

Forestry extraction working group

Minutes of first meeting held 21/5/15 at Machrie Hall, 19.30 to 21.45

Present: R McMaster (ACC and Chair), D Price (Minutes and Machrie resident),
L Gunaydi (Machrie resident), N Arthur (ACC), L Evans (ACC), A Walker (FC),
J Lauder (FC)

Apologies G McLeod (NAC)

1. Background

The working group was set up following an ACC meeting on April 28th at which JL and AW gave a presentation on the Machrie timber extraction proposal. As part of the discussion it was agreed that there was a need to involve the general public as well as the ACC in the overall strategy of timber extraction on Arran. This is the first meeting.

2. Forestry overview

JL clarified the timescales involved. Various documents produced in recent months had two different timescales, either 10 years or up to 2050. It was confirmed that timber extraction was effectively `in perpetuity` as replanting took place following felling and extraction. The 10 year period is the time a Forest Plan lasts before it has to be reviewed and any further felling is approved by the regulatory body.

3. Strategy

JL described the overall FC strategy

A copy of his paper, received later, is inserted at 3.1 below.

3.1 Arran Timber Haulage Strategy

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 :-

3.1.1 Minimises public spending.

3.1.2 Minimises timber traffic through settlements.

3.1.3 Minimises carbon emissions from the haulage process.

3.1.4 Improves the visitor experience.

3.1.5 Encourages private growers to bring material to the market.

3.1.6 Reduces the potential for an incident in the port area in Brodick.

With the exception of 3.1.5, these were all discussed at various points in the meeting.

3.2 Revenue The FC is not involved in haulage, so currently timber is sold at 'road side'. This value is derived from an average mill gate price as delivered to Adam Wilson of Troon (Timber Merchant).

The price received by the FC is then based on the following equation:

$$\text{Sale price} = (\text{Millgate Price as per AW}) - (\text{haulage costs on Arran}) - (\text{loading costs on Arran}) - (\text{barge costs}) - (\text{unloading costs at Troon}) - (\text{yard costs at Troon})$$

The present contract is due for renewal in 2016. JL stated that timber prices were currently low by historical standards. Despite being pressed JL would not present either absolute costs or even percentages for this equation. He said this data was confidential as third parties were involved, but he would provide the percentage improvement figures that the Dougarie proposal was estimated to deliver at the next meeting....**ACTION JL**

DP proposed that the WG consider all financial data received to be confidential to the group. This was agreed.

There was much discussion about lack of information on alternatives to Machrie, both financial and non-financial. Some members felt unable to make progress unless this information was forthcoming.

4. The Machrie proposal

4.1 There was much convoluted debate about this proposal. The essence of it is that this is the preferred solution for the FC, but they were unable to supply the rest of the WG with many hard facts or data to support this preferred option or details of alternatives that had been ruled out. JL stressed other options had been looked at but Machrie was more advanced as land was available and the seabed was suitable. They were working on the premise that road miles had to be reduced so a W-coast site was logical to extract W-coast timber.

4.2 JL and AW tabled a spreadsheet on road miles and tonnages and outlined their current strategy for extraction of Arran's W-side forests. These amount to some 24ktpa and include the Machrie, Shedog, Kilpatrick, Torr Righ and Glenloig forests (240,000 tonnes over 10 years). In addition there will be the need to extract some 40kt and 60kt from the private forests at Machrie and Whitefarland, respectively (76,000 tonnes over 10 years). Extraction from these private forests will be intermittent over an estimated 20 years. The FC are not responsible for the extraction or transport of timber from these private forests, but it will mean more timber lorries on the roads. FC timber equates to 3.2 lorries/day. FC plus private equates to 5.7/day. These numbers equate to 3 and 4 ships per month.

A 3 year payback time for the Forest Enterprise Machrie scheme was quoted. The cost of any road works, such as widening the Machrie Moor road/ lay-bys were the responsibility of NAC. The costs at this stage were unknown. Members felt that these numbers should be included in the costs as it could significantly affect the overall Arran roads budget and skew the perception of the advantages of Machrie.

ACTION JL agreed to contact Campbell Dempster at NAC for cost estimates.

4.3 The tabled data on road miles for various West coast forests indicated an average saving of 18.5 miles per lorry (both ways). Over 10 years this equates to 126,153 miles saved in terms of miles driven on council roads. (Note: see 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 above). There were differing opinions on the mileage difference from the Machrie forest to Brodick or Machrie. NA stated he had personally measured it at 3 miles each way. Following discussion it was agreed that this data was only for public road miles and excluded miles driven on forestry tracks.

4.4 Extraction via Glaister was quoted as more costly but no data was provided.

4.5 It was agreed by the FC that the cheapest transport route off Arran was via lorries on the ferry, providing the haulage companies had a return load and space was available on the ferries. The latter point was the main problem.

4.6 A recurring theme was the concern about the disruption and dirt expected in transporting timber across the coast road at Machrie (300 trips to load a ship). This conflicts with 3.1.4 above. The FC view was that visitor experiences over the String and elsewhere would be improved with this scheme. AW confirmed that at Sannox the ship was typically loaded in 8 hours, ie within one tide, however, he acknowledged that loading at Machrie would take longer due to the vehicle traffic on the road.

4.7 Test digs at the proposed Machrie timber store had revealed that the ground is almost pure sand, therefore a quantity of stone ballast would be needed.

4.8 There was much discussion from members about possible other sites on the W-coast and why there was no information available about them. JL said the coast between Flag Point and Imachar brae had been surveyed (but not extensively). There were very few areas with sand or where the storage area could be on the seaward side of the road. Land adjacent to Dougarie boat house had been ruled out by Dougarie Estate. Kilpatrick **was** too rocky. NA suggested that an option could be to move the road landward. This has apparently been opposed by Scottish National Heritage.

ACTION JL agreed to supply WG with information on which locations were considered and reasons for rejection, e.g. too rocky, tidal rise too high etc.

4.9 There was much discussion about use of the String road and its general state of disrepair. NAC do not plan any significant repairs until 2016. The FC want to

minimise road traffic. NA pointed out that NAC data indicated 10,000 String road vehicle movements per week. This already includes FC lorries as well as Thomson Construction lorries carrying crushed stone from their quarry at Dereneneach. These stone lorries could significantly increase depending on contracts awarded for the new pier at Brodick.

4.10 JL commented that NAC had concerns over safety with Brodick timber transport/loading operations. This was questioned by NA as being unsupported by any evidence.

4.11 A comment was also made about the possible disruption at Brodick during the new pier construction. The answer is unknown at present.

4.12 NA proposed that the FC should investigate other possible sites in the Brodick area to site a new slipway. Land owned by Arran Haulage and C Fforde at Clauchlands and Cladach was suggested. Currently Thomson's own the Brodick site and hence options for price reduction through competition were limited.

ACTION JL to contact C Fforde.

4.13 RM suggested that the FC could consider using the money earmarked for building a new track in Machrie forest instead to help upgrade the Machrie Moor road. The bridge at House of Machrie may be a big problem.

4.14 JL confirmed that although, in principle, logging activities at Machrie would be 24/7, should the scheme go ahead, in practice, night activities would be restricted because of the closeness of houses.

5. Remit

A number of options were discussed. A proposal was tabled and circulated later by DP for comment. The final version after feedback is:-

To critically review and advise the Forestry Commission on its strategic objectives for timber extraction on Arran and evaluate all proposed options.

6. Other matters

6.1 AW tabled preliminary report on bird species observed at Machrie cliffs.

6.2 DP asked for clarification on the ability of JL and AW to abide by the WG decisions. JL confirmed that as he was overall project manager, and as such the recommended actions made by the working group should be upheld by the FC.

6.3 It was agreed that DP would draft a short statement to send to the Arran Banner to inform the public about the WG and its remit... **ACTION DP**

7. Next meeting agenda

7.1 It was agreed that JL should expand on the Arran-wide strategy at the next meeting. It was noted that a land lease in SE Arran had already been secured as a site for a possible slipway for extraction from the south and east of Arran. He asked if ACC members from Lamlash or Whiting Bay should attend. It was agreed that at this stage, membership would remain as is. LE pointed out that all ACC members had an Arran-wide as well as local responsibility. **ACTION JL**

7.2 There are Forestry panel meetings twice a year. The next meeting is on 28 May at the FC office off the Auchrannie Road, Brodick. The agenda is the Machrie proposal. LE and NA will attend, DP and LG are unable to attend,

Date of next meeting:- 18th June, 6pm at Machrie Hall