

**Timber Transport Forum Meeting  
Silvan House, West Board Room  
10.30 hrs, Thursday 13th January 2011**

**Approved Minutes**

**Present:** Pam Stott (for Margaret Horn), David Sulman, Neil Dyson, Colin Mackenzie, Simon Oldham, Mike Green, Emily Maclean, Crispin Thorn, David Eaglesham, Ian Ross, Roland Stiven, Alistair Speedie (chair), Andy Leitch, Cameron Kemp, Margaret Watson, Jamie Farquhar, Darroch Lyon (for Code of Practice)

**Apologies**

David Hern, Syd House, Stan Corcoran, Richard Evans, Fergus Tickell, Alasdair Ferguson, Bill Barker, Margaret Horn

1. Welcome

Alistair Speedie welcomed everyone to a new year of further progress and challenges. He specifically welcomed Cameron Kemp who has taken over from Jim Tolmie as council chair of the Highland TTG.

2. Previous minutes and matters arising

The minutes of the previous meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2010 were agreed as accurate.

It was noted that

- The Carbon Footprint Information Note was now finalised and on the Forum website
- Alistair Speedie and Roland Stiven met with the Forestry Minister in September to present the case for continued support to the Forum and to the Strategic Timber Transport Fund (STTF). The minister was well informed on the subject and generally very supportive. (Since then a continuation of the STTF has been agreed –see below).

Simon Oldham asked about the 'snapshot of SRDP funding on forest roads'. While SGRPID could not provide this information directly, a request from ConFor for information on industry experience of applying for SRDP funding for roads showed there had been some achievements through Land Management Options and that a number of larger applications had been submitted to the current round of Rural Priorities. Jamie Farquhar noted that while there was now more recognition that forest roads could be funded in this way (in Scotland), the grant fund is now much reduced and it not easy for such projects to score sufficiently highly in the competitive environment. SRDP support for Central Tyre Inflation systems on timber lorries can also fall foul of thresholds for micro businesses.

**Action: Roland Stiven to collate information on SRDP support to timber transport to inform the next RDR round - post 2013.**

3. Impacts of weather and fuel cost rise

Mike Green noted that timber despatches from the national forest estate were less than 50% of normal due to ice and snow and it was likely that there would be a busy period following the thaw as mills restock their timber yards. It was noted that the prolonged severe frost and substantial temperature fluctuations may also have weakened minor public roads.

David Eaglesham thought there was likely to be a strong reaction from the haulage sector to the current very high fuel costs, particularly given the expectation previously that the Westminster government were supportive of a fuel duty stabiliser. Ian Ross noted that there remain obstacles to a Scottish level derogation to help reduce fuel costs in remote rural Scotland.

Pam Stott explained that the Dept for Transport was aiming for a bill by 2012 to introduce Lorry Road User Charging for road haulage. The detail is yet to be provided but there will be consultation in due course.

#### 4. Funding

##### 4.1. Freight Facilities Grant

This has been cut to £1m for 2011-2012 providing funding only for committed projects. Such a cut may impact on various timber-related projects in the pipeline. The FFG budget cut is to be debated this evening. [*The [official report](#) of the debate is now available.*]

##### 4.2. Strategic Timber Transport Fund and Scheme

Andy Leith provided an update on the current STT scheme noting that there were still a number of projects in near stages of completion with substantial grant claims to come in prior to the end of the financial year. With the Rannoch Rail and Glendarual projects being withdrawn from the current Scheme and other Schemes under budget, it is likely that there will be at least a £600k underspend. He added that another large project may yet not be in a position to claim, leaving further surplus.

Neil Dyson asked if the surplus £600k could be allocated to repair of winter damaged roads by local authorities as was made available in 2010. There was broad agreement that the recent weather constituted another 'extraordinary' winter resulting in substantial damage to minor public roads and that a strong case could be made that a similar approach this year is a strategic imperative to maintain access to timber.

Andy Leitch asked the Forum to forward a formal request for this type of funding to be made available. He could then refer to the FC Management Board for a decision. He stressed that if the funds were made available, it would be to specifically repair roads on the agreed routes plan.

**ACTION: Neil Dyson to liaise with Scottish Timber Transport Groups to quickly prepare a formal request to the STT Scheme for payments to support repair of winter damage to agreed routes.**

Andy Leitch confirmed that £3m has been made available to the STTF for the financial year 2011-2012. Up to £1m will support the TimberLINK contract for the year with the remainder of around £2m being made available to projects through the Scheme.

David Eaglesham suggested that given the reduced level of funding the allocation of what amounted to one third of the fund to TimberLINK may not be best value for money. Andy Leitch noted that while funding to continue the contract for a further year had been agreed, any further support for TimberLINK post 2012 would be dependent on a re-tendering of the contract.

STTS Projects will have to be delivered (and grants claimed) by March 2012. Given the reduced level of funds, (and the potential for projects that would otherwise have applied for Freight Facilities Grants to make the case for STTS funding), this is likely to be a very competitive round. It was agreed that a realistic deadline for applications for the round would be 28<sup>th</sup> February 2011 with the Panel meeting to score applications in mid March.

**ACTION: Roland Stiven and Andy Leitch to issue formal call for applications to the STT Scheme for 2011-2012.**

#### 4.3. Project Officer Funding

Colin Mackenzie, Emily Maclean and Neil Dyson all reported expectations of continued council contributions to their posts and a positive initial response from the timber industry. The Timber Transport Groups are expecting to apply for STTS support to the project officer posts for 2011-2012. Emily Maclean noted that one council had expressed doubt over further contributions post 2012. Alistair Speedie said that the Forum must continue to impress on local authorities and the industry that funding the officers to ensure the effective running of the groups and a continued close liaison with the forestry industry is a highly efficient and prudent use of resources, 'spending to save' by protecting the public road network.

The Forum's executive group met briefly to agree continued funding for the Forum's Project Officer until March 2012. The workplan for the coming year is being drawn up and Forum members are invited to suggest priority areas to address. Jamie Farquhar highlighted the need to ensure wide positive recognition of the work of the Forum and groups.

**ACTION: Roland Stiven to circulate Project Officer work programme for 2011-2012.**

#### 4.4. Wales

Roland Stiven reported that after an approach by Kath McNulty, the Deputy First Minister had requested a briefing on proposals for Welsh Assembly Government investment in infrastructure improvements for sustainable road haulage of timber. Information was provided via David Hern with input by Ann Elias, Kath McNulty, Roland Stiven, Chris Edwards. Since then the Welsh Timber Transport Group (WTTG) has been invited to join a (to be formed) Welsh Freight Group. WTTG will continue to press for a specific response regarding the proposal. Chris Edwards is meeting with Transport Department contacts later this month.

#### 4.5. England

Crispin Thorn noted 25% spending cut announced for FC England which will reduce project work on areas such as timber transport. In addition to a planned sale of £100m worth of assets, there will be a consultation on the future of public forest estate in England.

#### 4.6. Influencing Process

Following discussions regarding the scope for pro-active lobbying of political candidates prior to May elections in Scotland and Wales, it was agreed that effort would be best spent post election maintaining our profile and informing the then administrations of our successes and future priorities. Jamie Farquhar said that ConFor regularly draws government attention to timber transport issues through its political lobbying work.

Ian Ross suggested the Forum approach CoSLA providing an update on the STTS funding.

**ACTION: Ian Ross and Alistair Speedie to approach CoSLA and see if an update paper on the STTS could be presented to the CoSLA Execute Group for Regeneration and Sustainable Development. This paper could update the Group on the current position; acknowledge the important support of the Group; advise CoSLA and Local Authorities of the future support available and encourage Local Authorities to engage with the STTS and bring forward suitable projects.**

### 5. Regional Updates

#### 5.1. Highland

Cameron Kemp and Colin Mackenzie noted the priorities for Highland TTG which are to:

- Finalise and make use of the data on exit points and timber flows integrating this with the Agreed Routes Maps within a GIS layer. This information gives robust support for identifying strategic investment priorities.
- To bring stakeholders together to look for a sustainable solution to the transport of around 3m tonnes of timber from the flow country over the next 15 years. A working group to be chaired by Ian Ross will meet in February to take this forward.

Colin gave a brief presentation on the flow country transport issues and on data on forecast increases of timber production for parts of Highland.

#### 5.2. Cumbria

Roland Stiven reported that the Cumbria TTG is making good progress with the development of the Agreed Routes Map having held constructive meetings at district level with all Area Highways Engineers. The group expect to agree a map for wider consultation by the end of January 2011. The next stage of consultation will be with CCC Highways & Transport Working Groups and subsequently with a wider stakeholder group.

#### 5.3. Northumberland

Neil Dyson reported continuing work to set up or identify a representative group to be responsible for considering timber transport issues across Northumberland.

#### 5.4. Scottish Borders

Simon Oldham noted that the in-forest elements of the Craik STTS project had been delayed due to the complexities of achieving legal agreements for multi partner access and investment. However the 4<sup>th</sup> project stage – providing further improvements to the B709 has been brought forward and is currently underway.

#### 5.5. Ayrshire

The Ayrshire group continues to attract good attendance and interest with good day to day liaison between partners including the police. The Arran STTS project with North Ayrshire Council is now complete and a stage 2 will be submitted for the next round. In South Ayrshire, the Straiton bypass project has not been able to be progressed. South Lanarkshire Council are yet to give priority to a development of an Agreed routes map. The Barrhill Rail project has also floundered. The contract winner has pulled out due to various factors including insufficient commitment from timber interests (much of the currently available timber has already been extracted), public opposition to an ancillary development proposal and the suspension of new Freight Facilities Grants. There project also identified greater than expected costs associated with proposed lineside loading of rail wagons in this location.

#### 5.6. Dumfries

East and West groups remain well supported. Timber haulage has remained very busy throughout the winter with dedicated in forest extraction lorries using snow chains transferring to other vehicles for road haulage. The group are drawing together 6-8 project applications to the next round of STTS.

The group has had to counter some negative press coverage, often ill-informed and from a limited number of individuals. Some has related to the Eskdalemuir bypass where a limited number of lorries heading south have the agreement of the community council to continue to use the public road. Otherwise the bypass is being well used and proving robust in the face of some of the lowest recent winter temperatures in the country. The Dumfries group is

planning a pro-active approach to providing positive messages to the local media starting this spring.

#### 5.7. Grampian and Stirling & Tayside

Emily Maclean reported some disruption to timber supplies in Grampian particularly as resilience planning was caught out by early onset of the snow.

The groups benefit from having council road representatives with long experience of timber transport and providing early resolution to problems. Both groups are continuing with exit point and production forecast data collection from 98 identified contacts. This is due to be complete in February 2011.

Market research to support the proposals for a new Crianlarich railhead is continuing. Stirling and Tayside group is also preparing an STTS bid for improvements to the East Loch Lomond road.

#### 5.8. North Yorkshire

*James Gilroy reported via email* that budget cuts are restricting staff travel so he is unable to make this meeting. Crispin Thorn noted that a draft version of the NY preferred routes map is currently being circulated internally prior to be consulted on by contributors to the study. The group is looking to host and launch the details on a map on the County Council website within the next couple of months.

#### 5.9. Wales

Roland Stiven reported on behalf of the Welsh Timber Transport Group (WTTG)

- Very successful stand at the APF show hosting a Les Hughes and Son CTI lorry which, together with a James Jones CTI lorry, helped to promote the technology with lots of interest and feedback. Kath McNulty and FCW also commissioned some media promotion which resulted in various newspaper articles and a spread in Commercial Motor magazine.
- A community drop in meeting in the Tywi Valley in December organised by representatives of FC Wales, UPM Tilhill and Scottish Woodlands in conjunction with Rhandirmwyn County Council attracted good attendance and interest in what is a particularly busy part of the country for timber haulage. There was significant discussion regarding routes for timber haulage and options for the future.
- The Forum and the WTTG are planning a seminar (in mid Wales in late May 2011 to promote best practice in timber transport in Wales. It may provide an opportunity to launch the Best Practice Guide and possibly the revised Road Haulage Code of Practice (see below). The group will also press for Welsh Assembly Government involvement.

### 6. Best Practice Guidance

The text for this document, presented at the previous meeting, has been revised to address the issues raised and re-circulated in December 2010 with no further comments. The text and images are currently with designers and the proof copies will be circulated for final comment prior to publication. Hard copies will be distributed by the Forum and via Timber Transport Groups.

### 7. Road Haulage of Round Timber Code of Practice (revision)

David Sulman and Darroch Lyon provided an update on the revision of the Road Haulage of Round Timber Code of Practice. The working group tasked with considering the options for this has progressed swiftly taking advantage of resources becoming available through FC Scotland – particularly Darroch Lyon's time and design team resources. The text has been revised and updated by group members and has undergone a 'plain English' review.

A call for new photographs to illustrate the document resulted in a generous offer from A.W. Jenkinson Forest Products to commission a photo shoot which has provided many quality images. Additional images have been provided by various other timber hauliers.

The group expect to issue a draft for consultation by the end of January 2011. Design resources are available in March leaving us a short consultation window and particular effort will be required to ensure sufficient stakeholder involvement.

8. 2011 seminars

- Wales (see item 5)
- Communications and Information workshop. Work is ongoing to develop the GIS/IT potential of the ARMS maps and there may be STTS projects that relate to this. At the same time the groups are helping to set out develop a 'process diagram' to describe the consultation processes, with a view to streamlining this. A workshop to take both ideas forward is proposed for summer 2011.

9. TTF Project Officer update

The TTF has responded to the following two Scottish Government consultations. Both responses can be found on the [TTF website](#).

- Land Use Strategy (2<sup>nd</sup> response)
- Speak up for Rural Scotland. The [report](#) from this consultation has just been published. Transport infrastructure features highly as a requisite for rural economic development.

10. Next meetings will be on

- 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011
- 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011

**ACTION: Roland Stiven to arrange site visit linked to one of the forthcoming meetings.**