

**Report to Board 4<sup>th</sup> February 2011**

**EUROPEAN**

**EFFIPLAT Project Proposal**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To provide Board Members with details of a proposed Atlantic Area ERDF project aimed at improving logistical efficiency in the Atlantic Corridor.

**'EFFIPLAT' IN BRIEF**

Following several years of significant growth in the area dedicated to logistics and intermodal activities in the Atlantic Arc regions, the current economic crisis has marked a turning point and a slowing down of this growth, a circumstance which the EFFIPLAT Project sought to take stock of and help reverse, through the establishment of solid foundations for the sustainable development of transport in a post-crisis scenario.

Specifically, the objective of the EFFIPLAT project is the improvement of logistical efficiency in the Atlantic Corridor, and to achieve that it is proposed to create a transnational work space which will henceforth be known as: Atlantic Arc network of multimodal platforms aimed at logistical efficiency or EFFIPLAT Network.

This network of platforms will have two main objectives or work lines: The promotion of transnational cooperation to improve the planning, project and operational phases of logistics and/or intermodal platforms; and the promotion of interoperability and continuity in existing logistics chains, and intermodality between road, maritime, rail and air transport.

The project is aimed at ports, local authorities or logistics companies. The Portuguese lead partner is seeking interest from the relevant organisations in the UK who may be interested in becoming a partner in the project.

**HITRANS PROJECT OUTLINE**

**To promote the efficient transfer by rail of wood from remote fragile areas to biomass and wood processing market**

1. Harvested timber is conveyed to line-side loading areas – each of which has a construction cost of circa £20k. Timber is loaded at the lineside at night under possession onto flatrack containers using low-cost facilities. We have trialled this in the past but new ideas and containerisation should make this more widely applicable. Lineside loading has already been trialled at Kinbrace using conventional wagons. The method of working has been developed by HITRANS. The footprint of the optimum 7m x 13m footprint timber stack should be trialled in the first quarter of 2011. The proposed

locations include Altnabreac, Kinbrace, Borrobol, Kilearnan, Dorrery, Forsinard, Kyle. It is planned to survey them in the first quarter of 2011.

2. Off loading will be at Inverness Needlefield by reach stacker to skeletal trailer for delivery, potentially also to Elgin by rail, but may also be through the Millburn Yard. Potential markets: Balcas Invergordon, Norbord, James Jones Mosstodloch, BSW Boat of Garten.
3. The management of the project requires careful consideration and this would be developed as part of the project. A strategic alliance involving open book accounting could be set up, creating a collaborative partnership with landowners, agents, harvesters, local authority, hauliers, rail operators and end users sharing infrastructure, although potentially competing for use of the resource.
4. The benefits of this approach are significant: it would provide markets for landlocked timber, alleviate significant levels of damage to fragile local roads, boost local employment, and assist promotion of strategic wood procurement, whilst using existing paid-for rail infrastructure.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Members are asked to note the report.
2. Members are asked to approve the drawing together of a project programme consisting of a group of individual but linked projects in the Highlands and Islands based on proposals developed by individual Partnership Advisors, aimed at promoting the efficient transfer by rail of wood from remote fragile areas to the biomass and wood processing market.
3. Members are asked to approve HITRANS engagement at officer level with the Portuguese lead partner and other potential project partners in developing a project proposal for the Atlantic Area project call, without making a formal commitment to any Project at this stage

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**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011