

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 17 DECEMBER 2002

TIMBER TRANSPORT

Report by Director of Development 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 to enter into a Partnering Charter with the Timber Industry as part of the Ayrshire Timber Transport Group.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The report on Timber Transport to the Development Services Committee of 7 May 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
- 2.2 This report is to update the Committee on a number of ongoing issues with regard to Timber Transport.

3. AYRSHIRE AGREED ROUTES MAP FOR TIMBER TRANSPORT

- 3.1 The Committee recommended that the Ayrshire Agreed Routes Map be presented to the affected Local Area Committees to comment on. This map categorises potential routes as agreed, consultation required (on road improvement or traffic management measures), or excluded.
- 3.2 The Irvine Valley Local Area Committee asked that the U41 Hemphill Road be considered as 'Excluded' rather than 'Consultation'. The representative from the Darvel and District Community Council requested more information on timber extraction on the U3 Foulpapple Road.

- 3.3 The U41 serves as the only extraction route for timber in Cowans Law Forest near Moscow. If this road were categorised as 'Excluded' it would landlock the timber. The Roads Division has been undertaking extensive discussions with the Management Company for this forest. The company has explored all possibilities for extracting the timber by other routes. They have managed to identify an internal route for a small proportion of the timber. However there are no other practical solutions for the remainder of the wood. Although discussions are not complete the company have offered to put in place management systems to regulate timber flows along this road and through Moscow. They have also offered to carry out works in advance of timber extraction and pay a sum towards the ongoing maintenance of the road during the extraction period.
- 3.4 Information was passed to the Darvel and District Community Council regarding extraction on the U3 Foulpapple Road. This road serves a small plantation at Lochfield and would not be used for any timber extraction from Whitelees Forest, which would be served by internal roads constructed by Forest Enterprise to allow timber to be taken out to the north via South Lanarkshire roads. In light of the information the Darvel and District Community Council were agreed that limited, managed use of the road was acceptable.
- 3.5 Since the draft map was drawn up a fourth category of route has been proposed by the Timber Transport Forum, 'Severely Restricted'. It is to be defined as:
- "Those routes that should not normally be used for timber transport in their present condition. These routes are close to being Excluded Routes. Consultation with the Local Authority is required to achieve an agreed management regime to avoid landlocking of timber".
- 3.6 It is recommended that the U41 and U3 should be re-classified as 'Severely Restricted', and that subject to this change the Timber Transport Map as previously submitted to the Committee should be endorsed.

4. AYRSHIRE WOODLAND STRATEGY

- 4.1 As reported elsewhere on the agenda for this Committee a new Locational Premium for Ayrshire, which will provide £1.2 million over 3 years to help deliver key parts of the recently approved Ayrshire Woodlands Strategy has recently been announced by the Scottish Executive. The Ayrshire Woodlands Strategy includes actions that link into the work of the Ayrshire Timber Transport Group, namely the Agreed Routes Map, Local Area Modeling Assessment and the promotion of alternative modes of transport for timber.

5. LOCAL AREA MODELLING ASSESSMENT (LAMA)

- 5.1 The finalised report is due to be published shortly. The Assessment will be able to identify key 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 potential for modal shift from road transport to rail and sea.

6. PARTNERING CHARTER

- 6.1 Due to the close collaboration between the Local Authorities and the Timber Industry in the production of the Agreed Routes Map it has been proposed by the Ayrshire Timber Transport Group that a Partnering Charter be entered into by all parties represented on the Group to underpin the workings of the Group.
- 6.2 The draft wording of the Partnering Charter is given in Appendix 1 of this Report.

7. VEHICLE DESIGN

- 7.1 The Timber Transport Group has given some consideration to improvements in vehicle design. A pilot is being conducted in Dumfries & Galloway on vehicles designed to cause less damage to rural roads. The code of practice for loading vehicles in a way which causes less nuisance to road users has been under scrutiny nationally. The Timber Transport Group will give close attention to these issues in the coming months.

8. FUNDING

- 8.1 The main problem facing timber transport is the substandard minor public roads that provide access to the forests. Although the Roads Division has been successful in obtaining small contributions from some timber companies to help with the cost of repair of damaged roads, as well as minor work to roads in advance of extraction, the economics of the forestry industry is such that it would be unrealistic to expect large sums from the industry to upgrade public roads.
- 8.2 The SCOTS Timber Transport Working Group are to prepare a paper which will outline the problems of timber transport to the public road network and propose a number of solutions including Strategic Funding. It is envisaged that this would be a partnership approach to finding solutions possibly utilising Timber Transport Groups, Agreed Routes Maps, LAMAs etc., and could be underpinned by an Integrated Forestry Strategy.
- 8.3 A meeting has been arranged through the CoSLA Rural Affairs Committee with Allan Wilson, MP, the Deputy Minister for the Environment and Rural Development, to discuss timber transport and funding on 8 January 2003. It will be attended by the Convenor of the CoSLA Rural Affairs Committee, representatives from the Forestry Commission, Forest Enterprise, private industry and a representative from the SCOTS timber Transport Working Group.

The paper prepared by the SCOTS working Group will be presented at the meeting.

9. LEGISLATION

- 9.1 There have been previous discussions at this Committee about the legislative framework for controlling timber operations, in particular in relation to transport. The Irvine Valley Local Committee also recommended that the Council pursue with the relevant Scottish Minister the implementation of appropriate legislation that would provide for Local authorities to have greater enforceable control over timber transport in the interests of local communities and minor network in their areas.
- 9.2 Forestry operations do not require planning consent, and as a result transport of timber cannot be controlled directly by the Council. Any change to planning controls would require legislation and would almost certainly be opposed by the industry and the Forestry Commission. But forestry operations do require licences or other consents from the Forestry Commission which acts as in effect the Planning Authority. It is suggested that the Council should initially explore the potential for transport issues to be taken into account explicitly by the Forestry Commission in granting consents to forestry operations. This would reinforce the achievements to date in securing recognition of the importance of transport issues and establish a linkage between the issue of Felling Licences and adherence to the Agreed Route Maps through consultation with Roads Authorities prior to extraction
- 9.3 In addition, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) of Forestry Projects are required to be submitted to the Forestry Commission for initial afforestation, deforestation, forest roads and forest quarries, where the work is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The Council is a statutory consultee for EIAs. 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 i.e. over 100ha. The Forestry Commission do not view transport as an environmental impact that would trigger an environmental impact assessment. It is suggested that the impact of timber transport on the environment be considered as an environmental impact assessment and that the Roads Authority is consulted during the determination of the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment.

10. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no immediate financial or legal implications.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (a) Endorse the timber transport route map as presented to the Committee on 7 May 2002 subject to re-designation of the U41 and U3 as 'Severely Restricted';
- (b) agree to enter into a Partnering Charter with the timber industry as set out in Annex 1 subject to detailed changes to the wording agree by the Director of Development Services;
- (c) note that the Timber Transport Group will give consideration to possible improvements in vehicle design to reduce damage to rural roads and reduce nuisance to other road users;
- (d) note the work of SCOTS Timber Transport Working Group to lobby the Scottish Executive for funding to mitigate the effects of timber transport on the public road network; and
- (e) request the Director of Development Services to explore with the Forestry Commission the scope to build transport considerations explicitly into procedures for granting consents to forestry operations.

Stephen Chorley
Director of Development Services

SC/JMB/WC
9 December, 2002

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

AYRSHIRE TIMBER TRANSPORT GROUP

Draft Partnering Charter

We, East Ayrshire Council, North Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council, Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, Strathclyde Police, The Forestry Commission, Forest Enterprise and representatives of the Private Sector of the Forest Industry, commit to the following core values:

- Openness, effective communication and co-operation.
- Mutual trust, respect and integrity
- Excellence.
- Continuous improvement.

We will work together to assist one another in achieving each partner's aspirations, and in particular the following objectives:

- The maintenance of the Area's woodlands through ensuring access to them.
- The development of the Forest Industry through management and improvement of haulage routes.
- The avoidance or resolution of timber transport problems.
- The development and use of best management practice for timber transport within the Area.
- The agreement of a timber transport strategy, integrating public and private roads, to provide cost effective and sustainable solutions.