

Our Timber; Our Roads; Our Communities

A Local Authority Guide to Transporting Timber

Forestry and timber contribute significantly to the local economy and rural infrastructure needs. This summary provides a focused overview of how and why timber is transported on local roads, the challenges this can create, and the actions the timber industry is taking to manage and minimise its impact. It aims to support local authorities in understanding timber transport practices and collaborating on solutions that benefit communities and road networks.

Timber transport and the rural road network: Working together for sustainable solutions

The UK forestry and timber industry produces around 10 million tonnes¹ of timber each year, supporting over 34,000² jobs and contributing £3.1 billion³ to the economy.

Transporting this timber – primarily by lorry – often requires access to rural and minor roads not originally built for today's modern vehicles.

The Challenge

- Many rural roads are narrow and fragile;
- Timber haulage activities can be a concern for communities, tourists, and other road users;
- Local authorities face significant budget pressures in maintaining and upgrading road infrastructure.

Industry Action

The timber sector is working to reduce its impact by:

- Using **modern vehicles** equipped with technologies like tyre pressure control systems to help protect road surfaces;
- Following **voluntary practices**, including reduced lorry trips, seasonal and time-based restrictions, and preference for certain routes;
- Collaborating through **Regional Timber Transport Groups**⁴ and the **UK Timber Transport Forum**⁵ to encourage dialogue and joint solutions.

A Shared Responsibility

Timber transport is a vital part of the rural economy, and the sector is committed to working with local authorities to:

- Share information and planning;
- Coordinate infrastructure priorities;
- Support long-term, sustainable access to the forest resource.

Together, we can contribute to balancing economic needs with infrastructure resilience and community wellbeing.

¹ 2024 – 2: UK-Grown Timber – Forest Research

² Economic Impact of Forest Based Activities in Scotland 2024

³ 2024 – 8: Finance & Prices – Forest Research

⁴ Regional Groups - The Timber Transport Forum

⁵ The Timber Transport Forum Homepage - The Timber Transport Forum