

Timber Transport Forum Meeting
FCS Silvan House, Edinburgh
10.30 13th January 2017
Minute

Attending: Athole McKillop, Jason Hubert, Roland Stiven, Colin Mackenzie, Robin Pope, Ken Sinclair, Gillian Clark, Jamie Farquhar, Crispin Thorn, James Macdonald, David Sulman, Kirsty Robb Keith McDowell, Gillian Clark, Chris Little

Alistair Speedie and James England by phone for part of meeting

Apologies: Claire Glaister, Derek Nelson, Simon Oldham, Neil Dyson, Neil Stoddart, Alasdair Ferguson

1. Welcome and apologies
2. Previous minutes (4th October 2016)

The minute of the previous meeting was agreed.

3. Matters arising

- Future of Forestry Consultation. The Timber Transport Forum [response](#) was submitted more or less as circulated draft at last meeting.
- Rural Parliament Manifesto has been published referring to transport infrastructure investment <http://www.scottishruralparliament.org.uk/Manifesto> .
- Irish Timber Transport conference (Oct 16) presentations are now online. The Irish are offering grants for Tyre Pressure Control Systems which is seen as vital for accessing several thousand small private forest holdings.
<https://www.teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/news/2016/national-timber-transport-conference.php>
- Jamie Farquhar asked that while there is a recognition that infrastructure constraints are a factor in new planting, there are government targets for expansion and the tone of the conversation needs to be positive and robust if targets are to be achieved. It has proved difficult to share information about where new planting is being held up by infrastructure issues because many early proposals require confidentiality but they do exist. Many are getting resolved (with pressure on the extent of new planting). Where people have knowledge of where infrastructure is limiting and where this can be shared please inform Jamie.
- The requirement for prior notification for forest tracks has not been removed as expected and the Mackinnon Report, on addressing obstacles to new planting, did not propose this either.

4. RCI Condition and investment requirements

The Forum asked SCOTS for the roads categorised in the Agreed Routes Map to be overlaid on Road Condition Indicator data. This has been done and the spreadsheet of results was circulated showing % in red, amber or green condition by local authority by road category (agreed, consultation/severely restricted, excluded) by road class (A, B, C and Unclassified). The data for Highland is currently being re-viewed [*now done*]. The data shows an overall length of at least 13000km of road used for timber transport. In several local authorities less than half of the length of consultation route is in green or good condition. Audit Scotland's overall review published this summer suggests an average for rural roads of around 62% in good condition. There is a downward trend particularly for minor roads that is quite serious in some areas. The data should inform investment in maintenance but funding restrictions mean that higher use roads will be prioritised in local authority budgets. Scottish Government is aware of this and the issue was raised in the Forum submission to Fergus Ewing in October 2016. Colin Mackenzie noted that there had been a higher level of investment in rural roads prior to the 1996 creation of Unitary Authorities but since then, the ambition for continued modernisation has been much more limited.

5. ScotFLAG subgroup on rural freight

Following discussions between the Forum and Transport Scotland it has been agreed to set up a subgroup of ScotFLAG to look at rural freight capacity with respect to all rural business sectors. A draft remit for the group was circulated for the first meeting of the subgroup later in the day. Roland Stiven will report back to the Forum.

6. Vehicle Tracking

Following prompts from some timber transport groups and the FISA haulage working group, a draft brief for a study on vehicle and product tracking had been drawn up and was circulated for discussion. This sets out various potential benefits of more widespread adoption of the technology to deliver Forum objectives (such as compliance with Agreed Routes Maps) and safety objectives, (such as forest road haulage hazards), as well as wider industry benefits from more efficient logistics planning, e-business data management, timber security etc. The brief proposes a study to consult the industry on priority issues/tracking benefits and to assess the state of the available technologies to deliver such benefits.

The discussion noted that while there were potential benefits from the technology and examples of uptake and use in other countries, there are challenges to intervening constructively in the UK given the fragmented nature of the supply chain. The technology exists, there are commercial pressures for adoption and it is likely that in time it will be more widely used. It was thought that a conference approach may be more effective than a study and that this should be progressed through the Forum conference in 2018. There is also a primary need for a protocol and mechanism for data generation and the sharing of existing data on routes and hazards that can be used by vehicle tracking systems. The Scottish Roads Works Commissioner and BOLT both provide similar services.

ACTION: Roland Stiven to review potential for data sharing mechanism to enable tracking systems to address the Forum's timber transport issues.

(Alistair Speedie and James England joined the meeting by phone)

7. Developing the 'Ambitious List' for Infrastructure Improvement

At the Forum's meeting with the Scottish Cabinet Secretary in September 2016, Fergus Ewing asked for an ambitious list of infrastructure projects that could address timber supply chain constraints and highlight new planting and other development opportunities. A first draft was presented at the 2nd industry summit in October at Boat of Garten. This set out around £10m worth of works (largely on the public road network) along with a longer list amounting to £40m. The practical constraints arising from frequent 1 year funding rounds, the scope and criteria of the STTF and the limited co-finance from local authorities were explained. Fergus Ewing has responded asking that his officials discuss with the Forum how to take this forward. The initial list was developed in a hurry and since then the Scottish timber transport groups have continued to work to develop and refine the list and to prepare a portfolio of shovel ready projects. Private sector-led projects also need to be brought to the table.

There is a Scottish Parliament Forestry debate on 24th January and an expectation that continued STTF funding will be confirmed. Any funding will be limited to one year so it is vital that timber transport groups encourage preparation of a portfolio of projects and identify co-finance. We will still need to work within the STTF framework. It was noted that while councils may set budgets in late February, council election purdah in mid March will delay committee meetings that could allocate co-finance to STTS projects until around mid-June. FCS will set out a timetable for bids once funding is confirmed.

8. Funding

- STTF/ STTS update

Jason Hubert noted continued allocation of STTS funds but delays in some major projects will leave an under-spend of ~ £1m. This highlights the need for early preparation of projects. Thought is being given to STTS support for preparation of complex or large projects.

- Timberlink

An economic and environmental evaluation of the Timberlink projects was initiated in the summer and discussed at a workshop in Argyll in October. The final version will be published on the FCS STTF webpages. The Timberlink Public Service Contract is currently out to tender for the continuation of services after March 2017.

- **Mode Shift Grants (Scotland) (Keith McDowell)**

The draft budget suggests £1.3m to be available for 2017/18 mode shift revenue support projects. The Freight Facility Grants would be offered from a wider Future Transport Fund draft budget of £25.3m. State Aid approval for continuing FFG support for coastal and short sea shipping services expires in December 2017. TS discussing with DfT how to manage the notification/approval process.

- **England**

Crispin Thorn said that Countryside Stewardship funding was held up by Autumn Statement but continues to offer grants for woodland creation (closing date 1st March) and tree health. The Woodland Improvement Grant (which includes access infrastructure) will be available for applications later in the year. The Woodland Carbon Fund of £19m will be available for the rest of the UK parliament term providing comparable woodland creation grants for schemes > 30ha - £6800/ha of capital funding up to £100%. The Planning Grant remains open for schemes over 30ha. The £1m regional partnership funding remains available and is funding the Planning Grant. There may be scope to fund timber transport related work in the north of England through Roots to Prosperity.

DEFRA is consulting on EIA regulation in England and Wales with proposal to extend threshold for EIA above 5ha of new planting on less sensitive sites - closes 30th January.

9. Regional Updates

- **Dumfries & Galloway** TTG James England, (partly by email 13.1.17)

Still dealing with a lot of complaints over timber haulage and engaging with community councils. Over 20 new planting applications to work through, some with roading issues. The RCI, traffic count data, timber exit point data and ARM routes are considered. In some cases new accesses can help avoid weaker stretches of road.

Drawing together a package of timber transport related improvements for the region including drainage, sight lines, edge strengthening and passing places.

- **Ayrshire & South Lanarkshire** TTG James England, (partly by email 13.1.17)

To meet with Barr Community Council to discuss concerns over the long term impacts of timber haulage in the locality. Attended a presentation on an innovative bitumen replacement product called Macrebur. It uses recycled plastic and in laboratory tests it is showing high strength properties and a projected increase in lifespan. Cumbria County Council and other Councils have got trials constructed on various high usage public roads. [Click Here for more details >>](#) Would be keen to get this used in the South of Scotland..

Looking at potential STTS schemes in the region.

- **Scottish Borders** TTG James England, (partly by email 13.1.17)

James England will attend Council Scrutiny Committee to talk about third party road damage, specifically timber lorries. Attendance at community council meeting at Ettrickbridge was very worthwhile. The discussions centred on the impact of road damage and the disruptive hours that hauliers work and the impact it can have on communities. Deep road recycling to be used in innovative trial for road repair and strengthening. The road is smashed up and then a cement binder is added and the road is rolled and reshaped prior to resurfacing.

(Alistair Speedie and James England hang up)

- **North East England**

Athole McKillop Council leadership still supportive of the group but liaison post dropped and in practice it remains a challenge to work with the roads department. Discussions over timber traffic on road passed new Sill (Hadrians Wall) Visitor Centre have taken time but national park now recognise importance of route for timber traffic and limited impact on visitor centre.

The group met in December and will continue to meet every 6 months or so. Agreed to hold joint meetings with the Cumbria group as many representatives overlap.

- **Cumbria**

Group met in November and agreed to hold joint meetings with North East England.

- **Argyll**

Group met 22nd Nov 2016 with all technical officers from council roads department. Timber industry is very busy and there would be benefit in updating exit point survey forecasts. This could be followed up by a survey of access points looking at suitability of junctions with the public road. Is there scope for the timber industry to assist with scrub clearance on public roads particularly in forested areas where the industry has the skills and machinery to do efficiently. How might this be trialled or progressed.

Ten further timber traffic management plans are in draft.

Kirsty Robb noted a tendency for larger standing sales e.g. 30,000 tonnes from both public and private sector which may result in more concentration of timber traffic.

- **Highland**

The group maintains good relations with the council. Two public road projects are almost complete and one haul road on Skye. A large haul road on Morvern is delayed. Branchliner, focusing on the feasibility of rail haulage from Sutherland is being led by Tilhill and 2 rail operators have been interviewed. A decision will be made on the viability shortly with a trial in the summer if positive. A number of projects are being lined up for 2017.

Colin Mackenzie noted the sales of a plantation in Sutherland served by a public road with a 7.5t weight restriction not mentioned in the sales particular. While 'caveat emptor' applies, given the issues surrounding the use of minor public roads by the timber industry should the Forum be more robust in encouraging public road restrictions to be highlighted? The Council may be able to raise this with the estate agent too.

- **Stirling & Tayside** (by email from Claire Glaister 10th January)

The group welcomed new industry representatives from Norbord and Iggesund to the December meeting. Next meeting scheduled for March 2017.

2 STTS projects in progress with Kilbryde-Brack public road work largely complete and Kirriemuir public road works due to commence imminently. Potential STTS projects continue to be discussed by LAs and industry members, including those identified on "ambitious list".

TTMPs continue to be developed, where required, and this has enabled contact and liaison with local residents/community councils/schools (e.g. Balquhider Glen and Barracks TTMPs) The group has been reviewing Excluded Routes and agreed some changes and is now looking to review other ARM classifications.

The current Project Officer contract is due to finish at end of January; thereafter, a new contract host needs to be found.

- **Grampian** (by email from Claire Glaister 10th January)

Last meeting held in December. Next meeting scheduled for March 2017.

Two STTS public road projects for Aberdeenshire & Moray Councils are now complete and one further project at Suie Hill in Aberdeenshire underway.

The group has instigated a review of ARM classifications across the whole area and will be using SCOTS data to carry out initial review and assessment thereafter; meetings to start this process scheduled for 19 & 20 Jan 2017.

As for S&TTTG, the current Project Officer contract is due to finish at end of January with a new contract host required thereafter.

10. Timber Transport Video

The Business Plan includes an action to 'Improve communications with communities and community representatives prepare briefing notes, leaflets and short videos on the challenges and role of the Forum of information to various audiences on timber transport and to engage councillors and relevant council committees. A proposal will be brought to the Forum for the development of a short video to this end. It was noted that A.W. Jenkinson and others may have suitable video footage.

11. Phytosanitary Precautions

It was agreed not to show beetle zones on ARMS website at this stage. The Forum will request regular updates on Biosecurity Passporting regulations from John Morgan at FC.

12. Rail Strategy Consultation,

The Forum will respond to Transport Scotland's Rail Infrastructure Strategy by 24th February 2017. It will be very similar to the response to the Scottish Rail Freight Strategy this time last year. Many of the SG response actions have yet to be done and the focus of this consultation seems to be on passenger rail services.

13. NTS early engagement survey

The Forum contributed to the Scottish National Transport Strategy Review Early Engagement Survey <http://www.transport.gov.scot/news/have-your-say-scotland%E2%80%99s-national-transport-strategy>

14. FISA

The FISA Haulage working group has not met recently.

15. AOB

- **FE Low Ground Pressure** catchments will put back requirements for LGP vehicles on identified catchments from 2018 to 2021. By 2025 it is expected that all of the public estate will require lower ground pressure vehicles. This has been discussed with Confor and UKFPA. The road network will continue to be maintained at the current specification but it is assumed the costs for doing so will be reduced.
- David Sulman suggested there may be merit in the Forum considering the production of a 'Forest Road Handbook', which could offer guidance on forest road design, specification, construction and maintenance etc.
- Discussion on current **forest road specification** followed, noting the range across the sector and the development of vehicles and traffic. Specification should be kept under review.

ACTION: Forum Technical committee to review material on road specification, construction, management and maintenance and consider the need for collating existing information, repurposing or updating.

16. Date of next meetings

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