

**Timber Transport Forum Meeting
Forestry Commission, Silvan House,
10.30 10th January 2014
Minute**

Present: Crispin Thorn, Hazel Newman, David Sulman, Chris Campbell, Colin Mackenzie, James England, Claire Glaister, Roland Stiven, Alistair Speedie (Chair), Ken Sinclair, Ian Farmer, Jamie Farquhar, Kirsty Robb, Cameron Maxwell, Margaret Watson

Apologies: Victoria Hutchinson, David Spaven, Fergus Tickell, Will Anderson, David Hern, Simon Oldham, Richard Scott, Robin Pope, Neil Stoddart, Andy Leitch, Neil Dyson, Steven Herriott, Alasdair Ferguson

1. Welcome and apologies
Alistair Speedie welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. Previous minutes
The revised minute of the meeting of 4th October 2013 was agreed to be accurate.

Action Points

- Letters of thanks have been sent to David Eaglesham and to Phil Flanders on their retirement from the Forum. Chris Campbell noted that Phil Flanders' successor as RHA Director Scotland is expected to start in February – details will be announced in due course.
- The action to send a letter to David Hern will be carried forward and should request his assistance in supporting the development of the Wales timber transport email group. There is the possibility of a round table discussion between forestry interests and the Welsh Minister for Natural Resources and Food in February at which timber transport issues could be raised. **David Sulman will advise.**
- The Business Plan has been revised and, with some last minor changes, will now be prepared as a pdf publication.
- JST Services Ltd has recently sold its in-forest haulage business so it will not now be possible to re-schedule the postponed low ground pressure vehicle demonstration. **Another Forum visit will be arranged and suggestions for a location and topic are welcomed.**
- The Forum did receive a response from the new English Forest Minister, Dan Rogerson, in response to our proposal for an English timber transport fund. This highlighted the potential role of Local Enterprise Partnerships in investing in forestry development. Crispin Thorn reported on the current development of a Growth Plan for the forestry sector in the North of England. Infrastructure requirements are being recognised in this and it would be sensible to link timber transport investment opportunities to this Growth Plan. **Crispin will circulate the briefing paper for the North England Growth Plan** and Alistair Speedie will consider responding to the Minister in due course.
- The action to propose changes to the timber transport toolkit to reflect discussions on access agreements, has been carried forward.
- A draft of the Tread Softly document on lower impact vehicles was sent out to the timber transport group members for comment in November. Many have commented on the draft and a subsequent designed draft was circulated to Forum members ahead of the meeting. **ACTION: Final comments on Tread Softly requested by 20 January after which Roland Stiven to finalise and arrange publication.**

- Paul Wheelhouse was invited to open the Timber Transport Conference but is unable to do so. He has invited the Forum to meet with him at Holyrood on March 12th. Representation was discussed; Alistair Speedie, Roland Stiven and Jamie Farquhar will attend and Alasdair Ferguson will be asked to represent hauliers.
ACTION: Roland Stiven to prepare discussion material for meeting with Minister on 12th March 2014
- The Conference Programme has been finalised and circulated. With the conference being held in Dumfries, **Alistair Speedie will ask the chair of his committee to consider opening the conference.**

Matters Arising

- The contract for exit point data collection funded by the Scots Road Research Board has gone out to tender through Argyll & Bute Council. It is expected that a contractor will be appointed by the end of January and that the work will start soon thereafter.

3. Funding

- Strategic Timber Transport Fund
There have been no developments since the previous meeting. A decision on 2015-16 funding is yet to be made.
- Freight Grants
- Ian Farmer noted that there is no change to Freight Facilities Grant status. FFG is still available but although a number of applications had been received over the past 2 years for various reasons there had been no awards of grant made. There are timber transport related schemes in development that could potentially attract FFG. It was decided that this should be highlighted at the meeting with the minister in March.
- Mode Shift Revenue Support and Waterborne Freight Grant
Revenue support is ongoing.

4. Regional Updates

Wales

An email group has been set up with around 50 members in Wales and the Welsh Marches. The group will receive quarterly updates from the Forum and will consider taking forward actions at a local level as appropriate.

North Yorkshire

Victoria Hutchinson provided a written update noting that:

- The timber production data for the North Yorkshire agreed routes map is being updated.
- In November 2013 Victoria met with the lead officer for the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to discuss funding opportunities for timber transport through the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan, including infrastructure and road maintenance, particularly where there are difficult locations for extraction. Initial discussions were positive and the LEP would like to see the North England Forestry Sector Growth Plan, once it is developed in early 2014, for further evidence of how economic growth can be achieved through investment in the forestry sector.
- Defra funding is available for haulier training in North Yorkshire until March 2014. CPC providers have been contacted.
- Following clear support from the partnership Jeremy Walker is to continue as chair of the Freight Quality Partnership.

Crispin Thorn noted that the group had proved effective in helping to resolve some long running timber transport issues in North Yorkshire

North East England

Hazel Newman reported on the meeting of 13th December with Ruth Bendell and Dick Phillips that confirmed the re-engagement of Northumberland County Council in the group process. The contribution of Cumbria's Andrew Harper was very helpful. NCC will consider assisting with the secretariat for the group and taking on the GIS mapping for the regional agreed routes map. The meeting continued with a review of the draft agreed routes map and a working group will progress the map before meeting with selected highways engineers. Continued councillor representation on the group is being encouraged. Crispin Thorn noted that there have recently been several high level staff changes within the Council and that staff are open about the difficulties and challenges they face.

Scottish Borders

James England reported that the poor practice incident highlighted at the previous meeting was swiftly put right once the issue was raised, and has resulted in subsequent positive engagement with the roads department.

ACTION: Alistair Speedie to write thanking the company for the swift and positive response

There remains a gap in the uptake of best practice and engagement with timber transport groups by some of the smaller forestry agents which needs addressed. Recent high rainfall has resulted in incidents of mud from loading operations being washed onto roads and not dealt with. This is an offence. Preventing mud being washed onto roads is also basic forest operation management, covered by guidance within the UK Forestry Standard.

Ayrshire

James England and Roland Stiven met with staff from North Ayrshire Council and FCS to inspect STTS supported road improvements and to review and update the strategy for timber transport on Arran. There are a number of developments on Arran which may offer opportunities to improve timber transport and help target future investment in infrastructure.

James England produced a briefing note for South Lanarkshire Council on timber transport and has discussed opportunities for STTS funded projects.

The previous meeting of the Ayrshire timber transport group was very poorly attended so it is being re-arranged for later in January. The response so far is encouraging.

Dumfries and Galloway

Stretches of the B723 between Eskdalemuir bypass and Lockerbie have recently been upgraded with the result that there are increased reports of speeding lorries. James England is trying to encourage police involvement in this and their continued attendance at group meetings. Chris Campbell said that lorries ought to be fitted with speed limiters, preventing excessive speeding. Speeding concerns can be dealt with through the Road Haulage Association, who can talk with their member organisations. Speeding can also be reported to the Traffic Commissioner who can take action against drivers and operators, and to the Vehicle and Operators Standards Agency (VOSA). VOSA is currently being merged with the Drivers Standards Agency to become The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA). Chris also noted that a new 50mph speed limit for lorries (up from 40mph) is to be trialed on single carriageway sections of the A9 with a view to preventing accidents from overtaking.

A meeting of the B729 Lorg Road working group was convened to address the management and monitoring of multiple haulage operations on this public road. The Eskdalemuir bypass maintenance contract is out to tender.

The maintenance of some STTS-supported, shared, internal haul roads is an issue with not all being kept to the standard required to encourage their use. Kirsty Robb noted that there were similar issues regarding the maintenance of some shared haul roads in Argyll and various parties

are meeting to review the situation later in the month. Roland Stiven said that STTS contracts generally require facilities to be kept in good repair but that the Scheme has not always verified the establishment of robust mechanisms to ensure this is the case. The Scheme does allow project costs to include a guarantee to maintain road condition for up to five years after construction, but not all projects take advantage of this. Margaret Watson suggested that the Scheme should write to haul road managers reminding them of maintenance requirements. Jamie Farquhar noted that both the agents and the owners involved in haul route projects can change over time making it difficult to pin down clear responsibility for maintenance. Ken Sinclair noted the benefits of an access lease approach in this respect as it puts in place ongoing administrative procedures. Alistair Speedie said that we must ensure that the projects supported by the scheme are sustainable and continue to provide value for public money. He proposed an audit of previous haul road schemes to study the issue and make recommendations.

ACTION: Roland Stiven to liaise with managers of STTS supported haul roads and report back to the Forum on the issue of ongoing maintenance.

Stirling & Tayside

Claire Glaister said that the latest timber transport group meeting was held at the Perth & Kinross roads department depot and included a tour of the site and equipment. A member had queried whether their felling license should have been issued with the use of CTI-fitted lorries as a condition of the license. Claire has raised this with the Conservancy since the understanding is that while FCS can request applicants liaise with the roads department, any voluntary conditions agreed with the council cannot be made a condition of a felling license.

Updates are being made to the Agreed Routes Map to address transport considerations to do with new planting schemes. Claire is also looking into a possible STTS project to retain a stretch of Beauldy-Denny power line access track for timber transport purposes.

Jamie Farquhar asked about progress with the railhead at Rannoch. Two railheads are being proposed one within Forest Enterprise land the other a private lineside loading bay. [*The private project is still at the development phase with forest plan and EIA approval. Construction may depend on securing wider supply and agreeing rail freight costs- Roland*]

An on-road loading incident, raising safety concerns, was drawn to the attention of the group. Loading onto a live carriageway is not permitted and can only be done with authorised traffic management or a temporary traffic order to close the road. However, this is only clearly expressed in the Argyll Timber Transport Group *Guidance Notes for Timber Industry Operations on or adjacent to Public Roads* and referred to in the recently developed protocols for Stirling & Tayside and Grampian.

Kirsty Robb said that timber hauliers are under pressure and we need to take a positive approach to informing them of best practice. Areas to allow transfer of timber between lorries (e.g. to flatbeds for ongoing longer-distance road haulage) are few and far between in Argyll. Hauliers sometimes end up using larger laybys to load/unload. The group has considered developing formal transfer points but there are security and chain of custody issues that would need addressing.

Ken Sinclair noted that while timber lorries should not be loading directly from the public road, heating-oil tankers, building supply and livestock lorries regularly have to unload on the public road blocking narrow roads for a short period.

Claire has asked the Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA) whether the haulage working group will address on-road loading in their forthcoming guidance. The Forum agreed that there would be benefit in developing a shared, best practice dissemination plan with the FISA working group on haulage.

ACTION: Claire Glaister to follow up with FISA working group regarding advice about on-road loading

ACTION: Roland Stiven to liaise with FISA communication and haulage working group about a possible shared programme for dissemination of best practice to hauliers

Grampian

The group has attracted new members recently. A management plan is being drawn up for the C13E Dallas to Knockando road which is likely to be used as a route to supply a new biomass power plant being constructed at Craigellachie, with concomitant periodic increases in HGV traffic. The timber transport management plan will complement the plant's existing transport management plan.

The U108H 'Gownie Road' had been downgraded from agreed to consultation status following frost related damage. Moray Council has agreed to use of this road under certain restrictions regarding the number of vehicles per day and the use of tyre pressure control systems on the lorries.

Highland

Colin Mackenzie reported that the STTS-supported improvements to the Loch Arkaig road are already resulting in timber being delivered to market. Another project, the Flow Country Haul Road, is being developed to share access of a 26km forest road through the flow country amongst more than 12 forest owners. The group of owners is having to consider long term maintenance costs and mechanisms. It would be useful to have information from other haul roads of actual maintenance costs. Perhaps this could be learned from any audit/review of previous haul road projects?

At the most recent Highland timber transport group meeting, Colin prepared a paper on the ethics of timber haulage considering where responsibilities lie when several owners expect to use a road with limited haulage capacity. This is a real issue for several roads in the Highlands.

The Highland Council is also facing severe budget cuts and restructuring of high level posts.

A haulier in Highland raised the issue of the legality of using tyre pressure control systems on the public road after discussing the matter with local VOSA representatives. Both Colin and Roland have since discussed the matter with the VOSA representatives. VOSA re-iterated their previous position that fitting the system should be reported as a notifiable alteration and that *'Tyres must be fitted and maintained in accordance with C&U Regulations and the manufacturer's specifications. This includes ensuring that tyres are inflated within the specified range provided by the manufacturer.'* The Forum has always maintained that hauliers should use tyre pressure control systems with pressure settings agreed between the system manufacturer and their tyre manufacturers; pressures suited to the load, the road and the configuration and speed of the vehicle.

One of VOSA's concerns is that drivers will come out onto highways with low tyre pressures and it may take the system a few minutes to bring all the tyres up to the higher pressure – during which time they may be technically under-inflated. Again we would expect drivers to ensure tyres are suitably inflated prior to coming onto faster roads.

Colin Mackenzie suggested that Timber Transport Management Plans developed by councils and timber transport groups should be careful not to specify the tyre pressures to be used. Rather we should be asking hauliers to consult with their system and tyre suppliers and to propose a schedule of appropriate working tyre pressures for the lower impact vehicles they intend to use.

Ken Sinclair noted that FCS has an aspiration to categorize their forest road network to identify roads which would, in due course, be restricted to use by lower impact vehicles. This would be limited to where there were clear maintenance savings from restricting use.

ACTION: Roland to present available information relating to the use of Tyre Pressure Control System on public roads for the next meeting.

5. Guidance on Low Impact Vehicles for Timber Haulage.
This was dealt with under matters arising
6. Timber Transport Case Study document
A draft text of this document had been circulated prior to the meeting requesting comment. The response was generally positive though some case studies are seen as being too long. There were ideas about how to structure the document with the table of projects coming before the case studies. Jamie Farquhar said it should make clear that the harvest is still increasing and that there is a continuing need to improve infrastructure. There was discussion as to whether (if it is produced as an FCS document), it should include the English and Welsh case studies. On balance it was thought it should. If it cannot be delivered by FCS publications in good time then we can consider producing it as a Forum document. We should aim to publish in time for the conference.
ACTION: All to provide initial comment on case study document by 21st January
ACTION Roland Stiven to progress the case study document to publication allowing for further Forum review of a final draft text.
7. Conference 2014 Programme
Dealt with under matters arising.
8. Forestry Industry Safety Accord
Gillian Clark has been appointed chief executive of FISA. Gillian will be presenting at the Timber Transport Conference. It would also be useful to have the chair of the FISA haulage working group present to the Forum. David Sulman noted that there appeared to be less recognition of FISA in England and that the precise role and implications of FISA membership were not always clear to contractors.
ACTION: Roland Stiven to invite FISA haulage group to present to the Forum
9. AOB
Jamie Farquhar noted that there will be a survey of forecast larch harvesting starting shortly. Might it be possible to integrate this with the exit point data collection? **Kirsty Robb will consider.**
10. Dates of next meetings

Conference 13th March 2014

11th April 2014
20th June 2014
3rd October 2014