



**Forestry Commission Scotland**  
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba

# Timber by rail – is it really an option in Scotland?



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## Scotland's growing timber harvest

- 7.5 million tonnes p.a., potentially rising to 10m

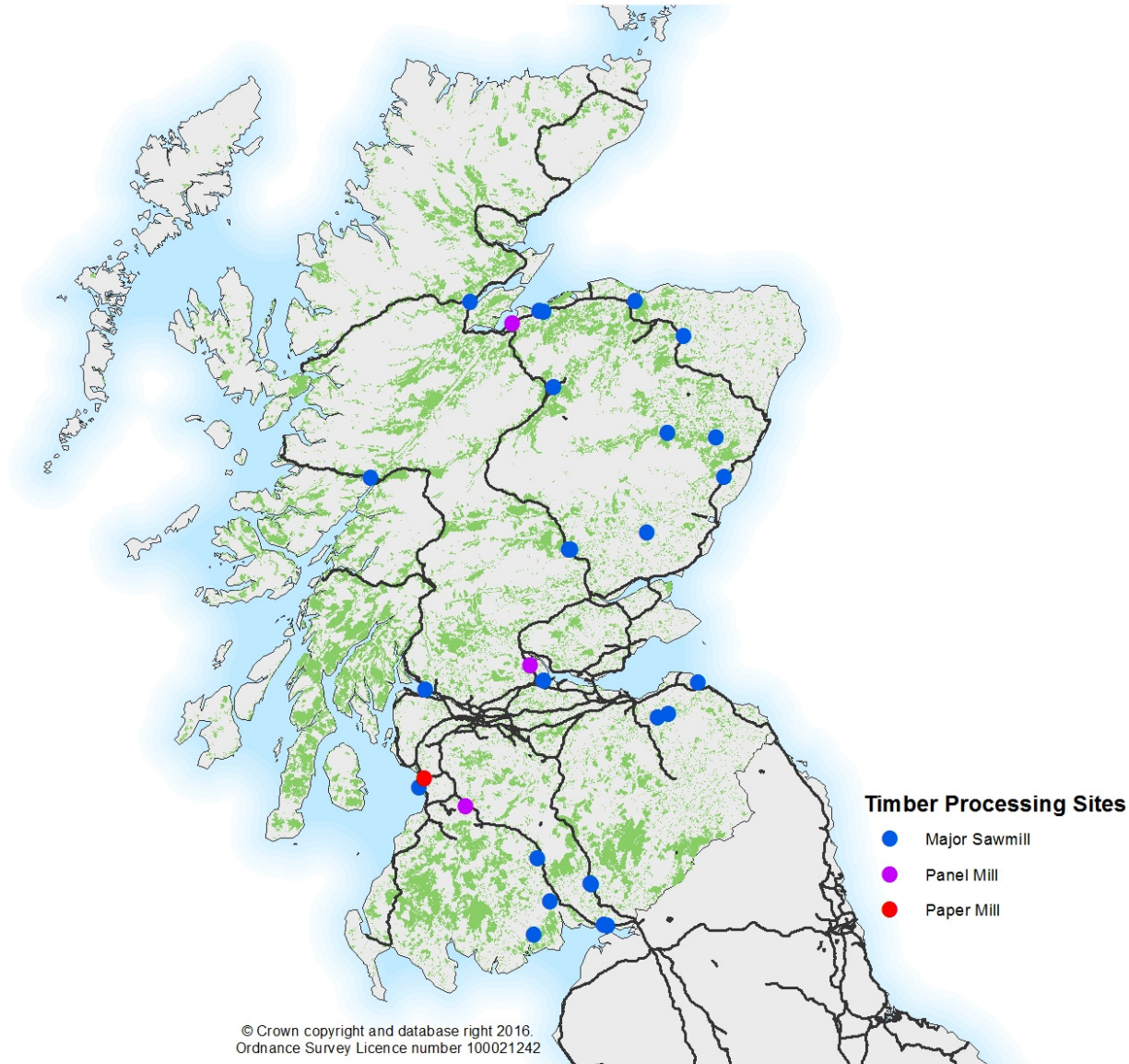
## £1billion value to economy

- 3 major board mills, 1 paper mill
- 22 (major) sawmills
- 4 major biomass consumers
- Recent announcement of expansion of Norbord's Oriented Strand Board (OSB) mill near Inverness





# Issues 1 – locations & proximity





## Policy

- 2006 National Transport Strategy and Freight Action Plan  
(2015 Parliamentary Committee Inquiry)
- 2015/16 Rail Freight Strategy Consultation
- 2016 National Transport Strategy refresh
- 2016 National Rail Freight Strategy refresh

## Potential forms of support

- State aid approved MSRS\* & FFG\* schemes
- Strategic Timber Transport Scheme

\*Mode Shift Revenue Support & Freight Facilities Grant



# We have done it before....





## Forest to mill by lorry

- Load at beginning and unload in mill
  - £2.00-2.50 per tonne per load & unload
- Capital cost
  - £250,000 lorry and trailer



## Forest to mill by lorry and train

*(and then probably lorry again)*

- Storage required at rail yard(s)
- Every journey must start with a lorry movement
- Up to 7 loading/unloading operations for each log
- Capital cost: £3,000,000 for a new locomotive
- 500-900 tonne load





### So, for arguments sake:-

**Lorry** @ 25 t x £15-20/tonne delivery to mill = £375-500

v

**Train** @ 500t=20 x £7.50-10.00/t to railhead & onto train +  
£7.50-10.00 off train at station and haul to mill = £375-500

- **Plus** train haul @ £10-20,000(?) = **+£20-40/tonne**

### And also

- Who pays for new rail infrastructure
  - ...and its maintenance?



- 2001 Scottish Enterprise “Intermodal rail timber demonstrator project” & related study into economics of timber by rail.
- 2001 Scottish Forest Products Transport mapping study.
- 2006 Potential timber transport applications of the Non Intrusive Crossover System (NICS).
- 2007 Highland TTG discussion paper points to rail option (... in the flow country).
- c2008 HIE study into lineside loading at Borrobol in Flow Country.
- 2009 Highland TTG meeting with and report for Cabinet Sec on “The transport of timber by rail in the Flow country”.
- 2012 Crianlarich timber railhead feasibility study

- Mid 2010''s: Rannoch investigations
- 2005-14: 7 STTS applications
  - 2 withdrawn (Flow country and Rannoch)
  - 2 rejected
  - 1 small trial completed on wagon types
  - 1 changed due to difficulties with rail and built a road
  - 1 study recently completed – Branchliner.
- Additionally, there have been a number of enquiries for FFG support, none taken up



### **Giving it a go:**

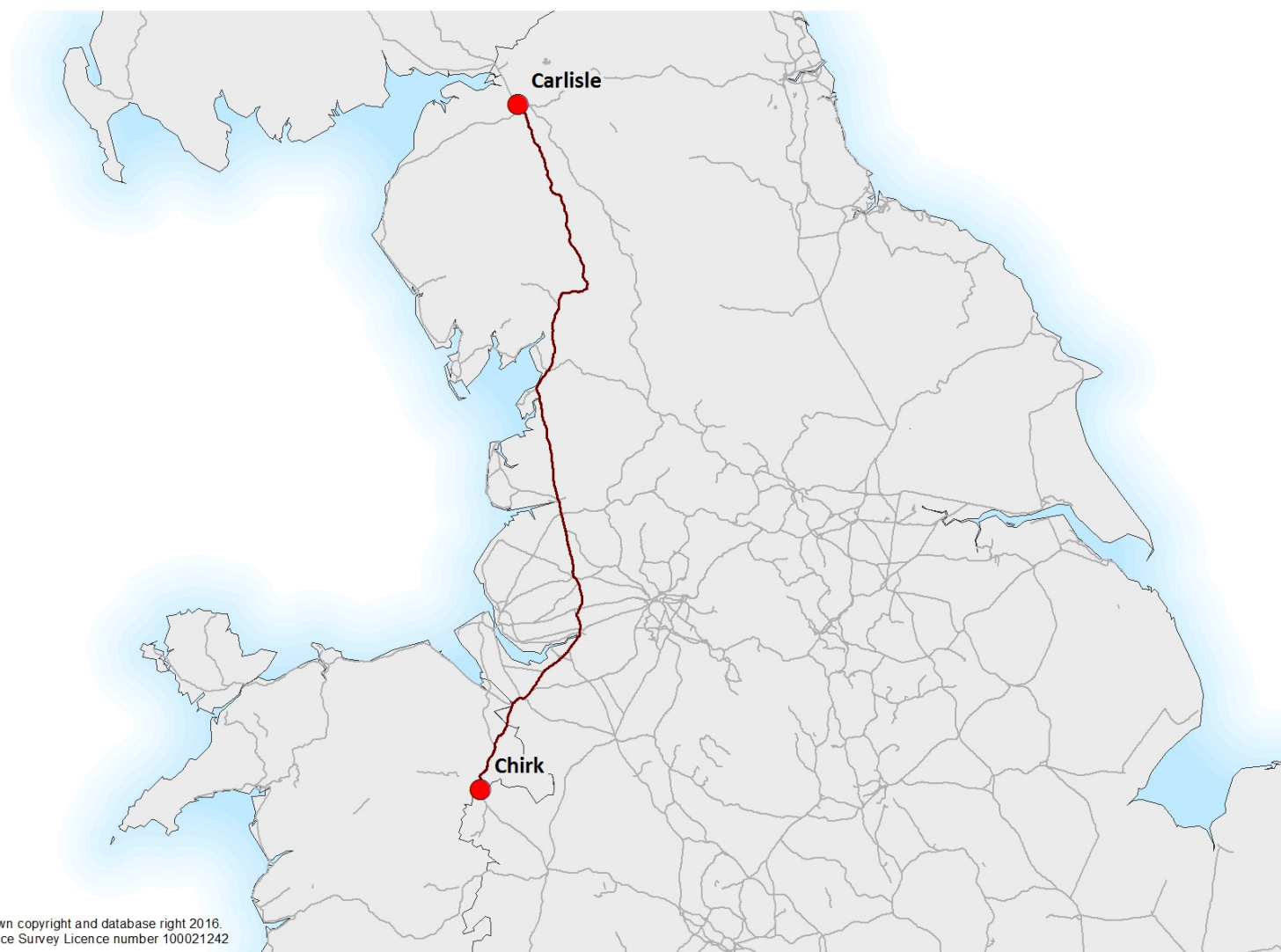
- 2001 to 2005: Kinbrace to Inverness (lineside)
- c2005-2009: Crianlarich to Wales (depot)

### **Though:**

Perhaps some light somewhere in the tunnel...

... (i) Norboard do transfer packs of OSB south on the Tesco train as a return load

...(ii) Kronospan move roundwood from Carlisle to Chirk by rail, up to 900t per train



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## Environmental and social benefits

- 1 train of 500-900tonnes = 40-72 return lorry trips

## Opportunities for moving timber by rail from:-

- Flow country?
- Rannoch?
- Crianlarich?



# So ... road or rail?



- Suitable infrastructure and rail linkages
- Costs – capital and operational
- Inertia – been there before and too difficult
- Understanding the needs of the other side
  - Rail - Safety concerns, bureaucracy, fixed methods
  - Forestry - Need for collective approach owners & buyers



- Times they are a changing...
  - **Policy** - Refresh of Rail Freight Strategy
  - **Demand** - Expansion eg Norbord & BSW (Fort William)
  - **Railfreight** - Huge downturn in coal and steel movement



So, is this the opportunity to move timber by rail?



If so, we need joint working to really explore the options - this could be the last chance

