

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 7 MAY 2002

TIMBER TRANSPORT

Report by Director of Development Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the developments in relation to timber transport in Ayrshire and in particular the workings of the Ayrshire Timber Transport Group.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The tonnage of timber transported by road within East Ayrshire has increased significantly over the last five years.
- 2.2 This is due to both, forests planted 30 to 40 years ago reaching maturity and the construction of major timber processing plants in Ayrshire.
- 2.3 Ayrshire is in a unique position in that it has both the timber source, in the extensive areas of forest, and its destination in major processing plants and large sawmills, within the area.
- 2.4 These factors led the setting up of the Ayrshire Timber Transport Group in 1998.

3. AYRSHIRE TIMBER TRANSPORT GROUP

- 3.1 The Ayrshire Timber Transport Group (ATTG), was formed in 1998 and covers the East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Council areas. At present the Group meets approximately every six months.
- 3.2 Organisations represented on the Ayrshire Timber Transport Group at present are:
- East Ayrshire Council
 - North Ayrshire Council
 - South Ayrshire Council
 - Forestry Commission
 - Forest Enterprise
 - Timber Growers Association
 - United Kingdom Forest Products Association
 - Road Hauliers
 - Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and Transportation Team

- Scottish Enterprise
- Police

An Elected Member from East Ayrshire Council, Councillor Dinwoodie, also sits on the Group,

3.3 The remit of the Group is:-

- To maintain under review the routes used within Ayrshire for the transportation of timber.
- To review future timber sourcing locations and associated infrastructure implications.
- To secure through collaboration, best management practice for timber haulage operations.
- To investigate alternative modes of transport.
- To discuss local timber transport issues.

4. KEY ISSUES FOR TIMBER TRANSPORT IN AYRSHIRE

4.1 A report titled “Key Issues for Timber Transport in Ayrshire” was presented to the ATTG in September 2001 (Appendix 1). The issues highlighted were:

- Impact of timber transport on the minor road network.
- Impact of timber transport on local communities.
- Transfer of timber to other modes of transport.

4.2 The ATTG is at present involved in two projects to help address these issues.

- Ayrshire Agreed Routes Map
- Local Area Modelling Assessment.

5. AYRSHIRE AGREED ROUTES MAP

5.1 Between 2000 and 2001 the Timber Growers Association undertook an extensive survey of private and state forests to establish timber extraction volumes and to ascertain the likely routes that these timber volumes will be taking in order to get from the forest gate to the processing mill. A non-confidential database of extraction forecasts was compiled. From this data the ATTG made recommendations on the designations of individual roads required for timber extraction over the next 8 years.

5.2 The roads required for timber extraction and transportation have been designated into three different categories, namely ‘agreed’, ‘consultation’ and ‘excluded’. The definitions of these categories are:

- Agreed – Those which can be used for timber haulage without restriction as regulated by the Road Traffic Act 1988.

- Consultation Routes – Those which are recognised as being key to timber extraction but which are not up to Agreed Route standard. Consultation with the Local Authority is required and it may be necessary to agree limits of timing, allowable tonnage etc. before the route can be used.
- Excluded Routes – Those which should not be used for timber transport in their present condition. These routes are either formally restricted or are close to being formally restricted, to protect the network from damaging loads. Consultation with the Local Authority is required to explore alternatives.

5.3 A Draft Agreed Routes Map has been compiled for Ayrshire showing the routes and their categorisation. Consultations are currently taking place between ATTG and all affected parties within the timber industry.

5.4 Once these consultations are complete, it is proposed that Agreed Routes Map will be open to wider Community Consultation. Within East Ayrshire Council Area it is proposed that the Draft Agreed Routes Map be presented to the affected Local Area Committees to comment on.

5.5 The Agreed Routes Map for Ayrshire will be a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority and the forestry industry.

5.6 Considerable discussion and negotiation over the designation of the individual roads has taken place in order that the forestry industry can move timber as cost effectively as possible. The industry would like the Local Authority to recognise that it is in crisis and must compete in a world market. However, the industry recognises that the Local Authority has minimum resources to repair and maintain the rural road network.

5.7 The Agreed Routes Map for Ayrshire will reflect this mutual recognition and aims to ensure that the forest industry continues to work in partnership with the Local Authorities to address this very important issue.

6. LOCAL AREA MODELLING ASSESSMENT

6.1 Scottish Enterprise commissioned The Scottish Forest Products Transport Mapping Study, published in June 2001. The study was undertaken to

- Collate available data on timber flows (TGA survey)
- Map existing and projected flows
- Identify infrastructure barriers
- Make recommendations on overcoming barriers

- 6.2** The mapping exercise was carried out on a strategic scale. A clearer overall picture of timber transport has been established and a robust mapping tool developed.
- 6.3** The study recommends that further detailed analysis be carried out at a more local level through a Local Area Modelling Assessment (LAMA).
- 6.4** The Ayrshire Timber Transport Group together with the Dumfries and Galloway Timber Transport Group requested that a LAMA be carried out for South West Scotland. Scottish Enterprise have agreed to fund the study and are in the process of commissioning it.
- 6.5** Such an assessment will be able to highlight stress points both in terms of volumes on the main road network through communities and loadings on the minor road network. It will also identify the substantial potential for modal shift from road transport to rail and sea and help the assessment of the feasibility of developments in this area.

7. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- 7.1** A feasibility study is presently being undertaken for a timber railhead at Barrhill in South Ayrshire. If such a project goes ahead it will increase the viability for a railhead at Egger (Barony) near Auchinleck. This would reduce the number of timber vehicles on the road network in East Ayrshire.
- 7.2** It is envisaged that the results from the Local Area Modelling Assessment together with the Ayrshire Agreed Routes Map could form a sound foundation to lobby for additional investment to develop an effective timber transport network.

8. NATIONAL TIMBER TRANSPORT GROUPS

- 8.1** SCOTS (Society of Chief Officers of Transport in Scotland) have recently set up a working group to look at timber transport. East Ayrshire Council have a representative on this group. Issues which the group are to address are
- Obtain baseline information from all Councils on timber transport.
 - National approach to solving timber transport problem and achieving a national timber transport policy
 - Mechanism to achieve meaningful consultation and co-operation
 - Explore the possibility of a Timber Transport Fund
 - Explore funding from the forestry industry
 - Request roads representatives on the Timber Transport Forum
- 8.2** The Timber Transport Forum was established in 2000 to provide a mechanism for sharing ideas and best practice across the existing Regional Timber Transport Groups and the wider forest industry. A Steering Group, consisting of forest industry representatives together with a COSLA representative, guides the

Forum's activities. These are co-ordinated by a Project Manager based at the Forest Industries Development Council .

9. WEIGHT LIMITS AS A CONTROL MECHANISM

- 9.1** There is the possibility that weight limits could be introduced in certain circumstances to prevent excessive use of roads not capable of sustaining the weight of heavy vehicles. Such measures may however cause inconvenience to other road users, and could be subject to challenge by timber operators. A separate report on this agenda covers a specific instance where it is considered that exceptional circumstances could justify the imposition of a weight limit.
- 9.2** The introduction of a weight limit would only be used as a control mechanism for timber traffic if all consultations and co-operation with the timber extractors failed.

10. STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS REGARDING FORESTRY

- 10.1** The Forestry Commission consults with the Council with regard to Felling Licences and Woodland Grant Schemes. The Council is notified for felling of areas over 50ha and consulted on areas of new planting over 10ha or 5ha in sensitive areas.
- 10.2** However, under Forest Licence Regulations, the Forestry Commission cannot condition the licence with regard to roads issues and cannot refuse a felling licence on the basis of road condition.
- 10.3** The Forestry Commission passes on the comments of the Council to the applicant and encourages them to adhere to the comments as best practice.
- 10.4** Forest Plans are prepared for the management of felling and planting of large existing woodlands to cover a 10 year period. The Council is involved in the compilation of these plans during the scoping exercise.
- 10.5** Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) of Forestry Projects are required to be submitted to the Forestry Commission for relevant projects that fall within the categories, initial afforestation, deforestation, forest roads, forest quarries, and the work is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The Council is a statutory consultee for EIA's.
- 10.6** The Forestry Commission will normally only request an EIA if there is an environmental impact on landscape, archaeology, wildlife, vegetation etc and, or, it is a sizeable project ie over 100ha. The Forestry Commission do not view transport as an environmental impact which would trigger an environmental impact assessment.

10.7 It is suggested that changes in consultation procedures should be sought to make them more effective in controlling transport impacts. This may require changes in current statutory regulations. One approach could be to include transport as an environmental factor requiring a formal EIA.

11. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no immediate financial or legal implications.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (a) notes the work of the Ayrshire Timber Transport Group and national groups to minimise the impact of increased timber transport on the road network.
- (b) agrees that the Ayrshire Agreed Routes Map be presented to the affected Local Area Committees to comment on; and
- (c) authorises the Director of Development Services to write to the Forestry Commission and request that the impact of timber transport on the environment be considered as a criteria when assessing whether a forestry project requires an environmental impact assessment, and that the Roads Authority is consulted during the determination of the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Stephen Chorley
Director of Development Services

SC/JMB/WC
17 April, 2002

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

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

Implementation Officer: John Bryson

APPENDIX 1

AYRSHIRE TIMBER TRANSPORT GROUP

KEY ISSUES FOR TIMBER TRANSPORT IN AYRSHIRE

The following issues have been identified as being key issues relating to the transport of timber in Ayrshire.

1. INTRODUCTION

The forestry industry makes an important contribution to Ayrshire's economy. There are almost 3000 people either directly or indirectly employed in the industry in Ayrshire, where direct employment relates to such activities as forestry, logging and sawmills and indirect to manufacturing of wood products etc. Ayrshire is in a unique position in that it has both the timber source, in the extensive areas of forest, and major timber processing sites as well as numerous small sawmills in the area.

The transportation of timber from the forests to the processing plants and sawmills is a key component in the timber industry and as such has a significant impact on both the principal and the minor road network of Ayrshire.

This report outlines the key issues, identified by the Ayrshire Timber Transport Group, relating to the transport of timber in Ayrshire

2. IMPACT OF TIMBER TRANSPORT ON THE MINOR ROAD NETWORK

Forestry in Ayrshire is generally located in remote areas served by a network of minor rural public roads, which are vulnerable to damage from frequent use by heavy traffic.

These roads have evolved from unsurfaced tracks rather than having been designed or engineered. As such many of them are unable to withstand the regular loading of 44 tonne timber vehicles to which they are subjected during timber extraction.

This has been highlighted in the fact that a considerable number of roads directly accessing forests have been identified as 'Excluded Routes' or 'Consultation Routes' by the three Ayrshire Local Authorities in the draft Agreed Routes Map for Ayrshire. These routes have been identified because they are either formally restricted, close to being formally restricted, or may require

restrictions with regard to tonnages, timing, number of lorry movements etc. to ensure these roads are not subject to structural damage from heavy loads.

The Local Authorities do not have the resources to meet the large additional costs of repairing these minor roads damaged by timber traffic, let alone carry out necessary improvements and strengthening. There is also a financial burden on the forestry industry due to restrictions on timber movements because of weak roads, which can cause significant increases in journey times etc. There may also be instances of timber being unable to be extracted due to minor roads being classified as 'Excluded' on the Agreed Routes Map.

These minor public roads which provide direct access to the forests are, therefore, identified as being a key barrier to timber extraction and to the potential further development of a processing industry in Ayrshire.

The tonnages of timber and volumes of vehicles using these roads require to be identified. Surveys of the roads should be undertaken to determine their strength and their ability to withstand the subjected heavy loadings. From this information required strengthening and remedial works can be quantified and costed.

3. IMPACT OF TIMBER TRANSPORT ON LOCAL COMMUNITITES

A number of timber routes pass through communities. These are mainly A class or B class public roads through rural communities not normally used to the environmental impact of large vehicles.

There is also the impact of timber vehicles in urban communities particularly on the roads around the ports of Ayr and Troon. Although timber is being transported by sea from Argyll, thereby saving thousands of vehicle miles, these savings are mostly on trunk roads outwith Ayrshire. From the ports the timber is transferred to road therefore concentrating timber traffic on roads exiting the ports.

There is therefore an environmental and a road safety impact on both rural and urban communities through which the timber traffic passes.

Tonnages of timber and volumes of vehicles using these roads requires to be identified and therefore the environmental and road safety implications on the communities assessed. Actions to mitigate the effects require to be identified and quantified.

4. ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORT

4.1 RAIL

At present no timber is transported out of Ayrshire by rail and very little is brought into Ayrshire by rail. There is therefore an opportunity for a modal shift for timber transport from road to rail.

To help facilitate this there is a proposal to construct a timber railhead at Barrhill.

There is also the possibility of developing multi-user facilities such as combining timber railheads with coal terminals at Dalmellington and Cronberry.

To increase the viability of rail, railheads would also be required at the processing plants. In Ayrshire this would mean connecting the Egger plant at Auchinleck to the existing, nearby, Kilmarnock to Dumfries railway line and ensuring the UPM Kymene factory at Irvine can accept inbound shipments of timber.

A key constraint to the movement of rail freight particularly to the south are the capacity restrictions on the Kilmarnock – Dumfries – Carlisle line between Annan and Gretna due to single line working.

The further examination of these projects is required to help assess their viability.

4.2 SEA

Timber is at present brought into Ayr and Troon harbours by sea from Argyll. While the group welcomes the Timberlink project and acknowledges the thousands of vehicle miles saved on roads there is not a great saving to roads in Ayrshire. In fact it can lead to concentrations of timber traffic on roads in Ayrshire, particularly around the ports. One of the main benefits of sea transport to Ayrshire is timber brought by sea to Troon can be directly transferred to the adjacent timber sawmill.

A facility to transfer timber directly to rail at the ports of Ayr and Troon would help reduce concentrations of timber traffic in Ayrshire.

Again, further examination of this project is required to help assess its viability.

5. SCOTTISH FOREST PRODUCTS TRANSPORT MAPPING STUDY

The Scottish Forest Products Transport Mapping Study was commissioned by Scottish Enterprise and the final report was published in June 2001. The Study was undertaken to

- Collate available data on timber flows
- Map existing and projected flows
- Identify infrastructure barriers
- Make recommendations on overcoming barriers

The mapping exercise was carried out only on a strategic scale. A clearer overall picture of timber transport demand and supply has been established and a robust timber transport modelling tool has been developed. The study recommends that further detailed analysis be carried out at a more local level through a Local Area Modelling Assessment (LAMA). Such an assessment will be able to highlight stress points both in terms of volumes on the principal road network and loadings on the minor road network.

The study also identified the substantial potential for modal shift from road transport of timber to rail and sea. It identified constraints in the form of line capacity problems on the Kilmarnock – Dumfries – Carlisle line and lack of railhead infrastructure both in the forests and at the processing plants. Again it was recommended that a LAMA could be used to help identify and assess the feasibility of developments in this area.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Long lengths of the minor public road network used to directly access timber stocks do not have the strength to withstand the large volumes of timber traffic, which require to travel over them. These require to be assessed and the required investment quantified. The provision of alternative internal forest haul roads requires investigation.

A number of communities are affected by large numbers of timber lorry movements. Environmental and road safety implications on these communities require to be assessed and actions to mitigate these effects identified and quantified.

Opportunities exist in Ayrshire for modal shift from road to rail transport. Proposals for a railhead at Barrhill together with multi-user facilities at Cronberry and Dalmellington require further investigation along with connection to the rail network for the Egger plant at Auchinleck and the inbound shipment of timber by rail to UPM Kymene. The upgrading of the Kilmarnock – Dumfries – Carlisle

requires further investigation and justification for investment. The transfer of timber directly from sea to rail at the ports of Ayr and Troon also requires further investigation.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1** The above points are seen, by the Ayrshire Timber Transport Group, as being the key issues for timber transport in Ayrshire and could be barriers to the industry in the future.
- 7.2** It is recommended that the Ayrshire Timber Transport Group requests the Timber Transport Forum to commission a Local Area Modelling Assessment for Ayrshire, as outlined in the recommendations of the Scottish Forest Product Mapping Study, to assess the key barriers to timber transport in Ayrshire as identified above and identify and quantify proposals to mitigate these barriers.
- 7.3** Due to the large area of the Galloway forest to the south of the Ayrshire boundary it is recommended that the project area for the Local Area Modelling Assessment is extended to include Dumfries and Galloway as this would ensure cross-boundary movements and routes are taken into account.

John Bryson
Chair – Ayrshire Timber Transport Group
September 2001

AGENDA