

Minutes for GTTG meeting

Date: 16 March 2017

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

Present:

Ian Cowe (Chair) - Forestry Commission Scotland (ICo)
 Ian Cameron – Moray Council (IC)
 Neil Crookston – Scottish Woodlands (NC)
 Claire Glaister – GTTG Project Officer (CG)
 Lee Grigor – James Jones & Sons (LG)

Frank Tomlinson - Tilhill (FT)
 Derek Murray – Aberdeenshire Council (DM)
 Andrew Nicol – DWP (AN)
 Alastair Young – Forestry Commission Scotland (AY)

Apologies

Will Anderson - Chair

Euan Christie – Scottish Woodlands
 Cameron Gillies – Euroforest

Derek Nelson – Forestry Commission Scotland
 Ralph Singleton – Aberdeenshire Council

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	Discuss potential for STTS application for an in-forest route through the Gownie road forest complex	NC/CG
4.	Update ARM website revisions as per GTTG decisions	CG/RS/GAIST
6.	Follow up progress with A96 preferred route options with Transport Scotland	ICo/CG

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

ICo welcomed all those present and gave apologies from WA, explaining that he would be chairing this meeting on WA's behalf. CG confirmed that a number of other apologies had been received and that these would be added to the minutes.

2. Notes of last meeting on 12 December 2016 & matters arising

Following the change in wording on pages 3 and 4, 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, as too have a number of legacy actions which can now be closed out); carried forward actions added to current action table above.

Agenda Item	Action	Appointed person/s
3. (28/08/14)	Make contact with “missing information” agents on SCOTS project	CG
4. (20/11/14)	Liaise with FCS to review Forest Plans to fill gaps in SCOTS project data	CG
4. (20/11/14)	Submit timber forecasting information to CG	NC
7. (20/11/14)	Submit comments on driver shortages to the Road Haulage Association	Industry/CC
3. (16/07/15)	Provide NFI/SCOTS data to Jacobs once preferred route has been confirmed	CG
3. (16/07/15)	Use the Timber Transport Mapping tool to highlight how much timber has been forecast to use the A96 and advise Jacobs accordingly	CG
3. (16/07/15)	Identify exit points within a set corridor of current route options and encourage land owners to make contact with Transport Scotland	CG
5. (16/07/15)	Update ARM website to show relevant B roads as Agreed Routes	CG
3. (19/11/15)	Provide shape files for SCOTS exit points and ARMs to aid LA review of ARMs	RS/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	CG/LAs
3. (12/12/16)	Arrange STTS site inspections prior to approval of grant claims	RS/RS/IC
3. (12/12/16)	Check back through email trails to confirm eligibility of C13E underspend virement	RS/IC
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
5. (12/12/16)	Mark up northern section of Suie Hill road as Consultation Route	RS/GAIST
5. (12/12/16)	Meet with Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils to review ARM classifications and bring suggested changed to next GTTG meeting	CG/DM/IC
8. (12/12/16)	Circulate links to Aberdeenshire Council budget consultation for information/response	CG/All
8. (12/12/16)	Discuss effectiveness of internal circulation of consultation invitations	DM
9. (12/12/16)	Confirm Prior Notification situation with Confor	RS
9. (12/12/16)	Source Prior Notification guidance and post onto GTTG Local Guidance web page	CG
9. (12/12/16)	Circulate Lantra LMI survey to industry members for completion and return	CG/industry members

Northern Suie Hill Consultation Route

AY confirmed that feedback from a couple of hauliers had indicated that the road was better following the completion of STTS-funded works.

3. Strategic Timber Transport Scheme update and GTTG projects

3.1 Update on 2016-17 STTS project submissions

CG/IC/DM confirmed that all 2016-17 STTS projects have been inspected and claims submitted for approval and payment.

3.2 Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

CG summarised the background to the PPG and confirmed that funding had been available to support the development of complex STTS applications (the deadline for PPG applications was Monday 13 March 2017). Based on total PPG project costs of £8,000.00, up to 80% funding (a maximum of £6,400.00) could be provided for projects on the public road network/those involving modal shift to sea or rail and up to 60% for private/in-forest routes involving at least 3 parties (a maximum of £4,800.00).

CG also advised that whilst the deadline for the first PPG bidding round had now passed, it was expected that a second round of PPG funding would be announced at the beginning of the next financial year and that news of this would be published on the [STTS](#) website.

AN asked if a PPG would be able to pay for more of CG's time to support the GTTG in general or could only be used to prepare shovel-ready bids. ICo advised that the PPG couldn't be used to increase the amount of Project Officer's time but that it was available to help in the preparation of new STTS applications. ICo also confirmed that as the preparation of STTS bids was an integral part of the Project Officer's role, this would form a key element of their support to the GTTG.

3.3 Projects to consider for the 2017-2018 Strategic Timber Transport Scheme

Members discussed potential sites to consider for inclusion in any STTS bids, timescales of bid development, procurement of services etc., eligible activities, availability of match funding, industry input and how to best meet the criteria of the scheme. More specifically: -

AY asked the Local Authorities if they would have enough time to procure/complete works within project timescales; IC advised that they should be able to use a Quick Quote system to speed up the tendering process. Members discussed whether the 24 April submission deadline was equally achievable. IC/DM/CG advised that some previous bids have been prepared and submitted within similarly tight timescales so should be achievable; just.

IC sought clarification as to whether road re-cycling was eligible for funding; CG advised that previous projects involving re-cycling had been approved in the GTTG area and that as we were being encouraged to be ambitious, schemes involving such works should be considered. LG asked whether STTS can just be used for road improvements or help to fund the fitting of TPCS etc. CG advised that whilst STTS funding can be used for a range of non-road improvement activities, it was unlikely to be able to fund the fitting of TPCS to individual timber lorries.

IC confirmed that Moray Council were hoping to secure up to £500,000 to contribute towards road improvement works on forestry roads throughout the area during the next financial year..

ICo reminded industry members that they can't just rely on Local Authorities putting forward ideas for road improvements and encouraged them to bring forward potential sites. AY asked if the Local Authorities could circulate any proposed sites to GTTG members so that they could comment/make additional suggestions. IC/DM wondered if an application could be considered for an in-forest route through the "Gownie" forest complex, thereby avoiding the need for timber lorries to travel down into Aberlour. Members discussed how, with only one main ownership, the significant community benefits that could be accrued would need to be stressed. NC and CG to discuss further.

4. Agreed Routes Map review

4.1 CG ran through a number of proposed ARM revisions which had been identified during meetings with Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils earlier in the year. The following decisions were made (to be cross-referenced with attached presentation): -

Moray Site 1 – Mulundy (Dallas)

Proposal: Colour section of road from forest exit point to junction with Agreed Route (B9010) as a Consultation Route

GTTG decision: Agreed

Additional comments: Potential to consider junction improvements in STTS bid

Moray Site 2 – College of Roseisle/Alves (Alves)

Proposal: Colour up northern section of road from Kirkton crossroads to C25E (Agreed Route) as a Consultation Route and colour up southern section of road (from Kirkton crossroads into Alves) as an Excluded Route

GTTG decision: Agreed

Additional comments: AN asked if roads, when strengthened using STTS funding, shouldn't automatically be upgraded to Agreed Routes. DM explained that this has happened in the past but wouldn't necessarily be possible to do so now as on-going maintenance is limited due to budgetary constraints and hence previously strengthened roads may not be maintained to a suitable standard. ICo suggested that we at least follow the principal that roads strengthened with STTS funding should be upgraded to Agreed Routes

Moray Site 3 – Trochelhill Wood (Fochabers)

Proposal: Colour up section of road running east from exit point from Trochelhill Wood to Agreed Route (B9105) as a Consultation Route

GTTG decision: Agreed

Moray Site 4 – Lunan Wood (Mosstodloch)

Proposal: Change status of C18E from Agreed to Consultation

GTTG decision: Further discussion required to confirm timber forecasts and current access routes

Moray Site 5 – Dufftown

Proposal: Colour up southern section of road from junction with U77H (Consultation Route) south to B9014 (Consultation Route) as a Consultation Route

GTTG action: Agreed

Moray Site 6 – Jock's Hill (Dufftown)

Proposal: Consider ARM status of all roads serving Jock's Hill

GTTG action: To discuss and potentially consider a PPG/STTS application

Aberdeenshire Site 1 – Gairnshiel Bridge to the Bush (Crathie)

Proposal: Colour up Gairnshiel Bridge on the A939 (Agreed Route) as an Excluded Route (new weight restriction) and colour up B976 south of bridge towards Crathes as a Consultation Route

GTTG decision: Agreed

Aberdeenshire Site 2 – Bridge of Sterin (Ballater)

Proposal: Colour up road across Bridge of Sterin between C8M and U9M (Agreed Routes) as an Excluded Route

GTTG decision: Agreed

Aberdeenshire Site 3 – Birsemore to Bridge of Ess (Aboyne)

Proposal: Colour up B976 from junction with B968 to Bridge of Ess as a Consultation Route

GTTG decision: Agreed

Additional Comments: AN advised that this route can be used as a through route from South Deeside into Burnroot Sawmill and whilst the road geometry at the Bridge of Ess is tight, it can be negotiated by timber lorries

Aberdeenshire Site 4 – Portlethen/AWPR (Aberdeen)

Proposal: Change ARM status of section of C5K between Blue Hill and A90 from Agreed to Excluded

GTTG decision: Agreed

Additional comments: Junction with A90 has been closed due to AWPR

Aberdeenshire Site 5 – Duff's Hill/AWPR (Aberdeen)

Proposal: Change ARM status of section of C43K running south between The Crossroads towards Duff's Hill from Agreed to Excluded

GTTG decision: Confirm exact road changes with Aberdeenshire Council and change ARM status/colour up affected road/s as Excluded Route/s

Additional comments: Road network has been redirected due to AWPR

5. Contract arrangements for Regional Timber Transport Project Officer post

ICo reassured members that funding for an on-going RTTPO post has been confirmed and advised that whilst nothing has been finalised as yet, Confor are currently the preferred organisation for taking on the contract hosting.

ICo also confirmed that WA and Iain Peddie, Chair of the S&TTTG, were supportive of this arrangement but suggested that if any GTTG members were also Confor members, they may wish to highlight their support to Confor.

6. GTTG members updates

6.1 Round table updates and topical discussion

AN wished to express his thanks to Ralph Singleton for his support for the forest industry and GTTG over the years; a request seconded by other GTTG members. DM to pass on the group's best wishes.

AN asked if there was any update on the preferred routes for the A96 dualling project. ICo advised that whilst he has received comment from SNH, he wasn't aware that any specific routes have been notified as yet so will follow up with Transport Scotland.

DM advised members that the Minister had visited the A95 in response to concerns expressed.

LG asked if roadside vegetation clearance was an eligible activity under STTS as it was being noticed that vegetation was not being cut back as frequently as in previous years and was causing damage to vehicles. ICo advised that such work would be viewed as maintenance, rather than improvement, and hence would be ineligible for STTS support. IC and DM invited LG to notify them of any problems so that they could take the appropriate action.

CG circulated information on the recently launched [Forestry and Water Scotland Initiative](#) which brings together new and existing resources to help forest owners, managers and practitioners follow good forestry practice to improve water management of their sites. ICo advised members that this was an industry-wide initiative, rather than a specific FCS publication and that the Conservancy office has a supply of pocket-sized booklets to issue.

7. Date of next meeting/s

Wednesdays 12 July & 15 November 2017; venues and dates to be confirmed