

## Minutes for GTTG meeting

**Date:** 05 October 2022

**Location:** via Teams

### Present:

Will Anderson – Chair (WA)  
Keir Allen – Euroforest (KA)  
Mark Atherton – Moray Council (MA)  
Paul Barron – Moray Council (PB)  
Niall Duncan – Scottish Woodlands (ND)  
James England – South Scotland Timber Transport Project Officer (JE)  
Cameron Gillies – Euroforest (CGi)

Ben Lennon – Bowlts (BL)  
Cat Kent – Tihill (CK)  
Claire Glaister – GTTG Project Officer (CG)  
Lee Grigor – James Jones (LG)  
Steven Hutcheon – Scottish Forestry (SH)  
Paul Mathieson – Tihill (PM)  
Derek Murray – Aberdeenshire Council (DM)  
Roland Stiven – Scottish Forestry (RS)

### Apologies

Steve Conolly – Cawdor Forestry  
Claire Wightman - Treestory  
Phil Whitfield – Tihill

| 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              |
| 5. (03/03/22) | Review ARM classifications in Moray and advise of potential revisions                           | PB                 |
| 3.            | Send timber transport information to SLE to promote GTTG and wider timber transport network     | CG                 |
| 5.            | Circulate details of ARM colour change trial to RTTGs to seek comment                           | CG/RTTGs           |
| 5.            | Report on responses/next steps for ARM colour change                                            | CG                 |
| 6.            | Arrange visits with roads department staff                                                      | CG                 |
| 7.            | Update Aberdeenshire Council contacts on GTTG web page                                          | CG                 |
| 7.            | Circulate FISA Timber Haulier Driver CPC link to members                                        | CG                 |

### 1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

WA welcomed members to the Teams meeting and confirmed that apologies would be noted in the minutes.

## 2. Notes of last meeting on 03 March 2022

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. (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                 |

**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

Members discussed how harvesting was going well and whilst there has been an increase in activity and more timber lorries on the road, there haven't been any reports of significant issues. DM noted that consultation with the local authority has been difficult due to absence of council staff/restructuring but is aware of the issue and responding as soon as they are able. JE advised that he is seeing an increase in roadside loading in D&G, particularly in small shelterbelts where farmers are organising/doing harvesting work themselves. WA and SH reported that there hasn't been an increase in reports of roadside loading or of alleged illegal felling within Grampian. CGi advised that the focus of work to date has been on larger forests (to secure certified timber) but forecasts they will be moving into smaller blocks over the next 6 months. WA highlighted that we don't want to see small woodlands coming out of production and requested CG send information on timber transport to SLE for onward dissemination. PB confirmed that whilst Moray avoided the worst of the storms, they are now seeing a slight increase in FPAs and LTFPs.

#### **4. Strategic Timber Transport Scheme update and future GTTG projects**

##### **4.1. Update on regional 2022-23 projects**

PB updated members on the progress of the C12E Branchill road; interim claim has been submitted (and inspected by RS), additional work has been possible due to involvement for adjacent landowner and timescales for completion of all main works should be within a month.

WA asked what impact the global increase in cost of materials will have on the project. PB advised that it hadn't been too significant to date and that a slight allowance had been included when the bid was submitted.

##### **4.2. Proposals for 2023-24 projects**

###### **4.2.1. Aberdeenshire**

DM advised that restructuring within the Council and staff vacancies has left a large gap in staff resources and hence ability to focus time on considering bids. He was able to confirm however that the capital budget for roads has been boosted by the Infrastructure Investment Fund; revenue funding is still being squeezed.

###### **4.2.2. Moray**

PB highlighted that Moray Council don't have a ring-fenced budget for roads from which to draw match funding for STTS projects. He advised that they would still like to consider Jocks Hill as a potential bid. MA confirmed that, as with Aberdeenshire Council, staff resourcing is an issue when considering future bids and that revenue budgets are tight.

###### **4.2.3. Timber Transport Project Officer**

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

Local authority representatives, WA and CG called on industry members to come forward with any suggestions and WA reminded members that we have the exit point data to highlight potential areas where harvesting levels are forecast to be high.

Members discussed the difficulties where roads lead to just one forest, the need for longer lead in times to discuss potential land purchase/collaboration, how best to demonstrate community benefit when communities in some areas are very small/do agricultural businesses count as community, the need to balance strategic targets for new woodland creation with infrastructure for future harvesting, likelihood of STTS being reviewed.

## **5. Agreed Routes Map**

### **5.1. Colour Change pilot**

A 12 week trial will begin across the GTTG area on 01 November 2022 where Agreed Routes will be coloured green and Excluded Routes red (Consultation Routes will remain yellow).

As the pilot only covers Grampian, where roads cross into other LA areas, colours of roads with the same ARM classification will be different. A splash screen will therefore be added to the ARM website to highlight this and hopefully avoid confusion. CG to email all RTTG project officers to ask if they could seek comment from their respective RTTG members; GTTG members to submit comments to CG. CG to report on responses received/next steps at the end of the trial.

## **6. Consultation and Engagement**

### **6.1. With local authorities**

Members discussed planning permission requirements for roadworks/improvements. PB and DM explained that these are dealt with by planning colleagues, but they would always recommend the applicant speaks with the LA timber transport representative prior to the submission of applications so that key issues/mitigation can be identified, and again once application has been submitted;

### **6.2. On Agreed Routes**

Following an incident of a request for evidence of consultation on an Agreed Route, members discussed whether local authorities should be notified of timber transport operations on Agreed Routes. Whilst consultation is not required, DM/PB advised that it is always useful to notify the local authority so that they can confirm if there could be any conflict with planned operational programmes;

### **6.3. Timing** (not specifically discussed as a separate item)

### **6.4. With community councils**

Members discussed how forestry and agriculture are significant industries across the GTTG area and that operational activities such as timber (and other) haulage are considered a normal part of rural life. Notwithstanding this – and as per industry good practice - the industry takes steps to notify those potentially affected by its operations on a site-by-site basis and using different methods (e.g. letter drops, social media, Public Register, forest plans). Members recognised that members of the public are increasingly aware of Agreed Routes Maps and TTMPs;

### **6.5. By the GTTG Project Officer**

Given staff turnaround in many local authorities over recent years, CG advised that she would like to offer to visit roads departments to discuss the work of the GTTG, industry good practice for timber transport, Agreed Routes Maps etc.. Members agreed this would be a useful approach.

## 7. GTTG members updates

### 7.1. Round table updates and topical discussion

#### 7.1.1. Member updates

- DM advised members that he is now the lead for Roads Maintenance and Brian Strachan that for Road Network Management. Contact details will be updated on the GTTG Local Contacts webpage;
- DM also advised members that the council is undertaking a review of bridges across the council area and may be able to use this information to consider future STTS bids;
- RS reminded members that funding is still available for Project Preparatory Grants (PPGs) which can support initial investigative work in preparation for a full STTS application at a later stage;
- PM highlighted potential risk of areas of windblow which are not eligible for FGS support not being replanted; WA confirmed that this is being discussed with Confor and Scottish Forestry;
- CG advised members of a query received from a resident on a private road asking if these are covered by the ARM system; CG had gone back to resident to say this system only covers public roads. PB and DM confirmed that unadopted roads no longer receive council funding and any repairs/maintenance, have to be funded by the residents;
- Members noted the closure of the BSW sawmill at Boat of Garten.

#### 7.1.2. TTF update

No update provided

#### 7.1.3. FISA Haulage Working Group update

LG and ND confirmed they are keen to make use the FISA Driver CPC training course. CG to circulate links to course details on FISA website.

## 8. Provisional dates for next meetings

### 8.1. Wednesdays March 8<sup>th</sup>, June 28<sup>th</sup>, October 4<sup>th</sup> 2023