

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 3 MAY 2005

TIMBER TRANSPORT

Report by Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the latest developments in relation to timber transport in Ayrshire.
- 1.2 To seek the Committee's approval for a contribution of £1500 towards the funding of a South of Scotland Timber Transport Project Officer.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The reports on Timber Transport to the Development Services Committee of 7 May 2002 and 17 December 2002 advised the Committee on the following issues:
 - Ayrshire Timber Transport Group
 - Key Issues for Timber Transport in Ayrshire
 - Ayrshire Agreed Route Map for Timber Transport
 - Local Area Modeling Assessment
 - Future Developments
 - National Timber Transport Groups
 - Weight Limits as a control mechanism
 - Statutory Consultations regarding forestry
 - Partnering charter
 - Funding
- 2.2 The transportation of timber from source to processing point is a fundamental requirement to allow the economic benefits of Ayrshire's forestry resource to be reaped. However, this brings with it a number of economic, environmental and social issues that require co-ordinated action to address.
- 2.3 The Ayrshire Timber Transport Group (ATTG), was formed in 1998 in recognition that liaison was required between Local Authorities and timber industry stakeholders to address the issues commensurate with timber transportation.
- 2.4 The report of 17 December 2003 advised that a meeting had been arranged through the CoSLA Rural Affairs Committee with Allan Wilson, MP, the Deputy

Minister for the Environment and Rural Development, on 8 January 2003, to discuss timber transport and funding.

3. STRATEGIC TIMBER TRANSPORT FUND

- 3.1** In October 2004 the Scottish Executive announced funding of £13M over the next three financial years for a Strategic Timber Transport Fund, £3M in 2005-06, £5M in 2006-07 and £5M in 2007-08.
- 3.2** The objective of the Fund is to facilitate the sustainable transport of timber in rural areas of Scotland for the benefit of local communities and the environment, maximizing the value of the Fund through innovative projects and partnerships.
- 3.3** Projects that can receive funding include development of in-forest roads to enable timber lorries to avoid using fragile minor public roads or avoid communities and road improvements that help link forests to sea and rail loading facilities. Such projects will help to minimize the impact of timber transport on Scotland's rural roads as national timber harvest doubles over the next ten to fifteen years.
- 3.4** The STTF bid process and criteria are described in Appendix 1 of this report. The STTF can only provide Capital or start up funding and cannot provide funding for recurring expenditure, such as normal public road maintenance, or subsidise normal operations.
- 3.5** Two projects have been approved by the Ayrshire Timber Transport Group to be submitted in the first round of bids.
- 3.6** The B7027 Barrhill to New Luce road is a heavily used timber extraction route, but significant lengths of this road are very weak. It is proposed to construct internal forest roads to link the various forests directly to the A714 Barrhill to Newton Stewart road and also a link to the proposed new rail timber loading facility south of Barrhill. As well as removing timber traffic from the B7027 it will also reduce the volume of timber vehicles going through Barrhill. The total cost of this project is £400000.
- 3.7** The second project approved by the ATTG is a Forest and Public Road Research Study. There has been very little research into in-forest roads, which have been constructed from locally won material, and minor rural unclassified roads, which have evolved rather than been engineered. This project is intended to produce a methodology for assessing the strength of, and potential damage caused to, these roads and to develop more accurate methods of forecasting transport and maintenance costs. The total cost of this project is £300000 and the bid will ask for £200000 from the STTF.

4. SOUTH OF SCOTLAND TIMBER TRANSPORT PROJECT OFFICER

- 4.1** Scottish Enterprise has offered £10000 to part fund a Timber Transport Project Officer. Forestry Commission has identified £10000 of funding for the officer for three years. Both organizations have indicated that the funding is available only if the proposed post supports the Ayrshire Timber Transport Group, the Dumfries and Galloway Timber Transport Group and the Scottish Borders Timber Transport Group.
- 4.2** Dumfries and Galloway Council and Scottish Borders Council have indicated they will contribute £5000 each. The total contribution from the three Ayrshire Councils would be £5000 of which East Ayrshire Council has been asked to contribute £1500.
- 4.3** The Timber Transport Project Officer would provide advice for potential STTF bidders, provide support for STTF bidders during and after bid submission and during the project, provide support for the three Timber Transport Groups in the South of Scotland, along with other timber transport duties.
- 4.4** Dumfries and Galloway Council will be the lead authority in employing the Timber Transport Project Officer.

5. AYRSHIRE TIMBER TRANSPORT STRATEGY

- 5.1** A Draft Ayrshire Timber Transport Strategy has been developed with the assistance of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan Team.
- 5.2** The draft strategy seeks to take cognizance of the relevant national, regional and local policy context and provide a mechanism through which projects that address timber transport problems can be brought forward. ATTG members can utilize the strategy in support of their applications for Strategic Timber Transport Funding to demonstrate that the projects that are being brought forward are strategically significant.
- 5.3** The Strategy also provides details of the progress that has been made towards the transport actions identified in the Ayrshire & Arran Woodland Strategy.
- 5.4** The Ayrshire Timber Transport Group approved the Strategy at a meeting of the Group on 8th March 2005 and it is proposed to inform elected members by presenting the Strategy to the next meeting of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan Committee on 3rd June 2005.

11. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1** The contribution to funding for the South of Scotland Timber Transport Project Officer will be contained within existing Roads and Transportation budgets.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

(a) notes the latest developments with regard to Timber Transport in Ayrshire.

(b) approve a contribution of £1500 for 2005-06, and similar sums adjusted to include for inflation for 2006-07 and 2007-08, to the funding of a Timber Transport Project Officer for the South of Scotland.

James Lavery
Director of Development and Property Services

JMB/WC
18 April 2005

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

For further information on the contents of this report, please contact John Bryson, Area Engineer (South Area), on 01563 555330

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APPENDIX 1

STRATEGIC TIMBER TRANSPORT FUND

Eligibility

Projects eligible for funding from the STTF are:

- a. Forest roads benefiting the local community and environment (eg construction of in-forest link roads to by-pass communities or fragile public roads and in-forest road links to water and rail routes).
- b. Public forest access roads benefiting the local community and environment, such as:
 - Public road improvements integral to the success of a project that provides significant rural / environmental benefit
 - Short stretches of public road strengthening that link in-forest routes
 - Optimum freight route facilitation (where diversion is more cost-effective than upgrades or development)

Projects can be considered for either capital or start-up funding provided that they:

- are in the public interest;
- reduce the potential for damage to public roads;
- reduce disruption to rural communities;
- provide innovative long-term benefits and solutions;
- demonstrate value for money; and
- demonstrate partnership working.

Proposals must not:

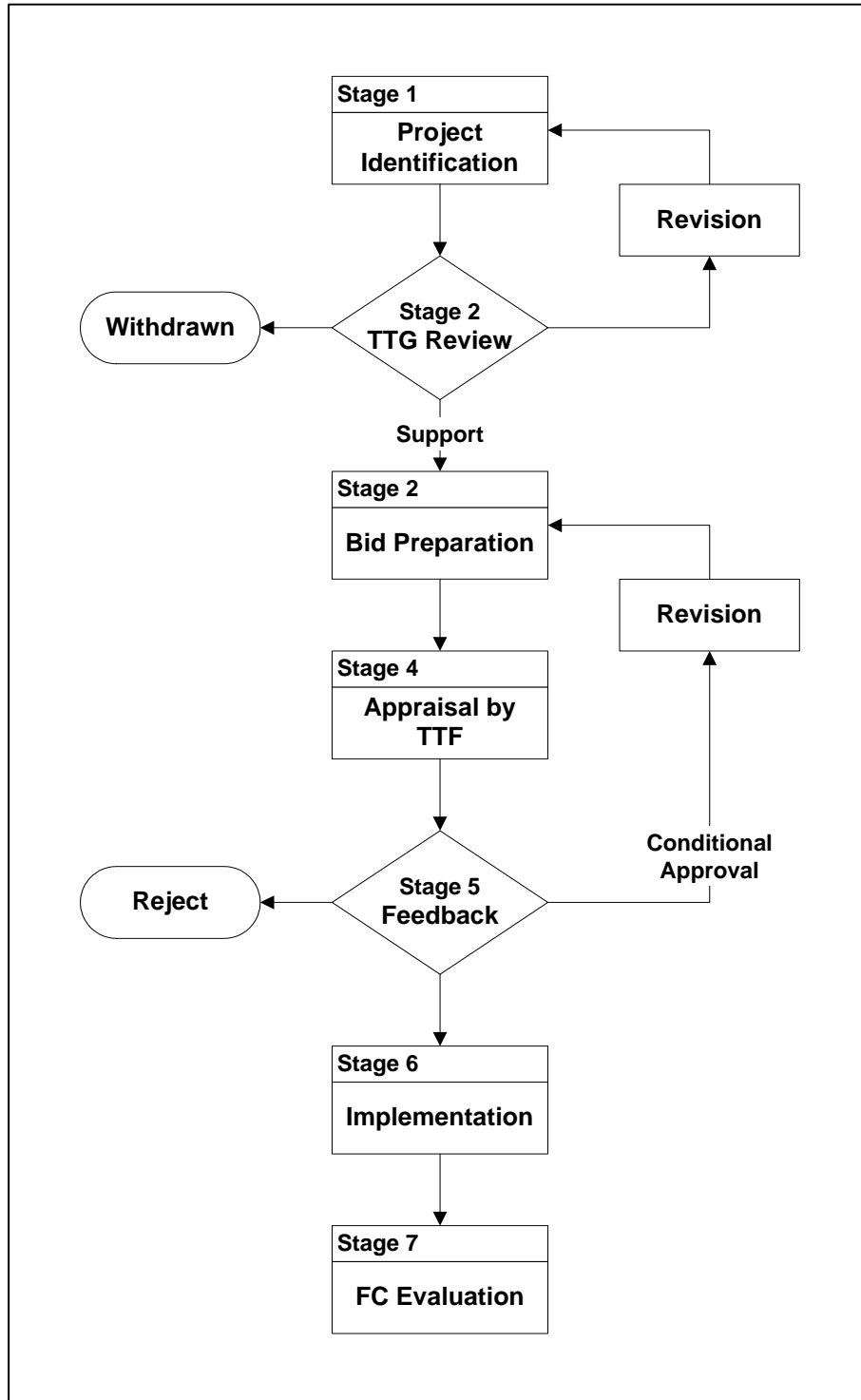
- subsidise normal operations;
- contravene state aid regulations;
- subsidise normal public road maintenance and repair; or
- be used if other funding streams are available.

The Project Application Cycle is shown in the diagram below. Projects are identified and submitted to the regional Timber Transport Groups. The TTG will consider whether the project 'fits' with the Agreed Routes Map and the regional Timber Transport Strategy, and will check that the bid meets the essential criteria listed above.

If supported by the regional TTG, bids are developed further and submitted to Forestry Commission Scotland, where they are checked for completeness and assessed for technical feasibility and financial and economic quality.

The Timber Transport Forum (TTF) then carries out an appraisal of each proposal submitted for Fund support. This will be based upon the submitted bid and the Forestry Commission Scotland's assessment of the financial, economic and technical deliverability aspects of the bid.

The TTF make recommendations for grant support to those projects which score most highly in the Appraisal process, according to agreed proportions of support agreed for the different types of intervention and geographic areas. The output of this stage will be a ranked list of bids recommended by the TTF for approval.



Forestry Commission Scotland reviews the TTF recommendations and determines the final list of approved projects taking into consideration the evaluation scores awarded to each project, and the cash funds available within the Timber Transport Fund. Projects will be approved within the financial limits of the Fund.

Forestry Commission Scotland notifies the bidder of the results of the appraisal. There are three possible outcomes of an application:

- Full Approval;
- Conditional Approval (where further bid development is required);
- Rejection.

Approved bids are then implemented and project outcomes delivered. Following implementation, Forestry Commission Scotland will undertake an evaluation exercise to determine how well the project has met its objectives. Each year, a formal evaluation report of all projects financed by the Fund will be produced for consideration by the national Timber Transport Forum and Forestry Commission Scotland.