

# Improving timber transport

The 20th century was a period of unprecedented afforestation in Scotland and the amount of home-grown timber we produce is increasing as these forests mature. From 1976 to 2012, the timber output from our forests multiplied from under 1 million to over 6 million tonnes per year. The forecast is for this to continue to rise to around 10 million tonnes per year by 2030.

Meanwhile, the minor road network that serves rural Scotland has remained much the same. The capacity of the road infrastructure to take timber haulage can be limiting. Narrow roads are a challenge for articulated vehicles, while passing places tend to be small and are few and far between. On more fragile roads, there is a risk that heavy traffic may break-up the thin tarmac surface leaving the local authorities with high repair costs. A significant increase in heavy traffic on minor roads can also create disturbance for rural communities particularly where vehicles pass through small towns and villages.



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Sustainable haulage is a critical part of the timber supply chain, moving logs from forests to the processors with minimal impact on roads, communities and the environment.

## Timber Transport Forum

The Timber Transport Forum was formed in 2000 to address these concerns and has formalised a voluntary system of agreed routes maps to direct timber lorries towards the more suitable roads. Some parts of the rural road network that serve concentrations of forest require strengthening and upgrading to take timber traffic. Otherwise there is a risk that considerable areas of forests will be effectively 'landlocked' without a reliable route to market and the impacts of timber haulage on roads and rural communities will increase.

## The Strategic Timber Transport Fund

The Strategic Timber Transport Fund (STTF) was introduced in 2005 to facilitate the sustainable transport of timber in rural areas of Scotland for the benefit of local communities and the environment, maximising the value of monies through innovative regionally and nationally strategic projects and partnerships. Projects that have been supported include:

- the construction of forest roads that bypass communities and fragile public roads
- the development of other modes of timber transport, such as boat or rail haulage
- the upgrading and strengthening of public roads that are vital to the timber industry.

The fund is delivered through the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme (STTS) and has typically contributed 50% of the costs, with the remainder coming from local authority or forestry sector partners. The scheme

The Strategic Timber Transport Fund logo.



also helps to finance staff time for the Timber Transport Forum and the work of regional timber transport groups in Scotland.

Over ten years the scheme has allocated £23 million to ninety-nine projects for works with an overall value of £51 million. It is forecast that this will facilitate more sustainable haulage of 25 million tonnes of timber over the coming years. The fund also supports the Timberlink service, shipping logs from Argyll to timber processors in Ayrshire.

The funding that has been made available to the scheme to date has been fully allocated and not all projects offering significant public benefit could be supported. As the timber output increases we can expect continued demand for investment in timber transport infrastructure.



## Case studies

This map shows the distribution of STTS-supported projects across Scotland. The projects are clearly associated with areas that have a high concentration of planted forest.

Case studies have been prepared for a selection of the projects and there are short summaries of these case studies below and on the following pages. The case studies will be available to download from [www.forestry.gov.uk/sttf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/sttf)

Strategic Timber Transport Scheme projects 2005–2015.



## Craik Forest and Eskdalemuir

Craik Forest is the largest plantation in the Scottish Borders. The 16 000 hectares is managed by various private owners as well as by Forestry Commission Scotland and will produce around 3 million tonnes of timber over the next 15 years. With support from the STTS, Scottish Borders Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council have invested significantly in the public road network serving the forest. The single track road from Ettrick to Potburn, together with sections of the B709, have been widened and strengthened with new passing places constructed. The road improvements link up with the STTS-supported Eskdalemuir bypass, a 4km stretch of forest road taking most of the timber traffic around the village of Eskdalemuir.



## Annandale and Ae Timber Haulage Route

Timber from the Forest of Ae in Dumfries and Galloway previously relied on minor public roads, such as the 'crooked road' between Kinnelhead and Beattock, and a fragile road to the south which encouraged timber lorries onto a 'rat run' through Johnstonebridge. Following complaints from the local communities and the Council roads department, Forestry Commission Scotland and Annandale Estates requested STTS support towards a 7km haul route across tenanted farmland, leading out onto the A701, which is the main road from the A74 to Dumfries. Over 25 years the route will save half a million road miles and take 40 000 lorry loads of timber off the minor roads.



© Stephen Smith

## Lorg Glen and the B729

Dumfries and Galloway has 27% forest cover and contributes a third of Scotland's softwood production. Most of the plantations are served by minor roads such as the B729 between Carsphairn and Moniaive. Three public roads reach up into 3200 ha of forests bringing 70 000 tonnes of logs down onto the B729 each year, the equivalent of ten lorry loads per day. The STTS contributed to strengthening of both the Lorg Glen road and the B729, with co-finance from the Council and local forestry sector partners. A working group continues to monitor and manage timber traffic on the B729 to minimise the impact on the road and the local communities.

## Brenchoillie Road

A few miles west of Inveraray on the A83 is the turning to Brenchoillie and the start of a 12.5 mile haul route bringing out 80 000 tonnes of timber each year. The first mile of the haul route is a public road serving a handful of houses and a farm. Following a study tour to Sweden, the Council agreed to convert the tarmac public road to a gravel road which they thought may be easier and cheaper to maintain. The experience has been otherwise. While timber lorries can cope with a relatively rough surface, the expectations of car drivers has required a much higher level of maintenance than envisaged. In 2010 the partners called an end to the trial and re-surfaced the public road, with support from the STTS.



## West Loch Awe Timber Haul Route

The 5500 ha of forests on the west of Loch Awe were previously accessed by a fragile lochside road through the villages of Dalavich, Inverinan and Ford. In 2008, plans for the Carraig Gheal Wind Farm presented Forestry Commission Scotland with an opportunity to share construction of a 35km haul route across the hill to serve the wind farm, forests and local farmers. The experience of constructing a haul road that meets everyone's needs has been less than straightforward but it will greatly improve haulage from the forests and take 4000 lorry loads, or around 100 000 tonnes of timber from the public road each year.



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## Rathad Mara and the Floating Piers

The development of floating piers to access coastal forests has significantly reduced the impacts of transporting timber from the west coast of Scotland. Scottish Woodland's Rathad Mara project was a partnership with landowners in Glenelg, Loch Etive and Kingairloch, each with substantial areas of coastal forest at the end of long, fragile minor roads. The STTS contributed funding to shore-based infrastructure to allow loading of boats via a temporary floating pier. Timber hauliers JST (Floating Piers) Ltd and Boyd Brothers Haulage each designed innovative floating pier systems which have taken 270 000 tonnes of timber out by sea. The floating piers have since been used to transport timber from Raasay, Jura and Mull.

## North West Mull Timber Haul Road

When the community in the north west of Mull acquired their local forests they inherited the challenge of hauling 140 000 tonnes of mature, good quality timber to market. Weight restrictions on the single track public roads made them unsuitable for timber haulage and previous investigations had ruled out a floating pier on the nearby exposed stretch of coastline. In partnership with forestry and harvesting company UPM Tilhill, and with support from the STTS, the community constructed a 16.5km cross-country haul road to link up with forest and public roads close to the pier at Fishnish.



### Flow Country

The Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland is the largest area of blanket bog in the European Union. In the early 1980s over 22 000 hectares were planted with spruce and lodgepole pine. Planting stopped in the late 1980s as the conservation value of the flows became more widely recognised. Three decades on and there are 2 million tonnes of timber to be harvested. Transporting the timber to market, over single track public roads floated on the peat, is a major challenge. The STTS has worked in partnership with The Highland Council and forest owners to enable various projects to be undertaken which improve and sustain the public roads and build new in-forest haul roads.



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### Timberlink

Timberlink is a public service contract delivered by Associated British Ports to transport roundwood from Argyll, across the Firth of Clyde to timber processors in Ayrshire. By road, the return journey is up to 320 miles. The sea crossing from harbours at Ardrishaig, Portavadie, Sandbank and Campbeltown is much shorter but is more expensive as it involves multiple handling of the timber as well as port charges. STTF covers the extra cost of this inter-modal haulage compared with the road haulage. Timberlink ships over 80 000 tonnes each year, reducing traffic congestion on the trunk roads and the associated impacts on air quality, noise and visual amenity along the route. The sea route also produces fewer greenhouse gases.

## Contacts and further information

### Strategic Timber Transport Fund

More information can be found at [www.forestry.gov.uk/sttf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/sttf). Our Timber Transport Programme and the Strategic Timber Transport Fund are managed for Forestry Commission Scotland by Derek Nelson ([derek.nelson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:derek.nelson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)).

### Timber Transport Forum

The Timber Transport Forum assists in the delivery of the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme. The Forum is a partnership between the forestry sector, Scottish Government and local authorities. The Forum promotes the development of agreed routes maps for timber transport and develops good practice for timber transport. To find out more and to download the case studies visit [www.timbertransportforum.org.uk](http://www.timbertransportforum.org.uk).