

Highlandman's Wood Timber Extraction

Notes of the meeting of 23 January 2019 at Rhu Marina Café, 10.00 – 12.30

Post meeting notes are in colour.

Attendees:

Fiona Baker and Peter Knox – Rhu and Shandon Community Council **FB** and **PK** [comments](#)

Kirsty Robb - Ridings Sawmill, Cardross. **KR** [comments](#)

Barry Harper, Scottish Woodlands **BH**

Allan Johnston, Coille Haulage **AJ**

Iain Catterwell, Argyll Timber Transport Group. **IC** [comments](#)

Apologies:

George Freeman

Good wishes for a resolution: Jackie Baillie MSP.

No response to email of 22 January 2019 – Argyll and Bute Council (Jim Smith, Stuart Watson, Campbell Divertie), Cllr Barbara Morgan, Cllr Iain Paterson, Maurice Corry MSP, Brendan O'Hara MP.

Acknowledgment

Rhu and Shandon Community Council thank the attendees for arranging the meeting, for being in attendance at short notice and for their frank discussion of the issues and consideration of the residents' concerns.

Resolutions / Actions

- IC will ensure that the TTMP published on the A&B C website will be updated ASAP to reflect the school exclusion times agreed by the Council at the December 2018 review and ensure this information is in the public domain. **Initiated.**
- IC will liaise with A&B C regarding alterations to the operating times and load frequency to try and resolve the difficulties of accommodating the requested exclusion times with ensuring the timber extraction can meet its extraction targets. R&S CC hope that this matter can be discussed and resolved at the 11 February 2019 review meeting to the satisfaction of all parties. **Initiated.**
- KR, AJ et al will work out a revised timetable that will allow the optimum business solution and accommodate the school exclusion times but this would require more frequent loads in the non-exclusion times. **Any change to lorry movements is entirely at the professional discretion of the Argyll and Bute Council Technical Officer on the basis of the prevailing road and weather conditions, amongst other factors. It might not be feasible to operate on a revised timetable as this would impact the logistics of the operation across the board and a trial period would be needed.**
- BH will draft a leaflet, with the assistance of R&S CC that will provide information on the extraction programme, contact numbers, links to health and safety and timber extraction guidance. R&S CC to provide a list of the issues they wish addressed in the leaflet. This leaflet will be distributed as an insert in the Helensburgh and Lomond *Community Advertiser* magazine distributed to all houses in Rhu. Copies will also be made available at local outlets (Brae Shop, Café Rhu, and Rhu Inn). The

objective of the leaflet is to provide information on the timber extraction programme, clearly identify which organisation is responsible for which aspect of the extraction and provide health and safety advice for users of Highlandman's Road and woods during the timber operations.

- IC post meeting note: I agree with the general point that communication has not been as effective as it might, and for my part am happy for you to minute my apology in my opening remarks when we met. In retrospect better neighbourly relations in the first instance would have hopefully predisposed more of the community towards the timber operations and allayed some concerns. Latterly, a faster response to Peter's email of the 16th would have been better given the particular history, (although I would reiterate the part time nature of my post.)
- Prior to the next phase of timber extraction in 2023-24 a public meeting open to all residents will be held and a flyer circulated in advance to advise the community of the timber operations.
- R&SCC will advise KR of the dates of Rhu Gala and garden open days in advance.
- KR offered tours of Ridings Sawmill to R&S CC and Rhu Primary School. The Sawmill has worked with the H&S Executive in devising and providing safe trips of working sawmills for school pupils. R&S CC recommend this offer is taken up by Rhu Primary School.
- R&S CC will ask Rhu Primary, Hermitage Academy and Lomond School to consult with parents and confirm the exclusion times they feel are appropriate. *Initiated*
- The TTMP will be amended to include the correct signatories (i.e. IC and not KR and the appropriate A&B C officer). It will be clearly stated at the top of the document that it is a voluntary agreement and not legally binding. The names of roads should be corrected (Manse Brae is incorrect and should be replaced with Caldwell Place, at the mini roundabout). *There is no mention of 'Caldwell Place' in the published 'Public List of Roads-Argyll & Bute Council Area 2017'. As this is a council document the recognised names pertain.* *The use of Manse Brae might explain why a lorry tried to go up Manse Brae when Scottish Water were digging up Pier Road. The lorry was unable to access Station Road from Manse Brae (roads too narrow) and had to undertake difficult manoeuvres to get back to the main road. We suggest delete Manse Brae altogether to make it clearer where this junction is.*

Points of Information

- A TTMP is a voluntary agreement between the timber extraction team and the Council. It is not a legally enforceable agreement.
- School exclusion times are a courtesy, not a legal requirement, it is a public road.
- The timber operations team do not carry out a risk assessment of transporting logs on public roads. There is not a legal or H&S requirement to do this. It is the responsibility of the Council technical roads officer to assess roads for vehicle safety (i.e. Campbell Divertie). AJ pointed out that removal vans or other large lorries do not carry out risk assessments to use the public road.
- The next review meeting between the timber operations team and A&B C is scheduled for 11 February 2019.
- This phase of the timber extraction programme will finish in May / June 2019. It will be approx. five years before the next phase of timber extraction takes place.
- The timber operation requires to extract 6 – 8 loads per day in order to be economically viable.

- The timber extraction is removing 750 tonnes of timber per week with a maximum allowance of 8 loads per day with a daily target of 6 loads. The target is lower than the allowance to factor in school exclusion times and variables such as delays on the road (e.g. base traffic), waiting times to unload at sawmill, driver operating times etc.
- Approx. 320 loads of timber have been removed so far without incident.
- The TTMP allows for operations 7 days per week. The timber team has restricted operations to Monday to Friday and only occasional loads are taken out on Saturday / Sunday if other factors have caused them to fall behind on the weekly target.
- It is the responsibility of A&B C to change the school exclusion times / operating times and load allowance. If the proposed school exclusion times of 08.30 – 09.30 and 14.30 – 16.00 as requested by R&S CC on behalf of residents are implemented the allowance of 1 load per hour will need to be amended to allow more frequent loads in order to meet the daily target of 6 / allowance of 8 loads. It was suggested the operations could start at 6am rather than 7am.
- AJ noted that all the vehicles are fitted with CTI – Central Tyre Inflation – which spreads the load over a greater area and this technology minimises the impact on the road surface. AJ advises that because of this it may be possible to run more loads than 1 per hour without detriment to the road surface. In his opinion, and at the sole discretion of the Technical Officer, loads every half hour may not cause an increase in wear and tear to the road surface.
- Following the initial haulage period and after inspection, at the discretion of the A& B C Technical Officer, the TTMP allows for two articulated lorries with flat bed or skeleton trailers per day. This information is not included in the TTMP. Some of the timber is being transported to Lockerbie and is travelling a greater distance than to Cardross and on motorways it requires a different loading and transportation method. The artic lorries carry approx. 4 to 5 tonnes more timber, the artics are not fitted with the CTI system.
- All timber lorries are fitted with GPS enabled tachographs. Driver operating times (H&S Executive requirements) must also be factored in to operating times.
- In the specific circumstances of 22 January 2019 (i.e. snow and ice), the road was driven and assessed by the harvesting contractor in a normal vehicle to assess its safety before deciding whether the lorries could operate safely. As with any vehicular journey, the driver is responsible for determining if it is safe to proceed.
- Ridings Sawmill and Coille communicate daily.
- The timber operations team are of the opinion that the timber extraction has gone well without any safety issues. The main area of their concern is safety of walkers etc in the vicinity of the timber operation on the hill. AJ was able to advise of various incidents when the public have put themselves at risk by e.g. riding a horse past a timber wagon being loaded and people stopping and leaning against wagons which were being loaded. FB and PK were able to advise that the extraction and loading team have been courteous and stopped to allow them to pass when walking on the hill. It would seem a lack of common sense by hill users is the main H&S concern. **Pedestrians have occasionally stopped lorries (putting themselves in danger in so doing) and made abusive comments to drivers, who are instructed not to engage, but be polite and report the incidents to AJ.**
- Signage – approximately 20 signs have been put up on Highlandman's Road by Ridings Sawmill and these are consistently vandalised and removed and thrown over the wall.

- Permanent and temporary road signs – there are no appropriate ‘danger timber operations’ road signs despite some 1200 pages of regulation, guidance and interpretation on signage in official roads operation documents. A&B C roads officer is responsible for signage decisions and has advised they are not necessary. Temporary signs are not permitted (Note that BH of Scottish Woodlands did erect temporary signs at the mini roundabout within a week of the request by R&S CC to do so. These temporary signs also have his office phone number on them (BH has received no calls).) Note to R&S CC – lack of appropriate fixed warning signs for timber operations is a national issue and should be addressed in parliament.
- R&S CC able to advise that Scottish Water propose undertaking works at the water treatment plant at the Station Road / Lineside Walk corner in the near future. ATTG et al to investigate what and when.
- The construction of the new house at High Laggary had caused delays to the operations which had an impact on incursions into the exclusion times.

Discussion

The concerns of the residents with regard to public safety were discussed and the following issues raised. *Response noted in italics.*

- Review of TTMP to include public safety issues and consultation of revised TTMP by R&S CC. *The TTMP is a voluntary agreement with the Council and is focussed on the condition of the road and not public safety. It is not appropriate for it to be reviewed by the CC as it is a voluntary agreement with the Council.*
- TTMP’s is focussed on road condition and use of the road but not on the safety of other road users, this needs addressed. *See above. IC stressed numerous times that the timber haulage and use of the public road and timber lorries being on the road at the same time as school children is no more dangerous than any other Large Goods Vehicle and so no more of an H&S issue. R&S CC responded that whilst we appreciate that timber extraction is what Ridings, Coille and members of the ATTG do and they are professionals and guided by and working to extensive professional and H&S guidelines it is the PERCEPTION of the residents that it is dangerous and an H&S issue and this needs to be recognised and addressed.*
- Provision of risk assessment and H&S plan to R&S CC. *This will not be shared but links to guidance can be provided. IC again stresses they are professional people working in a professional manner, working within the law and to industry best practice standards.*
- School exclusion times 8.30 – 9.30 and 14.30 – 16.00 Monday to Friday in term time. Rhu Primary School to be consulted and safety advice provided that can be disseminated to parents. Hermitage Academy and Lomond School also to be advised on the timber extraction. *Without an increase in the number of loads per hour / time between loads the exclusion of 2 ½ hours operational time per day would make the extraction uneconomic and unworkable. R&S CC will confirm exclusion times with the schools. The leaflet will provide safety advice.*
- A telephone number that concerns including breaches of the TTMP and school exclusion times can be reported to. This information to be provided to Rhu Primary School and the Community Council. *BH of Scottish Woodlands has included his telephone number on the temporary warning signs at the mini roundabout. Contact telephone numbers will be included in the leaflet.*
- Inclusion of R&S CC representative at the review meetings of the TTMP. *The ATTG et al were not keen on this as the TTMP is concerned with the condition of the road*

and not H&S issues but recognised that a local representative may be able to identify useful issues. PK and FB believe that whether a representative attends or not the timber operators and ATTG have recognised the concerns of local residents as a result of this meeting and that better lines of communication will result.

- *Permanent and suitable hazard road signs to be erected. Within the remit of A and B C but see notes on this above.*
- *Roundabout give way etc lines to be repainted. Responsibility of A&B C. R&S CC to write to A&B C requesting this is done.*
- *Use of pilot vehicle or Stop / Go man when lorries travelling. This is not considered necessary by the timber team or any other haulage contractor engaged in similar works or commissioners of such works. These measures are for exceptional loads/ vehicles. It is noted the TTMP requires the drivers to communicate with each other to ensure two lorries will not pass each other on the road.*
- *A&B C need to take ownership of the TTMP and ensure it is adhered to. A&B C to do so but timber team advise it is adhered to with only very minor breaches of the exclusion times / operating hours.*
- *Consideration of local events such as Rhu Gala (Sat 8 June) and garden opening events in the village (cars will be parked on Pier Road). KR monitors this but would be grateful for any information from R&S CC on dates.*
- *Breaches of TTMP by contractors need sanctions. By whom? It is a voluntary agreement, responsibility of A&B C.*
- *Monitoring of timber lorry movements (GPS enabled tachographs are standard?). Yes GPS enabled tachographs and full monitoring of timber movements by Coille and Ridings.*

Comments

- *The meeting was helpful and productive. R&S CC have a better understanding of the timber extraction operation and the timber team have listened to and acknowledged the concerns of residents.*
- *IC of ATTG appears to find it difficult to acknowledge that whatever the facts of how timber operations are carried out and the rigour of the professional standards and guidelines that are being adhered to the perception of residents who are not familiar with timber operations will not be allayed by simply being told everything is being done to the highest professional standards. I find this an unfortunate statement, and demonstrably untrue. I specifically said that any perceived fear is real fear and we do not wish to cause anyone to be in fear. I said that there needed to be trust built between the parties. I also said that should lorries and pedestrians, despite best intentions, unfortunately find themselves to be in close proximity then the lorry should be travelling at approximately the same speed as the pedestrian(s) (ca. 4mph). FB and PK acknowledge that you did indeed say this. However, safety concerns are at the heart of the residents' complaints, a large part of the meeting focused on explanations of how the movement of the logging trucks meets all safety and legal requirements for using public roads. We felt that perceived danger was rather dismissed as a valid cause of complaint and we had to be quite forceful in stressing this point. It remains the opinion of FB and PK that the community perception of danger needs to be taken more seriously and we hope that more can be done to build the trust of the community. I can only apologise if that was your impression, it was certainly not my intention.*

- Residents are frightened and placed in fear and alarm by encountering 44 ton lorries loaded with timber on a narrow road with blind access driveways and no passing place. They are intimidated by only having a white line to demarcate a pedestrian walkway between them and a loaded lorry or a narrow pavement to shelter on. The road conditions cannot be changed and the timber must be extracted on this route, these are unavoidable facts.
- The meeting, which comes after three months of correspondence between R&S CC and A&B C regarding residents' concerns, has resulted in a clearer understanding of the concerns of residents and the operational requirements of the timber extraction.
- ATTG and Scottish Woodlands (and Ridings and Coille) recognise that further information on H&S and operational procedures needs to be provided to the residents of Rhu in advance so people know what to expect. This will be addressed at the earliest opportunity by the agreed information leaflet and by a public information event and leaflet drop in advance of the next timber extraction in 2023-24.

Unresolved issues and actions

- School exclusion times are unresolved and the authority to resolve this issue lies with A&B C. In order to extend the current school exclusion times of 08.45 – 09.15 and 14.45 – 15.45 to the requested 08.30 – 09.30 and 14.30-16.00 will require the timing of loads in the operation hours of 07.00 – 19.00 to be increased from 1 per hour to enable the timber to be removed economically.
- IC, KR, BH and AJ will address this issue directly with A&B C (IC leads on this). **Initiated.**
- R&S CC will discuss the outcome of this meeting with residents and members of the CC. PK and FB will recommend that the priority for residents is that they feel safe and the perceived danger of timber lorries on the road at school times placing the children of the village in danger is removed by allowing an increase in frequency of loads in order to allow the requested exclusion times to be applied. R&S CC will write to A&B C officers, our elected councillors, MP and MSPs to advise them that this appears to be the only way in which this issue can be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties. Decisions of this nature are at the discretion of the Council's Technical Officer based on the preservation of the road surface for the enjoyment of all legal road users.

Further Actions

- Signage issues need to be addressed. This will need to be raised in parliament.
- Community engagement by the timber trade is lacking. Having reviewed the ATTG and other websites and the various guidance notes and protocols no advice on community engagement could be found. When one works in any industry its working practices are 'normal' but it is not normal for residents of a town or village to have timber lorries operating in their midst. R&S CC suggest the ATTG develops a code of good practice for community engagement. It is hoped development of such guidance and a 'what to expect for residents' document would help avoid conflicts arising in the future. **I have sent you the link to the CONFOR guide to stakeholder engagement, and the Forestry Commission guide to consultation, amongst other links. Timber lorries frequently successfully navigate their way through built up areas**

throughout the Argyll & Bute Council area and beyond without adverse effect or comment.

CONFOR Community Engagement guide included below. At a meeting of the Timber Transport Forum I attended in Edinburgh on Friday 25th, we agreed a short final consultation period on a 'final' draft of a timber transport specific stakeholder engagement practice guide, 'Transporting Timber on Public Roads – consultation and engagement' I will forward a copy when it has been approved for circulation.

Thank you. This indicates to R&S CC that this whole issue is a recognised matter of concern across Scotland. We are pleased to learn that the Timber Transport Forum is taking steps to address it.