



Transporting Timber on Public Roads

Good Practice Guide

TimberTransportForum
delivering solutions for a growing UK harvest

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Introduction

The UK's forests play a vital role in producing sustainable timber and wood products, while also delivering a wide range of public benefits – including employment, climate change mitigation, biodiversity, renewable energy, cleaner air, flood management, recreation and health and well-being opportunities.

The forestry and primary timber processing sectors together support more than 34,000¹ full-time equivalent jobs and contribute approximately £3.1 billion² annually to the UK economy. In terms of indirect benefits, the value of flood-risk reduction provided by UK forests alone is estimated at around £6.5 billion³ per year.

Forestry operations, including the transport of timber, take place within this wider context of delivering social, environmental and economic benefits.

Transporting Timber on Public Roads: Good Practice Guidance is aimed at supporting local authorities and the forest industry in mitigating the impact of timber haulage on the rural road network. The document outlines good practice for how the forest industry engages with local authorities and other stakeholders to manage timber transport responsibly. It reflects voluntary, collaborative approaches developed by the sector to reduce impacts on communities and other road users, while supporting a sustainable, productive forest industry.

Engaging with Stakeholders

The forest industry works with a wide range of stakeholders when planning and carrying out timber haulage operations.

Engagement with local communities is valued as an opportunity to share information, explain planned activity and listen to local feedback. However, such engagement does not constitute consultation for approval or consent.

Decisions and agreements about road use, access and related matters rest with local authorities, which have statutory responsibility for managing the public road network. The forest industry therefore consults with local authorities to discuss practical measures that help reduce disruption, protect road infrastructure and support safe, sustainable transport.

¹ Economic impact of forest-based activities in Scotland 2024

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

³ Valuing flood regulation services – Forest Research



Jon Stevenson courtesy of James Jones & Sons Ltd

Transporting Timber: A Good Practice Framework

Each year, many millions of tonnes of logs are transported from UK forests to modern sawmills and timber processors, reducing the nation's reliance on imported wood products. Globally, the UK is the second-largest net importer of wood products, behind only China.

Modern timber lorries continue to evolve, incorporating new technologies to improve efficiency, safety and environmental performance. The industry's investment in these developments is important as local authorities face significant budget pressures in maintaining and upgrading road infrastructure, particularly rural roads, which may be structurally weak or narrow and have few passing places.

The locations of forests and processing destinations mean that timber lorries often need to pass through or close to residential communities. In doing so, they can have an impact on local people and other road users.

To help reduce these impacts, representatives from local authorities and the forest industry have established a network of **Regional Timber Transport Groups (RTTGs)** and a UK-wide **Timber Transport Forum (TTF)**.

These are voluntary, independent groups operating in a spirit of partnership, with members contributing their time and expertise freely.

The RTTGs and TTF promote a range of voluntary measures to improve the sustainability of timber transport. These include developing Agreed Routes Maps and publishing good-practice guidance. Most groups engage a Project Officer who provides strategic coordination and facilitates liaison between forestry businesses and local authorities. In most cases, these parties work together directly, following the steps set out in this and other industry good practice.

Roles and Responsibilities

Effective management of timber transport depends on a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities.

The following sections summarise how forestry and road management are governed across the UK, outlining which organisations regulate forestry activities and which authorities are responsible for the public road network.

Who Manages Forestry Activities

Government forestry bodies — **Scottish Forestry**, **Forestry Commission** and **Natural Resources Wales** — regulate forestry activities under the *Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018* and the *Forestry Act 1967 (England and Wales)*. These organisations regulate new woodland creation, provide grants for planting and management, and issue permissions or licences for felling and restocking.

While felling permissions, licences and forest plans focus on activities within woodland, the **UK Forestry Standard** – the government’s approach to sustainable forest management in the UK – also encourages consideration of wider environmental and community impacts.

Who Manages Roads

Trunk roads and motorways are managed by **Transport Scotland**, **National Highways (England)** and the **North and Mid Wales** and **South Wales** Trunk Road Agencies.

Other A-class, B-class, C-class and unclassified roads – including associated infrastructure such as bridges and drainage systems – are managed by local authorities under the *Roads (Scotland) Act 1984* and the *Highways Act 1980* (England and Wales).

Local authorities can apply traffic regulations, restrictions and weight limits to maintain the road network and protect public safety. Where damage occurs through negligence or failure to follow agreed protocols, they may seek to recover costs.

Permission from the relevant roads authority is required for certain activities, such as:

- creating or upgrading forest road accesses onto the public highway,
- carrying out engineering works close to public roads, or
- undertaking forest operations within danger zones that could affect the public road.

Permission is also required when timber is loaded from roadside forests or where in-forest works could impact the travelling public.

Permission is not required by timber lorries to use the public road network, provided they comply with all relevant road-vehicle and use regulations – including legal limits on vehicle weight and length and requirements for tax and insurance.

A Shared Responsibility

Effective timber transport relies on **shared responsibility** between the forest industry, roads authorities and other road users. Forestry bodies regulate woodland activities, while local authorities and national roads agencies manage the public road network. Together, these organisations – alongside the haulage industry and other users – play complementary roles in enabling sustainable timber transport.

This guidance supports that shared responsibility by promoting consistent, voluntary good practice across the UK. It encourages collaboration to manage timber movements safely and efficiently, reduce disruption and protect rural infrastructure – recognising that maintaining and using the road network responsibly is a collective effort, not one for any single sector alone.



The Engagement Process

Engagement between the forestry sector, local authorities and communities is a central part of the partnership approach to managing timber transport on public roads. Timber haulage is one of the most visible points of contact between the forest industry and the public and when concerns arise, they should be addressed constructively to maintain good working relationships and public confidence in the sector.

In many cases, timber haulage can take place without restriction. Where there are constraints, measures should be discussed and agreed between the local authority and forest industry, with the aim being to protect the road network while enabling essential timber movements.

Regional Timber Transport Groups (RTTGs) promote this partnership approach, which relies on proactive engagement by the forestry sector – landowners, agents and works managers – and on timely, constructive responses from roads authorities and community organisations.

Fig. 1 – Timber Haulage Engagement Protocol sets out the key steps for engagement and who is responsible for each action. The protocol uses the same Duty Holder terminology as the Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA) **Guidance on Managing Health and Safety in Forestry**.

The protocol also suggests when engagement with communities should be considered, and by whom.

Where timber transport may have a significant impact, a more formal engagement plan may be appropriate.

In Scotland, to help ensure engagement is proportionate to the potential impacts and resources of all parties, reference should be made to:

- **Scottish Government** – Guidance on Engaging Communities in Decisions Relating to Land
- **Scottish Land Commission** – Protocol on Community Engagement, and
- **Scottish Forestry** – Forestry Engagement and Consultation Processes.

These documents explain what can reasonably be expected when engaging with people who may be affected by land-management decisions, proportionate to the likely level of impact.

Fig. 1 – Timber Haulage Engagement Protocol

1. Before submitting forest plans or felling permission/felling licence applications	
The Landowner or Agent (Responsibility rests with the landowner. Agents should be specifically instructed to fully represent the landowner.)	Consults with the roads department of the local authority to identify likely road constraints for timber transport on Consultation, Severely Restricted and Excluded Routes (including default Consultation Routes). NOTE: Consultation with a local authority is not required for Agreed Routes but is still encouraged so that details of planned roadworks can be shared and conflict with work programmes avoided.
2. During Scoping	
The Landowner or Agent	Proceeds to engage with stakeholders, including local authorities and, where appropriate, local community councils/Parish councils, to provide an opportunity for comment and identify any concerns (see also Appendix I - Forestry Stakeholder Engagement Guidance Note for general reference). This early engagement can also help inform a local authority's roads maintenance programme. Where timber haulage on public roads has been identified as a constraint/concern, discusses the outcome of engagement with the local authority and proposes mitigating measures in forest plans and felling permission/felling licence applications. Where required, develops a new or agrees on a revised Timber Traffic/Transport Management Plan (see p.12).
3. When planning new or improved infrastructure	
The Landowner or Agent	Contacts the local authority/Trunk Road agency to seek consent to improve or create an access onto a public road (e.g. planning permission*) or to carry out any civil engineering works on or adjacent to a public road (e.g. road opening/occupation permit). *Where required, obtains planning permission from the local authority planning department or National Park Authority for any proposal to improve or create a new forest access onto a classified (A-class, B-class or C-class) public road. NOTE: Forest road works may also require prior notification to the local authority planning department, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening opinion from Scottish Forestry/ Forestry Commission/Natural Resources Wales – and Controlled Activities Regulations (CAR) approval from the relevant environment agency in Scotland, England or Wales. Considers how other haulage associated with forest management (such as low loaders and lorries delivering stone for forest roads) will be managed to ensure that the careful management of the road for timber lorries is not negated by other related traffic.
4. On Assessing Felling Permissions, Forest Plans and Land Management Plans	
Scottish Forestry, Forestry Commission and Natural Resources Wales	Where appropriate, consults with the local authority (both the roads and planning departments) on forest plans and felling permission/felling licence applications. NOTE: Scottish Forestry, Forestry Commission and Natural Resources Wales expect to see evidence of consultation between the applicant and a local authority wherever public roads have been identified as a constraint. Felling permissions or felling licences will take account of the information provided.
5. Prior to harvesting or standing sale	
The Landowner or Agent	Identifies and establishes contact with the most suitable person in the local authority roads department to confirm the timber haulage measures to be followed. Where appropriate, informs the relevant local community council / Parish council of timber haulage plans and provides contact details. Includes details of contacts, discussions, agreements or Timber Traffic/Transport Management Plans regarding haulage on the public road in sale particulars, tenders and contracts for timber sales.

Fig. 1 – Timber Haulage Engagement Protocol (cont.)

6. After the timber is sold but before haulage starts	
Forestry Work Manager – FWM (timber purchaser or their harvesting agent) By clear agreement it may be that some or all of these actions are taken on by the Landowner or Agent (in continued dialogue with the FWM)	Acquires details of contacts, discussions, agreements or Timber Traffic/Transport Management Plans regarding haulage on the public road from the landowner or agent. If required, liaises with the local authority to confirm and agree on the implementation of any measures required to address road limitations, monitor road conditions, or agree on measures to deliver the requirements of a Timber Traffic/Transport Management Plan, where one is in place. Considers taking a video survey (e.g. dash cam) or photos of the road condition before haulage starts. Liaises with neighbouring forest owners who may be using the same roads for timber haulage. Where appropriate, informs the relevant local community council/Parish council of timber haulage plans, provides contact details and responds to the concerns of directly affected neighbours. Any community concerns should be dealt with promptly through constructive dialogue. Ensures haulage contractors, sub-contractors and their drivers are fully aware of timber haulage measures to be followed.
7. During Haulage	
Forestry Work Manager (timber purchaser or their harvesting agent) By clear agreement it may be that some or all of these actions are retained by the Landowner or Agent (in continued dialogue with the FWM)	Monitors road condition and reports any degradation to the local authority roads department. Stops haulage when conditions are unsuitable and before significant deterioration occurs. Continues to liaise with neighbouring forest owners who may be using the same roads for timber haulage. Where applicable, updates the local community council/Parish council and directly affected neighbours of any significant changes to haulage plans. Any community concerns should be dealt with promptly through constructive dialogue. Ensures haulage contractors, sub-contractors and their drivers are fully aware of timber haulage measures to be followed.

Agreed Route Maps

Agreed Routes Maps are central to the partnership approach. They encourage a shared understanding between local authorities and the forest industry and provide the trigger for consultation between the two parties.

Regional Timber Transport Groups develop and review Agreed Routes Maps, categorising roads according to their capacity to sustain timber haulage.

These maps are hosted by the Timber Transport Forum as an **Agreed Routes Map**.

Road categories used in Agreed Routes Maps:

Agreed Routes: Roads suitable for timber haulage without restriction other than normal road-traffic legislation.

Consultation Routes: Roads requiring prior consultation with the local authority before haulage takes place. Limits may be set on volume, timing, or vehicle type to prevent damage. All minor roads ("B", "C" and unclassified roads) should be treated as Consultation Routes by default, unless covered by one of the other categories.

Severely Restricted Routes: Particularly fragile or sensitive roads that should only be used under a tightly managed regime agreed with the local authority.

Excluded Routes: Roads unsuitable for timber transport in their present condition. Alternatives should be explored with the local authority.

The **Advisory Traffic Management Measures** in Fig. 2 suggest good-practice options for minimising haulage impacts. They are provided for guidance only; local authorities may adapt them to reflect local geography and experience.



Fig. 2 – Advisory Traffic Management Measures

Road Category	Road Definition	Advisory Traffic Management Measures
Agreed	Roads which can be used for timber haulage without restriction other than as regulated by the Road Traffic Act 1988. A-class roads are classified as Agreed Routes by default unless covered by one of the other categories (e.g. Consultation Route).	• All timber haulage operations should comply with The Road Haulage of Round Timber Code of Practice. • When using an existing forest access, the bellmouth onto the public road must be well-formed and suitable in terms of horizontal and vertical alignment to allow safe access and egress. For access improvements or new accesses onto the public road, liaise with the relevant local authority to establish specific requirements (see Helpful Resources). • Put in place arrangements to monitor and maintain the condition of the forest access, ensuring water does not flow onto the public road and no mud or debris is transferred onto the public road. • Report any deterioration of the public road surface to the local authority immediately and stop haulage before significant damage is caused.
Consultation	Roads which are key to timber extraction but, for a variety of reasons, are not up to Agreed Route Standard. Consultation with the local authority is required before any timber haulage takes place and it may be necessary to limit the amount, timing or frequency of timber haulage, or to specify lower impact vehicles to prevent damage. All minor roads (B-class, C-class and unclassified roads) should be treated as Consultation Routes by default unless covered by one of the other categories (e.g. Severely Restricted Route).	The measures set out for Agreed Routes will apply. Additional mitigating measures may be required for particular roads, such as: • Seasonal restrictions – to avoid very wet periods and periods of winter freeze/thaw. • Reduced frequency of lorries – to allow time for the road to recover between lorry passes and minimise cumulative damage. Manage lorry timing to prevent lorries meeting on narrow roads or avoid busy times or school runs to minimise disruption to local communities. • Vehicle and trailer configurations – use “wagon and drag” trailers (rather than articulated lorries) on narrow twisting roads. These have a narrower ‘swept path’ helping to minimise edge damage. It may be necessary to use smaller tractor and trailer units for short hauls to secondary loading points. • Reduced ground pressures – use lorries with twin tyres or wide ‘maxi’ tyres in conjunction with tyre pressure control systems that spread the load across a greater tyre footprint so reducing the impact on fragile roads (see Tread Softly; Lower impact vehicles for timber haulage). Multi-wheel axle configurations are available and traditional trailers can be underloaded to reduce axle weights on short hauls to secondary loading points, although reduced loads mean more trips. • Passing places – provide or improve passing places sufficient for road sightlines and volume of traffic. Widen corners where necessary. • Signage – erect temporary road signs to warn other road users (liaise with the Local Authority to establish signage requirements).

Fig. 2 – Advisory Traffic Management Measures (cont.)

Road Category	Road Definition	Advisory Traffic Management Measures
Consultation (Cont.)	Roads which are key to timber extraction but, for a variety of reasons, are not up to Agreed Route Standard. Consultation with the local authority is required before any timber haulage takes place and it may be necessary to limit the amount, timing or frequency of timber haulage, or to specify lower impact vehicles to prevent damage. All minor roads (B-class, C-class and unclassified roads) should be treated as Consultation Routes by default unless covered by one of the other categories (e.g. Severely Restricted Route).	• Speed restrictions – driving slowly will minimise damage to junctions, corners and bridges from dynamic loading. Significantly reduce speed when driving on narrow roads through communities. • Community awareness – where appropriate, inform the local community council/Parish council – and particularly affected households or businesses – of extraction dates, times and frequency of lorry movements. Provide contact numbers for liaison purposes. (See also Appendix I Stakeholder Engagement Guidance Note). • Driver awareness – Ensure hauliers are fully aware of the road constraints and the measures agreed with the local authority. On particularly sensitive roads, it may help to use nominated drivers who know the road well and can monitor any degradation. • Other Haulage – Consider how other haulage associated with forest management (such as low loaders and lorries delivering stone for forest roads) will be managed to ensure that the careful management of the road for timber lorries is not negated by other related traffic. • If appropriate, consider developing a TTMP with the local authority.
Severely Restricted	Roads which are particularly fragile or sensitive and should only be used for timber transport under a carefully supervised management regime agreed with the Local authority. Some Timber Transport Groups make more use of the Severely Restricted category than others. Where it is used, it tends to suggest that there will be significant constraints which will constrain or add cost to haulage operations.	The measures set out for Agreed Routes will apply, together with selected mitigating measures as listed for Consultation Routes. It may not be readily apparent why a road has been categorised as Severely Restricted so consult with the local authority and regional timber transport group. It may be possible to make improvements to the road that will overcome the primary constraints. Consider the feasibility of constructing additional forest roads that could bring the timber out onto better public roads. If appropriate, consider developing and agreeing a TTMP with the local authority.
Excluded	Roads which should not be used for timber transport in their present condition. These routes may have a formal weight or height restriction or be close to being weight restricted. In a few cases roads are excluded in order to direct timber traffic onto alternative roads that are more suitable.	• Excluded Routes should not be used for timber transport. • Consult with the Local Authority to explore alternative routes.



Timber Traffic/ Transport Management Plans (TTMPs)

TTMPs are partnership agreements between the forest industry and local authorities to sustain haulage on fragile or sensitive roads. They set out voluntary measures to balance operational needs with road protection.

They can be developed where multiple forest operations share vulnerable routes, ensuring that access can be maintained for the timber sector, communities and other road users alike.

TTMPs are established through consultation between the regional timber transport group and the relevant roads department. Measures may include any combination of those listed in Fig. 2.

Where communities have raised significant concerns, their feedback is used to inform the mitigation measures agreed by the authority and forest industry.

Local authorities and forestry representatives should be actively involved in implementing and reviewing TTMPs, with names and roles recorded in the plan. RTTGs can assist with monitoring where required.

TTMPs can be published on the Agreed Routes Map website so that anyone planning haulage can review current agreements.

Where TTMPs cover multiple operations, any capacity measures included must be shared among them.

An interim TTMP may be agreed before submission of forest plans or felling permissions and can remain valid for subsequent operations on the same route.

Following agreed TTMP measures does not remove the need for consultation with local authorities on Consultation or Severely Restricted Routes, but the TTMP provides the baseline for discussion.

If, despite mitigation, road conditions deteriorate beyond acceptable levels, stricter measures should be introduced through agreement between the local authority and forest managers. Conversely, road improvements may justify relaxing or withdrawing the plan.

Forestry Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder Engagement: the process of involving people in the decisions that affect them.

Consult: To have regard for a person's feelings or interests in making plans or decisions.

When?	Planning or developing activities e.g. new planting, revision of management plans, significant felling or haulage.	Management of existing activities e.g. timber transport, access and forest management interactions.	Tackling problems e.g. fly tipping, unauthorised mountain bike trails.
Who?	• Neighbours • Community (community council, development trust, user groups) • Clients/agents • Legal interests e.g. wayleaves • Special interest groups • Government forestry bodies & statutory consultees • National NGOs • Vociferous detractors	• Neighbours • Community (community council, local authority, development trust, user groups, local schools) • Clients/agents • Legal interests e.g. wayleaves • Special interest groups	• Neighbours • Community (community council, development trust, user groups) • Local authority • Local councillors, MSPs, MPs
How?	• Site visits • Small informal/formal meetings with key stakeholders • Telephone contact with key stakeholders • Attend meetings of relevant local groups • Website • Advertisements/articles in local press • Interactive workshop/event • Leaflet drop to all households	• Establish a forestry contact within Community council or similar • Advisory committee • Attendance at suitable local events e.g. shows, galas, etc • Newsletters • Annual surgery • Annual meeting with key stakeholders • Notice board at forest gate • Website	• Site visits • Small informal/ormal meetings with key stakeholders • Awareness raising via local press • Attend meetings of relevant local groups

Lessons Learnt

- One size does not fit all – it's about the right thing at the right time. Knowing what works takes time.
- Speaking to people in advance of an activity rather than after can identify issues before they arise.
- Style and tone are as important as what is said/done.
- Make yourself known and available to stakeholders/communities as this can help avoid problems escalating.
- Listening skills are essential. Often foresters want to solve problems and take action, when just listening works.
- Take time to understand the problem. It may not be what you first think.
- Face-to-face always works better in difficult situations.
- Avoid 'town hall' style public meetings.
- Visual aids (but not just maps) and 'active' feedback sessions work well.
- Admit mistakes, rectify and move on.

Helpful Resources

The following resources support collaboration and transparency between the forestry sector, local authorities and communities:

Agreed Routes Map

www.timbertransportforum.org.uk/agreed-routes-map

Community and Town Councils (Wales)

www.gov.wales/community-and-town-councils

Community Councils (Scotland)

www.communitycouncils.scot/

National Association of Local Councils (England)

www.nalc.gov.uk

Natural Resources Wales – Trees, woodlands and forests

www.naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/environmental-topics/trees-woodlands-and-forests/?lang=en

Public registers and consultation on forestry projects

www.gov.uk/guidance/consultation-and-the-public-registers

Regional Timber Transport Groups and Contacts

www.timbertransportforum.org.uk/regional-groups

Scottish Forestry – Stakeholder engagement and consultation

www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/forestry-engagement-and-consultation-processes

Scottish Forestry Public Registers

www.forestry.gov.scot/how-we-deliver-functions-and-services

Scottish Land Commission – Protocol for Community Engagement

www.landcommission.gov.scot/downloads/Protocol-on-community-engagement.pdf

Scottish Land Commission – Route Map

www.landcommission.gov.scot/downloads/5ddfaf5834ff3_GOODPRACTICE-routemap-web.pdf

The Timber Transport Forum

www.timbertransportforum.org.uk

This Good Practice Guidance is accompanied by a series of **Our Timber; Our Roads; Our Communities** guides, summary versions that explain the purpose of timber transport and the voluntary good-practice measures that have been developed. These documents together provide both an accessible overview and detailed reference for practitioners, local authorities, and community organisations.

- Our Timber; Our Roads; Our Communities:
A Guide to Transporting Timber;
- Our Timber; Our Roads; Our Communities:
A Local Authority Guide to Transporting Timber;
- Our Timber; Our Roads; Our Communities:
A Community Guide to Transporting Timber.

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www.timbertransportforum.org.uk

Timber Transport Forum

22 LG1 Forth Street,
Edinburgh,
EH1 3LH
Tel: 0131 240 1419

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