

Cumbria & North-East England Timber Transport Group Meeting

Draft Minutes

27th April 2022 at 14:00 via Microsoft Teams

Chair: James England (standing in for Mike Yerbury)

Present (19 people)

James Harrison-Moore, Robin McCartney, Mark Child, David Stoddart, Paul Boobyer, James Richards, Lynne Ryan, Robert Scott, John Riddle, Dan Barry, James Houghton, Michael Hall, Max McLaughlan, Marcus Wright, Andy Powell, James England, Tracy Turner, Rajmund Zygadlewicz

Apologies

Mike Yerbury, Colin Binnie, Tom Coates, Matt Kelly, James MacDonald

1. Minutes from last meeting

Actions from last meeting

- Robin McCartney to make contact with the Borderland Growth Deal Forum. **This action has not been completed.**
- James England to circulate a one-page document providing information on resources following Storm Arwen. **This action has been completed.**
- Paul Boobyer to contact the Highways Department of Durham County Council to ask whether they will join the C&NETTG. **Paul has contacted Durham County Council's Highway Management Sub Area Office and awaits a reply.**

There followed a discussion about Item 4 of the previous minutes (review of the Agreed Routes Map) in which James England explained that major forests are the focus for timber transport planning. A review is done concertedly with all stakeholders. Normally this involves marking up a map to identify key timber exit points. In England parish councils are normally included in this process.

Robin McCartney noted that some routes are designated as Agreed Routes when they shouldn't be. James England added that it is very useful to have a road condition index and local haulier knowledge to classify haulage routes. James Houghton commented that routes in Cumbria are reviewed regularly, and a review will be undertaken by the summer.

In reference to Item 4 of the previous minutes, Michael Hall suggested that there should be more than one working group convened, to make sure all the appropriate stakeholders are consulted.

The minutes of the last meeting were otherwise agreed.

2. New Actions

- ACTION: A small working group / working groups will be formed to review the Agreed Routes Map (re Item 4 of the previous minutes)
- ACTION: ACTION: JE to organise small working group (re Item 4c)
- ACTION: Group to identify 6 priority roads for timber transport (re Item 5)

3. Reiteration of protocols and best practice

James England advised that he was dealing with a number of issues arising from storm Arwen and thought it would be timely to go through them:

- Roadside timber loading - on the rise and as the best practice leaflet (Loading Timber From Roadside Forests) we have states it can only be done with the approval of the Local Authority and should only be done as a last resort.
- Harvesters working right by the side of the public road with no road closures in place and therefore no safe system of work.
- Accesses improved on classified roads without the correct planning required from the Local Authority.
- Brash and mud left on roads causing issues.

4. Current Issues

a. **Update on windblow issues** – James England stated that it has been a difficult time with the storms and hopefully things are gradually getting back to an even keel.

Max McLaughlan gave an update from Forestry England. The most affected areas are northeast England and Kielder. FE is selling parcels of windblown timber. There are some significant volumes and some landlocked sites which are challenging to reach. Forestry England's forests in the Rothbury Beat will be producing increased volumes of timber from windblow recovery which will result in higher than normal haulage levels in that area.

Andy Powell (GT Timber) reported that there had been a lot of harvesting activity around Christmas which reduced just before Easter. A lot of volume of the windblown trees has been non-FSC, so maintaining the minimum 70% FSC-sourced timber is a challenge and will remain so for a while. Mostly spruce being processed by GT Timber.

b. Ponteland, Northumberland

Concerns have been raised by the local community over HGV's and timber lorries using Callerton Lane B6323, Berwick Hill Road and North Road. James highlighted that timber lorries are HGV's and the distinction is unjustified and it claims the roads are being abused. Given the relatively small percentage of usage by timber lorries, when compared to other HGV's, it seems unfair. A discussion took place over the road (A696) and the group acknowledged that this is an important route for all hauliers and road users. It also needs to be acknowledged that the road is a public road and therefore open to all legal traffic which HGVs are part of.

c. Ennerdale, Cumbria

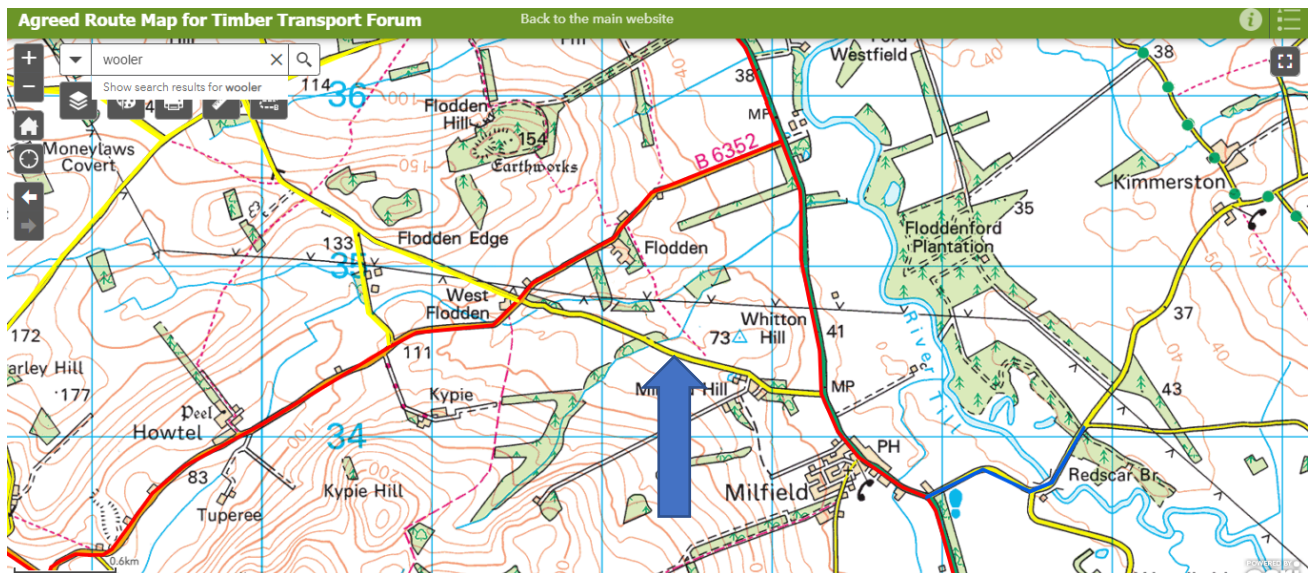
Following a complaint by the Parish Council at Ennerdale, relating to timber being transported from the area, James England and Mike Yerbury visited the location and assessed the condition of the access routes. That visit concluded that the roads are suitable for 44 tonne (gross vehicle weight) timber transport due to

the generally good road condition. The route into the forest remains the only route for accessing the timber and bring it to the market. Max McLaughlan noted that timber has been hauled along this route for decades and in his long tenure at Forestry England can only recall two previous incidents (>30,000 tonne has been hauled out in the previous 5 years). However, with suggested visitor numbers increasing the Parish Council are seeking some clarification of the route designation and what mitigation measures are planned to prevent future issue. Forestry England have installed information panels explaining the purpose of the forestry works (clearance of *P.ramorum* infected Larch). Forestry England have engaged with the local Parish Council (21/03/2022) and are keen for engagement to continue with the input of the TTG and Cumbria CC. It was agreed to setup a small working group to look at the issues and see how they could be addressed.

ACTION: JE to organise small working group

d. Any other issues

- **C31 Weight Restriction:** Robin McCartney mentioned that a weight restriction will be imposed on the C31 (shown below) in Northumberland which will need adding to the agreed route map in due course.



- **Contacts for consultations:** It was confirmed by both NCC and CCC that the best way to contact the Councils was via the [addresses](#) displayed on the Timber Transport Forum's website.

5. Potential funding for a north of England Timber Transport fund

Mike Yerbury met with Guy Opperman (MP for Hexham) recently. Following discussions about how the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme works in Scotland, he has asked the group to identify the 6 biggest priority roads in Northumberland where funding/road works are required. This could very easily tie in with something like an exit point survey for the next 12-24 months which would be very useful for the region. It is hoped that we can build on this work to secure additional funding from National Government to support more projects.

ACTION: Group to identify 6 priority roads for timber transport

6. Timber Transport Forum update (PB)

a. Road Haulage Association proposal

The RHA is arranging for a trial in Scotland, on the A75, in which the speed limit for vehicles over 7.5 tonnes laden weight would alternate between 40 & 50mph on consecutive days (the speed limit for laden HGVs over 7.5 tonnes travelling on A roads in Scotland is currently 40mph). The RHA will also review English and Welsh data from the last seven years (i.e., since the 50mph limit was instated in those countries). In addition, Transport Scotland will produce stats for pre and post speed trial on the A9 (2014-2018). The RHA hope to review findings in Q3 this year.

b. Forest Haulage Safety for Professional Drivers - Driver CPC training days

Dates for the first round of CPC eligible training in +F format for HGV holders are available between May and February 2023. FISA recommend that FWMs involved in instructing haulage should also sit the course. All training days will be held on a Saturday, but additional midweek and custom dates can be accommodated to assist with this. An event on 24th September will be held at Kielder, and on 29th October in Carlisle. A flyer can be viewed on [FISA's website](#).

c. Timber Transport Forum conference presentations

The Timber Transport Conference was held in March at the North Lakes Hotel, Penrith and was well attended. The chair of the TTF and Paul Boobyer have received positive Feedback on the quality of the presentations, topics and venue. Presentations are available on the [TTF website](#).

7. Any other business

Andy Powell asked whether the timber haulage sector engages with local authorities and industry stakeholders more than other sectors. Andy pointed out that quarry vehicles also use the public road network, but timber haulage often gets the blame for road issues. Robin McCartney replied that other sectors tend not to engage as much as the timber haulage sector. James England said that this had been looked at previously in other areas and quarries tended to be established through the planning process but the long-term impacts were often not well considered and not well planned for in the same way as timber.

8. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held in September. An invite and agenda will be sent in due course.