

Dumfries and Galloway
Timber Transport Group



TIMBER TRANSPORT STRATEGY

1 INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 Dumfries and Galloway is one of the most afforested regions in Scotland with around 28% of the land covered with woods and forests. They range from the great spruce forests of Galloway and Eskdalemuir through the traditional estate woods such as those of Buccleuch and other private mixed estates to the small native and farm woodlands valued in the landscape.
- 1.2 Dumfries and Galloway is the third largest local authority in Scotland in terms of area and public road length – but the eleventh largest in terms of population. The region's public road network and associated infrastructure (lighting, bridges etc) is important because it delivers the essential services that provide the foundation upon which economically healthy, prosperous and safe communities are built.
- 1.3 The region is a major timber producing area harvesting some 30% of Scotland's homegrown timber annually. It is home to some of the top sawmills in Britain such as Howies of Dalbeattie and James Jones near Lockerbie as well as a number of smaller mills all processing local timber.
- 1.4 Forestry and related processing employs over 2,000 people in the region - many in rural areas. The forests are also major providers of outdoor recreation facilities for walking, mountain biking and horse riding all of which are important in supporting the tourist industry as well as providing local opportunities and generally adding to the economic regeneration of the region.
- 1.5 The timber production is set to double over the next 10 -15 years as the post-war forests reach maturity. This will result in a substantial increase in timber traffic on the rural public road network which, in turn, will have a significant impact on the fragile rural road network, much of which has evolved over time rather than having been planned and constructed.

Aim

- 1.6 The aim of this document is to set out a Regional Timber Transport Strategy for Dumfries and Galloway.

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- 1.7 Locally, the forest industry and the Council have recognised the issues surrounding road infrastructure, timber haulage and funding levels. In February 2002, following research and a number of productive meetings with the forestry industry in Dumfries and Galloway, the former Environment and Infrastructure Committee agreed a Forestry Routes Management Strategy.
- 1.8 Essentially the strategy is one of partnership working with self-regulation by the forestry industry. In the unlikely event that this partnership approach fails the Council would need to impose the ultimate sanction of weight restrictions to protect its rural road network which would affect all road users and the forest industry's contribution to the local economy. It is therefore not a decision that the Council would take lightly.
- 1.9 The Dumfries and Galloway Timber Transport Group (TTG) has been established to develop the partnership. It has representatives from the Council, Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway, Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary, Forestry Commission, Forest Enterprise as well as private sector producers, harvesters, hauliers and sawmill owners. The TTG works through two 'operational' sub-groups covering the (West) Galloway and (East) Ae Forest Districts. These sub-groups agree the detailed operation of the partnership approach.

2 POLICY AND OBJECTIVES

Policy

- 2.1 Dumfries and Galloway TTG agreed the following policy statement as part of its Partnering Charter launched on 23rd September 2004:

We will work together to assist one another in achieving each partner's aspirations, and in particular the following objectives:

- *The maintenance of the value of the Region's woodlands through ensuring access to them;*
- *The development of the Forest Industry through management and improvement of haulage routes;*
- *The avoidance or resolution of timber transport problems; The development and use of best management practice for timber transport within the Region; and*
- *The agreement of a timber transport strategy, integrating public and private roads, to provide cost-effective and sustainable solutions.*

Partnership

- 2.2 The TTG members are committed to the following core values which are essential for any successful partnership:
- a. Openness, effective communication and co-operation;
 - b. Mutual trust, respect and integrity;
 - c. Excellence; and
 - d. Continuous improvement.

Objectives

- 2.3 The policy statement and partnership values above translate into a number of objectives:
- a. Developing the forestry and timber industry's contribution to the economic well being of the region.
 - b. Providing sustainable timber transport solutions in, through and from the region.
 - c. Minimising adverse impacts on the fragile public road network and local communities.

Policy Context

- 2.4 Whilst not formal Community Planning Partners, members of the TTG are working together in accordance with the essential values of the Community Plan. Dumfries and Galloway Council's corporate, strategic and operational plans provide direct links to and from this Regional Timber Transport Strategy.

3 THE AGREED ROUTES MAP

- 3.1 The Dumfries and Galloway Agreed Routes Map (ARM) is a vital tool for the TTG to deliver its strategy of minimising adverse impacts of timber transport on fragile roads and isolated rural communities. The aim of the ARM is to keep timber traffic off the most vulnerable roads by directing it along stronger routes. The ARM thus has two implicit commitments:
- By the forest industry to use in-forest roads and public roads which are 'Agreed Routes' wherever possible.
 - By Dumfries and Galloway Council, as Roads Authority, to maintain those Agreed Routes so that they are fit for purpose and use by timber traffic.
- 3.2 The following definitions are used to classify roads for the ARM:
- Agreed Routes. Those routes that can be used for timber haulage without restriction as regulated by the Road Traffic Act 1988.
 - Consultation Routes. Those routes that are recognised as being key to timber extraction but which are not up to Agreed Route standard. Consultation with the Council is required before they may be used and it may be necessary to agree limits of timing, allowable tonnage etc before the route can be used.
 - Severely Restricted Routes. Those routes that should not normally be used for timber transport in their present condition. These routes are close to being Excluded Routes. Consultation with the Council is essential before they may be used so that an agreed management regime may be agreed. Severely Restricted Routes are a means to avoid 'land locking' timber.
 - Excluded Routes. Those routes that should not be used for timber transport in their present condition under any circumstances. These routes are either formally restricted, or are close to being formally restricted, to protect the network.
- 3.3 The maps are published annually and are available on paper, CDROM and from the dedicated Agreed Routes Maps web-site (www.timbermap.org).

4 SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

- 4.1 The route agreement process has been voluntary - but it has the full support of the Council, the Police, industry representative organisations and the Forestry Commission as a basis for minimising problems arising from timber haulage on public roads. It continues to serve the industry well as a tool to sustain the region's rural public roads for use by all types of road user. However, it is not a long-term solution to the problem of heavy timber traffic on weak rural roads.
- 4.2 The impact of forestry traffic on the Council's rural road network is causing a number of road maintenance problems that are, in turn, putting the road maintenance budget under pressure. In particular, the implicit designation of A and B class roads as 'Agreed Routes' means that, over the last 3 years, an increasing amount of money has been spent on the more remote parts of the network. This has had the effect of reducing the funding available for more heavily trafficked elements of the road network.
- 4.3 The TTG recognises the transient sustainability of the Agreed Routes Map and is working to identify pinch points (due to infrastructure issues and community impacts) and to develop truly sustainable solutions recognising increasing production and fluid markets and the resulting effects on the rural road network.