

Minutes for GTTG meeting

Date: 21 February 2024

Location: via Teams

Present:

Will Anderson – Chair (WA)
Paul Barron – Moray Council (PB)
Euan Christie – AW Jenkinson (EC)
William Clark – Scottish Forestry (WiC)
Niall Duncan – Scottish Woodlands (ND)
Cameron Gillies – Euroforest (CGi)

Claire Glaister – GTTG Project Officer (CG)
Lee Grigor – James Jones (LG)
John Mackie – Scottish Forestry (JM)
Paul Mathieson – Tilhill (PM)
Jonathan Sharp – Aberdeenshire Council (JS)

Apologies

Mark Atherton – Moray Council
Neil Crookston – Scottish Woodlands
Jason Hubert – Scottish Forestry
David Leslie – James Jones

Paul Manson – Scotrees
Steven Hutcheon – Scottish Forestry
Claire Wightman – Treestory

Agenda Item	Action	Appointed person/s
5. (13/11/19)	Colour up all B-class road default Agreed Routes	CG/JE
6. (05/10/22)	Arrange visits with roads department staff	CG
5. (08/03/23)	Organise visits to forest management companies to promote GTTG and timber transport initiatives/good practice	CG
4. (28/06/23)	Update ARM website with updated Moray ARM classifications	CG/JE
5. (28/06/23)	Circulate FISA roadside safety guide, once published	CG
5. (02/11/24)	Organise meeting with planning department representatives	BD/CG
3.	Confirm match funding contributions	All
3.	Discuss future funding of RTTAS role	All
4.	Circulate new Scottish Forestry engagement guidance	CG

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

WA welcomed all those present in person and invited introductions as EC and JS are returning/new members to the GTTG.

CG asked all members if they were happy for emails to be sent directly (i.e. not Bcc'd) and all agreed.

WA highlighted that this would be PB's last meeting as he would be retiring before the next one. On behalf of the GTTG, WA wished to thank Paul for both his contributions to the group over the years, and to timber transport discussions, consultations etc., in general and wish him a long and happy retirement.

CG also expressed her thanks to PB, particularly for attending the meeting when he was on leave this week, and, most recently for his detailed review of the ARM for Moray and his advice, guidance and insights into council operations over the years.

2. Review of notes of last meeting on 02 November 2023 & matters arising

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

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6. (05/10/22)	Arrange visits with roads department staff	CG
5. (08/03/23)	Organise visits to forest management companies to promote GTTG and timber transport initiatives/good practice	CG
2. (28/06/23)	Post Road Permit weblinks on GTTG Local Guidance web page	CG
3. (28/06/23)	Discuss current and potential future match funding contributions for RTTG PO role	CG/All
4. (28/06/23)	Update ARM website with updated Moray ARM classifications	CG/JE
5. (28/06/23)	Circulate FISA roadside safety guide, once published	CG
5. (02/11/23)	Provide details of individual contributions to match funders	CG
5. (02/11/23)	Update members on discussions with Aberdeenshire Council re closure of the Slug Road	CG
5. (02/11/23)	Organise meeting with planning department representatives	BD/CG

2.1 New members: CG advised that she had contacted the names provided by CGi and has added a couple of names to the circulation list (they won't necessarily attend meetings but would like to be kept informed);

2.2 Agreed Routes Map colour trial: Still pending response from one RTTG before whole switchover can be made;

2.3 Planning permissions and permits: Links to application forms and guidance have been posted on the GTTG [Local Guidance](#) web page. Members discussed the difference of approach taken between councils and council departments (e.g. roads and planning), existing/new accesses, alterations/maintenance/construction, specifications (e.g. accesses, turning areas, tree safety surveys etc.) and response times to consultations; ND highlighted that this has become a real road block for the industry and even with improvements being proposed for existing accesses, these can be rejected as sight lines now considered insufficient. WA stressed that partnership working is a two-way process and fundamental to getting things done. PB wondered if there should be planning reps on the GTTG, particularly as there is nowhere in the WC/LTFP/FPA system where LAs can comment on suitability of existing accesses; JM confirmed that whilst consultation responses are hit and miss, due diligence/PR is the right time to raise any issues and if there are concerns from a LA, SF raise this with the applicant. CG advised that previous action to organise meeting with planning department representatives is in progress.

3. Strategic Timber Transport Scheme update and future GTTG projects

3.1. STTF budgets and impacts on projects

WC updated members on 2023/24 STTS bidding round and of the 16 contracts that were issued, 15 were public sector applicants, 4 had been withdrawn but replaced with 3 others and 9 were now completed and claimed. 5 PPGs were successful but 3 withdrawn.

3.2. Timber Transport Advisory Service funding and rates

Members discussed that as rates have remained the same since 2019, with increase in costs/inflation etc., it would be appropriate to consider inflationary increase and demonstrate commitment of the industry to the role. JS and PB provided updates on local authority budgets and members considered whether LA contributions should remain the same with industry increasing theirs to cover any gap. CG to confirm match funding availability with current contributors but to be discussed at future meeting.

3.3. 2024-25 projects

WiC advised that the budget for 2024/25 would only include the SF contribution as Transport Scotland would not be provided any funding. Of the £2M in the overall STTF, £945,00 had been allocated to Timberlink with £850,000 - £900,000 to road improvement projects with a 50% threshold for grant awards. WiC discussed that there would be some changes in scoring criteria (key ones remain deliverability, environmental and community benefits but timber volumes has now been removed to support those projects where forests situated at the end of a road and volumes relatively low compared to other areas).

STTS Timelines: 21/03/24 – deadline for application; 28/03/24 – deadline for additional information; 19/04/24 – STTS assessment panel.

4. Stakeholder Engagement

4.1. Members discussed at what points in the process this is undertaken, what methods are used and how easy/hard they found getting responses. Invitations to respond and responses received vary (e.g. during LTFP scoping only, via CG, to a generic LA email address etc.) and will depend on availability and knowledge of staff. CG advised that Scottish Forestry have produced new guidance – [Forestry Engagement and Consultation Processes](#) and that Confor have developed training on Stakeholder Engagement for the sector.

5. GTTG members updates

5.1. Round table updates and topical discussion

5.1.1. Member updates

- CGi raised issue of liaising with LA over winter gritting programmes; PB and JS advised that it would be unlikely that rural roads leading up to forests would be considered priority routes;
- ND highlighted difficulties/delays in operations – particularly SSE shutdowns – if roads aren't gritted;
- LG advised that due to environmental constraints (e.g. wildcats), they have to work some sites over the winter which wouldn't be the preferred time due to access/weather restrictions;
- Given these challenges are squeezing the industry into an ever smaller window of operational activity, members discussed whether STTS could support winter gritting – WiC advised this was unlikely – and whether the industry could grit roads, as farmers do using their own equipment – to be discussed further;

5.1.2. TTF update

No update provided

5.1.3. FISA Haulage Working Group update

No update provided

6. Provisional date/s for next meetings

6.1. Wednesdays 12 June and 16 October 2024