting held at Dalby Forest Visitor Centre in North Yorkshire was agreed. This focused on funding for timber transport in the north of England. The minute included a note of the subsequent meeting with Robert Goodwill MP in his capacity as Minister responsible for local roads. The Forum subsequently received a letter from Robert Goodwill referring us to a forthcoming Department for Transport consultation on how the additional money announced for local roads should be allocated and again highlighting the role of the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in local public investment. So far there has been no sign of the consultation but it will be kept under review.

Crispin Thorn noted that the local Timber Transport group had welcomed the opportunity to meet members of the Forum and to discuss the approach being adopted in North Yorkshire. He suggested that the Forum should continue to encourage LEP interest in timber transport through the Roots to Prosperity action plan while maintaining approaches at a national level through the Forum. The Roots to Prosperity Steering Group recognises the importance of timber transport / infrastructure and this is highlighted as a specific priority within the action plan.. Alistair Speedie noted that the forest industry is a theme within the Borderlands Initiative and that a paper on the status of the industry in South Scotland is being prepared.

Alistair Speedie suggested we should continue to approaching the Minister responsible for Forestry in England. Kirsty Robb suggested a shadow round of bids for projects in North England to demonstrate demand.

ACTION: Roland Stiven and Alistair Speedie to write to Dan Rogerson MP (minister with responsibility for Forestry in England) in November, requesting a meeting to discuss national funding.

ACTION: Roland Stiven to liaise with North England groups over a possible 'shadow round' for timber transport projects to demonstrate demand.

3. Regional Updates

North Yorkshire

Crispin Thorn noted that the group is functioning well, dealing with minor tensions in the Agreed Routes Map. Andrew Bainbridge (who is covering for Victoria Hutchinson) is offering support to help consider a north England collaborative bid to the LEPS for timber transport investment.

North East England.

The Agreed Routes Map has been finalised and was launched on Wednesday 17th September. It is now on line on both the Northumberland Council and Forum ARM website providing a framework as the basis for ongoing discussion. Andrew Douglas has been given timber transport liaison responsibilities for Northumberland County Council. Crispin Thorn welcomed the role of the Forum in assisting with the development of the agreed routes map.

ACTION: Alistair Speedie to send a letter of congratulations to the North East Timber Transport Group.

Scottish Borders

James England and Roland Stiven reported on a visit to Windymains sawmill in East Lothian. James has visited some previous STTS public road schemes with Scottish Borders highways engineers to review. Several Timber Transport Management Plans have been put online. No STTS bids have been submitted from Scottish Borders.

Ayrshire

Neil Dyson noted that the group is keen to link the exit point data with road condition index information to give a strategic overview of timber transport in Ayrshire. Two public road bids have been submitted to STTS - one for roads around Straiton and one for Arran.

Neil reported on issues arising from timber transport from windfarm sites and the opportunity to link the use of forest and windfarm infrastructure to open up new planting sites. There remain issues regarding applications for new planting in areas served by weak roads. Generally there is good liaison with FCS and James England regularly liaises with council roads engineers over new planting applications (mostly infilling already forested areas) where sites are accessed by weaker roads.

Jamie Farquhar noted that the James Hutton Institute has developed a web tool to look at land use opportunities as part of the Land Use Strategy. He has asked them to consider where low demand for agriculture may overlap with opportunities for new forestry planting, taking account of road constraints. Where there are strategic opportunities for significant areas of new commercial planting it may make sense to invest in upgrading road access. Jamie would like to be told of instances where transport limitations are constraining new planting opportunities.

Dumfries and Galloway

James England and Alistair Speedie attended the day of the region at Eskdalemuir in the summer which featured a Kronospan timber lorry which attracted discussion and attention.

The Eskdalemuir bypass was resurveyed by the roadscanner ground penetrating radar providing an update on the benchmarking survey done 5 years ago when it was opened. The data is still to be reviewed. James England attends the haul road management groups for the main strategic haul roads at Barrhill, Ae and Eskdalemuir with a view to ensuring they are well maintained and well-used. D&G Council has provided James with a speed gun which he took to a meeting relating to concerns at a primary school allowing live assessment of timber traffic speed.

General complaints from the public are on the increase – in line with the high levels of harvesting, some relating to heavy traffic in early mornings outwith hours agreed in a timber traffic management plan.

There followed some discussion on the level of public consultation that the industry should expect to deliver. There are formal processes for scoping and consultation in the forest planning process and public registers which should be used. However the public do not always engage in these and instead complain direct to the Forestry Commission or to local councils. Proactive consultation with communities on operational issues can be beneficial but can raise expectations and highlight particular issues which then attract criticism. There are limits to the extent that operators can realistically provide information to local people. Community councils can be informed but do not

always share information efficiently. The Stirling and Tayside protocols refer to consultation with community councils.

Timber Transport Management Plans (TTMPs) have proved useful in sharing agreements for working on challenging roads. They are voluntary agreements which establish a shared understanding of working arrangements. Some are effectively documenting a voluntary agreement between an operator and the council. Others have relevance to more than one stakeholder and are shared more widely. Those that are posted on the Agreed Routes Map become public information and while they remain voluntary, operators should expect to abide by them. This means they have to be realistic and worded carefully.

Colin Mackenzie noted that a TTMP was linked to permission for an exit point onto the public road at Applecross. [*The plan was also linked to STTS funding*].

Stirling and Tayside

The group has been meeting at the Perth and Kinross Council roads depot. Timber Transport Management Plans have been developed – some bilateral and some generic. An STTS bid has been submitted relating to a forestry haul route at Sherrifmuir and another for project officer support.

Grampian

The group's summer meeting was held at the James Jones sawmill at Aboyne which was a good introduction to Moray council's new roads engineer representative. Three STTS bids have been submitted one from Aberdeenshire Council for the road leading to the Aboyne sawmill and two relating to public road drainage improvements.

Argyll

The next group meeting is 21st October 2014 where they will be discussing protocols for new and existing exits from forests onto the public road. Forest Enterprise has undertaken some ground penetrating radar surveys of timber strategic public roads for the council. [Sandbank pier near Dunoon had expressed interest in expanding their timber facilities. Preliminary discussion had identified a number of alternative destinations for timber on Cowal which would need to be taken into account when developing thinking..](#) Scottish Canals is consulting on a feasibility study to improve the capacity of Ardrisraig Pier for marina and timber use. Argyll currently has 21 TTMPs.

There has been some discussion on the impact of low impact lorries with regard to increased scrubbing of corners on forest roads.

Six STTS bids have been submitted

- Project Officer
- A study of opportunities to share use of energy-related and forestry access infrastructure
- Upgrade of the Ormidale-Waulkmill section of the SW Cowal timber haul road.
- An in-forest haul road in Kintyre
- A feasibility study for a permanent pier at Ardcastle
- A floating pier at Ardcastle on Loch Fyne.

Highland

Six STTS projects have been submitted

- Project Officer
- A software application for managing timber pick up from forests
- A replacement for Ruthven Bridge near Kingussie
- Improvements to the minor public roads serving the Flow Country
- A pilot rail haulage project from the Flow Country led by HITRANS
- An in forest haul road on South Loch Ness

Robin Pope mentioned that Highland Council is reviewing its guidance on forest road access onto the public road. They are also encouraging private estates to engage more with the work of the timber transport group and to consult the council over public road use.

Ken Sinclair noted progress in liaison with Network Rail over management of the many miles of border between FCS owned land and Network Rail lines. Previously FCS were likely to be billed by NR for staff time to discuss mutually beneficial works.

Colin Mackenzie said that the Highlands shares the need for more strategic and co-ordinated overview regarding making best use of rural access infrastructure - as proposed in the Argyll project. Others agreed

ACTION: Forum to write to the Environment Minister in Scotland highlighting the need to promote a strategic overview of opportunities to optimise use of any rural land access infrastructure.

4. APF Review

The Forum had a tent at the APF for three days, shared with Tireboss and James Jones Ltd – who paid for tent and stand. We distributed copies of guidance and talked to many hauliers – mostly Welsh and SW England – also Irish and Scottish. We held an event on the Saturday which was not particularly well attended – only about 20 people - but generally well received and there was good discussion. Thanks to Neil Stoddart for chairing and to Fergusons Transport and Shipping and James Jones Ltd for sponsoring the lunch.

5. Future of Timber Transport (Exit Point Study)

Claire Glaister presented statistics on the outputs of the recently completed SCOTS/Transport Scotland funded exercise to forecast where timber will come onto the public road network over the next 15 years and to collect volume forecast information for each exit point. The project identified 2,300 exit points linked to 74% of the woodland area. In Argyll the coverage was over 90%.

The data has now been passed to consultancy TRL which is building the database and the presentational mapping tool. A final draft is expected by end January and project completion by mid March 2015.

The tool and the data will be passed to the Timber Transport Groups without ownership and contact details. The full data set, including personal details will be held by Confor on behalf of the Forum, only for use in any updating exercise.

6. National Forest Inventory by Local Authority

The Forum requested that the National Forest Inventory (NFI) produce 25 year timber production forecasts at local authority level for Scotland as this would provide a cross check on the total volumes of timber that have been allocated to exit points. FC has provided this data for the council areas covered by Agreed Routes Maps in Scotland. These will shortly be available from the NFI webpages.

7. Agreed Routes Map website

The contract with Gaist to host the Agreed Routes Map has been renewed for a further year to continue until March 2016. There is a £3,500 cost for the year 2015-16 which is to be shared between the Regional Timber Transport Groups.

8. Revamping the TTF Website

Roland Stiven referred to the email previously circulated regarding the proposal to update the Forum website. The existing Forum website is 8 years old and the content management system is based on a bespoke platform which will not run on modern browsers. Three tenders for the work have been received and an application has been made for STTS support for the project. There will be an opportunity for the Forum members and groups to input to the review process which would be completed by April 2015. The Timber Transport Toolkit will be revised and integrated within the website structure.

9. Funding

STTF and STTS

During the summer the STTS panel agreed to support an alternative project (following the withdrawal of the Applecross pier) providing for public road improvements to serve timber transport from the Applecross peninsular.

Derek Nelson reported that the recent call for STTS applications has attracted 25 bids; five project officer posts, five studies, two sea, one rail, three in-forest routes and nine public road bids. Overall the bids are requesting £3.6m while the budget is closer to £2.2m plus £300k left over in this year's budget (which would need to be spent in 14/15 and cannot be carried forward). Alistair Speedie welcomed the strong demand for the fund.

Freight Grants

Bob Bridges reported no change to the position on Scottish Freight Facilities Grants. No awards have been made from the current budget. Two bids remain under consideration, one of which involves timber.

Funding for England

There continue to be various approaches to identifying funds for investment in timber transport in England. One is through the Roots to Prosperity Action Plan to encourage Local Enterprise and private investment in the forestry and timber industries in the north of England. Andrew Bainbridge of North Yorkshire County Council has offered to lead this. The national approach to ministers will continue. The Forum awaits the expected consultation into the allocation of additional Department for Transport Funds to local authorities.

Crispin Thorn noted current funding from Forestry Commission England to the Forum post and suggested that the industry should consider contributing to this in future. Support for woodland infrastructure is expected to be included in the 'New Environmental Land Management Scheme' which replaces the English Woodland Grant Scheme and Environmental Stewardship. The details are still to be confirmed with announcements expected next year.

Funding for Wales.

Chris Edwards has identified Welsh Government funding towards the Timber Transport Forum for the period to March 2016 but this is not expected to continue thereafter. More should be expected from the industry in Wales if they consider this to be a priority. Jamie Farquhar noted that Confor has invested in new and increased staff time in Wales and will keep the pressure on for investment in timber transport and contributions from Wales to maintain the Forum as an organisation with GB reach.

10. Forestry Industry Safety Accord

Ken Sinclair noted that he will be attending the next meeting of the Haulage Working Group which is finalising a driver safety guide and developing ideas for driver training and for an electronic tablet-based approach to hazard mapping.

ACTION The Forum to request continued input into to the development of the FISA timber haulage related guidance.

11. AOB

Prior Notification of Forest Tracks

Jamie Farquhar noted the recent proposal from the Scottish Planning Minister for a new statutory instrument which would require prior notification of plans to build or develop forest roads and scope to require planning and public consultation in addition to existing requirements of the EIA process. Such an approach was rejected at the previous consultation on permitted development. FCS is continuing to liaise with Scottish Government on the appropriateness of this to forest roads.

ACTION Roland Stiven to liaise with Jamie Farquhar and send a letter to the Heads of Planning in Scotland highlighting concerns with prior notification for forest roads

Road Haulage Issues

Chris Campbell said that RHA receive details of all emergency weight restrictions and can forward them to those interested. RHA is also interested in hearing about fuel theft incidents. The RHA is also responding to consultations on a 20mph speed limit in Edinburgh City local streets and contributing to the A1 action group.

The speed limit for HGV's on non-dual carriageways in England and Wales is rising from 40mph to 50mph. The Scottish Government has no current plans to follow suit although there is a trial of introducing a 50mph speed limit on non-dualled sections of the A9. There was some discussion on this and it was thought that the differences would lead to confusion and disparity for haulage in Scotland and the rest of the country. Ideally there would be one speed limit, particularly on the trunk road network

ACTION Forum to write to the Minister for Transport in Scotland regarding the 50mph HGV speed limit in England and Wales highlighting the issues of confusion and disparity and encouraging parity particularly on the trunk roads.

12. Dates of next meetings

16th January 2015,
24th April 2015,
26th June 2015 (Field Trip?),
2nd October 2015

ACTION: Forum Members are invited to suggest locations and topics for a summer meeting.