

TimberTransportForum

delivering solutions for a growing UK harvest

**A contribution from the Timber Transport Forum
to
Scotland's Land Use Strategy**

The Timber Transport Forum is a voluntary partnership working with communities, their representatives and the forest industry to promote a vibrant and sustainable timber transport sector and to secure social and environmental benefits. Members comprise representatives from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, Forest Industries (Confederation of Forest Industries and UK Forest Products Association), Forestry Commission in England, Scotland and Wales, The Welsh Assembly Government, Welsh Regional Transport Consortia, The Highland Council, North Yorkshire County Council, Rail Freight Group, Road Haulage Association, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Government, and the Society for Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland.

More details can be found at www.timbertransportforum.org.uk

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Introduction

1. The Timber Transport Forum welcomes the opportunity to contribute to Scotland's first Land Use Strategy. The Forum's contribution focuses on the need to **invest in minor road and other rural transport infrastructure that serves the Scottish forest resource**, to ensure the resilience of the timber supply chain.

The contribution of forestry as a land use

2. The expansion of the plantation forest resource has made a significant contribution to land use change in the past few decades. In parts of the country, such as Dumfries & Galloway and Argyll, forestry cover is approaching a third of the land area.
3. The management of productive forests and the wood processing industries employ over 23000 people and add £960m per year to the Scottish economy¹.
4. The forestry sector provides a reliable, low risk and low cost contribution to achieving the targets for emissions reduction through economic growth. Trees sequester carbon from the atmosphere, which can then be fixed in wood products, replacing more energy intensive construction materials. Small dimension logs and sawmill by-products find a market with board and paper mills, or as biomass fuels, feeding renewable energy power stations and boilers.
5. The importance of forestry in this regard has been highlighted in the Read report: *Combating Climate Change: A Role for UK Forests*².
6. To maintain the contribution of forestry to emissions reduction, the Scottish Government Climate Change Delivery Programme envisages an expansion of forest cover in Scotland from 17% to 25% by 2050³, with a large proportion of this being productive forests to support the timber industries.

Timber Transport

7. Around 300,000 lorry loads of sustainably-grown logs are transported each year from Scottish forests to the many sawmills, and board, pulp and paper mills where they are processed. The harvest will increase by around 50% over the next decade

¹ The Economic Contribution of the Forest Industries to the UK Economy. Centre for Economics and Business Research 2006. Available on the [ConFor website](#)

² Combating Climate Change: A role for UK Forests. 2009. The Stationery Office, Edinburgh

³ The Scottish Government's Rationale for Woodland Expansion
[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/ForestExpansion.pdf/\\$FILE/ForestExpansion.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/ForestExpansion.pdf/$FILE/ForestExpansion.pdf)

as a substantial area of forest, planted in the 1970s and 80s, comes on stream. In addition there is an expectation that a proportion of the harvest residues currently left on site will, in future, be collected for biomass fuel. Sustainable timber transport is therefore critical if the potential contributions of Scotland's forests to a Scotland are to be realised.

Infrastructure limitations

8. What has become increasingly apparent in recent years is that the road infrastructure that serves our forest resource is ill equipped to handle this level of timber traffic. The minor public roads that reach into the hills often derive from narrow, twisting cart tracks that were never designed for modern haulage vehicles⁴. The culverts and bridges over the burns can be centuries old and the passing places on single track roads are seldom large enough for lorries. A few timber lorries per day can have a substantial impact on these rural roads. Even the trunk roads in rural Scotland have limitations and timber haulage contributes to wear and tear and to traffic congestion.
9. While the timber harvest is increasing, the condition of rural roads is declining and local authorities face a huge backlog of work simply to maintain rural roads⁵, with further budget cuts likely. In some areas, vital timber haul routes are threatened with closure for want of limited investment.

The role of the Timber Transport Forum

10. The Timber Transport Forum plays a critical role in sustaining timber transport. It was set up in 2000 with a Partnership Charter to ensure dialogue between Local Authorities, the timber sector and local communities. The forum works through a network of Regional Timber Transport Groups made up of forest owners and managers, local authority road engineers, local councillors, timber processors and timber hauliers. The groups provide a voluntary framework to manage timber movement on the public road network.
11. Over the last ten years the timber transport groups have developed agreed routes maps for roundwood haulage, directing timber traffic onto the most suitable roads. Diversions, restrictions or traffic management solutions are put in place where roads

⁴ The Scottish Forestry Strategy (2006) highlights the limitations of the road infrastructure for timber transport and includes a priority action to develop infrastructure through the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme and through partnership working.

⁵ State of the Scottish Local Roads Network 2010, SCOTS, April 2010

are weaker, and where timber traffic will affect local communities. The maps⁶ are regularly reviewed and updated to take account of new areas of harvesting and changes in markets. The agreed routes maps are voluntary but self-enforced by the timber industry and hauliers. Should problems arise, the timber transport groups provide a forum for resolution.

The contribution of the Scottish Government

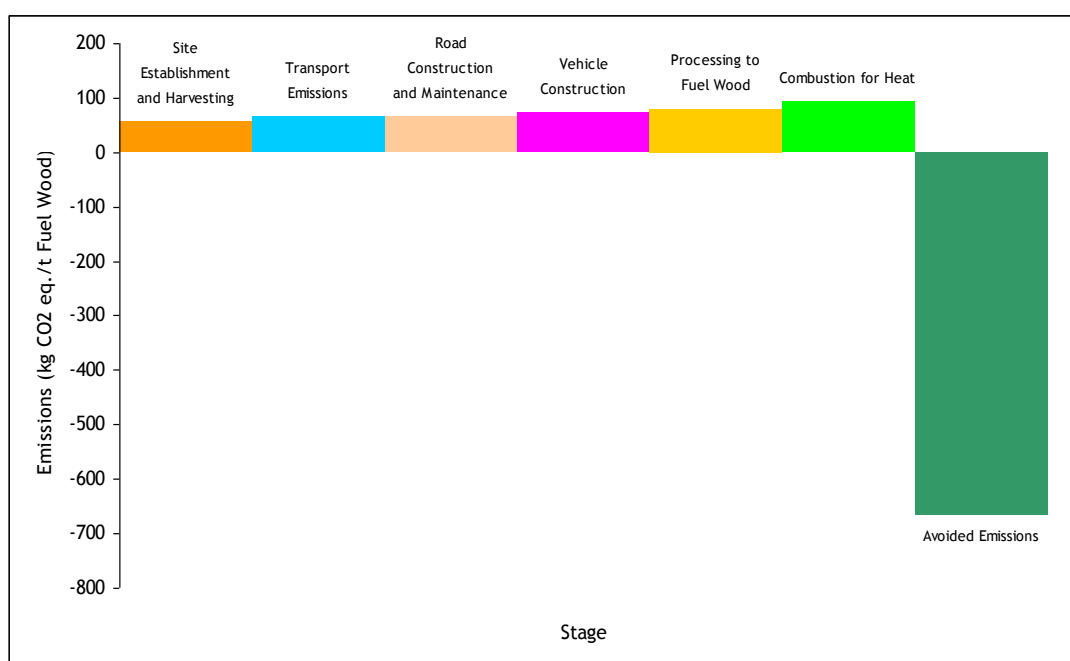
12. The Scottish Government has provided match funding through the **Strategic Timber Transport Fund** investing around £19m since 2005⁷. More than half of the fund, around £8.4m, has been spent on constructing in-forest haul routes, which help to keep timber traffic off particular stretches of the public road and to bypass villages.
13. A further £4.7m has been spent on improvements to public roads, where often relatively small investments can significantly increase their capacity to sustain timber transport. Works typically involve strengthening road edges and bridges, improving sightlines and building passing places.
14. In some circumstances a shift from road to other modes of transport – boat or rail - provides additional benefits. The **Strategic Timber Transport Fund** has enabled innovative developments in promoting rail and boat haulage, taking large volumes of timber off the main roads. However, even with inter-modal transport, the initial journey to a port or railhead still requires transport on minor roads. Rural ports and railheads that could contribute to inter-modal solutions have also suffered from neglect in recent decades and require upgrading.

⁶ The Agreed Routes Maps cover the main forest areas of Scotland and are available online at www.timbermap.org

⁷ Strategic Timber Transport Scheme, Update Report, Forestry Commission Scotland, August 2009
[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/STTSUpdateStatementAugust2009.pdf/\\$FILE/STTSUpdateStatementAugust2009.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/STTSUpdateStatementAugust2009.pdf/$FILE/STTSUpdateStatementAugust2009.pdf)

The carbon footprint of timber transport

15. A report⁸, commissioned by the Timber Transport Forum, has improved understanding of the carbon footprint of timber transport, covering the direct costs of fuel, the indirect costs of lorries and tyres and also looking at the contribution of road maintenance to emissions. There is scope to improve the information we have, to better evaluate the relative carbon benefits of alternative investments such as improving public roads or creating in-forest bypasses. However, what is clear from the study and demonstrated in the graph below, is that **the carbon benefits of avoided emissions from using timber products in construction or as a renewable fuel greatly outweigh the carbon costs of transport and production.**



Cumulative Contribution of Each Stage of Fuel Wood Production and Use

Investing in a low carbon future

16. Our forest resource is here to stay; when forests are harvested there is a requirement to replant. The forest industries are continuing to invest in modern, efficient processing facilities which draw logs from large catchment areas. The renewable energy sector provides an additional market for lower value material, particularly in providing renewable heat to businesses and communities within Scotland. If we are to increase our reliance on biomass fuels we need to ensure a resilient and dependable supply chain.

⁸ Understanding the Carbon Footprint of Timber Transport in the United Kingdom, North Energy Associates Ltd. 2010. Timber Transport Forum

17. Where there are substantial concentrations of productive forests, there is a strong rationale to construct robust, fit for purpose infrastructure that can serve our forest resource in the long term.

18. The scale of investment required to maintain timber transport infrastructure is significant from a local authority perspective but minimal when compared with the investment requirements of other emissions reduction strategies. If we are to reap the huge benefits of a century of investment in Scotland's forests it is critical we continue to invest in sustaining the minor road network and other transport infrastructure that serves the forest industry.

Recommendations

19. The Timber Transport Forum proposes that the Land Use Strategy:

- **Recognises the Scottish Government's rationale for woodland expansion and the contributions of the forestry sector and forest industries to the Scottish economy and the GHG emissions reduction strategy**
- **Considers the investment in rural transport infrastructure required to realise these contributions**
- **Supports the call for a continuation of the Strategic Timber Transport Fund or similar measures to ensure there are sufficient resources at the local level to provide for a resilient, dependable supply chain for home grown timber**

20. The Timber Transport Forum would be happy to discuss these proposals further and to provide more information as required.

Roland Stiven

On behalf of the Timber Transport Forum

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