

Note of HTTG Meeting

5th December 2017– Fodderty Way, Dingwall.

Present:

Colin MacKenzie – HTTG Project Consultant	CM
Robin Pope (Chair) – THC	RP
Alison MacLeod – THC	AM
Martin MacKinnon – FCS	MM
Roland Stiven – TTF	RS
Carol Davidson -Tilhill	CD
Jamie Hendry – Euroforest	JH
Grant Stuart - THC	GS
Graham Johnstone – Balcas	GJ
Stuart Waugh – FES	SW
Ewan Robertson – BSW	ER
Casey Keller – SWL	CK
Donald Beaton – James Jones	DB

1. Introduction

RP welcomed attendees.

2. Membership & Apologies

Everyone introduced themselves and apologies were received from Derek Nelson, Alex MacLeod and John Risby.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed.

4. Matters Arising not covered on Agenda

None.

5. THC Community Services update and ongoing Council changes

RP confirmed that R&T contacts have not changed and the structure is now fixed. Contact details sheet issued and this will be amended and updated as and when required.

6. Update on STTS budget and Preparation Grant availability

RS gave an update on STTS budget position. All funds allocated and all but around £100k spent. This underspend will hopefully be reallocated to extend existing schemes. Fergus Ewing has indicated that there may be a

further £20k made available for project preparation. These funds would be available for complex private sector schemes with numerous partners or for large public sector schemes. Details are on the TTF website. A preparation project for several sites in Highland has already received funding.

RP asked if there was any prospect of a 3 year funding cycle rather than the current 1 year. The Minister had apparently made encouraging noises but nothing concrete yet.

7. THC Forest Strategy refresh update

GS gave an update on progress with the update which had been slow to date. Draft still out for comment. Chris Piper leading on this and GS will pass on contact details so that group members can contact them and make comment.

CM asked if there was a map available to show the best sites/locations for planting. GS stated there is such a map but it dates from 2006 and is now out of date. A review of this is being carried out but it is proving difficult to source all the necessary information.

8. Need to identify problem roads before issue of Felling Licenses

RP had received complaints from THC Area staff regarding lack of information/consultation prior to felling licenses being issued and felling taking place. Reductions in staffing level on both sides having an impact on the flow of information. MM stated that his side was proactive in ensuring that any applicant had made contact with the relevant roads office prior to issuing the felling licence.

CM put up the Grampian Protocol for ensuring that roads departments are consulted prior to the felling license being issued. This had been developed by Claire Glaister and it was suggested that it be adopted in Highland as well.

9. Review Routes identified as Excluded

South Loch Ness - Bunachton and Dalcrag are amongst the worst sections and require work to bring up to useable standard. Other sections are excluded as a way to push timber traffic onto better routes and previously STTS funded routes where available. There was some discussion about removing the exclusion over a small section at the access to Drummond but the group agreed to leave this as excluded with a note on the ARM to indicate that consultation should take place with the Council as it could be used under certain circumstances.

a) B849 Lochaline – Drimnin

This is a long standing problem. Previously haul road was proposed and

developed as an STTS project but did not progress. CM has met with 3 estate owners in the Autumn of 2017. Preparation project ongoing and Arvikaconsult have been engaged to look into the feasibility of a sea option. It is hoped the results of this study will be presented to the community early next year.

One estate owner has written requesting permission to haul timber using a small lorry. HTTG agreed to note the request and to pass it on to the relevant Area Roads Operations Manager for a decision on viability. The group would continue to investigate and support a designed solution using either the previously proposed haul road or, if possible, a sea option.

Group agreed to the continuation of the exclusion and to review again in June 2018.

10. Consider potential 2018 projects

CM asked for private sector bid suggestions.

CM provided a list of 18 potential schemes already identified and gave a brief review of the current position with them all.

11. Timber Transport National Conference 23 March 2018 in Inverness

RS presented a draft running order for the event and asked for suggestions for speakers.

RP suggested something on the flow country A897 Timber Haulage Group as an example of good practice.

12. Need for Speed Restrictions on CTU Routes

Benefits from CTI can only be gained where the speed is reduced sufficiently to allow the vehicle to run at low pressure. Some evidence that hauliers are not reducing their pressures because they don't want to reduce their speed. Where pressure is not reduced the road does not experience the anticipated benefit from the use/specification of CTI fitted trucks. CM suggested that hauliers who do not use the system correctly should not be allowed to operate on weak roads. There was some concern that this would prove impossible to police. CM also suggested that a maximum speed could be specified for certain routes covered by TTMPs.

CD stated that in the Flow Country low pressures were being used but this would be encouraged by the fact that the roads were not suitable for speeds over 30mph anyway. There were also constraints on tyre type etc when using CTI.

13. Update on progress of STTS current 2017/18 projects.

Broubster and Brawlbin – Complete.
B871/B873 – Ongoing.
Kincardine Hill – Complete.
Achilty & Strathconnon – Ongoing.
Glenbrittle & Eynort – Ongoing.
Ratagan – Complete.

14. Flow Country – Report on progress of A897 Timber Haulage Group

Parties to the agreement working well together and sharing capacity.

15. Update on completed 2016/17 STTS projects.

Waternish – Completed
Swordale – Completed
Glen Loth – Completed

Morvern and Branchliner 2 – not progressed.

16. Timberlink North – Update in developments in Coastal Shipping

RS held a meeting with interested parties in the Summer. There is an issue with shipping companies not finding it easy to access FFG for timber movements and RS drafted a paper to show the limitations of the current grant scheme. Transport Scotland did not accept the findings of the report but agreed to hold a workshop to help to explain how these grants can be accessed.

17. Timber by Rail

Rannoch & Kinbrace - CM stated that there had been interest in getting the Kinbrace trial underway in 2017. However, the economics still don't stack up even with grant aid. These projects can be looked at again in 2018.

18. HiTRANS

Nothing to add.

19. Updates from Forum

RS gave update – TTF have produced short videos which can be downloaded on youtube.

- Full length: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Apay34Lw4BI>
- Short version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQu3SKVxQoU>

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Forestry Bill is now at its second stage reading and having proposals on CPO considered.

Agreed Routes Maps – trial version still available, live version coming in March.

20. HTTG Funding

RP thanked everyone for their contributions.

21. AOCB

None.

22. Date of Next Meeting

Provisionally Tuesday 5th June 2018.