

Note of HTTG Meeting

4th December 2012– Fodderty Way, Dingwall.

Present:

Colin MacKenzie – HTTG Project Consultant	CM
Cameron Kemp – THC (Chair)	CK
Neil Stoddart – Scottish Woodlands	NS
Alison MacLeod – THC	AM
Roland Stiven – TTF	RS
John Risby – FCS	JR
Robert Patton - THC	RP
Doug Lamont	DL
Ewen MacKinnon – Balcas Timber	EM
Ken Sinclair – FES	KS
Kevin Thomas – Norbord	KT
Alan Harrower – UPM Tilhill	AH
Frank Roach – HiTRANS	FR
Sandy Hogg – James Jones	SH
Robin Pope – THC	RCP

1. Introduction

Cameron Kemp welcomed all attendees.

2. Apologies

Julian Fryer	Jamie Farquhar
Andy Hunt	Andy Leitch

3. Membership and Chair Changes

CK explained that he was now in an Area based post with a less strategic role and proposed that the role of Chair of the group be taken by Robin Pope who had replaced him at HQ. The group agreed to this.

Alan Christison has been replaced on the group by Alan Harrower.
Doug Lamont has been replaced as Norbord rep by Kevin Thomas although DL will continue to attend meetings.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed.

5. Matters Arising not covered on Agenda

Convoying Protocol – RS stated that there was no monitoring taking place of the effectiveness of the campaign. Promotional material has been distributed to processors and mills. RS to give poster to SH and box of cards to KT. **RS**

Forest Tracks Planning Consultation – no announcement yet from the Scottish Government. All consultation responses have been published.

A855 Portree – Extraction during tourist season now complete. NS stated that a local haulier with a local driver had been used to bring out no more than 3 loads per day and the extraction was now complete. He felt that the use of a local person had helped the smooth running of the operation and stated that there had been no complaints. CK stated that any further extraction through Portree would have to be subject to ongoing discussion.

6. Highland Projects submitted to Nov 2012 round of STTS (See paper issued with Agenda)

Ardnamurchan Peninsula – Proposal for a floating Pier at Gorteneorn and inter-forest road to feed timber to this facility. Poor quality timber to be used locally for biomass, much of it at the proposed new distillery.

Applecross Pier – Longstanding problems with the roads in this area. Community led proposal to upgrade and improve the existing pier to enable Angus Biofuels to use a landing craft there and transport low quality timber for conversion to wood fuel. NS reminded the group that this sort of solution had been considered 5-6 years ago without being progressed. He was concerned that there would be significant conflict with tourist interests as the pier was located at probably the busiest location within the village, adjacent to the Inn and very close to the campsite. There were likely to be H&S concerns raised. CM believed that the community involvement in this scheme would help to alleviate these issues. JR indicated support for this project partly because of the windblow issue and the negative landscape impact it was having. JS also confirmed that the Applecross Trust owned the woodland. NS stated that he believed controlled road haulage would be a better solution.

Braehour Link – Inter-forest road to avoid section of weak public road. This is a vital link in the Flow Country Timber Haul Route and its development ties in with the current and proposed drainage improvement works on the A897. It also links in with the proposed Strathrail Project. NS raised concerns regarding the limits imposed on daily haulage movements along certain roads. eg if a road was only approved to carry 6 loads per day but served 3 forests, there was the potential for each owner to

assume that they could put 6 loads down the road, especially if this permitted load figure had been quoted in sales particulars. JR proposed holding a mini-seminar with owners/agents in this area to clarify this point.

JR

Strathcarron – Croick – This was a previously excluded route and this project aims to carry out minor works to culverts etc with a benefit to the public and local community.

A897 Drainage Works – Continuation of previous schemes to improve drainage on this route.

Loch Ussie – Inter-forest link to access the A835 without hauling round the north side of the loch. Issues raised regarding commercial benefit to one landowner but this offset by community benefit and continuity of supply for a local processor.

Great Glen Shipping Co – assistance required for upgrading of vessels to sustain transport by sea in Lochaber/Mull/West Argyll. Application not being considered at this time as was submitted late. RS suggested it may be better for request to come from growers/harvesters rather than the shipping company as there were issues with sole commercial benefit and lease/ownership of the vessels. CM to ask STTS for feedback on the content of the application even though it is too late for consideration. **CM**

The Strathrail Project – NS gave presentation on the proposal to resurrect timber transport by rail from the flow country at Borrobol, Kinbrace and Achentoul. This has been looked at for at least the last 6 years and various reports have been produced. STTS previously approved a proposal to carry out trials but this scheme stalled due to forest plans not being approved. NS now wants to resurrect this scheme to test, trial and benchmark validity of processes and service. He is hoping to run a 2 year trial extracting 20K tonnes per year. This will require the construction of a temporary lineside loading bank and the use of an intermodal reach stacker to handle the cradles at Inverness. FFG has been applied for and is almost in place to assist with equipment and welfare provision costs.

Currently rail costs for transporting this timber are about twice the road haulage costs and the STTS funding is required to offset this additional expenditure. Potential to streamline costs but by how much won't be known until project up and running. RS keen to see robust reporting of whole process so that the information is available to share throughout the industry. CM felt that the Council should discourage use of the public road until such a scheme had run its course however this did not receive universal support from the group. JR did express some concern regarding the proposed restriction on the number of timber movements along the public road, fearing that this would give one operator a monopoly on haulage and effectively bar others from using the road haulage option.

7. Update on Schemes submitted in April 2012

- a) Loch Arkaig – about to go out to tender for second section of works on 16km of the route. First phase been completed by the Council. May be overbudget this year but this can be recovered through next year's allocation. Hoped to have CTI trucks running on this route by April/May next year.
- b) South Loch Ness – Currently in design phase.
- c) Killiechonate – Under construction and James Jones carrying out extraction.
- d) Cannich/Fasnakyle – Ongoing.
- e) Flow Country A897 Survey – Substantially complete.
- f) Highland Drainage – Need more detail.
- g) Rathad na Mara, Glenelg – This bid was not successful but NS stated that repair works would take place.

8. Update on other Projects

Sound of Mull – One Estate not allowing access across their land and this situation has not been resolved despite several meetings. KS suggested that it may be advantageous to get purchasers of FC blocks to sign an agreement regarding permission for future construction of accesses to prevent one landowner blocking extraction.

River Snizort, Skeabost – Internal road, this is being progressed.

Glen Etive – Future project, internal link roads to allow timber to flow to sea extraction point.

9. C J Piper Report on Flow Country

CM will try to get this issued in email form shortly.

CM

10. HiTRANS Update

Network Rail consulting on the transfer of rail yards from current service provider to themselves. It was felt that this may be beneficial to HTTG.

Forest Enterprise Tayside were wanting to get Rannoch going which would also be advantageous.

FR stated that there was money available to investigate the impact of timber operations in remote areas. He proposed that this fund should be used for a continuation of Roadex, particularly where timber traffic is affected. NS asked if the fund could be used to employ a graduate but FR felt this may be problematic as the fund was not only for the HTTG area and other areas would need to see a benefit. CM suggested that the fund be used to carry out some survey work on timber traffic routes, volumes etc. FR said that HiTRANS had carried out a similar exercise for distilleries and would look into a similar project for timber for RS. **FR**

Scottish Planning Policy up for review and RS proposed to put a response together from the Forum focusing on land use and it being serviced by adequate infrastructure. FR will liaise and progress. **FR**

11. Agreed Route Maps

There is a new website host. The Forestry Commission no longer want to hold the Agreed Route Maps so the Forum has engaged a contractor to host the maps. A prototype will be made available to all members for testing and comment, likely cost of this host is £300.00 per year per group.

12. HTTG Information on Council Website

Argyll shown as an example. Stirling and Tayside looking to progress this as well.

13. Forum Update

RS gave brief overview of update as issued to attendees previously.

14. HTTG Funding

All funding for this year now received and CK thanked all contributors.

15. AOCB

On behalf of the group NS thanked CK for Chairing the Group for the last 2 years and welcomed RCP as the new Chair.

16. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 4th June 2013.