

Minutes for GTTG meeting

Date: 12 December 2016

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)

Claire Glaister – GTTG Project Officer (CG)

Lee Grigor – James Jones & Sons (LG)

Ben Hazell – Tilhill (BH)

Derek Murray – Aberdeenshire Council (DM)

Andrew Nicol – DWP (AN)

Roland Stiven – Timber Transport Forum (RS)

John Thomson – Forestry Commission Scotland (JT)

Apologies

Euan Christie – Scottish Woodlands

Neil Crookston – Scottish Woodlands

Cameron Gillies – Euroforest

Derek Nelson – Forestry Commission Scotland

Ralph Singleton – Aberdeenshire Council

Alastair Young – Forestry Commission Scotland

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 data to Jacobs	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	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.	Arrange STTS site inspections prior to approval of grant claims	RS/RS/IC
3.	Check back through email trails to confirm eligibility of C13E underspend virement	RS/IC
3.	Identify roads where potential STTS works would be beneficial	All
3.	Discuss potential planning permission conditions for road improvements at Conyachie Road end	DM
5.	Mark up northern section of Suie Hill road as Consultation Route	RS/GAIST
5.	Meet with Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils to review ARM classifications and bring suggested changed to next GTTG meeting	CG/DM/IC
8.	Circulate links to Aberdeenshire Council budget consultation for information/response	CG/All
8.	Discuss effectiveness of internal circulation of consultation invitations	DM
9.	Confirm Prior Notification situation with Confor	RS
9.	Source Prior Notification guidance and post onto GTTG Local Guidance web page	CG
9.	Circulate Lantra LMI survey to industry members for completion and return	CG/industry members

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

WA welcomed all those present and invited members to provide a brief introduction. 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 14 July 2016 & matters arising

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. (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
4. (23/03/15)	Members to continue to put forward STTS proposals using pre-proposal form	All
3. (16/07/15)	Provide NFI data to Jacobs	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	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)	Highlight northern section of Suie Road in yellow (Consultation Route) on ARM website	RS/GAIST
7. (17/03/16)	IC to provide C13E traffic count results to CG for circulation to GTTG	IC/CG
7. (17/03/16)	GTTG to discuss/agree requested change to ARM classification of U144H	All
3. (14/07/16)	Consider potential STTS bids for submission by 30 September into rolling programme	All
6. (14/07/16)	Pull together events programme for discussion with members	CG/LAs
7. (14/07/16)	Investigate planning restrictions on timber lorries travelling through Archiestown to the CHP plant at Aberlour	CG
7. (14/07/16)	Investigate feasibility of Suie Hill road STTS bid with colleagues and GTTG	RSI/CG

3. Strategic Timber Transport Scheme update and GTTG projects

3.1 Update on 2016-17 STTS project submissions

RS confirmed that there was a current underspend of 2016/17 STTS funding and that this highlighted the need for a longer term fund and continuity, particularly for more complex bids. RS also advised members that the Timber Transport Forum met with Fergus Ewing to make a case for the continuation of the STTF and are hopeful that on-going support will be available, albeit recognising that any funding would be for a one year programme only. RS explained that when asked by Fergus Ewing how much could be spent via the STTS, the Timber Transport Forum had suggested a figure of £10m but that a 12 month timescale would restrict what could actually be achieved.

RS has also been keen for the Minister to consider a longer term approach which didn't just focus on social/community criteria but was more a rural roads infrastructure investment scheme; a figure of £40m had been highlighted for such an initiative. This issue has been raised at the recent Forestry Summits but a response is awaited from the Minister.

- 3.1.1 Aberdeenshire Council – Coynachie Road:** DM advised members that the works were completed last Thursday (08/12/16) and that final collation of costs was being prepared in readiness for the STTS claim submission by mid February. RS to arrange site inspection prior to grant claim approval.
- 3.1.2 Aberdeenshire Council - Suie Hill Road:** DM/CG confirmed that, following discussions at the July GTTG meeting and on-going liaison with the GTTG Chair, FCS and CG, Aberdeenshire Council had submitted a bid for works to be undertaken on the northern section of the Suie Hill road. The bid had been successful and DM advised that the contract to carry out the works was in the process of being issued and that the Council were confident that all works would be completed by the STTS deadline.
- 3.1.3 Moray Council – Forestry Roads Programme 2016:** IC updated members on the works, now completed, in the 2016 STTS programme of work. RS to arrange site inspection prior to grant claim approval. Across the 3 sites, there had been an underspend which had been reported to STTS so that an assessment could be made of whether the monies could be used to contribute to some additional improvement works that had been completed on one the C13E. RS to check back through email trail to confirm timings of notification/underspend virement request and report back to IC. WA and JT confirmed that the edge strengthening works had made a big difference and was much appreciated.

3.2 Ambitious projects for 2017-18

Whilst RS confirmed that a decision on 2017-18 STTS funding was yet to be made, he indicated that should STTS funding be confirmed, the Timber Transport Forum would be keen to focus on schemes which targeted works on minor public roads and therefore encouraged Local Authorities to identify a list of priority routes on which work would be beneficial. IC requested that industry representatives also contribute to the identification of roads so that both current and future issues could be considered.

WA advised that the Minister was keen to see that actions from the Forestry Summits had been progressed and encouraged GTTG members to be pro-active in identifying potential STTS projects.

CG advised members that she had discussed a range of potential “ambitious schemes” with GTTG Local Authority representatives, these focusing on the creation of passing places along routes which were forecast to carry significant volumes of timber as part of the SCOTS data collection exercise.

AN suggested that the Coynachie road end may be a suitable “ambitious” project as there was a very narrow bridge and swept path for lorries coming out of the Clash Forest. JT confirmed that FCS were in discussions with a windfarm developer who were considering the construction of a windfarm within the forest complex. Should the scheme be progressed, the swept path required would mean that improvements to that corner and bridge would be essential. DM agreed to discuss with planning colleagues as to potential conditions. RS highlighted the South Loch Ness road as an example of STTS supporting a joint forestry-windfarm project.

In terms of ambitious projects across Aberdeenshire, DM advised that the Council would like to consider a similar approach to that taken by Moray Council whereby the case for forestry had been made in a report submitted to the Council which subsequently helped to secure a £250,000 budget for works on strategic forestry routes.

4. Contract arrangements for Regional Timber Transport Project Officer post

ICo confirmed that for the remaining RTTPO contract period, FCS will shortly be invoicing partners for their contributions and that, as previously agreed, invoices would be sent to the S&TTTG representative on the group for forward circulation, as required. ICo also advised that in addition to existing number of contributors agreeing to fund the post in the coming year, a new contributor had come forward too.

With regard to future procurement however, ICo advised that FCS will no longer be able to host the contract but wished to stress that this did NOT mean that FCS were withdrawing any support for the role; they would still be happy to provide some administrative support as well as funding. ICo went through a range of options which had been identified (see also RTTPO Service Provision attached) and confirmed that of these, FCS' preferred option would be for an existing partner organisation to host the post.

Members discussed the current arrangements in terms of how other Project Officers are appointed, how funding was secured and invoiced and other STTS administrative requirements, potential management charges and insurance requirements, employed post vs. self-employed post, dual GTTG and S&TTTG coverage etc., the potential options available and what impact these could have on the group.

ICo confirmed that the current contract runs until February 2017 and that something would need to be put in place before then.

ICo highlighted that this was the first time that the issue had been raised with the group as a whole and invited members to come back to him should they have any queries/questions.

WA acknowledged that the group wouldn't be able to come up with a solution today but stressed that the service provided through the Timber Transport Project Officer is widely used and valued.

5. Agreed Routes Map

5.1 Suie Hill Road (northern section)

Further to discussions during the preparation of Suie Hill Road STTS bid, CG sought clarification from the group as to what ARM status the section of improved road should carry. Members agreed that the route should be marked up as a Consultation Route.

LG suggested that this route wouldn't be the preferred route for timber lorries travelling between Alford and Huntly as they would more likely travel via the A944-A97 but DM/CG explained that work had been proposed to create an alternative route for timber from the two forest exit points located directly on the road, particularly in the event of a road closure along the southern section. JT highlighted that the neighbouring communities take an active role in traffic routes in the area.

5.2 Programmes for Revisions and Updating

Members discussed the conundrum that currently exists whereby if a Consultation Route is coloured yellow, it is a Consultation Route but if a C or U class road isn't coloured yellow (or any other ARM colour), it is still a Consultation Route!

RS suggested that comparing the Road Condition survey with data collected through the SCOTS timber forecast project could be a useful way of highlighting which routes should be formally marked on the ARM website.

IC asked if having routes coloured up in this way could be beneficial in terms of STTS applications and was advised that yes, it would certainly help to identify the strategic value of the roads in question.

Members discussed options for prioritising roads for consideration, how the previously discussed 1000 tonne threshold should be incorporated and the potential use of other ARM classifications.

It was agreed that CG will arrange meetings with the Local Authorities to review ARM classifications and bring suggested changes to the next GTTG meeting for discussions/approval.

WA highlighted that whatever the outcome of the discussions, if a road is coloured up as a Consultation Route, there should be no excuse for not consulting with the Local Authority in advance of timber haulage operations commencing.

6. Good Practice and industry updates

6.1 Update on phytosanitary precautions

RS advised members that this subject is still to be discussed by the Timber Transport Forum and could now be impacted by the BREXIT outcome so there is no further update as present. CG highlighted that a member of the S&TTTG had asked whether the boundary of Phytophthora ramorum risk zones could be overlaid onto the ARM website to highlight where additional phytosanitary precautions need to be taken and that RS would follow this up with FCS/GAIST.

7. Promoting the Regional Timber Transport Groups

7.1 TACTRAN Board meeting presentation

RS and CG updated members on their invitation from Michael Cairns (TACTRAN and S&TTTG member) to present to the TACTRAN Board. The invitation to speak to the Board, comprised of Council Councillors, gave RS and CG the opportunity to explain about the Scottish timber industry in general (RS) and describe the work of the Stirling & Tayside Timber Transport Group at a more local level (CG) - see copy of presentation attached.

7.2 Scottish Rural Parliament

RS provided members with some background to the [Scottish Rural Parliament](#) and highlighted that despite its rural focus, there was no forestry representative at the second Parliament other than he and CG. RS explained that he raised the issue of the need for improved rural infrastructure but challenged industry to take a more proactive role and get involved. WA asked if Confor had attended and RS confirmed that whilst not at this second session, they had attended the inaugural Parliament in 2014.

RS advised that the Rural Parliament's manifesto would be coming out soon and suggested this be circulated with the GTTG meeting minutes (click [HERE](#) to view).

8. GTTG members updates

8.1 Round table updates and topical discussion

IC advised members that The Moray Council were undergoing a cost cutting exercise and looking to save £24m. IC was uncertain as to how this process might impact on the £250,000 forestry budget that had been secured for this FY but confirmed that they were still pushing for this funding to be made available again; a decision is expected to be taken next week. IC also advised that they will now be known as Moray Council (rather than The Moray Council).

DM advised members that Aberdeenshire Council was looking to cut £45m from its budgets over the next 4 years and that a public consultation exercise was currently taking place. ICo asked if DM saw any specific issues that could impact on timber transport; DM suggested that the Council could move from proactive maintenance to more reactive maintenance. CG to circulate links to the consultation so that members can respond, as appropriate.

DM also enquired as to what progress has been made with the FCS review on the process of consultation. ICo confirmed that the situation currently remains unchanged (i.e. FCS will issue information to one contact within the Local Authority for them to circulate internally thereafter) but that any problems should be advised to FCS. DM to discuss with colleagues and report back if any issues. IC confirmed that he was beginning to see consultations coming in.

ICo highlighted that Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils were developing Forestry and Woodland Strategies in which the role of timber transport and importance of suitable rural infrastructure was being highlighted.

ICo confirmed that the inclusion of forestry in Prior Notification requirements had not been overturned in a recent review and encouraged members to speak to CG if they were having any issues with the process; he did however note that experience across the Grampian Conservancy appears to have shown some improvement. WA suggested that the recent Mackinnon Report may well reinvigorate the debate and therefore asked if pressure was still being applied and if RS could check with Confor; WA was still concerned at some Local Authorities' definition of "maintenance". CG advised the group that S&TTG members had agreed that the guidance Syd House had produced on standard specifications/information requirements should be posted onto the [S&TTG Local Guidance](#) web page and could do likewise on the [GTTG Local Guidance](#) web page.

RS updated members on a couple of his key work areas, one of which is in connection with his suggestions for a rural roads infrastructure investment scheme (see also **3.1** above). RS had previously suggested that Road Condition Indicators could provide some useful statistics to highlight road condition in terms of their ARM status, thus strengthening the case for a rural roads infrastructure scheme. To this end, he has instigated the establishment of a Rural Roads Freight Group within Transport Scotland's Freight Logistics Advisory Group (SCOTFLAG) so that awareness of the issues can be raised and solutions found; it is anticipated that the group would meet 4 times per year.

RS advised members that he has been asked to prepare a project brief to look into the benefits and options for vehicle tracking and will report back at a future meeting.

RS highlighted to members that the ARM website would shortly be changing to a new platform which would enable the site to be accessed from iPhones etc. Details would be issued in due course.

CG updated members on a piece of work being undertaken by Lantra on behalf of the Scottish Forest and Timber Technologies Skills Working Group. As part of this, she would like to circulate a questionnaire to industry members of the GTTG so that they can contribute to the research and also encouraged their attendance at a meeting at the Scottish School of Forestry on 27 January 2017, details of which had been circulated via HIFIC. JT advised that workforce issues aren't just focused on recruitment (whenever FCS advertise for jobs, they are significantly oversubscribed) but also by the retention of good staff.

9. Date of next meeting/s

Thursday 16 March 2017; venue to be confirmed