

Timber Transport Forum Conference • 2012

Last hosted two years ago in Perth, the Timber Transport Forum's 2012 conference moved south to Cumbria's Rheged Centre on the outskirts of Penrith on Thursday 15 March.

Attracting over a hundred delegates along with fourteen speakers, the topics covered were both timber haulage specific and those general transportation topics that will become of concern over the next few months – fuel efficiency, driver training and safety being the three primary subjects.

Signing on

Overseen and opened by Chairman of the Timber Transport Forum Alistair Speedie, the conference got underway with the introduction of the various speakers and their subjects plus the signing of the new voluntary Partnering Charter. A voluntary agreement between all the regional timber transport groups and organisations, the charter means that all those involved in timber transport will come together on a regular basis to discuss the industry as a whole and suggest changes for the benefit of all concerned. Alistair Speedie signed the charter on behalf of the Timber Transport Forum, adding his name to the 23 other signatories.

Keynote

Head of Public Affairs for BSW, and MD of Howie Forest Products Limited, Hamish Macleod outlined how far the timber haulage industry has progressed in every respect over recent years. Comparisons to other parts of the world highlighted local impacts and sensitivities,

methods of working with communities from various backgrounds, and the importance of forestry and timber production and the industry as a whole to the UK market. He also emphasised the significance of controlled, sustainable growth whilst maintaining the acceptability and general understanding of the timber industry and its associated haulage in the eyes of society.

Newly agreed routes

The three newest Timber Transport Groups have recently been established in northern England. Delegates heard of the experience of the Cumbria Timber Transport Group and North Yorkshire County Council's Timber Freight Quality Partnership. The newest group has been established in north-east England, covering Northumberland and County Durham.

Andrew Harper from Cumbria County Council and Richard Scott of BSW Timber in Carlisle described their experience of developing agreed routes maps for timber haulage by the Cumbria Timber Transport Group. This process had involved extensive public consultation. As with other groups, the agreed routes maps will be available online and copies of maps can also be encapsulated for drivers to keep in their cabs. James Gilroy, of the revitalised North Yorkshire Timber Freight Quality Partnership, reported that they were currently

involved in a public consultation on agreed routes for timber haulage.

Whilst noting that the amount of work involved in this stage of the process had been greater and more time-consuming than anticipated, both councils agreed that the outcomes of the consultation processes had been very worthwhile. In some cases, communities had suggested alternative and more suitable routes for timber haulage, such as at Burton-in-Kendal in Cumbria.

Whilst Cumbria and North Yorkshire have extensive road networks that are suitable for timber transport, Kirsty Robb and Callum Robertson from Argyll & Bute and Colin Mackenzie from the Highland Timber Transport Group described the considerable limitations imposed by the road network – especially weak rural roads – in their areas. In some cases, there aren't any alternative routes, which requires solutions to be devised that will avoid forests being 'land-locked'.

Colin illustrated the innovative solutions that had been developed to improve weak roads in the Flow Country in the far north of Scotland. Some had been strengthened by innovative technologies, including the use of tyre bales, which had proved to be very effective. Colin also commented on the success of the Roadex project in improving the understanding of the behaviour of weak roads and methods of improving their performance. The challenge of rail haulage of round timber was also described, and work is continuing to identify economic solutions.

Type Approval

This is a subject that is going to affect virtually anyone and everyone involved in timber haulage, and their vehicles. The explanation of Type Approval was undertaken by Alastair Evans, Product Sales Manager for Cargotec. Explaining

how what was once taken for granted, such as the fitment of aftermarket lights, can now render a truck or trailer illegal, the minefield of approval was explained in a way that gave those present a basic working insight into European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval.

The ECWVTA basically allows a harmonised directive for the unhindered sale of commercial vehicles and trailers throughout the EU, sets common technical standards, and allows individual member states to work to a common standard whilst prohibiting any unapproved vehicle or trailer from being sold, registered or used on the roads. From the timber haulage perspective, the main effect of this type approval will be felt by vehicle, trailer and body manufacturers who take a chassis and build or modify the bodywork before selling it on, the regulations applying largely to trailers.

There are three whole-vehicle categories from the buyer's perspective: Complete Vehicle Approval, Incomplete Vehicle Approval and Completed Vehicle Approval. In addition to these, other pertinent regulations are controlled and governed by the EEC and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe directives alongside UK Road Vehicle and Road Vehicle Lighting regulations. From the haulier's perspective this means that there are now 22 approval-specific areas on a trailer or over 60 on a complete vehicle.



Alastair Kerr and the JST in-forest Volvo FM12 started a five-year contract on the Isle of Mull within days of the conference.



Alistair Speedie (left) and James England (right) from Dumfries & Galloway Council pictured with Timber Transport Forum Projects Officer Roland Stiven and the newly signed Partnering Charter.

Keeping track

Ensuring that each and every vehicle in an operator's fleet is working and being driven as efficiently as possible has now become a major concern. Fuel costs alone are a serious point of interest to fleet owners, irrespective of size. Now supplied factory-fitted by most manufacturers, and retro-fitted providing the vehicle has what's called a 'gateway' within the management system, telematic systems allow the operator to keep fully abreast of each vehicle's exact movements.

The example demonstrated was the Volvo Dynafleet system, explained at length by Ian Maclean, Fuelwatch Manager at Volvo Carlisle, along with John Scott of JST Services who employs Dynafleet on his own vehicles.

It is important to point out that all of these systems are more or less identical in how they function, and that they are interchangeable. For instance, Mercedes-Benz's Fleetboard can be fitted to most other trucks, as can other systems, should an operator already be signed up to a different manufacturer's version.

"Working closely with our customers, the question of fuel saving now accounts for over 40% of initial vehicle enquiries. Government assistance on costs is nonexistent," Ian explained. "Dynafleet is what we call a 'soft product' that's been designed and is managed by Volvo. Instant feedback and all figures are accessible online, 24 hours a day. The system itself is an engine control unit (ECU) that reports profitability of the entire fleet, right down to each individual vehicle and driver combination and their working hours."

This greatly assists administering the managerial side, logistics, working hours, fuel and manpower effi-

ciency, servicing intervals and compliance, which in turn increases overall profitability and influences organisational structures, making it possible to get the best out of the vehicle.

Activated as soon as each driver inserts his individual card, the information is stored online for up to two years. There is no restriction on the number of drivers. The cost to the customer is the fitment and initial registration on each vehicle when first put on the road.

With permission to use their live feedback generously granted by one of his customers, Ian was able to demonstrate how the Dynafleet system worked. Highlighting a vehicle's registration number, every aspect of the vehicle and driver's history was instantly accessible on screen or to be printed off for further evaluation.

Dynafleet might be regarded by some as a 'spy in the cab', but fleet operator John Scott was able to expand on the overall benefits he's found with the system, including the fact that it pinpointed a case of fuel theft. The system highlighted that a large quantity of fuel had been removed, recording the time of day, date and precise location. Nothing whatsoever to do with the vehicle's driver, the case is best described as 'still ongoing'. Dynafleet means the culprit has no defence whatsoever.

Code of Practice

David Sulman, of the Timber Transport Forum's Technical Working Group, introduced the latest edition of the Road Haulage of Round Timber Code of Practice. The latest edition, the fourth, is now in A4 format and provides refreshed text and images. It was emphasised that although the principal technical requirements

of the Code of Practice remain unchanged, current best practice has been incorporated. There are seven chapters, including vehicle specifications, road networks, loading timber, transporting timber, unloading timber and improving roundwood haulage, together with sources of further information.

David Sulman said, "This revision has been undertaken by a group of industry specialists, to whom we are very grateful. It has been produced fully in the spirit of partnership working, collaboration and cooperation, which typifies the work of the Timber Transport Forum."

The Code of Practice, which was first published in 1996 and last revised in 2003, now incorporates the revised load restraint and strapping guidelines, which were published in 2006. These include the requirement for double strapping, using appropriately rated straps, of the bay/bunk of roundwood nearest the cab on vehicles not fitted with cab-height headboards, thereby affording increased protection for drivers in the event of loads moving forward under severe braking. Guidelines on the securing of lorry-mounted cranes are also provided.

The importance of driver training, including the promotion of safe and efficient driving techniques, was highlighted, as this would not only improve efficiency and reduce fuel consumption, but would also reduce the overall carbon footprint.

The Code of Practice complements the Forum's guidance on partnership working in timber transport, which was launched at the Welsh Timber Transport Conference in May 2011.

David Sulman commended the Code of Practice to the forestry

industry, hauliers, local authorities and others with an interest in the road haulage of timber. The document is available as a pdf download from the Timber Transport Forum website (www.timbertransportforum.org.uk), or as hard copies, available direct from the Timber Transport Forum.

David Sulman also referred to the Forum's 'Wait A Minute' campaign, which aims to reduce the impact of timber transport on communities by avoiding convoy running. Leaving a minute between vehicles is less daunting for pedestrians and other users of narrow roads, makes it easier for motorists to pass and overtake, and helps weak roads to recover after each movement, thereby reducing the risk of damage to the road.

Keep it safe

With an increase in health and safety requirements likely to be implemented, James Walls, the Regional Safety Manager North for UPM Tilhill, highlighted the main areas of concern in both general haulage of timber on public roads and in the forest.

"Safety within haulage, not just the timber industry, starts at the depot, where the employer must show a duty of care, with the provision and maintenance of plant and equipment along with safe systems of work, and the provision of relevant instruction.

"This also brings into focus the fact that, besides the employers, employees also have a role in ensuring their own health and safety and in cooperating with their employer in maintaining a safe working environment. It's also advisable that companies have a designated safety officer or responsible person for both employers



(Top row, left to right) Hamish Macleod, Richard Scott, Andrew Harper, James Gilroy, Kirsty Robb, Callum Robertson. (Bottom row) Colin Mackenzie, Alastair Evans, Ian Maclean, John Scott, David Sulman, James Walls and Chris Hetherington.

and employees to consult."

New to the Health & Safety Act is corporate manslaughter. James highlighted the fact that the first company to be prosecuted was fined 112% of its annual turnover – a sum of money that no company would wish to have to lose – a penalty that could have been avoided and one that could run into hundreds of millions of pounds.

Pertinent to the forestry industry, the main aspects were to be aware that at certain times of the day or week, the driver would be working alone, or be the last person to leave the location, so if an accident happened, no one would be aware of the fact. To counteract this, all drivers should now carry a mobile phone to inform the relevant parties that they are entering or leaving the forest. This would ensure that if the 'exiting' call hadn't been made, after a certain period of time the emergency services could and would be alerted.

"Other subjects of concern include monitoring loading areas within the forest, ingress and egress, and the need for drivers to carry and wear all relevant equipment and not leave it in the cab; ensuring the 'goalposts' are maintained and in the correct location, especially around power lines; that single trees that haven't been felled

are dealt with; and that the correct loading and securing procedures are carried out.

Health and safety applies for the entire journey. Agreed routes must be followed, and, on the open road, traffic legislation also comes into play. Both the employer and employee are responsible and all potential outcomes must be taken into consideration."

Constant training

Last speaker of the day, Chris Hetherington of CRH Transport Training, a specialist in all aspects of driver training, eco driving, health and safety and forestry, emphasised the need for fleet operators to ensure their drivers maintained their Certificates of Professional Competence. Out on the open road, every aspect of health and safety, load security and the suitability of the vehicle is the responsibility of the man behind the wheel.

"The problem is that the safety or qualification cards issued by both the DSA and DVLA differ, and the organisations cannot agree on exactly what's required. Similarly, if a driver doesn't have the relevant cards, the penalty system is still unclear, and where will the enforcement come from? Only when a prosecution has taken



From now on all Cumbrian timber hauliers will have a detailed map of approved roads located within each cab.

place will the industry know where it stands."

It is regarded as the driver's responsibility to ensure they have the correct training to maintain or acquire their CPCs, especially where agency drivers are contracted in to provide coverage. But for employed drivers, it's also down to the fleet owner to ensure their drivers have the relevant CPCs, or if not, make certain that the drivers are both permitted the time off and required to undertake the training courses.

It must also be pointed out to drivers of long standing that,

although they might think they know it all, they still have to undertake the appropriate training within the designated time spans.

Till the next time

As the timber haulage industry moves on and regulations alter or are introduced, the importance of the Timber Transport Forum was once again underlined along with the fact that everyone involved needs to make certain they keep themselves fully abreast of each and every change as and when it happens, on a constant basis.

Mark Stone



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