

Timber from the Flow Country Background to The Problem

HITRANS BRANCHLINER SEMINAR

Inverness 14 June 2016

Presentation by Colin JT Mackenzie

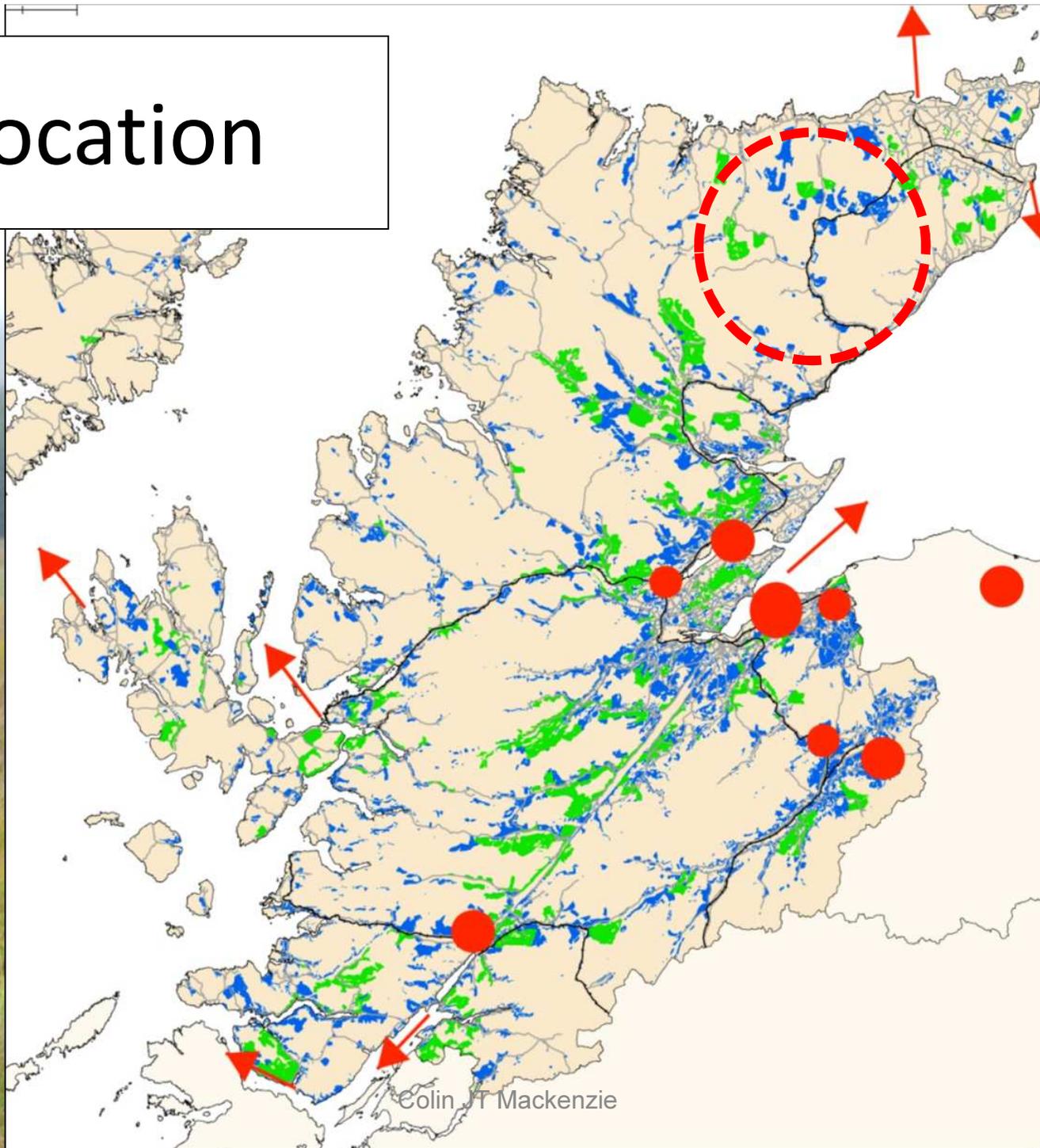
Projects Consultant to the HTTG

Highland Timber Transport Group

- Voluntary partnership covers the Highland Council area
- Primary Role: Try to resolve Timber Transport problems by negotiation and partnership
- A strategic body - meets twice a year
- Membership **THC FCS FES HITRANS** and **Industry**
- Has initiated £11M of projects supported by £5M STTS grants



Location



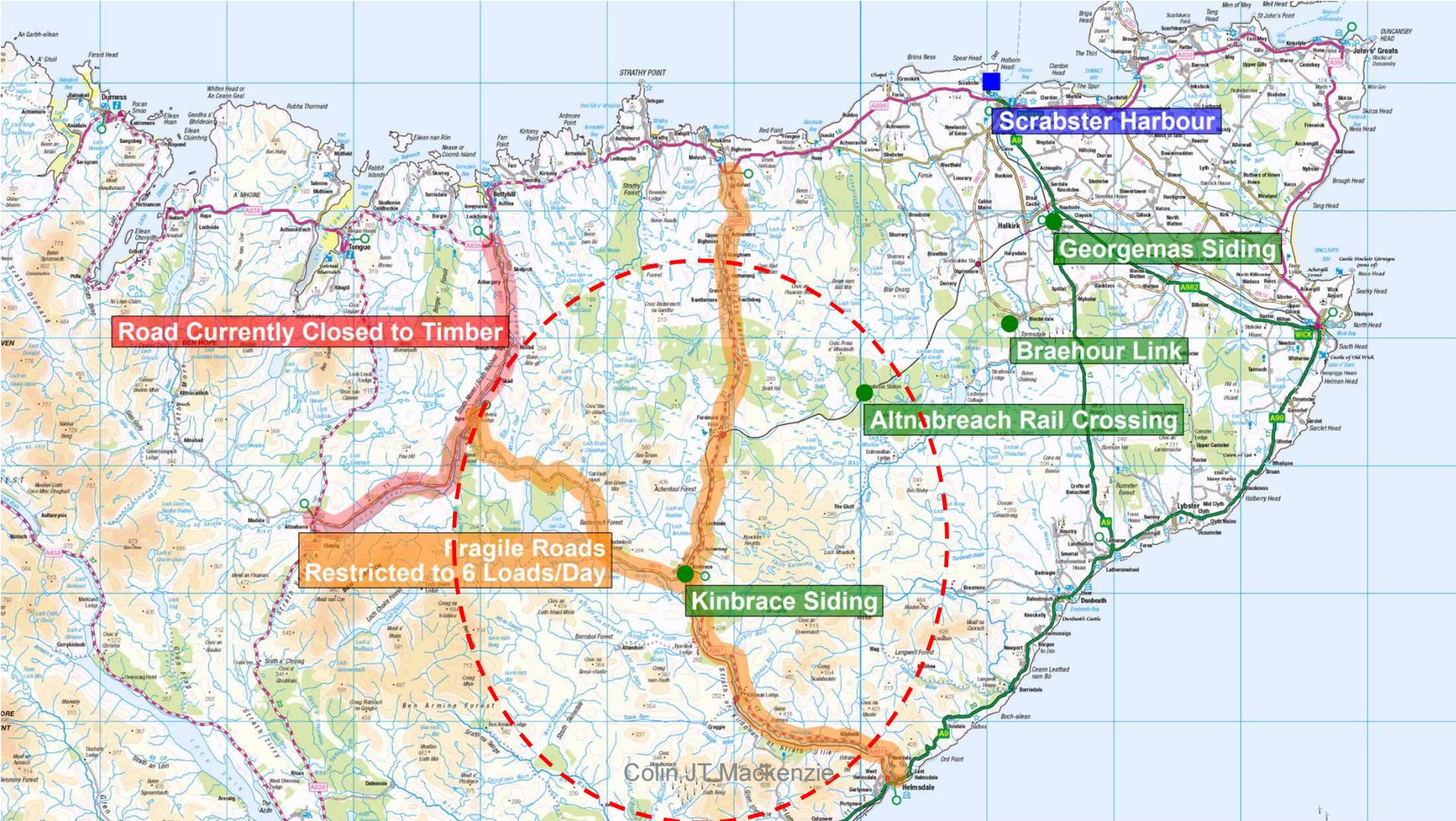
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Logistics:

150-200km from main markets 30-60km on weak single track roads



A897 catchment: Changing attitudes

- 1960's on: FCS and estates
- 1980's: Conifers, cash and celebrities!
- 2000's: RSPB; peatland restoration
- 2015 FCS sell last block in catchment
- Now: a mix of private sector ownership



Bank of England invests in Scots forests

THE Bank of England has joined the list of famous names such as Terry Wogan and Hurricane Higgins who are involved in planting trees in the environmentally sensitive "flow country" of Caithness and Sutherland. The bank has been buying up forestry land in Caithness, in the heart of the flow country, an area which has been described by one international group as being of global importance to wildlife.

Recently the Austrian-based "International Mire Conservation Group" wrote to Prime Minister Mrs Thatcher begging her to halt "the rapid destruction of one of the world's outstanding ecosystems — the blanket bog landscape of Sutherland and Caithness."

Operating through a wholly-owned nominee company called Securities Management Trust Limited (SMTL) the bank has bought two plots of land on the Altnabreac/Lochdu estate in Western Caithness from Fountain Forestry.

The deal was struck in November 1984, a few weeks after Fountain Forestry bought the estate for £200,000 from John Sinclair the Younger of Ulbster.

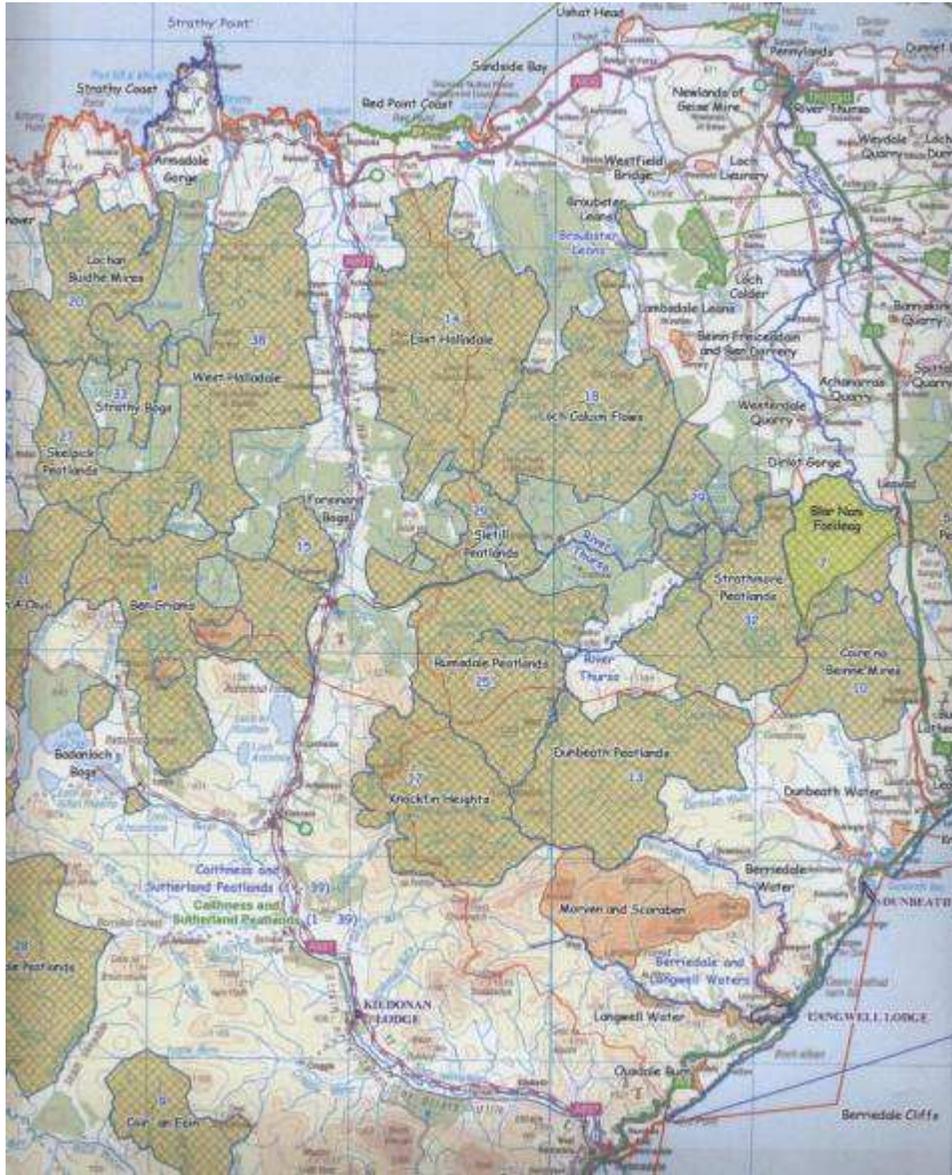
SMTL paid £82,000 to Fountain Forestry for plots of land around Loch Dubh and the Lochdu Hotel. Like other forestry investors SMTL will receive £100 an acre planting grants from the Forestry Commission and qualify for generous tax allowances.

A spokesman for the Bank of England confirmed that SMTL is a wholly owned subsidiary of the bank, but refused to discuss why the company is investing in forestry land in the far north of Scotland.

But the bank's deal in Caithness is not their first foray into private forestry. A few years ago the same nominee company bought nearly 1700 acres of Swardale and Foulis in Easter Ross for £202,000, or £180 an acre. A local farmer who bought a small piece of the same forest had to pay more than £800 an acre, a fact which generated considerable resentment in the area.



Environmental designations



1990's: The problem emerges

- The road network is a major constraint.
- Do not blame history!
- HRC considers weight restrictions
- THC: All options considered
- Railside loading seemed the best answer



2000 to Present

- 2002-2005 Railside loading tried
- Abandoned: Cost and logistics

- 2006 on: 4 Low Impact trucks per day
- Network continued to deterioriate

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January 2015 Storm

an environmental crisis

- Windblow estimated at 230,000t
- Needs to be harvested
- Worth £8-10M at the mill gate
 - **Zero if left to rot**

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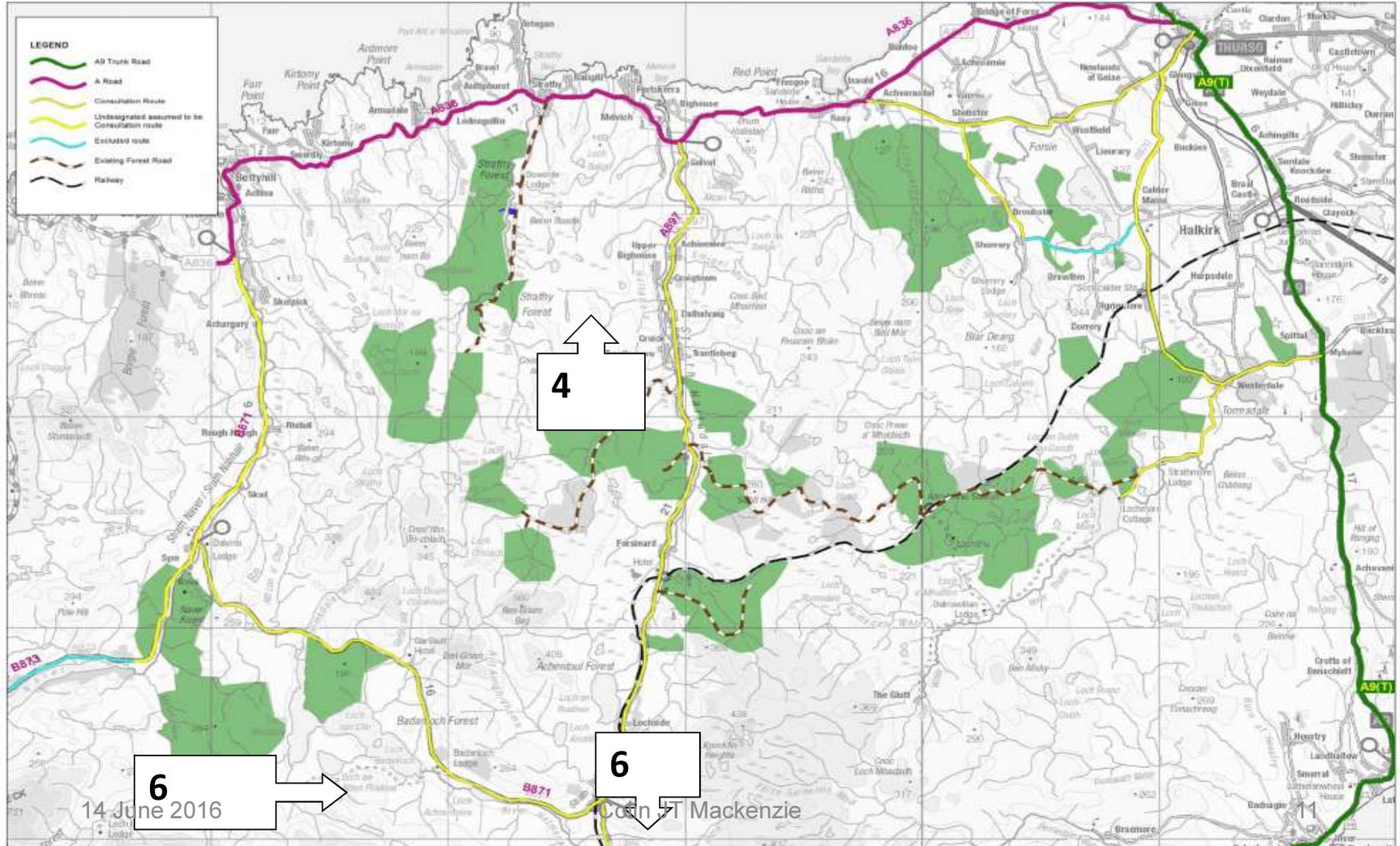
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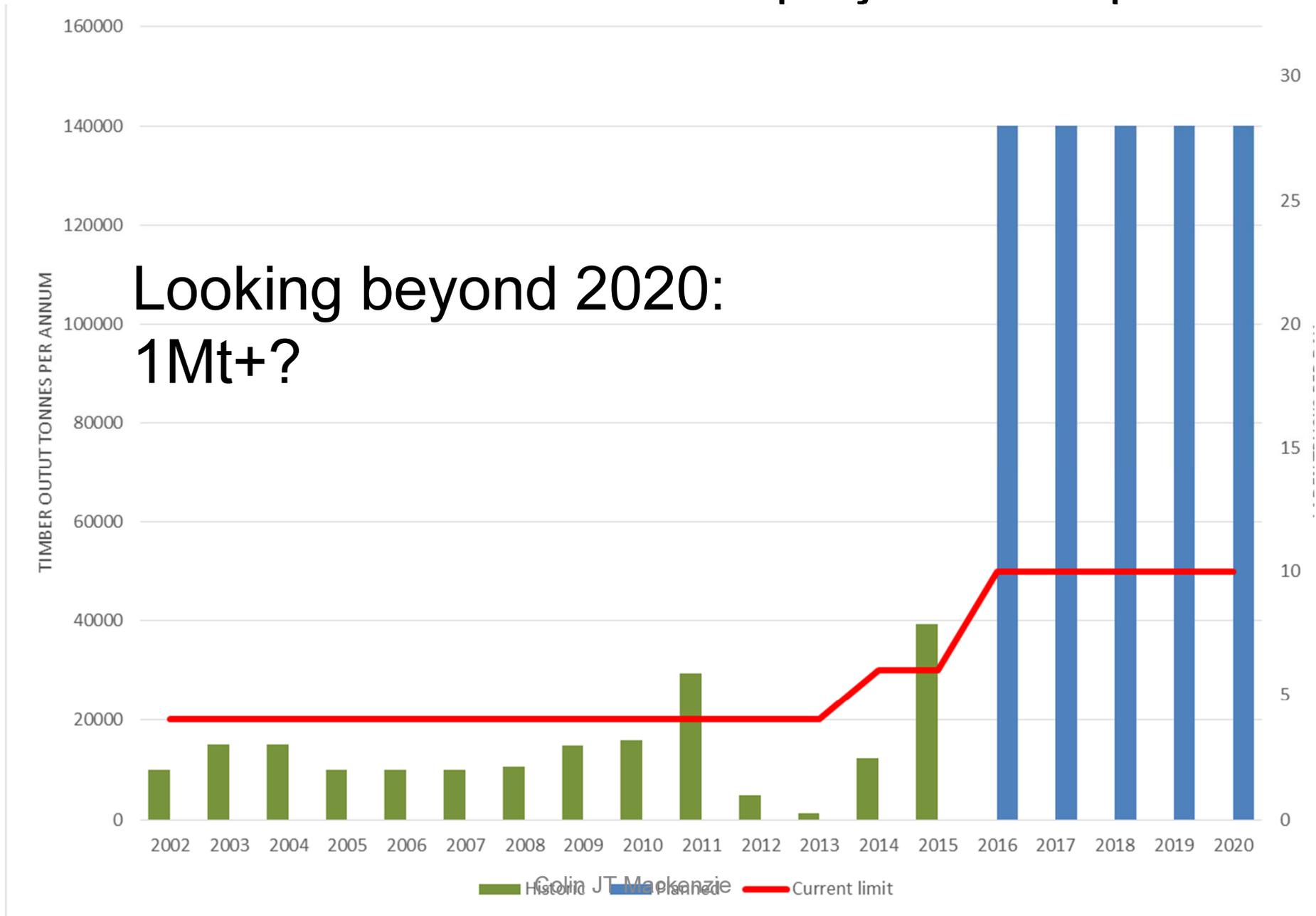
Current position

- Demand output 130-150ktpa
- Conservancy Council, TTG & Owners working together
- Timber Haulage Group set up for 2016
- Current agreement with THC allows ca 50,000t to come out

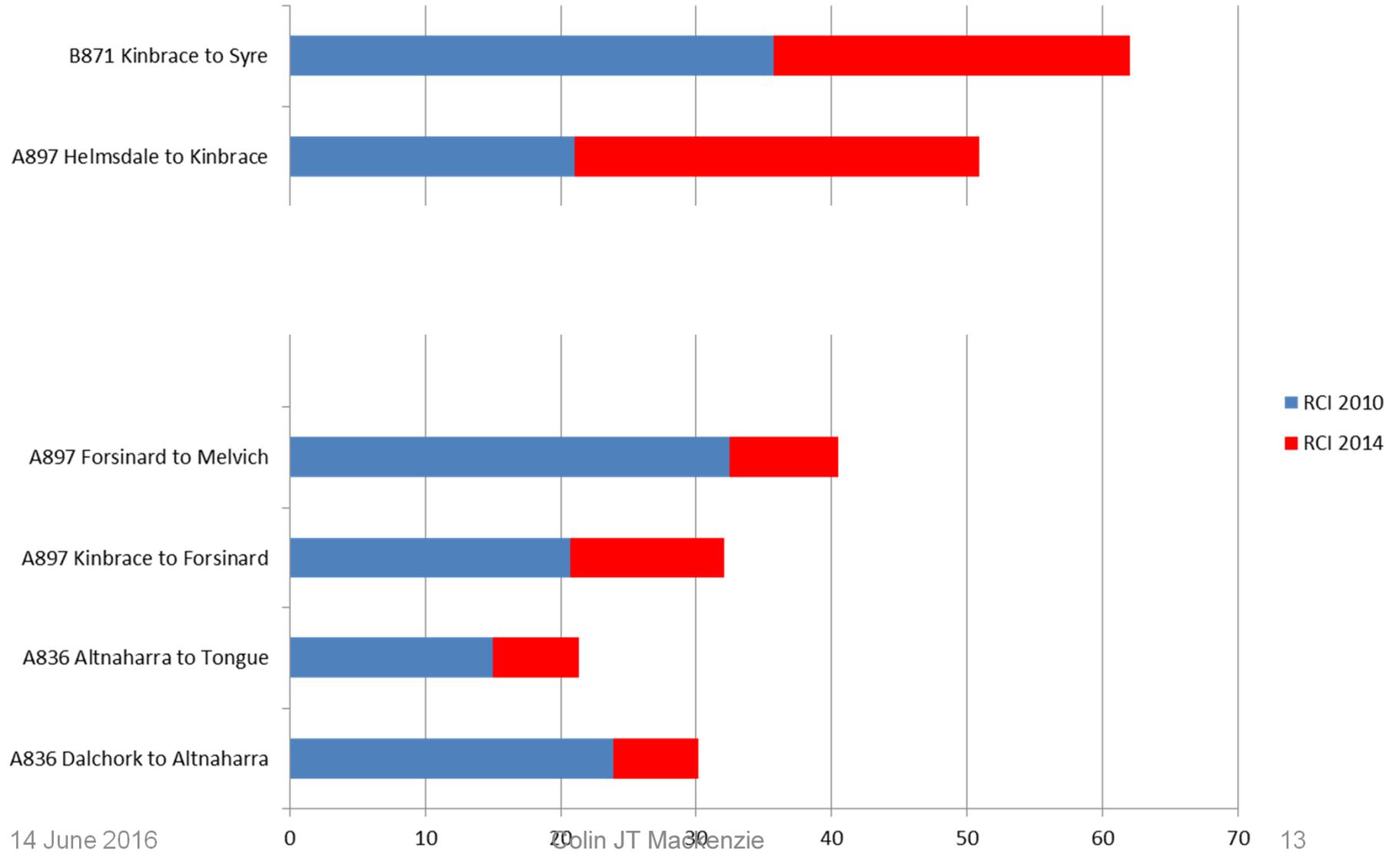
A897/B871 permitted trucks/day



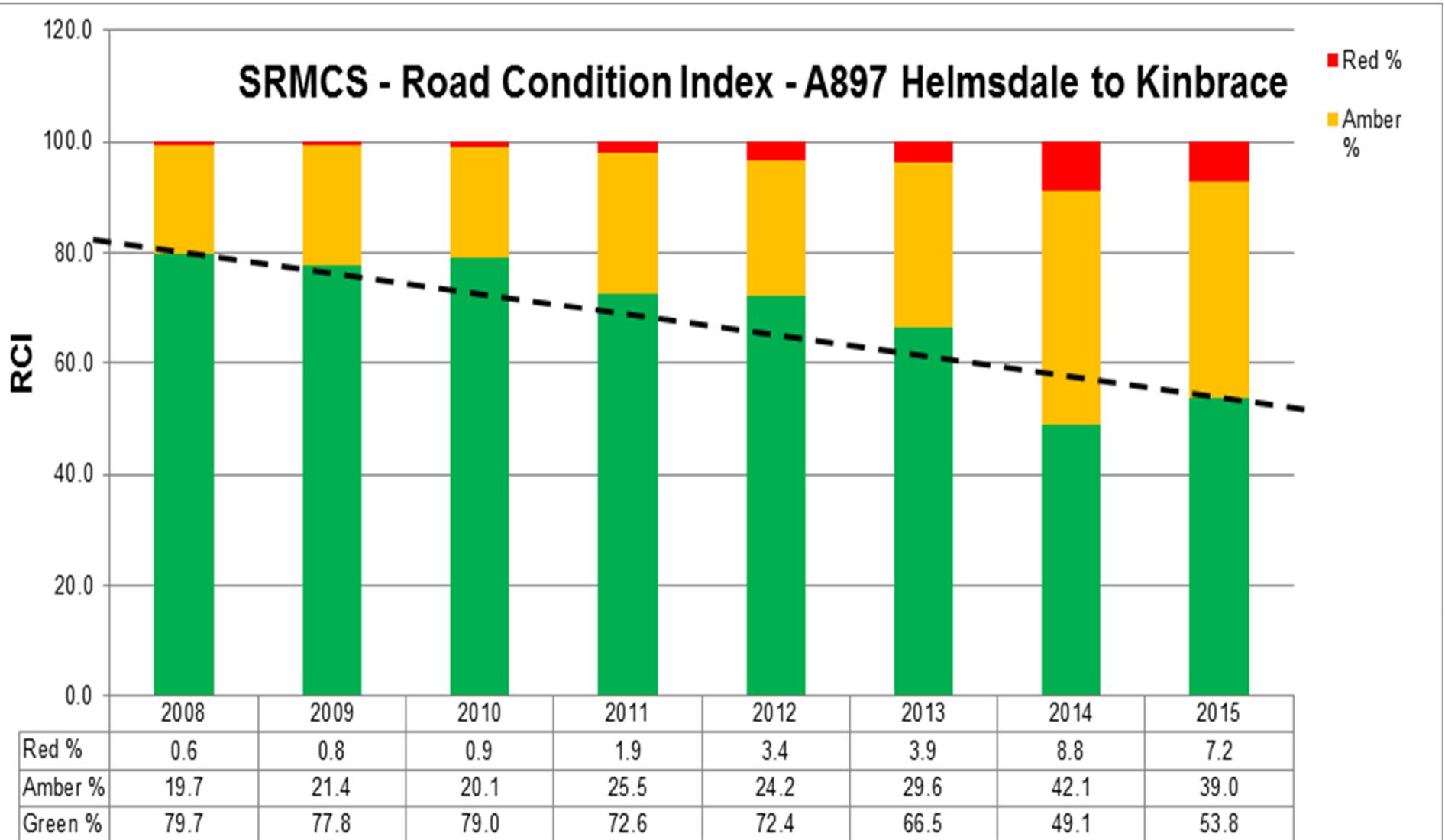
A897 Catchment historic and projected outputs



RCI comparison 2010-14



~£2M spent between 2008/15



A897 THG

A897 Timber Haulage Group
Planned outputs for 2016 as at 20 May

				2016							2017					
				Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Forest	2016 output	N/S	Remarks													
Borrobol	4,500	S	Shared within total 6 loads per day	█	█	█	█									
Rimsdale	10,000	S	Shared within total 6 loads per day	█	█											
Achentoul	7,000	S	Shared within total 6 loads per day		█	█	█	█	█	█						
Rosal	7,000	S	Shared within total 6 loads per day		█	█	█	█	█	█						
Syre	7,000	S	Shared within total 6 loads per day								█	█	█	█	█	
Torrish	7,000	S	Shared within total 6 loads per day							█	█	█	█	█		
N Loch Naver	400	S	Shared within total 6 loads per day											█	█	
FES Rosal	500	S	Shared within total 6 loads per day													
Dyke area	15,000	N	Northbound restricted to 4 loads per day	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█					
Total for 2016	58,400		15k northbound, 43,400 southbound													

The challenge for rail

- We need a Customer
- We need to overcome short-termism and self interest
- We need unity of purpose...a co-operative approach
- We need it to be profitable!

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Who will step forward?

- Government
- FC(S)
- Network Rail
- ROC's
- Transport Scotland
- Council
- HITRANS
- SNH

- Owner
- Manager
- Agent
- Harvesting contractor
- Haulage contractor
- Mill
- CONFOR
- UKFPA

- Freight Strategies
- Green policies
- Community interests

Summary

- An issue of urgent national concern
- Beyond capacity of local agencies or TTG to resolve
- Can rail provide the sustainable solution?

• >>>>>>>>>**BRANCHLINER !**