

Minutes for GTTG meeting

Date: 03 March 2022

Location: via Teams

Present:

Will Anderson – Chair (WA)

Paul Barron – Moray Council (PB)

Paul Boobyer – Timber Transport Forum (PBo)

Niall Duncan – Scottish Woodlands (ND)

Angela Funk – Aberdeenshire Council (AF)

Claire Glaister – GTTG Project Officer (CG)

Lee Grigor – James Jones (LG)

Steven Hutcheon – Scottish Forestry (SH)

Paul Mathieson – Tilhill (PM)

Douglas Murray – Fountains Forestry (DoM)

Graeme Ralph – Euroforest (GR)

Roland Stiven – Scottish Forestry (SF)

Alastair Young – Forestry and Land Scotland (AY)

Apologies

Mark Atherton – Moray Council

Steve Conolly – Cawdor Forestry

Cameron Gillies – Euroforest

John Mackie – Scottish Forestry

Derek Murray – Aberdeenshire Council

Claire Wightman - Treestory

Phil Whitfield – Tilhill

Agenda Item	Action	Appointed person/s
5. (13/11/19)	Colour up all B-class road default Agreed Routes	CG/JE
2. (09/09/21)	Discuss minimum tonnage thresholds for consultation with other departments and confirm position	DM/PB
2.	Request update from TTF on ARM colour change	CG
4.	Prepare STTS application for the C12E	PB
4.	Submit letter of support for C12E and RTTAS STTS applications	WA/CG
5.	Review ARM classifications in Moray and advise of potential revisions	PB

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

WA opened a round table introduction and welcomed Steven Hutcheon as the new Scottish Forestry Conservator for Grampian.

2. Notes of last meeting on 09 September 2021

GTTG members were happy to accept the minutes of the last meeting as an accurate record of discussions.

Agenda Item	Action	Appointed person/s
5. (13/11/19)	Colour up all B-class road default Agreed Routes	CG/JE
2.	Circulate information from TGR to Aberdeenshire and Moray Council for consideration and action	CG
2.	Discuss minimum tonnage thresholds for consultation with other departments and confirm position	DM/PB
3.	Set up poll for members to vote on whether specific GTTG letter regarding Code of Practice/Strapping be sent to Police Scotland	CG
4.	Circulate exit point data to Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils	CG
5.	Set up Doodle Poll to canvas availability in late January 2022 for next GTTG meeting	CG

Colour up all B-class road default Agreed Routes: This action has partly been superseded following discussions about the colouration of Agreed and Excluded Routes. Members have previously requested that Agreed Routes are not coloured red as this gives the impression that they shouldn't be used but that Excluded Routes should be to make it clearer that they shouldn't be used. This request has been highlighted at the Timber Transport Forum and whilst they have questioned the need for a change, they will consider the request further.

If changes are to be made, WA commented that these will need to consider accessibility needs (e.g. colour blindness); PB asked if it would be possible to thicken the lines to make them clearer too.

Confirm minimum tonnage thresholds for consultation on felling licences at meeting with FCS: CG reported on information provided by Tim Gordon-Roberts (TGR) which confirmed that the 500 tonne threshold for consultation was agreed at a multi-agency meeting held in January 2017; several Council departments had been represented at the meeting and the 500 tonne/no thinning threshold was requested in response to non-road issues and not by the roads department.

TGR advised that if the Council wished this to be changed, they would need to discuss internally with all the relevant departments and come back to Scottish Forestry with a new proposal with which all departments agreed.

PB and DM re-confirmed that they were happy to stick with the original 1000 tonne threshold and hadn't had any issues with sites of less than this and would follow up with colleagues.

3. Storm Arwen/Malik and Corrie

3.1.1. Industry update

Members spent a considerable amount of time discussing the current state of the industry following the three storms including the collation/presentation/accuracy of information regarding the extent of the damage, volume of FPA/LTFP amendments and timescales for approval, need to compare what has been approved in FPAs/LTFPs with what has been reported, how to consider the additional clearance required to access/clear windblown areas in LTFPs, impact on smaller forest owners/of undermanaged woodlands, need to publicise the need to obtain permission to clear windblow more widely, use of existing/provision of new infrastructure to access woodlands/load timber, consideration of resilience felling around critical infrastructure in forest restructuring and general operational activity.

3.1.2. Local Authority update

AF reported that all local roads have now been cleared and policies are in place with Police Scotland, the Council and landowners so that when a report of a blocked road comes in, the Council will close the road for the landowner to carry out the clearance work.

There has been an increase in requests for consultation on FPA which is putting pressure on limited staff resources which has resulted in delays in getting back to forest managers. CG asked if there was anything the GTTG could do to facilitate discussions; AF advised that in most cases, site visits by local inspectors will be required.

PB noted that Moray was largely unaffected, but the Council has had to contact Scottish Forestry to ask if they have contact details of landowners who they need to clear blown/hung up trees. PB also highlighted that whilst the roads department try to take a pragmatic approach as they recognise the time constraints faced by the industry, they are aware that there is a variable degree of knowledge and experience of timber transport amongst other council colleagues.

3.1.3. Scottish Windblow Regional Action Committee update

WA/RS advised members that Scottish Forestry convened two groups (Grampian and South Scotland/North England) to discuss capacity of the sector (regulation/harvesting/haulage/processing) and potential impacts. It was recognised that processing capacity is fairly fixed and that uncertified timber coming onto the market could be an issue and that a lot of forests will not be covered by LTFPs/MPs.

WA/CG advised members that they had offered to co-host a meeting with Scottish Forestry/Aberdeenshire Council/NFUS to promote the work of the GTTG and offer information/guidance/support and had also requested that consideration be given to reviewing the eligibility of the FGS Forest Infrastructure Grant option as a way to assist smaller forest owners with the provision of access into undermanaged woodlands. SH explained that Scottish Forestry will try to make allowances where possible.

3.1.4. GTTG update

CG advised that contact details had been checked/updated on the [Local Contacts](#) GTTG web page and that should members have difficulties in contacting roads authorities to discuss timber haulage plans, to get in touch.

4. Strategic Timber Transport Scheme update and future GTTG projects

4.1. Update on regional 2021-22 projects

AF confirmed that the successful STTS projects have been completed and claims submitted. RS and CG expressed their thanks to AF for submitting all the information required so promptly.

4.2. Proposals for 2022-23 projects

RS advised members that the deadline for 2022/23 applications was 12:00 on 21 March, with the assessment panel meeting and the end of April and decisions made early May.

4.2.1. Aberdeenshire

AF advised that the Council would not be submitting any 2022-23 bids due to restructuring within the council and resulting lack of staff to develop applications. AF also advised that Aberdeenshire Council have been awarded £10m more for road maintenance for the next 10 years from the Scottish Government which has taken some pressure off the roads budget.

4.2.2. Moray

PB highlighted that the eligibility requirements of the scheme can make it difficult to develop suitable bids as the roads in most need of improvement are the “last mile” where it can be difficult to demonstrate significant community and environmental benefit.

AF reported that this was an issue in Aberdeenshire too where timber volumes are relatively low, communities are smaller populations and the roads in most need of improvement off the main, more “strategic” routes.

PB brought forward one potential scheme on the C12E Branchill road near Dallas which, were improvements (e.g. widening and edge strengthening etc.) to be carried out, could be re-classified as an Agreed Route and divert timber lorries running through the small village of Dallas to reach the B9010. GTTG members were happy to support this application so CG to prepare a letter of support for WA to sign and supply.

4.2.3. Timber Transport Project Officer

Members confirmed they were happy for a bid to be submitted to provide a regional timber transport group advisory service.

5. Agreed Routes Map

5.1. Annual review

CG advised that she was planning to review all ARM classification on an annual basis so that any queries/anomalies could be actioned accordingly. Members would still be able to make suggestions as required but an annual review would mean that all classifications would be checked at least once a year. Members were happy with this suggestion.

5.2. Moray Council ARM refresh

PB and CG advised members that there have been a number of developments in Moray which will require a review of the ARM classifications on some of the associated roads. Staff resources are such that at present, this isn't a high priority for the Council and will be picked up at a later date.

6. GTTG members updates

6.1. Round table updates and topical discussion

6.1.1. Member updates

6.1.2. TTF update

PBo gave update on the work of the TTF – see also attached.

6.1.3. FISA Haulage Working Group update

CG advised members that a series of [forest haulage videos](#) were being produced, these forming a key component of the new forest haulage driver CPC + F training course. One in particular – [haulage on fragile roads](#) – would be an important resource to show stakeholders what the industry is already doing to minimise the impact of its operations on all road users. Dates for the CPC+F training courses were still to be announced but CG to circulate to members once published.

7. Provisional dates for next meetings

7.1. Potential dates to be circulated