

Timber Transport Forum Meeting
FC, Silvan House,
10.30 16th January 2015
Agreed Minute

Present: Robin Pope, Derek Nelson, Cameron Maxwell, Roland Stiven, Colin Mackenzie, , David Sulman (chair), Neil Dyson, Jamie Farquhar, Ian Farmer (for Margaret Horn), James England, Crispin Thorn, James England, Claire Glaister, Ken Sinclair, Richard Scott, Andrew Douglas

Also Frank MacCulloch, Alan Dickerson (for item 10) and Douglas Wright (for item 7)

Apologies: Steven Herriott, Chris Campbell, Simon Oldham, Margaret Watson, Alistair Speedie, Alasdair Ferguson, Fergus Tickell, Kirsty Robb

1. Welcome and apologies

David Sulman agreed to chair the meeting in Alistair Speedie's absence. David welcomed Frank MacCulloch of Avrika Engineering and Alan Dickerson, Head of FC CECS, Civil Engineering Central Services and Douglas Wright, FCS.

2. Previous minutes

The minute of the previous meeting on 3rd October 2014 was accepted.

Roland Stiven provided an update on the action points

- The proposed letter to Dan Rogerson MP requesting a meeting to discuss national funding in England has been deferred as we engage with the Department for Transport funding opportunity (see item 12).
- There has been discussion with the North England groups about the idea of producing a possible 'shadow round' for timber transport projects to demonstrate demand and this is ongoing.
- Alistair Speedie sent a letter of congratulations to the North East Timber Transport Group regarding their Agreed Routes Map.
- Alistair Speedie 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. [*This has now been sent and circulated*]
- Roland Stiven, Claire Glaister and Ken Sinclair met with Mick Bottomley and Alasdair Ferguson to discuss the development of the FISA haulage guidance. See item 13
- A letter has not been sent to the Heads of Planning in Scotland highlighting concerns with prior notification for forest roads. Instead Jamie Farquhar and David Sulman have continued to meet with Ministers and others to discuss the issue (see item 8)
- A letter was sent to the Minister for Transport in Scotland regarding the issues arising from the differences in HGV speed limits between England and Scotland. This has been circulated.

3. Red Princess Launch

The landing craft was successfully launched by Paul Wheelhouse on 3rd November at an event in Troon hosted by Glennon Brothers, UPM Tilhill and Troon Tugs. The launch received good media coverage on TV, radio and the press. The Forum has professional photos of the event.

4. Online Survey of Timber Transport Forum Effectiveness

The Forum considered the results of the effectiveness survey undertaken by 'survey monkey' in the summer of 2014. The survey was sent to around 500 people with an interest in timber transport and received 108 responses, Mostly from Scotland (83 responses) with England 18 and Wales 7. The responses were mostly considered positive with a relatively high proportion of 'very effective' and 'effective'. This should be communicated with Ministers and stakeholders. However, there is a range of responses and differences between countries. It was agreed the Forum should respond to the survey considering the issues raised and proposing where the Forum could take actions to improve

effectiveness, particularly in Wales. The response should be reflected in the business plan for 2015-16. The exercise should be repeated every 2-3 years.

ACTION: Roland Stiven to produce a response to the results of the TTF effectiveness survey.

5. Timber Transport Forum Website

The contract for the modernisation of the website has been let to Moriarti Design & Marketing. The structure has been agreed and example designs have been circulated to the Forum requesting comment back within the week. A draft site will be available for comment soon. The project is to be complete by mid-March.

James England asked if the exit point survey data could be made available for download from the website.

ACTION: All to provide any comment on the circulated website designed pages by Friday 23rd January 2015.

6. Regional Updates

North Yorkshire

Crispin Thorn reported on the meeting of October 17th, which was positive with several cases moving forward effectively. The Yorkshire Dales Society remain concerned about the potential impact of forestry operations but they recognise the importance timber transport in supporting sustainable woodland management. There remain isolated incidents of poor practice which warrant continuing promotion of good practice by the group. Crispin presented on the Routes to Prosperity initiative and action plan. Jeremy Walker as chair responded to the DfT consultation on allocation of roads maintenance budget requesting the creation of a timber transport challenge fund (see item 12).

North East England

Andrew Douglas of Northumberland County Council has taken on the role of timber liaison officer and now acts as secretary to the NE England Timber Transport Group. Andrew noted the launch of the Agreed Routes Map in September 2014. The group met in early December and noted a good level of uptake and response to the ARM. It is early days with some categorisations of roads being queried and ongoing discussion with council colleagues. The group is considering the opportunities of conducting an exit point survey. NCC is liaising with neighbouring councils with a view to submitting a bid for a timber transport challenge fund (see item 12)

Cumbria

Richard Scott said that the Cumbria group has not met recently but continues to work effectively through the group's network dealing with around one issue each month.

Scottish Borders

James England noted that the group met in October. The Local Authority has been sent the data from the exit point survey and this has shown up a number of gaps in the Agreed Routes Map where roads will need to be considered and categorised. There have also been applications for new planting on roads that have not been previously categorised for timber transport.

Roadside stacking and loading continues to be widespread across the south of Scotland creating obstruction, mud on roads and the potential for road damage and creating substantial risk and disruption to other road users. James tabled a draft page flier he had drawn up in conjunction with council and police contacts. This highlights the issues that arise from roadside loading and notes that council permission must be sought and conditions met.

The leaflet generated some discussion. It is clear that roadside loading is common throughout Scotland and there is a widely held rule of thumb (held by foresters) that they can stop and load from minor roads for up to 20 minutes. This is NOT the case. It is an offence to block the highway (including the verges) without permission and it matters not whether the landowner owns the solum of the road. Different

authorities deal with it in different ways and not consistently. For small loads Northumberland County Council have issued permits (similar to permits used for temporary skips).

It was agreed that there is a communication failure here with the existing guidance not being clear and the trade not really aware of the problem or the regulations. It was agreed the Forum should develop guidance and present progress to the next meeting.

ACTION: Roland Stiven to progress development of GB relevant good practice relating to roadside stacking/loading.

Ayrshire

As part of the development of the Ayrshire Freight Strategy, North Ayrshire Council is undertaking a strategic routing study and meeting with timber processors for their input. At the timber transport group meeting it was agreed to revise and update the Ayrshire timber transport strategy and review the Agreed Routes Map.

D&G

There are several windfarm applications and James England is undertaking a GIS exercise to look for potential access sharing with forestry.

Stirling & Tayside

Claire Glaister reported that West Dunbartonshire Council joined the group in November and one of their roads engineers met up with Keith Wishart the Central Scotland conservator. A meeting will be held to develop a timber transport management plan for multiple forest sites in Balquhider Glen. Scottish Water has joined the group. They have an interest in diffuse pollution from forest infrastructure in drinking water catchments.

Grampian

The group met in November and focused on the then proposed prior notification for private ways. The group has sent comments back on the draft FISA driver Safety Manual to the FISA Haulage Working Group. The exit point data was presented and the local authority is keen to make use of this. There is an ongoing consultation by Moray Economic Partnership into the use of the A95 from Keith to Aviemore regarding possible improvements. Grampian has four successful STTS bids and Moray Council is currently delivering an existing project on pre-emptive drainage works.

Argyll

Kirsty Robb submitted the following by email but this was not raised or discussed at the meeting.
The Rest & Be Thankful A83 Taskforce meeting on 12 January was attended by Derek Mackay the new minister for Transport & Islands. Michael Russell also attended and pushed for a permanent solution in addition to the 'mitigation' already in place against landslides. Another Taskforce meeting is scheduled for April when Transport Scotland has been asked to put forward more information on alternative routes (including upgrade of the forest road) and historical details on landslide incidents.

Highland

Colin Mackenzie noted successful STTS bids for the Highland TTG project officer, Ruthven Bridge, South Loch Ness In-Forest Timber Haul Route, Timberlinks (public roads in the Flow Country) and Branchliner1 An Investigative Study. David Sulman said there is a need for the timber transport challenge in the Flow Country to be addressed through a multi-agency high level group. Colin presented to the HIFIC (Forest Industry Cluster) meeting in Fort William in late October pressing the need for the sector to liaise with the roads department.

7. Rural Development Funding and Forestry Infrastructure

Douglas Wright of FCS explained that the new SRDP forestry grants programme of £252m over 7 years will commence in March and will include a forestry infrastructure category. The proposal is for a budget of £300,000 per year (starting 2016) aimed at bringing smaller woods into productive management. The funding could support forest road bell-mouths onto the public road, roadside laybys for safe stacking and loading of timber, short stretches of forest road and low level water crossings. Woodlands would need to have a forest plan or management plan for 5 years involving harvesting. Douglas will

email around high level details and proposed selection criteria [done], for prompt comment. Further details will be released at the end of January. Jamie Farquhar asked whether grant would be available even where a bell-mouth was required by planning conditions for an exit onto the public road. This will be confirmed.

Crispin Thorn noted that the England Countryside Stewardship programme would be launched in July 2015 and is expected to support woodland infrastructure at 40% of costs. Details are still being finalised.

8. Prior Notification for Forest Roads in Scotland

As of the 15th Dec 2014 alteration or construction of a private way for forestry purposes in Scotland requires a prior notification process with the Planning Authority. The authority will state if the work is permitted or not or whether it is permitted with conditions. Previously forest roads were permitted development and this sudden change to prior notification was unexpected. There is little support from the industry or indeed from some environmental bodies who are particularly concerned about the impact of higher level hill tracks. The situation was debated by the Local Government and Regeneration Committee but the Statutory Instrument remains in place. Jamie Farquhar and David Sulman met with Alex Neil, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights, who has given his assurance that forestry will be treated differently from hill tracks and that they will try to align the process with current FCS processes (Forest Plans and EIA (Forestry)). The Scottish Government will produce definitive guidance and monitor progress. In the meantime we have interim guidance at local authority level and some confusion as to how forest roads should be dealt with. Frank MacCulloch noted that the current Highland Council guidance refers to SNH guidance on Constructed Tracks in the Scottish Uplands which is not necessarily appropriate for forest roads. Robin Pope agreed to follow this up.

9. Forest Enterprise Scotland Lower Impact Vehicle Roads

Ken Sinclair said that following consultation with industry bodies FCS is continuing the process to categorise around 40% of the FCS road network for lower impact vehicles only. This is being done on a 'catchment' basis – i.e. all roads serving a forest block. It may well coincide with weaker public roads that would also benefit. They will post a GIS webmap showing the catchments and will engage with the trade to implement the policy over the coming 3-5 years. FCS will not be downgrading the specification of the road network but it is hoped that the policy will significantly reduce maintenance costs and associated impacts. Civil engineers will monitor the effectiveness of the policy. The definition of lower impact vehicles will mirror the categories defined in the 'Tread Softly' guidance. In the longer term FCS expect lower impact vehicles to become the norm for all of their forest roads. David Sulman noted that the timescale for introduction of such measures is critical to allow the industry to adapt and invest in suitable vehicles.

Colin Mackenzie noted that Roadex is developing the Tread Softly idea of 'truck wear factor' and this may result in further data and guidance on the value of different lorry configurations and tyre pressure control systems. In Sweden, they are now permitting 74 tonne lorries and in Finland 76 tonnes. While axle weights are similar, the successive axle loads of road train configurations may have an additional impact on roads. Frank MacCulloch noted that lower impact technologies are being promoted in Sweden and are allowing winter access to forest roads in British Columbia.

10. Broadening the Forest Road Design Specification (presentation by Frank MacCulloch)

Frank gave a presentation (which will be available on the website) based on one given previously at the HIFIC meeting in October 2014. Frank made the case for a broadening of the range of road design specifications to take account of current practice in the private sector and the use of longer and wider vehicles and lower ground pressure vehicles. In order to access difficult sites the private sector is accepting steeper gradients and is making more use of crossfall drainage (rather than cambers). By necessity they are making use of locally available aggregates which may be of poorer quality than is ideal. These changes can generally be adequately dealt with by changing road design, making roads and curves wider and making gradients smoother. Frank proposes that such options be incorporated into standard design specification documents that set out accepted good practice for forest road design.

The impacts would need to be considered. There was little time for discussion but it is suggested that the Forum's Technical Working group consider this proposal and feed back to the Forum.

ACTION: Technical Working Group (David Sulman, Richard Scott, Alasdair Ferguson and Roland Stiven) to consider how this should be taken forward.

11. Roads Engineer Workshop

This year's business plan expected a workshop for roads engineers focusing on public road strengthening specifications for forest roads, exit points onto the public road and shared access (and maintenance) agreements. The Forest Engineering Group has been asked if they would consider incorporating this theme into their September 2015 seminar. [*Bruce Hamilton FEG secretary raised the idea with the FEG chair and they will take a decision at their AGM in March*]

12. Funding

Funding for England

The Department for Transport issued a consultation on the 10th November 2014) on how the announced funding for road maintenance should be allocated. The Timber Transport Forum responded with a proposal for a timber transport fund and there were supporting proposals from some of the north England groups/councils. The allocation mechanisms were announced (on 23rd December 2014) and include a challenge fund element. DfT is requesting bids by the 9th February 2015. The Forum is encouraging the north of England groups and councils to respond to the bid for a challenge fund to be delivered over 3 years for timber transport.

See also reference to England Countryside Stewardship in item 8.

STTF and STTS

Derek Nelson reported that the 2014-15 STTF budget was underspent due to 2 projects being de-committed and 2 projects with significant underspend. £300k has been transferred towards ongoing work on the A83 at the Rest and be Thankful in Argyll and The Highland Council is bringing forward planned works for 2015-16 to maximise spend in this financial year. Despite this £250k has been decommitted. This emphasises the need for STTS projects to come forward with well-planned works and realistic delivery schedules. Unspent budget allocations make it more difficult to request a continuation of the STTF at the current level.

The 2015-16 budget has made offers to 16 projects and there remains £413k to allocate. A further round for submissions will be announced with a deadline of 23rd February 2015 with the results given by the end of March. Projects will need to be complete by mid February 2016.

Freight Grants (Scotland)

Ian Farmer reported that the Freight Facilities Grant budget of £2.5m for last year and of £4.5m for this year, remains unspent. The Waterborne Freight Grant which supports shifts from road haulage to sea transport has made a substantial allocation to Boyd Brothers Haulage Ltd for sea transport of timber products from the BSW mill at Corpach to the south of England. The Mode Shift Revenue Scheme budget is well committed and has received state aid approval for the next 5 years.

13. Forestry Industry Safety Accord

Claire Glaister, Roland Stiven and Ken Sinclair met with Alasdair Ferguson and Mick Bottomley of the FISA Timber Haulage working group to discuss the development of the FISA Timber Haulier Drivers Guide. The working group was encouraged to keep it simple and to get professional guidance writer input into the text and design. The working group is also in the early stages of developing an online mapping platform to provide site mapping for timber hauliers linked to vehicle tracking that gives live information on road categories and risk assessment issues. FISA and the Irish Forest Industry Transport Group are also considering whether there is a need for a review of load security relating to the use of sliding bunks and the strapping of roundwood loads without forward restraint.

14. Future of Timber Transport (Exit Point Study)

The Timber Transport Groups now have access to the data collected from the exit point study. The mapping tool is currently being finalised by TRL. This is expected to be complete in mid-March 2015.

15. National Forest Inventory by Local Authority

To complement the exit point data, FCS requested that the National Forest Inventory provide forecast production data at local authority level for Scottish timber transport group areas. This work has been done and the reports are now done and have been circulated to the timber transport groups. The reports will soon be available on the NFI webpages of the Forestry Commission website.

16. Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee (Scottish Parliament)

The Forum responded to the committee's consultation on Freight Transport in Scotland focusing on the scope for more sustainable freight. The response has been circulated to the Forum and is available on the website.

17. Forum Visit in Summer 2015

Roland Stiven has had discussions with John Lyons and we propose a summer trip to Ireland to share a meeting with the Irish Forest Industry Transport Group probably in Portlaoise an hour and a quarter from Dublin on a main motorway southwest. The themes are likely to cover; forest entrances and permissions, load security, wider acceptance of the Good Practice Guide, GVW increase for rigid and trailers, agreed routes project, variable tyre pressure, vehicle tracking and central logistic and haulage procurement. The expectation is that this visit will involve flights to and from Dublin, an overnight in Dublin and a hired minibus but should be reasonably cost effective if booked in advance.

ACTION All to let Roland know whether they would like to attend a summer meeting in Ireland.

18. AOB

Chris Edwards Retirement

Chris Edwards the Forum's Welsh Government representative retires on May 8th 2015. The Forum will send a letter of thanks.

Reduced time input to TTF project officer post

Confor has proposed that for reasons of job diversification and career progression Roland Stiven's input to Timber Transport be reduced from 5 days to 4 days/week. Roland would continue to provide STTS administration input at the current level (0.3 fte), to deal with the number of projects being delivered in the coming year. There will be a reduced time input to the remaining Forum workplan, but it is felt that this will be manageable. The Timber Transport Forum is in a relatively robust state with national guidance in place, new websites for both the Forum and the Agreed Routes Map, an experienced and full cohort of regional project officers in Scotland and effective groups in the north of England. The Forum business plan can be adapted to be delivered in the coming year on a reduced time input. Confor has negotiated with Wood for Good for Roland to work one day per week for the initiative to promote the use of timber in construction, starting from January 2015. Roland was keen to take on this opportunity and Alistair Speedie and the funding partners of the TTF post are supportive of this change.

Richard Scott asked whether the released funds from the project officer post could be used for relevant consultancy input to the Forum. Similarly the funding could be allocated to increase regional officer time where useful.

19. Dates of next meetings

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