

Loading Timber from Roadside Forests

Good Practice 2023



TimberTransportForum

delivering solutions for a growing UK harvest



The Timber Transport Forum was established in 2000 to provide a mechanism for sharing ideas and best practice on timber haulage issues in Great Britain. The Forum is a voluntary partnership which brings together the forestry sector, local and national governments with the aim of ensuring that the timber industry can access and market the timber resource in a sustainable way and with minimal impacts on the public road network, local communities and the environment.

This document sets out good practice relating to the use of public roads and adjacent verges for forest harvesting operations – specifically the stacking of round timber and the loading of timber haulage vehicles.

This Guidance Note complements the Forum's previously published good practice including:

- The Road Haulage of Round Timber Code of Practice (5th Edition 2020)
- Managing Timber Transport – Good Practice Guide (2012)
- Tread Softly – Lower Impact Vehicles for Timber Haulage (2014)



Forestry and Public Roads

The commercial forest resource in Great Britain has expanded over the last century resulting in substantial land use change in upland areas of rural Scotland, Wales and the north of England. The timber industries have invested heavily in modern processing capacity to produce the construction and other timber products that we use. Forestry and timber processing are now worth £1.5bn/yr to the Scottish economy alone, providing employment for over 30,000 people, mostly in rural towns.

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The public road network in these areas is a community asset essential to a wide range of users. Trunk roads are the responsibility of national government agencies (Transport Scotland, Highways England and the two Trunk Road Agents in Wales). Other public roads are managed by local authorities, acting as the roads authority. This guidance refers specifically to the road network managed by local authorities that provide access to much of the forest resource.

The forestry industry relies heavily on roads to transport raw materials from the forest and to haul timber products from the processors to market. The roads are a critical link in the supply chain. Some minor roads date from an era before modern commercial vehicles and the timber industry must use such roads with care to minimise the potential for road damage and disruption to other road users.

Under normal circumstances the public road network should not be used for forestry harvesting operations; this includes the movement of harvesting machinery (unless on a transporter vehicle), the stacking of round timber and the loading of timber haulage vehicles.

Legislation

All roads are maintained and made available for public access under national legislation; specifically the Highways Act 1980 covering England and Wales, the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 and the Road Traffic Act 1988. A public road is considered to include the roadside verges on either side of the carriageway. Verges can vary in width but normally cover all land up to a building line, boundary wall, hedge or fence. The public road also includes any related ditches, drains and public laybys.

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A public road must remain open to and available for public use at all times unless a traffic order is in place to restrict traffic.

Stacking timber on roadside verges or loading haulage vehicles from the public road could affect the safe use of the road by other users and are likely to constitute an offence under national legislation.

For instance:

- Obstructing the public highway without permission may constitute an offence under Section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 or Section 59 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.
- Obscuring sightlines is an offence under Section 79 of the Highways Act 1980 or Section 83 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.
- Damage to the public road, verges, drains and ditches is an offence under Section 131 and 148 of the Highways Act 1980 (enforced under section 149) or Section 100 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.
- Leaving mud and other debris on the road is an offence under Section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 or Section 95 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.
- Local authority roads officers have power under section 95 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 or Section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to take action over mud and other debris being deposited on the public road. In the first instance they would endeavour to work with the person causing the nuisance to mitigate or remove the danger to road users but they can carry out the clean-up work on a chargeable basis if the person causing the nuisance refuses to co-operate or is unreasonable in their response to a reasonable request made to them by a Council officer to clean up the road.
- The Police in Scotland, England and Wales have powers under the Road Traffic Act 1988 Section 22 or Section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to take action in relation to the deposition of mud or other debris on the public road which creates a danger to the road user. Their powers include charging people with committing an offence under this piece of legislation.





Figure 1:
The public road should not
be used for forestry operations.



Good Practice

Provide suitable areas for stacking and loading

Wherever possible, provide appropriate areas for stacking, loading and turning of vehicles that are **not on or immediately adjacent to** the public road. Where this involves constructing an access from the road into the forest area, be aware that:

- Any groundwork that constitutes development within 25m of a classified (A, B or C) road requires planning permission.
- In Scotland works carried out on or abutting a public road require permission under Section 56 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. Contractors carrying out work within the Public Road must be accredited to work within the public road through the holding of a New Roads and Street Works Act 1984 accreditation.
- In Scotland, any groundwork constructed further than 25m from a public road which is associated with private ways for forestry purposes will require to be considered by the planning authority under the Prior Notification process to ascertain if it is Permitted Development as outlined in the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) (Scotland) Amendment (No2) Order 2014 (SSI 2014 No. 300).
- Similar arrangements regarding Prior Notification of forestry private ways exist in England and you are advised to check with the local planning authority or the Forestry Commission local contact to ascertain if any further permission is required.
- Forest roads are regarded as a relevant project under the forestry EIA regulations with project developers being advised to seek appropriate advice.
- Improving or constructing a new access onto a classified (A, B or C) road requires planning permission.
- Improving or constructing a new access onto an unclassified road requires a road opening permit from the local authority. Local authorities will specify appropriate sightline and bell mouth design requirements. In England and Wales this requires a Section 184 License or, where improvement works to the highway is required, a Section 278 Agreement.
- Works on or abutting the public road must be carried out by operators approved by the local authority.

- Liaison will be required with utilities providers regarding roadside services such as water mains, power and phone lines.
- The requirements of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 must be considered in the management of any works.

An existing access onto a public road should only be used if it can be used safely with regard to other road users and without causing damage to the road, the verges or the drains. Where sightlines or turning areas are limiting, the access should be improved in accordance with local roads authority requirements in order to meet current standards. For small scale operations, it may be possible to ensure safety through formal traffic management procedures such as temporary traffic lights or manual stop and go boards.



Stacking and loading timber on or close to public roads

There may be situations where the topography, together with the scale of operations, means there is no practical alternative to using the road or roadside verges for forest operations. In such cases, it may be possible to arrange temporary use of the public road for stacking and loading timber. Where this is necessary, **it must be done with the formal permission of the relevant roads authority.**

In such cases you must:

- show there is no practical alternative
- plan ahead
- receive written permission from the roads authority (local authority roads/ highways department)
- Install timber stack safety signage
- manage road traffic and minimise disruption to the public
- manage operator and public safety: A risk assessment should be carried out and a copy of this document along with mitigation measures should be forwarded to the Roads Authority timber transport officer for comment.
- keep the road clear of mud and other debris
- avoid any damage to the public road including verges, ditches, drains





Permission

You will need to liaise with the roads authority well in advance. A Temporary Traffic Regulation Order to close a road requires public notice and can take up to 2 months to process, and there will be a fee. An order to occupy part of the carriageway or verge is less complicated but will still require formal process including written permission from the roads authority.

A Temporary Traffic Regulation Order only covers the road closure. You will also need to apply for planning and other permissions for any works being done to the road or on adjacent land. Be aware that the granting of other relevant permits/consents by the roads authority should not be taken as an indication that a road closure will be permitted.

Managing Road Traffic

In rural areas where opportunities for diversions are limited, it is preferable for the road to remain open to pedestrians, cyclists and emergency vehicles and to allow periodic through traffic. Temporary traffic management may allow through traffic to be maintained or enable the safe exit of vehicles onto the public road. Road signs alerting the public to operations on or adjacent to the road must comply with Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual Code of Practice and the Safety at Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1984. Traffic control using traffic lights or manual stop/go boards must be undertaken by suitably insured, trained and qualified operators, approved by the roads authority. Consider notifying the local police where permissions for timber operations are in place. Communication with local communities and other stakeholders is essential in rural areas where no alternative routes are available.

Manage Operator and Public Safety

When working on or adjacent to public roads, the risk assessments and safe working practices will need to take account of the risk of accidents to forestry operators from passing traffic and the risk to the public of forestry operations. The roads authority will require the forestry operator to have public liability insurance. Use experienced and competent operators. Risk assessment maps should be forwarded to the roads authority timber transport officer for comment.

Information on safety and forestry operations can be found in

- FISA 2014, Guidance on Managing Health and Safety in Forestry
- FC Practice Note 2013, Managing Public Safety on Harvesting Sites



Log Stacks

Logs must not be stacked on roadside verges in such a way as to obscure sightlines or to interfere with roadside drainage or watercourses. Areas designated for log stacks must allow for control and safe routing of public access. The safety zone managed around a stacking area must take account of stack height, possible failure of the stack or the accidental dislodging of logs from a stack. A single log falling from a stack could cause a major road accident for

which the operator would be liable. The most effective control measure to reduce the risk of injury from a log stack collapse is to **locate log storage areas well away from pedestrian and vehicle routes**. A minimum distance of five metres is desirable from the back of the verge of the public road to the edge of the stacking area. Signage on log stacks should follow standard forestry practice. Log stacks should be left in a safe and stable condition.

Loading Area

The vehicle loading area should provide space for vehicles to turn and load safely. The risk zone around a loading lorry is twice the length of the loader plus the length of the material being handled. If loading on a public road, banksmen should be present to maintain the risk zone and control pedestrians and traffic in addition to temporary traffic management signage. Temporary traffic management signage and information boards should comply with Chapter 8 Traffic Signs Manual and Safety at Street Works and Road Works Codes of Practice.

Keep the road clean

Timber lorries coming out of a forest access will often track mud, gravel and other debris onto the road. For reasons of safety and to minimise pollution, ensure loading areas are well drained and surfaced and remove mud from vehicles before they leave the forest gate. Where mud is brought onto the road it must be cleaned up promptly and safely. Failure to clean up mud from a public road promptly and safely can constitute an offence under the Road Traffic Act 1984



Avoid damage to public roads

Where possible the roads authority should survey and record the condition of the road prior to forestry works and share this information with the timber operator. It is good practice for the timber operator to also record condition of the road and to catalogue and report any obvious damage.

You must not cause damage to the road, including the verge, drains and laybys. This is an offence under national legislation and the local authority will seek to recover damages. Where damage has occurred, road verges and drains should be reinstated by agreement with the roads authority.

Do not stack timber over drains. Damage to drains can cause an immediate hazard from ponding of water on the road. Poor or damaged drains can also cause the water table in the road to rise, weakening its structure and resulting in potholes and road deterioration which could create further hazards and require costly repair. Verge damage often disrupts drainage grips. These simple channels cut through the verge into the roadside drain allow water off the road and must be kept open.



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Verges may also contain roadside services such as water mains, underground or overhead power lines and telephone cables. These could be damaged, as well as creating a significant hazard to those on-site.

Never use band-tracked vehicles on tarred surfaces. Rubber-tyred forestry vehicles may not be registered or insured for use on the public road.

Lorry outriggers used to stabilise the vehicle while operating an on-board crane will damage tarred road surfaces. Always use an outrigger mat to spread the load.

Many unclassified and minor roads contain old culverts, cundies and retaining walls which may not be obvious from the highway. Liaison with the local authority can identify such structures and suggest mitigation measures to prevent damage.

Where lorries turn out onto public roads from laybys or forest exits, the frequent heavy traffic and cornering can cause significant damage to more fragile roads. This can be minimised by ensuring the road is well-drained and clean and by keeping vehicle speeds low.

When installing temporary signage for forestry works in verges of public roads always hand dig the excavations for poles or posts as surface water drains or utility plant may be present and could be damaged or cause injury if hit.



Links

FISA 2014, Guidance on Managing Health and Safety in Forestry

<https://ukfisa.com/Safety/Safety-Library/fisa-guidance-on-managing-health-and-safety-in-forestry>

FC Practice Note 2013, Managing Public Safety on Harvesting Sites

<https://www.forestryengland.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Managingpublicsafetyonharvestingsites.pdf>

HSE 2015, Managing health and safety in construction: Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l153.pdf>

Safe stacking of logs, sawn timber and board material, HSE (2014)

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wis2.htm>

Timber Transport Forum 2020, Road Haulage of Round Timber Code of Practice 5th Edition

<https://timbertransportforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Timber-Transport-Forum-Road-Haulage-of-Round-Timber-5-Ed-Digital.pdf>

The Highland Council Road Guidelines for New Developments

https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/527/road_guidelines_for_new_developments

Argyll & Bute Council Guidance notes on public road operations

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ATTG%20-%20Guidance%20Note%20on%20public%20road%20operations.pdf>

Argyll & Bute Council Forest Access to public road- design guidelines

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/forest%20access%20sd08001a.pdf>

Traffic Signs Manual

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/203669/traffic-signs-manual-chapter-08-part-01.pdf

The Scottish Government published a consolidated circular (2/2015) on non-householder permitted development, including an annex on agricultural and private ways. The circular is available here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/planning-circular-2-2015-consolidated-circular-non-domestic-permitted-development/>

Guidance on prior notification in England and Wales can be found through the planning portal website here:

https://ecab.planningportal.co.uk/uploads/1app/guidance/guidance_note-prior_notification_proposed_agricultural_or_forestry_development.pdf





Figure 1: This attempt to stack timber on an uphill slope creates significant risk to passing vehicles.



Figure 1: The public road should not be used for forestry operations.



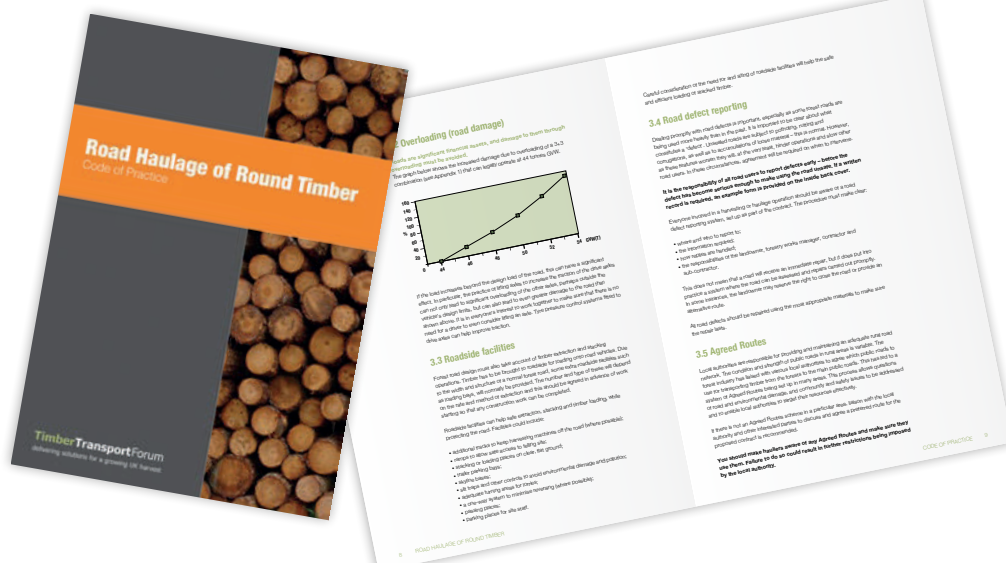
Figure 4: These log stacked on the road verge obscure sight lines, cause damage to the verge and are under an overhead cable.



Figure 3: This log stack is too high, is far too close to a public road, is causing damage to the verge and causing traffic to damage the opposite verge. A dislodged log would be a danger to passing traffic and the road surface is not clean.

This Guidance Note complements the Forum's previously published good practice including:

The Road Haulage of Round Timber Code of Practice (4th Edition 2012)



Managing Timber Transport – Good Practice Guide (2012)



Tread Softly – Lower Impact Vehicles for Timber Haulage (2014)



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