

**Timber Transport Forum Meeting
Forestry Commission, Silvan House,
10.30 4th October 2013
Agreed Minute**

Present: Crispin Thorn, Hazel Newman, David Sulman, Chris Campbell, Colin Mackenzie, James England, Claire Glaister, Roland Stiven, Andy Leitch, Neil Dyson, Alistair Speedie (Chair), Laurie Tyson for item on access leases

Apologies: Victoria Hutchinson, Kirsty Robb, Margaret Horn, David Spaven, Fergus Tickell, Will Anderson, Iain Peddie, David Hern, Simon Oldham, Richard Scott, Robin Pope, Margaret Watson, Neil Stoddart, Ken Sinclair

1. Welcome and apologies

Alistair Speedie welcomed to Chris Campbell who is representing RHA. Chris has had dealings with the Forum in the past through Skills for Logistics. Chris takes over from David Eaglesham who has retired from RHA. The Forum extends great thanks to David for his contribution to the development of the Forum over many years – see also item 11 re Phil Flanders.

ACTION: Forum to send letter of thanks to David Eaglesham

2. Previous minutes

The minute of the meeting of 28th June 2013 was agreed to be accurate.

Outstanding Action Points

- Letter to Edwina Hart

The Forum received a terse response to our request that timber interests be represented on the freight group and that the Welsh Assembly Government consider a strategic timber transport fund. David Hern has since said that while timber interest will not be directly represented on the Freight Task and Finish Group the membership will include representatives from RHA and FTA.

ACTION: Write to David Hern asking for assistance in progressing the development of timber transport interests in Wales and highlighting the issue within WAG.

- Timber Transport Toolkit review. This has not been progressed.

Action Points

- Business Plan

Alistair Speedie requested any further comment on the Business Plan prior to it being finalised. He suggested a clearer 'risk register' highlighting particular risks to the success and continuation of the Forum. Crispin Thorn noted the revisions made since the last draft and David Sulman re-iterated the need to ensure that our key performance indicators referred to outcomes that are within our control and for which we have data. Alistair asked if Scottish independence or further devolution of forestry within GB was a risk to the Forum. The general view was that there would still be several areas which warranted cross-border collaboration and that the structure of the Forum was already a partnership of different bodies and could expect to continue in a similar way.

ACTION: Roland to take account of any final comments and arrange pdf publication of the business plan

- Low Ground Pressure Demonstration

The proposed visit to JST Services had to be postponed and will be re-arranged for April or June next year.

- English Timber Transport Fund

We have not yet received a response to our letter to the English Forestry Minister setting out the case for a timber transport fund. Crispin Thorn said he was aware the issue was being considered by Defra and that a response should be forthcoming.

- Type Approval Exemptions

Roland and Ray Engley of RHA met with Department for Transport officials in late August to present the case for a re-instatement of type approval exemptions for skeletal timber lorries. The Forum is to provide DfT with figures for annual production of skeletal timber lorries for which an exemption would be sought. Data collection is ongoing and will be completed shortly.

Matters Arising

- Access leases

Laurie Tyson, Head of Estates at Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) joined the meeting to respond to our letter of May 24th 2013 querying aspects of the proposed introduction of access leases as an additional mechanism for third party haulage over FCS managed land. Laurie reviewed the rationale for this as set out in his original *proposal for shared access on forest roads; draft protocol*. Access leases are seen as being more flexible and avoid the up-front capital costs of servitudes. The access lease costs would be in three parts: A charge for the right to cross ground set at a flat rate, irrespective of the length of shared access; an annual administration charge; and a maintenance charge based on a rate/tonne/km. He noted that for short term access, FES is not in a position to grant informal 'favours' such as may be agreed between private partners; these need to be formalised permissions.

Laurie noted that reliable haulage access can make a significant contribution to the solum value of forest land. FES charges can be perceived to be high but FES has to make decisions informed by the market value evidence they have in order to demonstrate FCS is achieving full value for the taxpayer. Evidence is limited as private sector agreements are often kept confidential. If the Forum can provide data that demonstrates lower market values this would be taken into account.

FES accept that the market rates for access rights will change. The toolkit may wish to avoid mention of typical rates but FES staff will need some guidance. However, each situation is unique, and different circumstances and affordability – based on the scale and value of the crop - would be taken into account. Currently the typical flat rate access charge may be in the region of <50p/tonne.

Maintenance charges would continue to be according to use, based on a rate /tonne/km. Landlords would normally be responsible for maintenance. Where long distances are involved, maintenance costs will have a bearing on the overall level of affordability.

The administration cost of access leases would be a very low/token annual amount, serving to maintain lease agreements over long periods.

Where there are multiple potential users then the 'catchment' of the access will need to be mapped and suitable contributions from different parties proposed. This can become quite complex. Colin Mackenzie asked if an 'open book' approach could be applied to demonstrate that FES was capturing an 'appropriate level' of the access value. In some cases this is already the case and can be considered.

Where access rights are part of an STTS project, FES will still need to demonstrate value for money in setting access charges, but can also take account of the public benefit derived from providing access, avoiding communities and fragile public roads. Third parties may have various options with different public and private costs associated with each, so again FES charges can reflect this to encourage constructive outcomes. While access leases would be the preferred approach, FES is prepared to consider granting servitudes for STTS scenarios, particularly where a third party is exchanging a permanent, public road right of access for an in-forest route.

Where access leases are agreed, the term would be set to enable a further rotation, e.g. 40 years. They would be transferrable and extendable, subject to meeting conditions of lease.

Early involvement of land agents, and consideration of access charges/servitude values will be crucial if the STTS advisory panel is to take these into account in setting appropriate STTS interventions. FES, local authorities and third parties should expect to be formal partners in bids with each recognising the cost savings or penalties they would incur from different options.

ACTION: Roland and Laurie Tyson to produce a final draft of proposed changes to the toolkit to incorporate an access lease option.

- **Timber Transport Protocol**
Claire Glaister reported that these have been finalised and posted on the Grampian and Stirling & Tayside sections of the Forum website. They are available for adoption by other groups.
- **Case Studies**
The Forum agreed that the suite of case studies should be completed with a view to publication of an FCS case study document reviewing the outcomes of the STTS and incorporating examples from England and Wales. The publication could be used to support the case for a continuation of the fund and we should aim to launch it at the TTF Conference in March (see item 8).
- **Pennyghael Pier Launch**
Andy Leitch noted that the pier was expected to be formally opened in the coming weeks but it was not possible to arrange involvement by the forestry minister. There has also been separate interest from BBC Landward who will be covering water transport on the west coast.

3. Funding

- **Strategic Timber Transport Fund**
Andy Leitch reported that in August the Scheme received 13 applications requesting £3.2m. There was around £1m remaining in the STTS budget to March 2015 but the withdrawal of the Strathrail project has returned an additional £0.5m to the fund. The panel recommended allocation of the funding to the most strategic projects. The available funding supported only four projects. The shortfall does help to demonstrate demand for future funding and the need to make the case for its continuation (see item 6). Alistair Speedie noted the value of having 'shovel-ready' projects. David Sulman noted the proportion of available funding going to Timberlink and that this proportion would increase were the allocated budget for the Fund to be reduced.
- **Freight Grants**
Ian Farmer could not attend but submitted the following written updates:

Freight Facilities Grant

We have not made an award of FFG for 2 years. None of the 7 applications, received in 2012 and earlier this year, (referred to at the last TTF meeting) have progressed with sufficient momentum. We therefore re-opened the Scheme to new applications in August. There has been additional interest but it is difficult to gauge when these projects might be fully developed. Any new applications will compete with those applications already held. FFG is funded from the Future Transport Fund. The budget allocated is £2m 2013-14 and £4.5m in 2014-15. The decision on the budget available for FFG from the Future Transport Fund in 2015-16 has not been decided yet.

Mode Shift Revenue Support and Waterborne Freight Grant

Both these revenue support schemes remain open to new applications. Budget is £1.1m in 2013-14 and 2014-15. The planned budget for 2015-16 is also £1.1m.

Alistair Speedie noted the zero spend through FFG compared this with timber transport demands outstripping the available STTF budget. This should be highlighted in making the case for a continuation of the STTF.

4. Regional Updates

Ireland

John Lyons provided the following update by email

Regarding the telematics programme; most trucks, and over half of the trailers, have been fitted with the Bluetree system. This will be a condition of Coillte haulage contracts from next year. There are technical difficulties with the older trailers, to do with brake modules and power sources that will support the system on the trailer, even when disconnected from the truck.

Two lorries have now been fitted with tyre pressure control.

Coillte is still working on procuring a logistics company to manage all haulage from their forests.

The change to regulations increasing Gross Vehicle Weight from 44t to 46t for 6 axle trucks only applies to artics that fulfil certain requirements (relating to brakes and suspension). This makes it difficult to police. Also the 46t limit does not apply to rigids and trailers, a combination that is more road friendly. John has been asked to co-ordinate a submission to government for the 46t to also apply to these.

Michael Joyce will present a second draft of the Good Practice Guide. The involvement of local authority representatives in this process highlights the need to develop the partnership approach.

Chris Campbell noted that a vehicle height limit of 4.65m is being introduced in Ireland.

Wales

Given the lack of resources at national level in Wales, it has been agreed that the TTF project officer should establish a wide email list and use that to disseminate a quarterly update to Welsh timber transport interests following each Forum meeting. From there we could, if there was interest, set up a Linked in discussion group or similar and arrange meetings/ workshops at appropriate levels (national or local authority) where there is interest and demand.

David Sulman noted that timber transport problems are continuing to crop up within Wales and that Phytophthora outbreaks will put additional stress on transport infrastructure. This may encourage recognition of the importance of tackling timber transport issues and draw in NRW support for partnership working.

North Yorkshire

Crispin Thorn noted that Jeremy Walker was considering his role as chair of the group as he was due to complete his term as Chair for the Forestry Commissions Regional Advisory Committee. The group was due to discuss the issue at the next meeting.

North East England

Crispin Thorn said that the Bellingham meeting with Barry Rowland and Ruth Bendel, Roland Stiven and James England had been useful, recognising the opportunities for partnership and the need to commit resources to rural infrastructure. Hazel Newman said that a working group to develop the maps will meet on 23rd October. The forestry sector has agreed to re-engage and it is hoped that suitable officers from NCC will contribute effectively in order to help move the partnership forward.

Cumbria

The recent meeting of the Cumbria group had been useful and effective. James England reported on an accident involving a timber lorry turning over on a roundabout.

Scottish Borders

The Scottish Borders group will be meeting next Monday. The one STTS bid for the region had not been successful.

James England showed photos of a recent incident on a minor public road off the A7 demonstrating very poor and unacceptable practice (improper stacking immediately adjacent to the public road, evidence of the forwarder working on the public road and lorry loading direct from the road). The operation had been reported via the Forum and had also attracted contact from the Police. Immediate action has been taken to stop the works and those responsible have been identified and approached. Despite the fact that a timber transport management plan for this consultation road had recently been developed and discussed within the group, there had been no consultation over this operation with the council. The issue has been highlighted with the chair of Scottish Borders TTG and actions will be taken. Alistair Speedie offered to write a letter from the Forum to the company involved. It was recognised that there remains considerable work to disseminate good practice on timber loading and haulage to contractors but there is a responsibility of forest owners and harvesting managers to ensure this is done. Claire Glaister noted the potential to involve the Institute of Chartered Forestry Professional Standards committee where chartered foresters are involved in poor practice.

Ayrshire

The recent meeting of the Ayrshire TTG was poorly attended. Neil Dyson and James England are proposing an extraordinary meeting later in the autumn to consider the exit point data collection exercise (see item 7) and to propose a review of the Ayrshire timber transport strategy. It is hoped this will help to re-invigorate the group and attract new and existing members.

Dumfries and Galloway

James England reported that considerable time was spent working up four projects from D&G for STTS funding. Unfortunately none were successful, largely because of the competition with more strategic projects elsewhere. One proposal was for improvements to the A708 Selkirk to Moffat road and the group will now need to consider how this can be managed to sustain timber traffic. James noted a recent proposal to link the Potburn road to the A708 which has come to light since the STTS round.

Stirling & Tayside

Claire Glaister noted that the one STTS bid from S&T had not been offered support. Another for Upper Grainstone was pulled prior to submission as agreements could not be reached. The railhead development at Rannoch is progressing without STTS support.

Three timber transport management plans are being considered and Claire has had a useful meeting with the local authority highway officer to develop these. John Hair of FES has been appointed vice chair of the group.

Grampian

The Grampian group was pleased with the offer of STTS support to a programme of pre-emptive drainage and improvement to agreed routes in Moray.

Alongside the timber transport protocols for the areas (see matters arising) the web pages for both S&T and Grampian have been updated with contact details for local and trunk roads departments.

Argyll

Andy Leitch noted STTS support for two projects in Argyll – one an innovative project to provide landward infrastructure at ten coastal sites to be accessed by a large landing craft. The other was for the main east-west public road crossing the Cowal peninsular, leading to Sandbank and Portavadie piers and improving local haulage opportunities for substantial volumes of timber. The recent landslide closing the A83 was also noted.

Highland

Two of four submitted projects received STTS support, both in the flow country. The Strathrail STTS project has had to be withdrawn primarily because of technical issues with Network Rail that could not be resolved. This is very unfortunate as developing the project has taken considerable effort by several people.

Colin Mackenzie presented to the Forestry Commissioners who were on a visit to the flow country. He covered the importance of the STTS, talking about the Braehour Link project that is now complete and the forthcoming project to open up the whole flow country haul route.

Colin mentioned the opportunity to do more in the way of publicity of STTS schemes. Alistair Speedie agreed that local authority communications teams should liaise with FCS press office over suitable press releases. Similarly we should be ensuring councillors and elected members are informed of the successes of the Forum and the scheme.

5. Guidance on Low Impact Vehicles for Timber Haulage.

Roland Stiven introduced a first draft of *Tread Softly* general guidance on low impact vehicles for timber haulage. This is proposed to be a Forum published guidance document to support the *Good Practice Guide on Managing Timber Transport*. It is targeted at a fairly general audience of hauliers, forest roads managers, local authority staff, highways engineers, forest managers, harvesting managers, land agents etc. and assumes little technical knowledge. The aim is to provide a common understanding of the range of vehicle options available and an indication of where certain configurations or lower impact technologies may be appropriate.

It was suggested there was some duplication with other documents. These could be referenced as appropriate enabling more focus on the technologies. At the same time we need to make it clear that the majority of timber haulage can be undertaken with standard vehicles and, where sensitive haulage is required, the technologies are only a part of the solution alongside road and traffic management and driver behaviour. The document needs to be clear about the up-front and on-going cost implication of lower impact technologies. It was agreed the document should be consulted on and progressed with a view to publication and launch at the conference in March 2015.

ACTION: Roland Stiven to circulate a draft of *Tread Softly* to the Forum and groups for comment

6. Future STTS Funding

With Scottish ministers already considering budgets for 2015-2016 and beyond, the Forum needs to make the case for a continuation of the Strategic Timber Transport Fund. Roland Stiven noted the substantial unmet demand for funding evident in the most recent round. He showed a map of STTS projects to date which demonstrates the strategic geographic coverage of the fund. He also showed that timber transport is concentrated in local authorities where the road condition indicators suggest there is a substantial gap in resourcing maintenance of public roads. The underspend on Freight Facilities Grant is also relevant (see item 3).

Roland is preparing the case study document (see Matters Arising – case studies) that will review the STTS to date, presenting a series of case studies on timber transport (including projects from Wales and England). This could be published (probably by FCS) and launched at the March conference.

Alistair Speedie said that we should engage the forestry minister as soon as possible asking for an initial meeting to make the case for the Fund. In addition we should promptly prepare material reviewing the fund, describing the achievements and benefits and demonstrating continued demand and need. The Forum should encourage and assist timber transport groups and partners to inform councillors, COSLA, MSPs and Ministers of the need for a continuation of the Fund.

ACTION Alistair Speedie to write to Paul Wheelhouse requesting a meeting to set out the case for a continuation of the Fund and inviting him to open the timber transport conference in March 2014.

7. Exit Point Study

The timber transport groups have been successful in attracting Transport Scotland funding through SCOTS and the Roads Research Board to undertake the collection of exit point data for Scotland, showing the forecast volumes of timber being brought onto the public road network. Existing data for Highland, Grampian and Stirling & Tayside will be refreshed and the collection will be extended across Argyll and South Scotland. In addition the project will provide a tool that can analyse the timber 'catchments' of specific roads- showing where issues are likely to arise with large volumes on weak roads. The data will be presented in a format that can assist local authorities in including timber transport issues within road asset management plans and to target investment for timber transport. Argyll and Bute Council are acting as lead partner for the project. It is expected that a proportion of the funding will be used for a contractor to collect and collate the exit point data and the remainder will be assigned by Transport Scotland to one of their framework contractors – possibly TRL – to develop the analytical tools and presentation of the data. A second meeting to finalise the project plan will be held on Friday 15th November.

8. Conference 2014 Programme

Roland Stiven presented a draft programme for the conference and requested comment and ideas for the content. This will need to be firmed up soon. The programme will need to be more specific on the case studies being presented. It was agreed that we should invite the Scottish Forestry Minister Paul Wheelhouse to attend the conference (see item 8) and launch the case study document.

ACTION ALL to provide final comment and suggestions for the conference programme by 25th October 2013

9. Forestry Industry Safety Accord

David Sulman reported that FISA is currently recruiting a chief executive and permanent chair. Eight working groups, including the timber haulage working group, are continuing to develop outputs. Roland Stiven noted that FISA has agreed that the working group would present outputs or progress at the March conference. It would be helpful for the Forum to have a clearer update from the haulage working group on the priority issues being discussed and the expected outputs.

10. APF 2014

The Forum has agreed to partner James Jones Ltd with a stand at the APF demo in September 2104. The Forum will also consider a stand at the harvesting demo in Dumfries in May 2014.

11. AOB

Phytophthora

Jamie Farquhar explained that the spread of *Phytophthora ramorum* infection in larch, particularly in South Scotland, will result in large volumes of larch being felled under statutory plant health notices. The implications of this are being considered by an industry-led group led by John Dougan. Timber may be coming onto the public road network from new or less-used forest exit points. There is unlikely to be a flood of material as there are limits to what the market can take. The timber transport groups should ensure that agreed routes maps and timber transport agreements are upheld and that harvesting managers continue to consult with local authorities as appropriate. Claire Glaister noted that

Dothistroma fellings in Grampian are being dealt with in an orderly fashion and the timber transport group receives regular updates.

Regional Land Use Pilots

Jamie Farquhar noted he is represented on the groups developing the regional land use strategy pilots and will be highlighting the importance of timber transport infrastructure.

Phil Flanders Retiring

Chris Campbell noted that Phil Flanders will be retiring as Scottish Director of the Road Haulage Association. Phil has been a member of the Forum for several years and has been most helpful in assisting the Forum in dealings with hauliers and transport policy.

ACTION: The Forum to write to Phil Flanders expressing our best wishes and thanks for his contribution.

12. Dates of next meetings

10th January 2014

11th April 2014

20th June 2014

3rd October 2014

Conference 13th March 2014