

Arran Community Council

Forestry Extraction Working Group.

Approved Minutes of second meeting held 1st July 2015 at Machrie Hall, 18.00 to 20.45

Present: R McMaster (ACC and Chair), D Price (Machrie resident and minutes), N Arthur (ACC), L Evans (ACC), A Walker & J Lauder (both Forestry Commission (FC)).

Apologies G McLeod (NAC), L Gunaydi (Machrie resident),

1. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Changes were discussed and approved. Proposed by JL and seconded by NA.

2. ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

3.2 Cost data for options

JL stated he could not provide the detailed figures as per the equation (see previous minutes), but stated that a cost reduction of approx. 20% was estimated for the Machrie scheme versus transporting timber from the W-side forests to Brodick. Assumptions were made on timber extraction and haulage rates for the Machrie proposal. Following discussion he confirmed that this 20% figure did not include the capital cost (depreciation, interest payments etc) on the proposed slipway or storage area, and also did not include any costs of road improvements to the Machrie Moor road or String road. (i.e. they were like for like haulage costs). He confirmed that haulage costs amounted to some 60% of the total costs of harvesting timber on Arran and delivering it to Troon. DP expressed his disappointment at not being able to see the cost breakdown, item by item, in the cost equation for the comparison between exporting via Brodick and via Machrie. JL said this could not be provided.

NA also expressed his disappointment at the lack of data and asked for clarification of the types of timber sales contract currently in use and expected from next year. JL confirmed that A. Wilson had two contracts, one for `road side` sale and one for `standing sale`, i.e. the purchase of trees still standing. Another firm, UPM, has a contract for small roundwood. JL confirmed that standing sales will almost certainly be the preferred system from 2016. Under this scenario the FC are not involved in transport of the extracted timber. Extraction to roadside on Arran is currently performed by contractor Mr D. Dick. Public road haulage is the responsibility of the respective merchants ie Wilson's and UPM Tillhill.

JL commented that the volume extracted from the W-side needs to increase to offset over-cutting on the E-side. NA suggested that haulage rates from local hauliers

could come down if timber tonnages increased. It was suggested that as part of looking at alternative methods of haulage that the FC should renegotiate their terms with local contractors. JL explained again that FES do not currently negotiate road haulage rates on Arran (see above). NA also reiterated a point previously made that it was undisputed that the cheapest route off the island was via the ferry. He quoted the example of Islay where whisky trailers were loaded without the attached tractor unit. He had discussed this with Rob Soutar at the environmental panel meeting on May 28 who had expressed interest in this approach. This method could be done via Brodick by utilising the 19.20 ferry say twice a month. Such a system would also reduce the number of times timber was loaded/off-loaded from 6 to 2, further reducing costs.

ACTION...JL agreed to look into this.

4.2 Road improvement costs

JL tabled an email from Campbell Dempster in response to this action. Remaining String road improvements (11.4km) would cost an estimated £10m based on £140/m² and drainage. Machrie Moor road improvements are as follows:

1. For full length, single track, with 25 passing places, (4.8km)...£2.1m
2. Omitting the middle section as per FC plans. 13 passing places, (2.65km)...£1.2m

These exclude any cost associated with acquiring land for the passing places. These figures were discussed, and queried by NA.

JL stated that the Strategic timber transport fund was no longer in operation (i.e. no longer available to help fund road works).

With specific reference to the Machrie forest NA and RM suggested again that extraction via Glaister to Brodick would be the preferred option. Following further discussion and looking at the O.S. map it was agreed that a further extension of the forestry track, at a cost of £0.3 would be the cheapest option, ie £0.6m versus the £1.2m quoted above, and would mean timber lorries would not need to use the Machrie Moor road. There was discussion about land ownership at Glaister. NA stated there was one landowner involved, and confirmed in his conversation with Charles Fforde; AW had thought there were two.

RM suggested it would be helpful if C Dempster could attend a meeting (possibly on site to further clarify road costs. **ACTION...JL** to contact him, requesting him to nominate a few possible dates and to re-look all the figures given in 4.2.

JL suggested an alternative route for the Machrie forest timber which would also not require road traffic and would involve building a further forest track west, to meet the Machrie coast road between Auchencar and the Schoolhouse, then be exported via

the proposed Machrie slip. This did not meet with any enthusiasm from NA, DP or RM as it would meet great resistance from the residents there.

AW stated that extraction from private forests north of Machrie would commence in the near future and that the timber would have to come south as the road to Sannox via Lochranza was not allowed. NA queried this, given that the Boguillie road was to be upgraded in the next two years on an SPT grant at a cost of approx. £2m including resurfacing, widening and passing places. AW stated that roads were classified differently for timber transport using a system agreed through the Timber Transport Forum. Members of the group were encouraged to view the TTF website by JL. **ACTION...** AW to confirm or otherwise, his statement re: the ban on timber traffic on the Boguillie road.

4.8 Alternative slipway locations

AW tabled a resumé of nine options, showing pros and cons. Some could be ruled out automatically, eg Machriewaterfoot...no agreement from landowner, or Clauchlands... due to possible access and environmental issues. The others have varying degrees of subjectivity. **ACTION...**AW agreed to rank the options based on FC assessments so far.

4.12 Other sites near Brodick

AW had spoken to C Fforde who had stated he had no plans to build another slip in the area as Brodick was nearby. He had not discussed options in the South East of the island during that meeting. A reoccurring theme during all the discussions above was the request from non-forestry WG members to see evidence of a real attempt to research several alternatives to timber extraction from all areas on the island, and not concentrate on Machrie.

6.3 Remit. DP had produced this which had been subsequently agreed and published in the Arran Banner and The Voice.

3. FORESTRY COMMISSION STRATEGY

JL stated that this was as previously minuted... repeated below

Effectively deliver the timber resource on the island to the market in a manner that causes least disruption to residents and visitors alike.

Do this in a manner that :-

- 1 Minimises public spending.*
- 2 Minimises timber traffic through settlements.*
- 3 Minimises carbon emissions from the haulage process.*

- 4 *Improves the visitor experience.*
- 5 *Encourages private growers to bring material to the market.*
- 6 *Reduces the potential for an incident in the port area in Brodick*

DP queried no. 5 as it appeared to be in opposition to no. 1. JL stated that the FC had a public duty to promote forestry activities by other providers even though it did potentially reduce FC profitability.

NA questioned no. 6 as there had been no incidents and was not considered an issue by NAC as far as he was aware, nor had a formal risk assessment been carried out. A similar argument could be made about potential accidents in Shiskine with its single tracked restricted bridge and adjacent primary school or any other community.

JL stated that an aim was to build a number of slipways around the coast of Arran, so as to minimise transport road miles. One site in the south East of the island has already been firmly identified and a provisional or temporary lease obtained. Negotiations with other landowners are in progress. Extraction was expected to start within the next five years. JL agreed to provide an A4 or A3 sized map showing prospective shipping sites, routes and forests to facilitate easier discussion. **ACTION ...JL to provide map.**

Following discussions about extraction rates JL stated that the Arran forests required harvesting at a rate of 60,000 m³ per annum to keep pace with tree growth. The contract with the timber merchant requires them to take this quantity, however, JL stated that this rarely happened - typically extraction was at 67-75% of this rate but is also possible for the merchant to extract 10% over the contracted quantity without penalty. DP requested data (graphical) for the last 5 years to confirm this as it impacted on the proposed numbers for lorry movements etc. **ACTION ...JL to provide for next meeting.**

Depending on wood demand the merchant would alter demand from Arran, in preference to the cheaper mainland supplies. JL stated that exports via Sannox had slowed recently due to lack of demand.

4. FEEDBACK FROM ENVIRONMENTAL PANEL MEETING ON MAY 28

There was brief discussion about this meeting, convened in the FC Brodick offices and on site on the Dougarie shore. Most items discussed there had been brought up above. The minutes of that meeting had been circulated to this group previously, and are attached for completeness.

5. AOB

DP requested that the approved WG minutes be made available on the ACC website so that the general public could keep abreast of developments. This was agreed. **ACTION...DP** will send approved documents to Bill Calderwood, secretary of ACC.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:- Thursday July 30th, 6pm at Machrie Hall