

North East England Timber Transport Group

Meeting held at the Offices of Egger (UK) Limited, Hexham
at 3.00 p.m. on Monday, 20th June, 2016

Present:

Athole McKillop, Chairman (AMcK)	Land Factor
Max McLaughlan (MMc)	H&M Operations Manager, Forestry Commission
Robert Mayhew (RM)	Northumberland National Parks Authority
Robert Scott (RSc)	SGS Timber Transport
Tom Coates (TC)	Egger Forestry Harvesting
Kris Westerby (KW)	Area Highways Manager, Northumberland County Council
Hazel Newman (HN), Secretary	Egger (UK) Limited

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1. Chairman, Athole McKillop welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined its purpose, which was to discuss the use by timber lorries of junctions on the B6318 (Military road) in the area of 'The Sill' development. This matter had been raised as an Agenda item by Robert Mayhew, of the Northumberland National Parks Authority at the last meeting of the Timber Transport Group held on 7th April, and deferred for more detailed consideration at this meeting.

2. It had been agreed at the TTG meeting that attempts should be made to quantify the extent of timber transport movement in the area.

Max McLaughlan of North England Forest District had calculated that based on the production forecast for Kielder, there was an outline volume of 140,000m³ (113,000 tonnes) which could potentially come onto the Military Road via Edges Green in the next five years. Assuming half of it is heading towards destinations to the east (turning left towards the Sill junction), this would equate to 57,000 tonnes in five years, equating to around 2,200 loaded wagon trips, an average of 440 loads a year, 9 per week. However, he pointed out that in reality there would be peaks and troughs in production, and based on two contracts (standing sales) where timber had been sold, but harvesting had not yet commenced, potentially 10,000 tonnes would exit Kielder via Edges Green over the next 9 months.

Looking at timber production in the wider context, the Chairman related some of the figures identified by the Roots to Prosperity initiative. Annual timber production in the North of England (west and east) amounts to approximately 1.4-1.5 million tonnes, of which about 500K comes out of Northumberland. The majority (440,000 tonnes) coming from the Forestry Commission, and the remainder from private owners. This equates to approximately 70 loads of timber per day being transported on roads somewhere in the North of England. Turnover in forest based industries amounts to approximately £200m per annum, attracting a GVA of £40m to the region.

3. Robert Mayhew explained the background to the Sill development, situated on the south side of the Military Road (B6318) at the junction with the C307. The initiative would replace the Once Brewed National Park Visitor Centre and YHA hostel on the site, which had seen a decline in visitor numbers over recent years, attributed to a lack of accommodation in the area and up to date facilities. The scheme will provide a new visitor centre, café, restaurant, offices, and a retail outlets, together with car parking. Whereas the previous visitor centre had attracted between 60-80,000 visitors per annum, it was anticipated that the new development would attract up to 150,000 visitors in the first year of opening.

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RM stated that visitor modelling had identified that activity days alone would attract up to 30,000 visitors, many of which would be school groups which would be transported to the Centre by bus, most of which would be travelling along the Military Road and parking at The Sill.

Kris Westerby, NCC, pointed out that signage had not yet been agreed on the approach to The Sill and it was agreed that signage would be an important source of information to hauliers.

4. U7038 – Road between B6318 and C305 (Edges Green)

RM explained that the increase in visitor numbers to The Sill was likely to lead to an increase in pedestrians using the U7038 to access the Roman Wall via Steel Rigg, and suggested that this road be designated a consultation route. He pointed out that there would be less risk of meeting pedestrians if timber vehicles were to use it between 18.00 hours and 09.00 hours (the busiest period for pedestrians being between 09.30 to 15.00 hours).

It was agreed that this road was little used by timber lorries in any event, and such a restriction was acceptable

James England to be requested to mark the route as a (yellow) consultation route on the ARM, with explanatory wording regarding the hours when it could be used.

HN/JE

5. Route South on the C307 to the A69

RM stated that with the increase in visitor numbers to 140-150,000 per annum, the nature of the junction at the Sill for vehicles turning off the B6318, south to the A69 would be impacted. He explained that it was planned to put in a pedestrian crossing across the Military Road to enable visitors to walk up to the Wall. The Centre would be a dropping off point for the Hadrian Wall bus. With the planned 30,000 person/activity days, it was anticipated that Sill would accommodate up to 600 coaches p.a. With increased visitor and vehicle movements there would be increased health and safety risks.

While this was acknowledged, the Chairman pointed out that this should have been taken into account before planning permission was granted – the increased risk was due to more visitors, not more timber lorries.

RM produced a photograph of damage to the verge of the B6318, allegedly caused by timber lorries swinging wide the left to turn right at the junction.

The viability of alternative routes from the C305 (from Edges Green) junction with the B6318, to the A69 to travel East were then discussed:

- Diversion along the Military Road to Chollerford would mean timber lorries travelling along the Military Road over a longer distance (12 miles from the C305 junction to Chollerford), and would result in an increase of lorries going through Wall and Acomb. KW reported that complaints were often received from residents of Acomb and Wall regarding disturbance from timber lorries, although there had been no accidents, and it was noted that this was an A road. RM commented that there were also health and safety issues at Housesteads and Brocolitia.
- Diversion to the A69 via the Grindon junction would result in timber lorries travelling down a long steep bank, past a High School, down into the village where the main street was restricted with parked cars. Diversion via Newbrough was deemed similarly unacceptable.

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• Diversion via Greenhead would result in a concentration of all timber lorries exiting Kielder Forest via Edges Green travelling on one smaller section of the Military Road, as well as having financial implications due to a significant increase in road miles for those with a destination to the East of the region. RM stated that a recent public meeting held at Bardon Mill regarding the Sill development, there had been complaints made regarding timber lorries using the existing route to the A69, although it was noted that there were only 6 houses on the route. Robert Scott stated that this was a well established route used over many years, and he was not aware of any problems. RM acknowledged that the concerns he had expressed on behalf of National Parks were based on a perception of risk since the Sill had not yet been built. AMcK queried the information upon which planning permission had been based, and RM replied that the Highways Authority had expressed 'no concerns regarding capacity'.	
6. Conclusion	
The Chairman identified the need for evidence upon which to make a sound decision regarding the future use of the junction at The Sill by timber lorries, and the following actions were agreed:	
• Identification of how many lorries are using the junction on a daily/weekly basis. It had been estimated that this would average approximately 9 per week over a year, but it was acknowledged that in some weeks/months the number would be more or less depending upon where the timber was being harvested. Sill staff to monitor the situation.	RM
• Identification of future busy periods at The Sill.	RM
• Identification of any problems during construction period. It was pointed out that trucks carrying building materials would currently be travelling along the Military Road to The Sill and loading/unloading at the roadside.	RM
• Comment to be obtained from NCC Highways both from when planning permission was sought and their current position.	KW
• KW and RM to meet to discuss appropriate signage at The Sill.	KW/RM
Taking into account problems arising from alternative routes, it was agreed that the junction at The Sill remained the preferred route. However, it was important that hauliers/drivers were aware of potential hazards. Based on the information obtained from the actions noted, it will be possible to carry out a risk assessment, the results of which can be disseminated to hauliers/drivers by the Timber Transport Group. It was concluded that the situation could be resolved by good communication between all parties.	
It was agreed that the Timber Transport Group would discuss with James England whether the on-line version of the ARM could include a 'pop-up' to identify the potential for pedestrian activity near the Sill junction/associated public transport movements and associated caution warning.	AMcK
The Sill is due to open in May/June 2017, and it was agreed that the information obtained regarding the above points should be brought to the next full meeting of the Timber Transport Group to be held in November.	

HN/15.08.16