



Timber Transport Forum



delivery solutions for a growing UK harvest

Scottish Executive
Transport Scotland Consultation
Victoria Quay
EDINBURGH
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Our Ref: P2/1

17 December 2003

Dear Sirs

RESPONSE TO 'PROPOSALS FOR A NEW APPROACH TO TRANSPORT IN SCOTLAND: A CONSULTATION'

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above consultation document.

This response is made on behalf of the Timber Transport Forum. The Forum brings together a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in timber transport whether from a business or a social perspective: membership includes representatives of forest industry and haulage businesses and local authorities.

Further information on the Timber Transport Forum is available at www.fidc.org.uk/timber_transport.

The Strategic Context

Forestry is a key sector supporting jobs and incomes in rural Scotland. The National Forest Strategy published in 2000, estimated that the sector supports 44,000 jobs directly and indirectly, and its total output, including wood processing and related industries, amounts to £1.4 billion per year, almost 1% of Scottish GDP. There is a need for the industry to remain competitive internationally and a key part of that is ensuring good rural transport infrastructure.

Ministers have identified in their **"Partnership for a Better Scotland"** (high level commitment) that they *"intend ensuring that sufficient resources are available for the non-trunk road network, particularly recognising the needs of pressured rural roads affected by timber production and other primary industries."*



**Forest Industries
Development Council**
- the UK's wood-chain partnership -

The Forum is managed on behalf of the partners by
the Forest Industries Development Council

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Delivering the Scottish Forestry Strategy, published by the Scottish Executive in November 2002, recognised this need in emphasising the importance of the forestry industry to the Scottish economy and the need to take action to help alleviate the growing number of transport difficulties. The strategy explicitly identified “*developing timber transport infrastructure*” as a key action for achieving this goal.

The **National Forestry Strategy**, and the earlier **Scottish Forest Industries Cluster** document published in 2000, established clear targets for the industry’s future development. The first strategic priority identified in the national strategy is “*to maximise value to the Scottish economy of the wood resource becoming available for harvesting over the next 20 years.*”

Forestry and Transport

Good transport infrastructure is essential for an efficient forestry sector in Scotland. Timber haulage accounts for about **20 to 50%** of the cost of wood delivered to Scottish mills and is therefore a key factor in determining the profitability and competitiveness of the sector. The high cost of transport is recognised as a key area in which the UK forestry is not internationally competitive – whilst this is in part a reflection of taxation policies and restrictions on permitted lorry laden weights, the poor standard of rural transport infrastructure is also critical.

Since Scotland’s timber production is set to nearly double over the next 15 years, the issue of timber transport is set to remain at the top of the transport agenda throughout rural Scotland for a long time to come. There are particular difficulties in transporting timber from forests in remoter rural areas, where much tree planting has taken place, but where roads and bridges are too weak to withstand timber traffic.

The Forum has successfully brought together interested parties to develop solutions to these difficult transport challenges. The Forum’s Steering Group provides strategic co-ordination at national level - it identifies international best practice, promotes innovative thinking and establishes working groups to address specific issues. In addition, there are eight local timber transport groups operating in Scotland - Argyll, Ayrshire, Scottish Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Grampian, Highland, Stirling and Tayside.

Each local group has developed a strong agenda to tackle local issues.

- Each has developed a local Agreed Routes Map which is used to direct timber traffic along specified roads, thereby keeping it off the most vulnerable roads.
- The Scottish Borders, Dumfries & Galloway, and Grampian groups have completed Local Area Modelling Assessments (LAMAs) for their areas. These studies incorporate the Agreed Routes and identify tonnages expected over these routes for a range of scenarios – for example, with and without investment in a particular road – and then present expected timber flows as GIS maps for the various alternatives. The information provided by these LAMAs facilitates forward planning of road maintenance and upgrading work by local authorities and the identification of options for infrastructure investment to enable use of alternative rail or water modes.

Some 95% of timber is carried by road, but there are obvious environmental and social benefits from moving logs by other modes such as rail and sea. Overall there has been insufficient investment in infrastructure – road, rail and sea – but where investment is made then the economic, environmental and social benefits are clear.

We believe the forestry sector provides an exemplar of best practice in collaborative working and in successfully developing effective solutions.

High Level Concerns

The Timber Industry plays a significant role in the rural economy of Scotland.

- **The Timber Transport Forum and the Regional Timber Transport Groups are well established in Scotland and have a significant role to play in helping the Scottish Executive identify existing and future rural transport needs.**

TTF welcomes involvement in Transport Scotland and already have processes in place that will help deliver the Scottish Executives targets.

- **The consultation document makes little mention of rural road user requirements and little mention of freight. The resolution of transport problems should not be driven by high profile political needs but should be linked to medium and long-term strategy.**

TTF welcomes the idea of ten-year strategic planning.

- **Resolution of Scotland's Transport problems will require additional resource. The proposals contained within the consultation will only be effective if the controlling bodies are given additional resource to implement cost effective proposals.**

TTF recognises that new resources are needed for cost effective delivery of the Scottish Executives proposals.

The Consultation

We comment as follows:

Q1. Overall aims

TTF recognises the importance of having a single point of strategic focus within government and is broadly supportive of the approach proposed.

However, we are concerned at the emphasis in the paper given to public transport and urban issues in contrast to freight and rural needs. The paper also places particular emphasis on developing **new** transport infrastructure. As a rural industry operating across Scotland, our highest priority is for upgrading and renewal of existing transport infrastructure including rail and sea, and particularly road, at the local level so that harvested timber can reach its markets.

In this we will have much in common with other rural based sectors. Rural industries can only deliver economic growth if there is adequate transport infrastructure investment. Rural transport infrastructure has received too little public investment for decades. Our test for the Executive's proposals is whether they will allow rural transport issues to be addressed more effectively.

Q2. Widening public involvement.

We believe that the Timber Transport Forum and the network of local Timber Transport Groups provide a successful model of stakeholder participation and joint working. It is a model that TTF would like to be applied more widely and one in which TTF could have an active role.

Q6. Regional partnership resourcing.

The Forum is not expressing a strong view on whether the Executive Agency approach is preferred over other options, but we can see merit in the flexibility such a model would bring.

Fundamental to success is the relationship between national, regional and local working. Again we believe the Timber Transport Forum model offers useful lessons in how to operate at all these levels – the Forum operates at national level, Timber Transport Groups operate at regional level and many of the solutions are delivered by the partners at local level. In a number of areas where Groups cover several local authority areas, Partnership Charters have been developed to formalise working relationships.

What is important is that the model developed and the working relationships that follow are such that an integrated and seamless approach can be adopted. A major transport issue such as timber transport needs to be recognised at national level as being important to Scotland's economic development. However, many of the solutions need to be developed at regional level and implemented at local level. Resources need to be guided along the chain to the point where they can best deliver solutions.

Since many timber transport issues require a sustained investment, it is important that a long-term (ten-year) planning framework is developed, so giving business confidence that the necessary investment will be forthcoming when it is needed.

The Forum believes that key arteries (but work needs to be done on "key arteries" definition) should be the responsibility of Transport Scotland, with other responsibilities being exercised by local authorities working in regional partnership when these partnerships will aid delivery. Whilst local authorities are best placed to develop solutions and are more directly accountable to local community needs, funding remains a critical aspect and funds must be made available at the appropriate level to ensure delivery. A clear definition of how partnerships will work and how finance will flow to the point of need is critical.

Q7. Regional transport partnerships.

We do not have a strong view on the number and extent of these but consider the current four regional partnerships to be a good starting point.

We would be pleased to provide any further information you require.

Yours faithfully

Ian Forshaw
Chairman
Timber Transport Forum