

TimberTransportForum

delivering solutions for a growing UK harvest

A Submission by the Timber Transport Forum

to

Forestry Commission Scotland

19th November 2012

The Timber Transport Forum is a voluntary partnership “working with community 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 twelve regional timber transport groups from across Scotland, N. England and Wales, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the forest industries (Confederation of Forest Industries and UK Forest Products Association), Forestry Commission England, Scotland, Wales, Welsh Government, Welsh Regional Transport Consortia, 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

1. The Timber Transport Forum welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the draft guidance on **Managing woodland access and forest operations in Scotland**.

2. Background to the Timber Transport Forum

- 2.1. The Forum is concerned with the process of moving softwood logs from Scottish forests to the processors. Currently around 300,000 lorry loads of logs are transported each year and the harvest is set to increase over the coming decade. Large lorries (now 44 tonne HGVs) remain the most practical and cost effective means of initial transport from the forest.
- 2.2. Those involved in timber transport are aware that road haulage from the forest can impact on the fabric of more fragile rural roads and on the quality of life of the neighbouring communities.
- 2.3. The Timber Transport 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 develop and share best practice and provide a voluntary framework to manage timber movement on the public road network with a view to minimising the costs and impacts of timber transport.
- 2.4. 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 are weaker, and where timber traffic will affect local communities. The maps¹ 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.
- 2.5. The Forum promotes the value of the Scottish Government's Strategic Timber Transport Scheme which, since 2005 has helped to fund the construction or upgrading of 140km of in-forest haul road specifically to divert heavy goods vehicles transporting timber from physically fragile public roads or from roads where timber traffic impacts substantially on communities. The busiest of these, at Eskdalemuir, diverts 10,000 lorry movements each year from the village.

¹ The Agreed Routes Maps cover the main forest areas of Scotland and are available online at www.timbermap.org

- 2.6. Projects funded by the scheme provide social and environmental benefits – normally reducing the impact of timber haulage on other parts of the road network, on communities and on the environment. In some cases there are additional opportunities to develop recreational access but the priority is to ensure safe reliable haulage routes.

3. Response

- 3.1. The focus of our response concerns the section of the guidance on core paths. We welcome the proposed amendment to the legislation that would enable more reliable closure of core paths where necessary to allow safe forestry operations.
- 3.2. Furthermore where a road is likely to experience regular use by heavy timber traffic (such as a purpose built timber haulage diversion route) it is unlikely to be appropriate for designation as a core path. Such a designation would create an unrealistic expectation of suitability for recreational use and at the same time place an unreasonable burden on the forest managers in managing harvesting and haulage operations safely.
- 3.3. In the few scenarios where there may be a clear conflict of interest between timber haulage and recreational access, the access authorities should work with forest managers to fund and develop suitable recreational infrastructure or provide alternative routes.

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

Roland Stiven (on behalf of the Timber Transport Forum)