

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Case Study 2015



TIMBER TRANSPORT: Managing impacts on communities and public roads

FOREST ENTERPRISE SCOTLAND

South Loch Ness-side, Inverness-shire



Right: Newly Completed Haul Route

Background

Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) manages 4,400 ha of predominantly mature forest on the South side of Loch Ness (major tourism area). Planned timber production from 2015-25 is approximately 350,000 tonnes. The felling programme is heavily influenced by Plant Health (Dothistroma Needle Blight) and stability issues (terminal height). The private forestry sector has a similar land holding in and around the National Forest Estate (NFE) in this area. All timber transport uses two “B” class roads and several single track unclassified roads that are very fragile.

Stakeholder Engagement

Forest Enterprise has had a difficult relationship with parts of the community in recent years, particularly around the impact of timber transport on the public road network and temporary road closures to facilitate felling. FES made a commitment to the community to investigate ways of reducing the impact of timber haulage. Advice was sought from the local HC councillor (with whom there is a positive relationship) on community engagement. As part of this, FES and Tilhill Forestry (TF) identified an opportunity to link up and share haulage through their respective landholdings.

From this concept a partnership was established involving FES, HC and TF to create a 12km Strategic Timber Haul Route, designed to capture as much timber movement as possible and to minimise use of the public road network. The community and key stakeholders were consulted and kept informed throughout the development of the route (including access and egress onto the public roads network) by attendance at meetings, local newsletter updates and community website updates. The funding bid included letters of support from the community and the local THC councillor as part of the bid portfolio.

The Outcome

A joint funding bid for 6km of upgrade and 6km of new build was approved by the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme (STTS) and completion is due in early 2016. Development of the funding bid provided an excellent platform to strengthen the relationship between FES and the community and enhanced the reputation of FES. Communication is continuing with the community and stakeholders during construction, through meetings, mail drops and face to face conversations as required.

Lessons Learnt

- Various forms of communications are required to suit circumstances to ensure that messages are effectively communicated as described above
- Individuals do not always speak for the greater “community”
- Project management must be flexible, and must factor in unforeseen developments e.g. rock breaking leading to noise nuisance for local neighbours resulting in working time restrictions
- Working with communities on projects with timescales over several years requires time and effort during planning, implementation and beyond
- Not all people will be satisfied - compromise is required by all sides
- “Cascade” communication (with reliance on third parties passing on information) is less effective. Direct engagement is always more effective
- The community can provide helpful local knowledge e.g. identifying neighbours, providing information on past issues etc. They will appreciate having some level of involvement and it helps build a relationship.

