

Arran Community Council

Forestry Extraction Working Group.

Approved Minutes of third meeting held 30th July 2015 at Machrie Hall, 18.00 to 20.00

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

1. APPOLOGIES G McLeod (NAC)

2. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Changes were discussed and approved, proposed by DP and seconded by JL.

3. ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

3.1 Use of ferry for `trailers only` to reduce loading/unloading costs

JL had contacted Calmac and had had a very positive meeting today at Brodick terminal with Ian Fox, Senior account manager, based in Oban. Calmac were keen to assist with such a proposal for at least a proportion of the timber exported from Arran, suggesting, for instance, that space for 6 trailers could be reserved on the last ferry each day as there was always spare capacity. JL and he will be following this up with further detailed discussions on operational practicalities such as trailer storage at Ardrossan and Brodick, costs etc. Ian Fox had stated that the Ullapool-Stornoway route operated a `trailers-only` system on the night ferry, so they had experience of this method.

NA welcomed the reported comments by Mr Fox and pointed out that initial design considerations were already advanced for two new ferries (one destined for the Arran route). It would be important to confirm that in light of this proposal for additional and alternative transport of timber by ferry that the vessels would be suitable for this traffic e.g. the car deck design with or without a `central casing` etc. This could be confirmed with Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMal).

NA also raised the issue of the current ferry operator tendering process and the possible outcome of that. This too had been discussed and Ian Fox assured JL that any agreement would be transferrable to the new operator should Calmac not be the successful bidder.

3.2 Contact Campbell Dempster (NAC Roads) to attend a meeting to further clarify relevant, necessary road construction and repair costs.

JL had contacted Mr Dempster, but he was unable to meet until after mid August, following a proposed meeting between North Ayrshire Council and the ACC to discuss Arran roads. **ACTION...** NA to confirm as neither he nor RM was aware of this meeting, which was obviously very relevant to this group's discussions.

3.3 AW to confirm or otherwise, his statement re: the ban on timber traffic on the Boguillie road.

AW produced an Arran map and referred the group to the Timber Transport Forum web site for more detail. `The Timber Transport Forum supports forestry by ensuring that the timber industries can access forests and market timber in a sustainable way while seeking to

minimise the impact of timber transport on the public road network, on local communities and on the environment.`

In essence the situation is that the road between Pirnmill and Sannox is categorised as a `Consultation route`. (Consultation routes are recognised as being key to timber extraction but are not up to Agreed Route standard and consultation with the Local Authority is required). The Pirnmill to String section is `Excluded`. (Excluded Routes should not be used for timber transport in their present condition.) Note: the Machrie proposal, should it go ahead, would use this road. The String road is also a `Consultation` route. NA stated that as these classifications are historic they need to be re-visited. For instance the Boguillie was about to have around £2m of SPT-funded improvements which would almost certainly improve its suitability for timber transport from part of the west coast to the existing slip at Sannox.

3.4 Ranking of options

AW tabled an updated document which was discussed. It was acknowledged that the rankings were subjective and different people could end up with differing results. It was agreed that the existing Brodick site should also be evaluated as the `status quo`...**ACTION AW**

RM asked about timber stack heights. JL stated that current guidelines were that height should not exceed timber length e.g. for 4.9m long logs, this means 4.9m max height. They could be lower to minimise visual impact.

3.5 Provide an A4 or A3 sized map showing prospective shipping sites, routes and forests to facilitate easier discussion.

JL tabled an O.S. -type map with forests and export sites highlighted which was referred to from time to time during the discussions...a useful document.

3.6 Harvesting rate on Arran over last 5 years (graphical)

JL tabled numerical and graphical data (m³ and tonnes) for 4 years, 2011/12- 2014/15. Years 11/12 and 12/13 were thought accurate at ~49,000m³(39kt) per annum, but 13/14 and 14/15 had timber probably included from mainland sources to make up a shortfall in Arran supply...**ACTION JL** to check/update these figures.

The reasons for the shortfall were not discussed. (Note: tonnes = volume in m³ x 1.24 and is based on what is termed `Over Bark Standing` timber, but without the branches being part of the calculation).

JL reiterated that the Arran target was 60,000m³ p.a. (48kt) of which 30,000m³ (24kt), was from the W. side to keep up with tree growth rates. Future extraction rates should aim to meet this target, irrespective of the price of timber as the FC had a responsibility to manage the forests, not just maximise profits on timber extraction/sales. However it was conceded that currently, due to the £:€ exchange rate, timber imports from European market sources were high, meaning that local Arran demand was low, Arran being more expensive than say, Galloway.

There was also further discussion at this point about the proposed change of contract next year (2016) from the present `roadside sales` to `standing sales`, the significance of which places all of the felling and transport costs onto the contractor who may well not wish to use the landing craft for all sorts of reasons particularly if transport by ferry is cheaper.

3.7 DP to send approved documents to Bill Calderwood, secretary of ACC.

Done; documents are now available on ACC web site.

4. FORESTRY COMMISSION STRATEGY

DP had sent an email to JL (copy to all) querying certain aspects of the strategy elements. JL had responded to all so details are not included here. Some specifics were:

4.1 Why does the FC encourage private growers, thereby reducing FC profits but boosting private growers? JL reiterated that the FC had a statutory duty to do this.

4.2 JL confirmed that the Strategic Timber Transport Fund was fully allocated for this year and it would not be continued. An Arran application was still on file. JL also stated that just because the Strategic Timber Transport Fund has come to the end of its time it was not impossible that another fund may start at some point in the future.

4.3 JL again reiterated that it was not possible to provide financial figures on which the FC had concluded that the Machrie scheme had a 3 year payback, (for commercial confidentiality reasons). RM, NA, LG, LE and DP had on a number of occasions in this and previous meetings, complained that without such data, site comparisons such as discussed in 3.4 above were unsustainable.

5. AOB

5.1 NA asked if JL had contacted haulier Mr I Thomson of John Thomson Construction, (the owner of the present Brodick barge slip) to discuss haulage rates and the possible effects of higher tonnages resulting in lower rates. JL confirmed he was meeting with him on July 31st but did stress that the haulage contracts were between hauliers and timber buyers(e.g. A Wilson), and not the Forestry Commission. NA stressed that while he was not acting as an agent for John Thomson Ltd or any other company he welcomed the fact that this long awaited meeting would now take place.

5.2 DP proposed that the approved WG minutes be sent to Rob Soutar, Galloway Forest District Manager, both for his own information and for him to forward to the FC Arran West coast project board. This is the body with the overall responsibility to oversee timber extraction from Arran west coast forests. This was agreed. **ACTION...DP** will send approved documents.

5.3 Marine licence application. JL stated that this was still being evaluated by Marine Scotland following some environmental concerns being raised.

5.4 Next Forestry Arran Environmental panel meeting. **ACTION... AW** to confirm date

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:- Thursday August 27th, 6pm at Machrie Hall