

Conference makes successful return after two year absence



The Timber Transport Conference was recently held in Penrith on the 25 March at the North Lakes Hotel. **Eamonn Wall** reports

The Conference is organised by the Timber Transport Forum which is nearly 20 years old and is a partnership organisation with the purpose of facilitating the transport of timber from the forests to the mills and plants, whilst minimising disruption to the public, maintaining and improving minor roads and where possible moving timber by other modes of transport. It comprises the forestry and timber industries, timber hauliers, local authorities, national government agencies and chairs and administrators of the regional timber transport groups. It employs a full-time project officer who is Paul Boobyer and has 11 regional groups. Four

of which employ part time project officers: Ian Catterwell in Argyll, James England in Dumfries and Galloway, Claire Glaster in Grampian, Tayside and Fife, and Simon Stuart in Ayrshire and North Lanarkshire. All of whom were at the Conference. Con For host the Forum.

The Forum has created agreed road route maps, publishes Good Practice Guides, and the regional groups meet occasionally and deal with any timber transport issues in their areas.

The Conference was very well attended by over 100 delegates with nine speakers. Volvo Trucks sponsored the event which kicked off with a dinner on the previ-

ous evening. The Chairman of the Forum, Alistair Speedie, was once again the Chair for the Conference and did a very good job introducing the speakers and keeping to time.

Speakers

The first speaker was the Deputy Leader of Northumberland County Council who outlined the scope and purpose of the Great Northumberland Forest Project launched in 2019. The Project is really an all-encompassing banner for any tree planting taking place in the county and a way of promoting more tree planting through general awareness of all the existing grant schemes already available, education and publicity. However, the Council does have its own Free Tree scheme for community and public tree planting. The Project has a large range of stakeholders within the Northumberland Woodland Creation Project with the aim of creating 100,000 ha of new woodland to provide the multiple



range of benefits we can all list in our sleep including carbon off-setting, climate and biodiversity crisis, world timber supply, rural employment, recreation, and net zero. The Council also wants to look into its own woodland holding of 1200ha to improve management where possible.

Keith Jones from Forestry Commission England gave an overview of woodland cover in the North of England with a current cover of 14.5% and the target of 17.5%. He highlighted the new Cumbria Coastal Community Forest and the large amount of funding now available in England for woodland creation. The target is to plant 420k ha over the coming years.

From Forestry England, Kevin May, Director North Forest District, reminded us all that of course Kielder Forest is in his patch producing a lot of timber and revenue for the District. The key is sustainable forest management at the 1500 forests nationwide, covering 250k ha, that FE manage. In the north of England lies 86k ha of this producing 550k cubic metres annually. 90% of this from clearfells and 50% sold through standing sales, the balance either by in house harvesting teams or contractors. Annually 800ha is restocked with 3m



trees. The main issues to the forests are tree diseases and storms, and he stressed the importance of managing the forest to the UK Forest Standard, taking on board all the biodiversity (e.g. re-introductions) and public engagement (e.g. health and well-being) opportunities. New woodland creation is also very much on the agenda for them. Also important are trainee programmes to get more people choosing forestry as a career, and the use of Natural Capital Accounts to show the value of forestry to society.

Net zero carbon vehicles

John Comer from Volvo gave us a very interesting review of Volvo's work in creating net zero carbon vehicles. It is a vast and complex issue. Volvo will be producing electric 44 tonne HGVs later this year which should have a 300km range but cost perhaps three times that of a diesel truck. Weight is a big issue as batteries are very heavy. Volvo will be building diesel engines for many years to come, and it was very interesting to see the reduction in pollutants over the years now in the EURO6 version. A EURO7 is in the pipeline in the EU. The government's target is to phase out die-

sel trucks in a phased manner, all by 2040. He noted that one litre of diesel produces 2.3kg of CO₂. The new bio diesel, HVO, hydrogenated vegetable oil, was discussed and the concept of well to wheel.

The view from the Road Haulage Association (presented by Chris Ashley) is that they support net zero but feel the time frame should be extended by 5 years. He outlined some issues that will slow the conversion to electric vehicles such as supply issues, Brexit, and Ukraine considerations.

Neill Stoddart from Creel Consulting gave a refreshing clear presentation covering many of the above topics. He now runs his Citroen van on HVO which requires installing a tank as you cannot buy it retail. It cost about 5% more than white diesel but 90% less CO₂, 30% less NOX, and 86% less other pollutants. Transport in Scotland accounts for 36% of greenhouse emissions and Net Zero is set for 2045 so a big change needed. There are 690 timber trucks in the UK. Alternative fuels include HVO, LNG, BEV, Fuel Cell, and Hydrogen.

Dustbin lorries seem well suited to BEV, and a trial of 50 is working well. Each alternative fuel has its own range of issues. Also, electric chargers for trucks cost about £120k. If you were charging ten trucks, you could easily use up all the available current and cause a blackout locally. So, plenty of challenges.

Nicol Sinclair from Forest Research outlined their windblow assessments which finally showed 8k ha in Scotland and 3k ha in England blown down by storm Arwen. Murray Clark from Clark Engineering showed some videos about automatic timber tensioning straps.

Covering training of drivers, Sandro Borland from Bensile Training reviewed the ongoing HGV drivers training, the Certificate of Professional Competence. They have now introduced a version relevant to forestry and timber truck drivers, the + F. This compulsory 7-hour training has been lightened up with the production of 8 videos which we got to see. Very worthwhile! She also mentioned the Timber Haulage Academy to attract drivers into forestry transport.

Finally, was Mick Bottomley from Forestry and Land Scotland, who ran through useful points on managing in-forest infrastructure which included Key principles such as planning, space for vehicles and well fare, Regulation and Water such as managing runoff and slurry issues, Forwarders and roads, Stacking Area and Forwarder ramps.

Alastair Speedie brought proceedings to a close and mentioned the Strategic Timber Transport Fund and the round just closed amounts to £7m available. Closing dates for bids was March 21, and he is keen we continue bidding for funds to keep the funding pot available in the future.

It was a very useful day with a nice mixture of topics.



Clockwise from top left: The conference had a bountiful attendance; Neil Stoddart speaking about decarbonising timber haulage; John Comer, Product Manager at Volvo Truck and Alistair M Speedie, host of the TTF Conference.