

Minutes for GTTG meeting

Date: 12 July 2017

Location: Forestry Commission Scotland Grampian Conservancy, Portsoy Road, Huntly AB54 4SJ

Present:

Will Anderson – Chair (WA)

Ian Cameron – Moray Council (IC)

Ian Cowe - Forestry Commission Scotland (ICo)

Cameron Gillies – Euroforest (CaG)

Claire Glaister – GTTG Project Officer (CG)

Lee Grigor – James Jones & Sons (LG)

Derek Murray – Aberdeenshire Council (DM)

Roland Stiven – Timber Transport Forum (RS)

Frank Tomlinson - Tilhill (FT)

Alastair Young – Forestry Commission Scotland (AY)

Apologies

Steve Conolly – Cawdor Forestry

Derek Nelson – Forestry Commission Scotland

Agenda Item	Action	Appointed person/s
3. (16/07/15)	Provide NFI/SCOTS data to Jacobs once preferred route has been confirmed	CG
3. (19/11/15)	Provide shape files for SCOTS exit points and ARMs to aid LA review of ARMs	CG/LAs
7. (19/11/15)	Confirm minimum tonnage thresholds for consultation on felling licences at meeting with FCS	IC/DM
7. (17/03/16)	GTTG to discuss/agree requested change to ARM classification of U144H	All
6. (14/07/16)	Pull together events programme for discussion with members	RS/CG/LAs
3. (12/12/16)	Identify roads where potential STTS works would be beneficial	All
3. (12/12/16)	Discuss potential planning permission conditions for road improvements at Conyachie Road end	DM
8. (12/12/16)	Discuss effectiveness of internal circulation of consultation invitations	DM
9. (12/12/16)	Confirm Prior Notification situation with Confor	RS
3. (16/03/17)	Discuss potential for STTS application for an in-forest route through the Gownie road forest complex	NC/CG
6. (16/03/17)	Follow up progress with A96 preferred route options with Transport Scotland	ICo/CG
4.	Prepare and submit response to Public Petition PE1654	CG/WA
4.	Review and update GTTG protocols to reflect FISA MHSF Duty Holder roles	CG
4.	Approve revised GTTG protocols	All
5.	Circulate Transport Scotland A96 Dualling project web link to members	CG
5.	Circulate Confor analysis paper and Forestry Act 1967	CG

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

WA welcomed all those present and gave apologies again for not being able to attend the March meeting.

CG confirmed that a number of apologies had been received and that these would be added to the minutes.

2. Notes of last meeting on 16 March 2017 & matters arising

Following the typo correction on page 1, minutes of the last meeting were confirmed as correct. Action table below has been amended to reflect current status (those now completed have been shaded; carried forward actions added to current action table above.

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4. (16/03/17)	Update ARM website revisions as per GTTG decisions	CG/RS/GAIST
6. (16/03/17)	Follow up progress with A96 preferred route options with Transport Scotland	ICo/CG

Round table updates and topical discussion: Following members' discussions re the eligibility of scrub clearance for STTS projects at the March meeting, RS advised that if part of a larger improvement scheme, then this could be considered. Members raised the definition of road verge and hence where the landowner's responsibility would stop and be under the Local Authority. DM and IC advised that the [Roads \(Scotland\) Act 1984](#) includes a mention of road verges and that they consider a verge to be the land between the road and a fence. Industry members suggested that they considered a verge to be the first 2m back from the road edge. All members agreed that where vegetation growth between thinning cycles causes a problem, this needs to be managed.

3. Strategic Timber Transport Scheme update and GTTG projects

3.1 Update on STTS

RS advised members that a total of £7.85 million has been available through the STTF, £7.05 million through the STTS. A total of 29 bids had been submitted in the last round with funding requests totalling over £8 million. 20 bids were considered eligible (the majority involving large Local Authority projects) and in order to allocate the funding equitably, all bids had an equal cut in the grant requested: offered. No further rounds are anticipated due to time limitations and any underspends would be re-allocated to current projects. RS explained that that TTF has asked the Cabinet Secretary for more money and that this request would be formalised at a future meeting.

IC asked if there was any indication of amounts and timescales for any future funding. RS advised that they would hope that funding would continue but this would most likely be for one year only. RS also highlighted that the previous 70% intervention rate for C and U-class roads may not be approved for future rounds. ICo advised members that the 1 year timescale for future funding was the most likely given the current changes in the management of forestry – new organisation of FCS/FES and the devolution of forestry through the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill.

3.2 Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

WA and ICo highlighted the benefits of members considering the Project Preparation Grant route as a means of developing bids for timeous submission and for demonstrating a continuing level of demand. RS suggested that the PPG can be useful for portfolio projects where applicants have a number of smaller projects which could be combined into one overall bid, such as Moray Council's most recent schemes. IC advised that due to their past experience with bid preparation and submission, Moray Council hadn't applied for a PPG for their most recent application but wouldn't rule out doing so in future. RS explained that were over-and-above liaison required to develop and submit a potential application, the time spent to do so could be eligible for support through a PPG. ICo highlighted however that were CG to assist with any such liaison, this wouldn't be viewed as an eligible cost as she was already contracted to provide support through the Regional Timber Transport Advisory service. IC asked if CG could be contracted as an independent consultant instead for that element of the work but ICo suggested that this might be viewed as inappropriate.

3.3 2017-18 project submissions

RS & IC advised that within the GTTG area, Moray Council's application has been successful and that whilst a reduction in funding awarded compared to that requested has been made, this was due to STTS being oversubscribed and had been applied across all approved projects. IC confirmed that work on the project has started.

DM advised members that whilst Aberdeenshire Council hadn't been in a position to submit any bids by the April deadline, this wasn't for a lack of work to be done, rather a change in personnel and would be looking at potential future bids.

4. Turning industry guidance into on-the-ground practice

CG provided some background into this agenda item, explaining that there has been an apparent increase in the number of cases where consultation with the Local Authority on Consultation (and even Excluded) Routes had not taken place prior to the commencement of timber haulage operations. IC highlighted a case within Moray where 7,000 tonnes of timber was to be extracted and, in the absence of any consultation from the agents, had only heard about it via a neighbour who happened to mention that work was being undertaken in the wood in preparation for harvesting.

Members discussed the operation of the consultation process between FCS and the LA for LTFP and Felling Licence applications and the need for forestry agents to be better informed about what was required.

In addition to local cases highlighted, CG circulated details of a recent petition which had been submitted to the [Public Petitions Committee](#) for consideration (see also PE1654 attached). In this, a resident in Dumfries and Galloway had called for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to develop a statutory code on stakeholder engagement for the forest industry based on the Confor guidance (see attached) and provide a role for a Scottish Government body to oversee and implementation of and compliance with the code.

CG explained that in the case in question, from discussions with the local Timber Transport Project Officer, she understood that everything we would encourage be done in terms of good practice and consultation had been done and yet still a petition had been submitted requesting that the process we follow be made a statutory requirement.

WA added that the Confor guidance is not timber transport specific and that felling is regulated and that the petition fails to recognise the considerable measures already taken by both the industry and Local Authorities, to try to minimise any damage and disruption.

RS advised that the TTF will respond to the Petition, as too would Confor, and suggested that should members wish to submit responses too, they should answer the comments raised directly. Members agreed that a response should be submitted by the GTTG so CG will draft and forward to WA for approval. IC advised that Moray Council would be submitting a response too, highlighting the support they have received through the STTS and the good levels of communication in most cases.

Members then discussed the current arrangements within the GTTG area, including the role of scoping, LTFP/LMP/felling licence consultation, timescales and paperwork, operational plans and contract specifications and internal communications within Local Authorities. It was noted that the GTTG have access to the SCOTS access data to indicate where timber is forecast to be travelling about and have also produced the [Grampian Timber Transport Protocols](#) which include a Timber Haulage Protocol which set out what should be done/by whom and when and the [Guide to Managing Timber Transport](#). Members highlighted the need for forest agents to be engaged in the implementation of such protocols and suggested that the [Forestry and Timber Technologies Industry Regional Group](#) meetings would provide a useful Scotland-wide opportunity to update this key audience.

With specific regard to the Timber Transport Protocols and Guide to Managing Timber Transport, members suggested that the stages included in these documents be linked to the Duty Holder roles used in the [FISA Guidance on Managing Health and Safety in Forestry](#) (e.g. Landowner/FWM/contractor etc.) so that the profile of managing timber transport would be further raised. CG to review and update the documents for circulation to members for discussion/approval.

5. GTTG members updates

5.1 Round table updates and topical discussion

5.1.1 Moray Forest and Woodland Strategy consultation

IC/ICo confirmed that the consultation period is now over and that the Council is currently incorporating comments in an updated draft. It was felt that the response rate was relatively low and Council officers had wondered if people were content with the document and didn't comment. WA thought it was a positive document and CG advised that a GTTG response had been submitted which highlighted that we supported the coverage of timber transport in the strategy.

5.1.2 Refresh of forest exit/timber production data

CG mentioned that the first 5 year period captured by the SCOTS project runs up to 2019 so it would be useful to consider starting the refresh process within the next year or so. Members suggested we wouldn't want to repeat the process too frequently and sought confirmation that the information is actually being used. RS confirmed that timber production data has to be included in STTS applications and that it is subsequently referred to in contracts and IC highlighted that Moray Council use the information for forward planning.

5.1.3 A96 dualling

AY asked if the GTTG were having any involvement in the Fochabers-Forres and Huntly-Inverurie sections. ICo confirmed that FCS have been in discussion with Transport Scotland, particularly to highlight the need to avoid the route running through large swathes of forestry and hence isolating forestry areas. Once we have ideas of the routes, we will engage further, highlight the impact of junction closures on haulage distances and costs and on surrounding roads infrastructure. CG to circulate the link to the Transport Scotland A96 Dualling project website with the minutes for members' information.

5.1.4 B974 Cairn o Mount Road

DM highlighted concerns raised by Aberdeenshire Council colleagues on the use of this road by timber Lorries when "Unsuitable for long vehicle" signs have been erected at both ends of the route. LG asked if this was a temporary measure and whilst DM wasn't sure when this was imposed the Council recognise that they can't stop Lorries using this route.

5.1.5 Timber Transport Forum

See attached update from RS

5.1.6 Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill

CG highlighted the progress of the Bill through Parliament and that a call for views had been issued by the [Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee](#) with a response date of 16 August 2017. WA encouraged members to look at the Bill and make comment, particularly on any concerns over the content of primary and secondary legislation. ICo suggested that the Bill and current consultation process provide us with an opportunity to clear up any idiosyncrasies. CG explained that Confor have produced a useful analysis paper which summarises the key areas of the Bill and highlights significant changes between this and the [Forestry Act 1967](#) and will circulate to members for information.

5.1.7 UK Forestry Standard

ICo highlighted to members that the updated [UK Forestry Standard](#) (4th edition) has been launched; the background to this revision can be found [HERE](#).

6. Date of next meeting/s

Wednesday 15 November 2017, FCS Grampian Conservancy, Huntly AB54 4SJ