

# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT Case Study 2015



## TIMBER TRANSPORT: Facilitating a New Timber Haul Route

### NORTH WEST MULL COMMUNITY WOODLANDS COMPANY

#### Langamull, Mull: Argyll



Right: New Bridge on Haul Route

#### Background

The North West Mull Community Woodlands Company (NWMWCW) owns 699Ha of predominantly conifer forest, which was purchased from Forestry Commission Scotland in 2006. All of the timber was landlocked due to a very fragile public road network which was subject to longstanding severe weight restrictions. In order for NWMWCW a community owned company to realise their objectives and to secure financial viability a new timber haul route was required necessitating the involvement of 4 other landowners the majority of whom have no current timber interests as well as the upgrading of 3km of public road which Argyll and Bute Council would not fund.

#### Stakeholder Engagement

NWMWCW secured commitment of the wider community to the need for a dedicated timber haul route and its location via the consultation undertaken for the long term forest design plan. The major issue was securing the involvement of the relevant landowners to gain a right of access to enable the route to be constructed. There were 4 other landowners involved including Forest Enterprise Scotland. The discussions with each landowner was generally via a direct one to one approach from different Directors of NWMWCW using personal contacts where possible. Varying levels of negotiations were required to achieve a positive outcome and different agreements were reached ranging from future access rights to use the timber haul route, financial payment up front through to an annual supply of c. 20 cu m of firewood. A flexible approach was essential.

The partnership involved in this project also included Argyll and Bute Council as the roads authority and UPM Tilhill as the harvesting manager. The strong support of the community for this initiative and the demonstrable public benefits meant that the landowners had a degree of moral obligation to participate in a positive way.

#### The Outcome

NWMWCW secured funding for the upgrade of 3km of upgraded public road and over 16km of new track from STTF which was completed in 2014. This will enable over 600,000 tonnes of previously landlocked timber from NWMWCW, FES and private estates to be brought to the market. Combined with the recent development of a fixed pier on Mull for timber transport it is anticipated that this will save 168,000 road miles for the NWMWCW forest at Langamull alone.

#### Lessons Learnt

- Produce a draft agreement before commencement of negotiations and agree up front what variations are going to be acceptable bearing in mind that all bodies may want to take advantage of variations agreed after you think it's all signed up.
- Trying to get 4 landowners on the same page is like "herding cats" if you think it will take 6 months allow a year we were nearly 17 months.
- Do all your research up front if possible as new information at a late stage can be costly. For example we came across a 22m strip along a burn where we couldn't establish ownership or insure the risk of crossing (once we had completed funding negotiations with SSTTS) and a 5km diversion was needed (and further approach to SSTTS) to avoid the land.
- Always try to create an even partnership where everyone wins, don't be greedy.