

North East England Timber Transport Group

Meeting held at the Offices of Egger (UK) Limited, Hexham
at 1.30 p.m. on Thursday, 21st March, 2013

Present:

John Paterson, Chairman (JP)
Alistair M. Speedie (AMS)

David Sulman (DS)
Cameron Smith (CS)
Athole McKillop (AMc)
Max McLaughlan (MM)
Richard Scott (RS)
Cameron Scott (CSc)
Carolyn O'Brien (CO'B)
Terry Garnick (TG)
Nigel Brannen (NB)
Robert Thorn (RT)
Keith Taylor (KT)
Paul Turnbull (PT)
Neil Howie (NH)
Amanda Cryer (AC)
Michael Rowe (MR)
Jane Karthaus (JK)
Roland Stiven (RS)
David Robson (DR)
George Nicholson (GN)
Peter Gilbertson (PG)
Robert Scott (RSc)
Stephen Swailes (SS)
Ian Robinson (IR)
David Woodhouse (DW)
Gary Leach (GL)
Councillor Anthony Murray (AM)
Keith Haywood (KH)
James England (JE)

Neil Dyson (ND)
Tommy Milburn (TM)
Billy Wood (BW)
Matthew Wilson (MW)
Hazel Newman (HN), Secretary

Egger Forestry Products Limited
Dumfries & Galloway Council/Chair UK National
Timber Transport Forum
United Kingdom Forest Products Association
Sheffield & Co. Limited
Land Factor
Forestry Commission
BSW Timber
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland County Council
Confor
Timber Transport Forum
UPM Tilhill
A & J Scott Limited
SGS Timber Transport
SGS Timber Transport
Iggesund Forestry
Scottish Woodlands Limited
Forest Enterprise
Durham County Council
Northumberland County Council
Taylormade Timber Products
Dumfries & Galloway Council (South of Scotland
Timber Transport Officer)
Fountains Forestry
Euroforest Limited
James Jones & Sons Limited
Egger Forestry Products
Egger (UK) Limited

Apologies:

Crispin Thorn, FC; Richard Pow, FC; Jon Bates, FC; Dan Barry, BSW Timber; Andrew Harper, Cumbria CC; Mike Yerbury, Egger Forestry; Dick Phillips, NCC

No.

1. Chairman, John Paterson, welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies.

Action

No.**Action****2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held 11th December, 2012**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

3. Presentation to the Meeting by Mr. Alistair Speedie, Director Planning and Environment Services, Dumfries and Galloway Council, and Chairman of the UK National Timber Transport Forum

Mr. Speedie gave a presentation to the meeting in which he described his role and responsibility for approximately 4000km of roads, including just over 900km of strategic road network (A and B class), with the remainder being C and D class. He currently has an annual roads budget of circa £8m with which to keep the network 'fit for purpose'.

Mr Speedie described how, until circa 1999, Dumfries & Galloway had been in receipt of 'ring fenced' funds for forestry roads improvement, after which these were terminated by the Scottish Government, and the Council was left with the question of how to tackle forestry transport. Initial policy involved the promotion of weight restrictions on all timber routes that could not be strengthened as a result of termination of the ring fenced funds. This was reviewed and in 2000 a committee report looked at the concept of establishing a preferred route network (Agreed Routes Map) and a timber transport group for Dumfries and Galloway.

A strategy of partnership working was drawn up which worked away from weight restrictions, keeping these as a last resort on the most fragile roads. Common agreement and self regulation was accepted as the way forward and on this basis a timber transport group was formed in Dumfries and Galloway and this concept was widened throughout Scotland and preferred routes implemented nationally.

A 'partnership charter' was signed by major stakeholders in recognition of this new collaboration, including the Forestry Commission in Scotland, England and Wales, the United Kingdom Forest Products Association, Confederation of Forest Industries, Forest Contractors Association as well as regional timber transport groups. The Charter outlined the core values important to both the industry and local Government, with one of the stated aims being to, *'maintain and promote voluntary agreed timber routes maps as a basis for finding solutions to timber transport problems'*.

Agreed routes maps involved the categorisation of roads as either 'agreed' (most A and B roads), consultation routes, severely restricted or those routes which are totally excluded from timber transport. The aim of such categorisation being to prevent any area of forest being isolated (land locked) from the road network.

Mr. Speedie concluded by pointing out that a successful forest industry meant that over 3000 people were directly employed in Dumfries and Galloway, with the gross value of forestry activities being estimated at £460 million. The benefits to the Council of the timber transport initiative are the better management of timber movements on fragile roads, better dialogue with the industry and less restriction of activities, less damage to roads resulting in the sustainability of the local road network.

4. Following Mr. Speedie's presentation there followed a general discussion. The Chairman stating that it was a priority to progress the Agreed Routes Map, and commented that industry representatives who had worked on the maps presented to the Council in September, were disappointed that as yet there had been no reply from the Highways Department.

AMS commented that highways departments know their own roads, and it was for them to classify roads 'with evidence', which the industry should either accept or negotiate a compromise. Council representatives asked what happened if hauliers/timber lorries did not adhere to agreed routes. It was pointed out that the success of the initiative relied on trust and cooperation by all parties – the partnership charter had meant the adoption of self-regulation, with individual hauliers/processors and management agents imposing penalties upon drivers not following the rules.

No.

Action

Mr. Speedie emphasised the importance of partnership working, and related that one case had gone to public enquiry in Dumfries and Galloway, which the Council had subsequently lost – this had been a hard lesson and proved that money should not be wasted in attempting to resolve issues through the Courts when partnership working can take issues forward.

AMS went on to explain that he had been instrumental in persuading the Scottish Government to introduce a Strategic Timber Transport Scheme, administered by the Forestry Commission, the aim of which was *'to facilitate the sustainable transport of timber in rural areas of Scotland for the benefit of local communities and the environment'*. Funds are available from the Scheme upon application via Regional Timber Transport Groups. AMS offered his support in attempting to obtain similar funding from the English Government.

AMS

Richard Scott, Chairman of the Cumbrian Timber Transport Group agreed that the partnership approach worked well in Cumbria and South Scotland, and confirmed that major processors supported the initiative and were able to influence individual hauliers in their adherence to agreed routes.

5. Following discussion, it became apparent that there had been some disagreement between Council managers, and Road Engineers regarding categorisation of roads. Highways Inspector, Amanda Cryer, pointed out while the Highways Inspectors wished to support the forest industry, roads funding was capped and under severe pressure. Inspectors had looked at the maps presented and attempted to categorise them in the knowledge of what the roads could take from a highway maintenance and engineering point of view. Richard Scott stated that representatives of their Group had found it useful to meet direct with roads engineers.

It was suggested that working groups should be set up for both the west and north of the county, to be attended by representatives of the forest industry (from both the private sector and the Forest Enterprise) and highways inspectors. Carolyn O'Brien offered to co-ordinate these meetings on behalf of the Council. Hazel Newman to advise her of the availability of industry representatives. It was anticipated that agreement on the first publically available draft could be achieved before the Group's next meeting in the third week of June.

CO'B

John Paterson reiterated that industry representatives on the Group were currently frustrated at the time it was taking to establish the agreed routes map. To date the Timber Transport Group was well supported, with a good turnout at meetings from all parts of the industry. Various individuals had also committed their time to working on the maps before presentation to the Council. It was important that momentum and enthusiasm was not lost through further delays. The Chairman suggested that one way forward may be to approach the Council's Head of Services for support, since progress was dependent on the Council's internal issues being resolved.

Councillor Murray recognised the importance for all parts of the industry to be represented on the Group, but queried the part played by local residents in adoption of the agreed routes. Carolyn O'Brien explained that the concept of the routes map had already been presented to Area Committees for the West and North of the county. She suggested that local issues would be dealt with on a case by case basis, where residents would be consulted if necessary. It was pointed out that the maps will change organically once they are implemented, as a result of consultation. Mr. Speedie agreed that local consultation was vital, as was the need to keep local Council Members informed of issues arising, and on board with the initiative.

Miss O'Brien reiterated the problem she had in obtaining information regarding imminent timber movement from harvesting sites via the Council Planning Department. Cameron Scott suggested that such issues should be resolved internally and he would speak to Head of Highway and Neighbourhood Services, Andy Rutherford, and Carol Ledger, Head of Planning.

CSc

<u>No.</u>	<u>Action</u>
6. The Chairman pointed out that the Agreed Routes Map was not the only reason for the formation of the Timber Transport Group, it was also a forum to bring parties together to discuss such issues such as the promotion of best practice, information on the latest technologies, and practical solutions found for such issues as winter working. JP went on to suggest that the Group could also explore means by which roads funding could be obtained. Mr. Speedie pointed out that the UK Timber Transport Forum was supported by Roland Stiven, as National Project Officer. At regional level, Councils and the private sector were supported by Project Officers (shared between Councils in certain areas of Scotland). He suggested that it might be possible for North East England to 'share' a project officer with one of the Scottish councils in the South. Discussion also took place as to whether roads funding could be obtained via the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme on the basis of partnership working and cross-border benefits. Consideration was further given to whether funding might be available from central Government (Westminster) under the Rural Development Fund's 'Access to Land' initiative. Mr. Speedie suggested he would write to David Heath, Minister of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs from the perspective of a partnership approach, using the Scottish model as an example. Keith Taylor, NCC, pointed out that there was currently no mention of timber in the 'Freight Strategy' for Northumberland. He suggested that if timber movement was included in the strategy, and its economic benefit to the county was demonstrated, this could be another means of attracting funding. It was agreed that timber transport should be included in the County Freight Strategy, as a matter of importance.	AMS NCC
7. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 18th June, 2013 at the offices of Egger (UK) Limited at 1.30 p.m. (At the request of the Chairman, this meeting has been postponed until further notice)	