

Timber Transport Operations on Public Roads in Argyll & Bute

Introduction

The Argyll Timber Transport Group (ATTG) is a voluntary body supported by the timber industry, Forestry Commission and Local Authority as a means of minimising problems arising from timber haulage on public roads. **Agreements are made in a spirit of co-operation to sustain the network to allow access by the majority of users.**

The **Agreed Routes Map (ARM)** is the primary working document for use by all interested parties to indicate the status of the majority of public roads and their capacity to sustain standard fully loaded haulage vehicles. The map is configured to indicate **Agreed Routes** as well as other routes designated in order of capacity as **“Consultation Routes”**, **“Severely Restricted Routes”** and **“Excluded Routes”** for the purposes of indicating the likelihood that any haulage operation will require mitigation to avoid damage to the network in excess of that considered sustainable.

Agreed Routes are generally the Council “A Class” network with a few exceptions for areas of limited structural capacity and also other lower class routes where substantial strengthening has been carried out. The majority of other B and C Class routes are designated as Consultation Routes, where generally the capacity is sufficient to cope with regular usage in normal conditions but where some seasonal restrictions may be required. As part of the first major review of the ARM, several routes are proposed to be re-designated as “Severely Restricted” in the aftermath of severe winters where frost heave damage has been extensive. In these cases seasonal and other restrictions are proposed to mitigate the recurrence of this damage.

Where Routes are “Excluded” these are generally:

- Where the structural capacity of the route is limited. This may include routes where a weight restriction traffic order exists.
- There are alternative routes of a suitable nature to take traffic.
- There are local community considerations on the movement of heavy haulage at high frequency

Protocol for haulage on public roads:

Planning through to harvesting operations

Initial notification of the intent to harvest timber and transport to market over public roads should be through direct contact with the Council, where this is likely to affect routes not included in the “Agreed Route” network. Discussions on acceptable haulage levels must be agreed in advance of a formal felling licence application. Recent events suggest that the amount of consultation between hauliers/ harvesters and roads officers has been limited and only becomes an issue once there is evidence of deterioration occurring after haulage operations have commenced. This protocol sets out the procedure for prior notification, agreeing sustainable levels of haulage and monitoring of conditions whilst operations are underway.

The re-designation of more vulnerable routes to “Severely Restricted” in the revised ARM is an effort to focus consultation in advance and where necessary produce a **Timber Transport Management Plan** well in advance so that the owner, purchaser, harvester and haulier are all aware of the requirement to manage haulage movements in a network sustainable manner and the effect on the economics of the exercise.

The draft process for notification of felling license applications is attached in **Appendix 1**

Timber Haulage – Mitigation Measures to protect vulnerable roads

It has become apparent, especially over the severe winters of 2009-10 & 2010-11, that frost heave and thaw damage is exacerbated where fully loaded articulated timber movements continue on narrow sections of predominantly single track roads with thin construction and weak or waterlogged sub grades. Discussions with hauliers through the ATTG co-ordinator, other industry bodies and neighbouring Timber Transport Groups has resulted in the development of a suite of proposals to allow the movement of Round Timber over vulnerable sections of the road network.

Primary amongst these measures is the restriction on the use of 44tonne GVM articulated vehicles with “super single” trailer tyres, on all but reasonably wide and reasonable capacity two lane roads, unless the capacity of the route indicates otherwise via the ARM. The recent procurement of CTI fitted vehicles and trailers by Argyll hauliers is recognised as an industry commitment to participate in mitigating the effects of heavy haulage on coated roads. A parallel commitment from the Council to participate in trials on designated routes to prove the worth of this measure will, if successful, encourage the expansion of this fleet to allow selected harvesting operations to continue in circumstances where at present, they may be stopped.

The suite of mitigating measures available to road users includes some or all of the following as part of an individual Timber Transport Management Plan for specific roads:

- Seasonal Restrictions – avoiding the worst of the winter freeze/thaw effects
- Frequency of loads – Partly to avoid cumulative damage but may also have a social aspect in the reduction in disruption to local communities
- Driver education and awareness of effects of heavy vehicles on weak roads – speed restrictions when fully loaded
- Lower Tyre pressures -The effect of lower tyre pressures on thin construction depth surfaced roads and the impact on sub grades- CTI trials pending
- Wheel and Tyre configurations- use of twin tyres on narrow roads , multiple wheel configurations including internal secondary tyres on trailers
- Axle weight restrictions – Associated with multi wheel configurations

- Under loading traditional trailers, use of secondary loading points adjacent to agreed routes, forwarding full capacity loads as 2 stage operation
- Vehicle and trailer configurations – more use of “Wagon and Drag” trailers instead of full length articulated trailers. Tractor and trailer units for short hauls to above secondary loading points. Improved swept paths on narrow twisting roads to minimise edge damage and resultant drainage problems

Timber Traffic Management Plan (TTMP):
Voluntary arrangement to sustain timber haulage on vulnerable roads

A series of TTMP’s for Argyll & Bute are being developed through consultation between ATTG Project Officer and Roads Asset Manager for roads presently identified on the ARM as “severely restricted” initially, progressing to “consultation routes” as required thereafter.

TTMPs are accessible on the Argyll & Bute Council website

<http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/timber-transport>

NOTE:

Where a TTMP is identified through consultation as necessary but as yet not developed, the TTMP should be agreed by Argyll & Bute Council and the applicants prior to submission of any forest plans or felling licences to the Forestry Commission.

Although developed initially by particular parties, the plans would apply to all timber haulage on the route and may need to be amended. TTMP will include date, and names of all parties contributing.

All timber haulage road users will be expected to accommodate the plan that has been developed for the route. This will require a degree of liaison when harvesting operations are likely to overlap.

Control/Monitoring/Reviewing. It is advisable that all parties will be actively involved in ensuring this agreement is fulfilled, and may also enlist the Group or a representative to help arbitrate in the control, monitoring or reviewing of this agreement. If road conditions continue to deteriorate beyond acceptable levels, despite the above mitigating measures, a more stringent scheme will be devised and implemented as prevailing conditions dictate. Conversely where improvements are made on a route, future plans may relax some measures, or it may be possible to remove the need for a TTMP altogether.

The purpose of this local agreement is specifically to ensure that reasonable access is maintained for the Forestry Owner, and their neighbours, but in a sustainable fashion, in accordance with regional and national forest strategy.