

Timber Transport Forum Meeting
FCS Silvan House, Edinburgh
10.30 4th October 2016
Agreed Minute

Attending: Kirsty Robb, Crispin Thorn, Colin Mackenzie, Keith McDowell, Derek Nelson, Chris Little, Ken Sinclair, Alistair Speedie (chair), Alasdair Ferguson, Robin Pope, Fergus Tickell, James England, Claire Glaister, James Macdonald, John Morgan for item 4

Apologies: David Sulman, Victoria Hutchinson, Athole McKillop, Rob Lewis, Gillian Clark, Martin Bishop, Hazel Newman, Will Anderson, Simon Oldham

1. Welcome and apologies

Alistair Speedie welcomed James Macdonald of BSW to his first meeting of the Forum

2. Previous minutes (17th June 2016)

3. Matters arising

- The Forum Business Plan 16-17 is now online incorporating the discussion from the previous meeting and updated accordingly. This was done in time for the meeting with the Cabinet Secretary. The Forum has not had a chance to review the final version so it can be revised if Forum members have further comment.
- Road Condition Index and Investment Requirements
SCOTS have been asked to take the RCI data for rural Scotland and overlay it on our Agreed Routes Map and, based on that, to provide statistics on the overall condition of our network. This should help to provide an estimate of the level of investment requirement. Audit Scotland has produced a review of road condition noting a substantial proportion of local roads not in acceptable condition. The figures suggest there is some negative creep in condition particularly in some rural council areas. This is concerning particularly with regard to targets for the further expansion of forestry. The Audit Scotland report does note the Forum as a rare example of collaborative working
- Vehicle Tracking
There remains interest in a study to describe vehicle tracking technology and its benefits. David Leslie presented the James Jones experience at the recent NE Scotland forest industry meeting. Ferguson Transport also has 5-8 years' experience and is working with Tireboss to integrate the TPCS with the tracking monitoring systems.

It was agreed the Forum should develop a brief for work to collate current experience and the opportunities of the technology with a view to developing accessible guidance. This should address the needs of smaller haulage companies, and consider geofencing, costs, drivers' views, lone working and speed monitoring etc. It will also need to manage expectations.

ACTION: Roland to draft brief for work on scope for expanding use of tracking technology in timber haulage.

- Social Media
The Forum continues to tweet @timbertransport and is following relevant MPs, MSPs and companies.
- Prior Notification for Forest Tracks

Following a review for Scottish Government, Jamie Farquhar noted that contrary to expectations there has not been a move to take forestry out of the prior notification process. Jim Mackinnon who has been brought in to review barriers to new planting has been asked to reconsider this.

4. Plant Health and Timber Transport

John Morgan (Head of Plant Health for FC) presented on the state of play with protected pest-free areas for Great Spruce Bark Beetle *Dendroctonus micans* and other relevant plant health issues. The area of work is largely based on EU legislation and administrative processes. New regulations are planned for 2020 to adapt to EU enlargement and increased trade - seeking to manage risk better.

A process of consultation will take place on current trade and risk. The UK has protected zone status for bark beetle. Currently the UK is seen as a 'local region' within which most control measures are not required. The new regulations will seek to limit the scale of such areas which may require some form of passporting of roundwood movements twithin UK. The self-certification measures around the pest-free status of NW Scotland allowing trade with Northern Ireland is typical of the sort of measures that may be more widely applied. What are currently treated as guidelines may become more formal permissions.

Protected zone status can be kept even if pest species are already present, allowing ongoing control. If we were to relinquish our protected zone status we would be open to unrestricted trade which may increase risk from pests. Each country has contingency plans in place.

DEFRA lead on negotiation and will consult with the industry and devolved administrations. John will take forward a study on the economic impact of measures and relate this to risk

5. Report and Discussion of Meeting with Fergus Ewing MSP Cabinet Secretary (A briefing note had been circulated). The Forum representatives, Alistair Speedie, Roland Stiven, David Sulman, Alasdair Ferguson and Stuart Goodall (for Confor) met with Fergus Ewing on 28th September. The Minister asked for a strategic investment plan setting out the scale of investment required in transport infrastructure for timber transport and setting out a delivery plan with identified projects and ambitious budget for 2017-18. This to be done by 24th October Forestry Summit at Boat of Garten. The Forum recognised that both the one year budget and the limitations on match funding will be a challenge for a delivery plan but all timber transport groups will engage with members – particularly roads authority representatives - to produce a prioritised list of projects and to identify scale and source of match funding. Public road works may be more 'shovel ready' for 17-18 than more complex private schemes but, where possible, these should be included along with modal shift projects to rail and sea.

We should be ambitious but not unrealistic about what we can deliver in one year. The plan should highlight economic benefits and estimate GVA benefits of investment. Assume STTS rules apply for now. Jim Mackinnon will be asked to review the STTF mechanism to see if it can be refined to deliver a broader range of infrastructure works.

ACTION Roland to draw together strategic investment plan with information from groups

ACTION Jamie Farquhar to collate information from TTG Project Officers on areas where road infrastructure has limited new planting opportunities.

6. Future of Forestry Consultation on Devolving FC
A draft response to the consultation on the Future of Forestry in Scotland was presented. Alistair Speedie attended the first Forestry Summit relating to this in Dumfries in September and will attend the 2nd Boat of Garten summit (along with Jamie Farquhar, David Sulman [and Colin Mackenzie]).

ACTION ALL: Further comment on the draft Future of Forestry consultation by 6th November.

ACTION Roland: To submit Forum response to Future of Forestry Consultation by 9th November.

7. Proposed ScotFLAG subgroup on Rural Freight

Roland presented a paper that had been submitted to ScotFLAG (Scottish Freight and Logistics Advisory Group) on the need for a rural freight subgroup to highlight rural haulage issues and investment needs. Pam Stott of Freight Group in Transport Scotland, is willing to discuss how this might be taken forward [meeting 31st October]. In general, Forum members welcomed the issues raised. Ahead of the meeting, the Forum is invited to comment further on the paper and suggest who might be involved in such a group and how it might beneficially relate to the work of the Forum.

ACTION ALL Comments on the ScotFLAG paper to Roland Stiven by 30th October 2017.

8. TTF at the Rural Parliament (6-8th October)

Roland Stiven and Claire Glaister will be attending the Rural Parliament and running a Forum stand. The Rural Parliament is a gathering of rural development activists. Roland will be presenting to a 1hr workshop on 'What are the priorities for the rural communities to be fed into the National Transport Strategy?' alongside Heather Cowan Policy Officer for Transport Scotland. The Forum will aim to highlight the transport infrastructure limitations and the need for investment in the freight capacity of rural roads and other infrastructure; that this needs recognised at a national level and mechanisms found to resource.

9. Funding (Derek Nelson)

- STTF STTS update

The STTS funding mechanism has been reviewed by Scottish Government lawyers and continues to be an agreed basis of funding within current rules. Changing the rules would involve re-presenting to EU.

Of Round 19 (May 2016) submissions, 9 projects have been approved by the panel and of these 5 are still under discussion. Some may not realistically be delivered in this 1 year round which would result in an underspend of up to £1m.

Round 20 was open to submissions until the end of September. Three have been submitted and some last minute submissions are still being awaited.

Kirsty Robb asked if a project preparation grant could be introduced and examples such as preparation grants for war memorials and community renewables were noted. This is under consideration by FCS.

- Freight Grants

Keith McDowell said that Scottish Government Freight Grants remain open for business with £800k of MSRS awarded and substantial work ongoing on applications for Freight Facilities Grant.

- England (Crispin Thorn)

FC England continues to support the Forum Project Officer post this year.

The Countryside Stewardship Scheme which provides grant support to land managers remains open to applicants. In the context of Brexit the Government commitment to contracts is only assured for contracts awarded before the autumn statement. The WIG capital support includes a number of projects for the construction of forest roads with the aim of bringing woodland into management.

10. Regional Updates

Due to time pressure regional updates were brief.

Cumbria

The Cumbria Group has not met for over a year but a meeting is scheduled for 4th November.

Scottish Borders

James England and Roland Stiven attended a Scottish Borders Council Area Forum in Hawick and presented on timber transport. There was good, well informed discussion.

Argyll

Fergus Tickell asked about the current Environmental and Economic Impact Assessment of Timberlink. The draft report is due next week and a presentation to stakeholders will be held at Inveraray on 25th October when the proposed schedule for retendering the contract will be set out.

Stirling & Tayside

Roland Stiven and Claire Glaister presented on timber transport to the Board of Tactran with several councillors representing the individual councils. There was time for a presentation and discussion. Tactran continue to support the S&T group project officer post.

Perth & Kinross council is considering the role of Section 96 agreements alongside (or in reserve for) Timber Transport Management Plans on difficult roads where there is uncertainty as to whether the management plans are sufficient to sustain the network.

Highland

Colin Mackenzie said that the development of a rail project to serve timber in the Flow Country continues through HITRANS, FCS and HTTG. The rail industry has come forward with competitive costs for the rail haul but the add-on costs of loading, unloading and haulage to and from railheads creates a significant deficit to owners/buyers compared with direct road haulage. FCS and HTTG are still encouraging the private sector to engage with the process sufficient to develop a bid for public support to the project.

Alasdair Ferguson asked for a refreshed mechanism to manage winter working, with clear responsibilities for closing roads (public and forest roads) when required. At the moment communication can be unclear and drivers can be in the position of driving up minor roads and having to make decisions about whether to continue without appropriate support from the road owner/authority. Ken Sinclair noted FCS procedures in place and an information note (which will be circulated with these minutes).

Dumfries and Galloway Timber Transport group has a winter working group which considers gritting priorities and contingency plans to mitigate risk on the public road.

11. APF Show Report

The Forum had a stand at the APF Demo alongside Tireboss, Michelin and James Jones & Sons. There was a good crowd, particularly on the Friday (when the contractors attend) and overall record numbers. The Tread Softly, low impact vehicle agenda does appear to be well understood though not all are implementing as appropriate.

12. Ireland Conference 21st October

The Irish Forest Industry Transport Group is holding a conference on 21st October in Roscommon. Roland Stiven [and Iain Peddie] will attend. The agenda includes an update on securing of loads and on vehicle tracking.

13. FISA

The date for the next Timber Haulage Working Group not yet set. FISA is supportive of a review of vehicle tracking technology and processes.

Dates of next meetings

- Friday, 13 January 2017
- Friday, 31 March 2017
- Friday, 30 June 2017
- Friday, 6 October 2017