

TimberTransportForum

delivering solutions for a growing UK harvest

A contribution from the Timber Transport Forum
to the
REVIEW OF SCOTTISH PLANNING POLICY: PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE

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 eleven regional timber transport groups from across Scotland, North England and Wales, as well as the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the forest industry associations (Confederation of Forest Industries, UK Forest Products Association and Forestry Contracting Association), Scottish Forest & Timber Technologies, Forestry Commission England, Scotland, & Wales, Wales Forest Business Partnership, Rail Freight Group, Road Haulage Association and the Society for Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland.

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

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Registered in Scotland as Confederation of Forest Industries UK (Ltd). No. SC34467

Introduction

1. The Timber Transport Forum welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the review of Scottish Planning Policy. The Forum's contribution focuses on the need to encourage **investment in minor road and other rural transport infrastructure that serves the Scottish forest resource**, to support the objectives of the Scottish Land Use Strategy.
2. Commercial forestry now covers almost 14% of Scotland's land area. The bulk of timber production comes from heavily forested regions such as The Highlands, Argyll, Dumfries and Galloway, Grampian, Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders, Perth and Kinross, Stirlingshire, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs, Moray and Angus. In these regions, commercial forestry cover can approach 30%.
3. The Government's [response](#) to the recent report from the Woodland Expansion Advisory Group sets a target for continued woodland expansion, much of it likely to be in the uplands of Scotland. The Woodland Expansion Advisory Group noted that the condition of transport infrastructure was a constraint on future woodland expansion in some areas.
4. Most of the existing plantation forestry resource is in the uplands and served by weak, sometimes single track, public roads, ill-suited to timber haulage vehicles. As a result the home grown timber supply chain is less efficient than it could be and impacts on the minor road network, and on the communities that rely on them.
5. Harbour and rail access infrastructure in rural areas is also dated, which restricts opportunities for intermodal transport of timber.

Economic and carbon benefits

6. Scottish forests are a national asset, the result of a century of investment and planting by the public and private sector. As the [Scottish Forestry Strategy](#) sets out, they deliver a wide array of social, environmental and economic benefits.
7. The management of productive forests and the wood processing industries employ over 23000 people and add £960m per year to the Scottish economy¹. Scotland's growing woodlands sequester greenhouse gases – currently over 8.0 MtCO₂e/ yr,

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

projected to reduce to around 7.0 MtCO₂e by 2022². In 2011³ recent new planting sequestered 0.45 MtCO₂.

Investing in a low carbon future

8. Our forest resource is here to stay; when forests are harvested there is a general requirement to replant. So, 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.
9. 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 carbon emissions reduction strategies.
10. The Timber Transport Forum has identified the strategic parts of the public road network necessary to access the timber. The Scottish Government currently provides £3m/yr through the [strategic timber transport fund](#) to match investment by local authorities and private sector growers to reduce the impacts of timber haulage by upgrading or bypassing substandard road infrastructure. This fund is well used.
11. However, local authorities are limited in their ability to prioritise investment in what are often (aside from timber haulage) relatively low traffic volume roads. Some council areas such as Argyll and Bute and Scottish Borders incur the impacts of timber haulage on their roads while the benefits of the value-adding timber processing industries are located in other council areas.
12. The local authorities in most well-forested areas prepare forestry strategies that consider the opportunities and constraints to productive forestry. In many cases transport infrastructure is seen as a constraint to efficient management of existing areas of productive forestry and to expanding the resource by new planting.

Proposed changes to Planning Policy

13. The Forum would like the Scottish Planning Policy to give **greater emphasis** to the importance of rural transport infrastructure in delivering the Land Use Strategy. Scotland cannot expect to have sustainable 21st century land uses reliant on (sometimes) 19th century transport infrastructure. There should be an **expectation** that, over time, the minor road network, harbours, piers and railheads will be upgraded to suit modern rural land management needs. The Timber Transport

² [Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting the Emissions Reduction Targets 2010-2022 Technical Appendix](#)

³ [The Scottish Forestry Strategy: Implementation Plan \(2012-15\) And Progress Report \(2011-12\)](#)

Forum has identified the strategic routes and infrastructure serving the forest industry and can help to prioritise investment.

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

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On behalf of the Timber Transport Forum

January 2013