

TimberTransportForum

delivering solutions for a growing UK harvest

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Response to Safeguarding Scotland's Remote Rural Communities; A proposal for a Bill to enhance the consideration given to remote rural mainland communities by public bodies in Scotland.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your consultation. The Timber Transport Forum is supportive of the aims of the proposed bill and agrees that such a bill is required to focus and integrate public policies.

Roland Stiven has completed the online survey on behalf of the Timber Transport Forum. This paper provides more detail on our response.

The Timber Transport Forum is a voluntary partnership of local authority roads authorities, the forest industry and national agencies and organisations. The Forum is concerned with supporting the forest and timber industries, a £1bn sector that involves 20% of our land area, provides 20,000 jobs mostly in rural Scotland and is vital in addressing the climate emergency by storing and sequestering atmospheric carbon and providing low-carbon alternatives to more environmentally damaging and greenhouse gas generating materials. The forest and timber industries move 8.5 million tonnes of logs from Scottish forests to processors across rural Scotland every year over 10,000km of minor rural roads.

The Forum's responses to recent Scottish Government consultations highlight issues that are relevant to the proposed bill. The Forum recognises that despite policy being well-meaning there is a metropolitan policy mindset that tends to perceive rural Scotland as unproductive places that need supported and serviced rather than lived in, invested in, worked in and made more economically productive.

We support the recommendations of the National Council for Rural Advisor's report the [New blueprint for Scotland's rural economy: recommendations to Scottish Ministers](#), and welcome the Scottish Government's response.

In this early stage of the development of this proposed bill, we would want to make specific mention of the role of the forestry and timber industries, and the importance of infrastructure.

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

The Forestry and Timber industries

The consultation document gives a particular focus to agriculture but, apart from a photo, there is a distinct lack of mention of forestry. There is mention of Agriculture Champions but no suggestion of Forestry Champions. The forestry and timber industries are a major, modern, low carbon growth sector in rural and remote rural Scotland with a higher GVA than agriculture and providing many, permanent, well-paid, jobs. It is central to the Climate Change programme.

It would be instructive if the Scottish Government were to overlay forestry land use and business activity against the rural classifications to see just how relevant it is to remote rural Scotland. In our response to the consultation on the Scottish Government's Forestry Strategy the Forum suggested how forestry and infrastructure development could help to spearhead economic development in rural areas alongside other productive land uses and businesses.

 [TTF Consultation Response 2018 Scottish Forestry Strategy](#)

The importance of transport infrastructure

The very definitions of rural, remote rural etc. are a function of infrastructure, specifically road infrastructure, or lack of it. 'Within 30 minutes drive' could be 10 miles or 30 miles, depending on the quality of the road infrastructure. By improving transport infrastructure, you dramatically shift the scope of what is rural, remote rural etc.

There tends to be a focus on car travel, on moving people around and the expectation that we need to move people from remote rural to the centres where economic production and services are located.

We tend to look at transport infrastructure in terms of how efficiently we can service the periphery from the centre, rather than how can we create a productive rural, value-adding economy.

Moving freight is just as important as moving people. Freight is vital for modern productive land uses, business and enterprise. Our trunk roads serving rural Scotland become poorer as you travel from the centre; so, remote areas have worse transport infrastructure than the centre, even though they have further to travel! Resilience and reliability also decline so that weather or accidents can mean that you simply don't get to your destination at all.

The minor road network in rural Scotland is aged and often ill-suited to modern freight. Rural rail and ports are often similarly decrepit. Support for modal shift reduces pressure on trunk roads and Transport Scotland but, can add pressure to fragile rural roads maintained by local authority budgets. The Forum responded to the consultation on the National Transport Strategy in this regard and awaits its production.

[TTF Consultation Response 2019 Scottish National Transport Strategy](#)

The local authority areas highlighted in the proposal document all host a regional timber transport group and have the large majority of Scotland's minor rural roads, this comprises about 30,000km of single tracked rural roads (half of our road network length).

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These roads are the responsibility of local authorities and there is no coherent plan on how to maintain them, let alone make them fit for the 21st century. Ageing infrastructure makes running a business, or efficiently providing a service, very challenging. The Timber Transport Forum and regional groups focus on the practical challenges of delivering economic land use activity despite the very real freight constraints of rural infrastructure.

The Forum recently responded to the RECC Committee regarding local roads.

 [TTF Consultation Response 2019 SP RECC on Road Maintenance](#)

The Forum also recently responded to the Consultation to the Infrastructure Commission Scotland highlighting the need to ensure rural Scotland is not left behind in the development of the low carbon economy. Indeed, we see rural Scotland as being at the forefront of this. We note the Commission's recent report and welcome that it picks up on the issue that planning of land uses such as forestry and agriculture is not well integrated with infrastructure planning.

 [TTF Consultation Response 2019 Infrastructure Commission Scotland](#)

We look forward to the development of the proposed Safeguarding Scotland's Remote Rural Communities bill and would welcome the opportunity to continue to provide comment and evidence as it progresses.



Roland Stiven on behalf of
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