

Item:
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Report to Partnership Meeting 17 September 2021

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Going with the Flow

Altnabreac Timber by Rail Demonstrator

Purpose of Report

To update members on the timber by rail project in the Flow Country.

Background

A CONFOR STTS Preparatory project is underway-part funded by HITRANS- to investigate the potential to divert timber off local roads and on to rail. It follows on from the inability to reach agreement on the use of the full length of the Flow Country Haul Route to take timber out East through Westerdale and builds on previous investigations by HTTG and HITRANS on lineside loading at Altnabreac and the successful Transport Scotland funded Victa Rail trial in 2020 between Georgemas and Inverness. The partnership of 5 agents covers forests with anticipated outputs of the order of 1 Mt over the next decade or so.

Demonstrator Partners

The partners in the demo project are Scottish Woodlands, Scottish Forestry, HITRANS, Highland Timber Transport Forum, Highland Council, Network Rail Victa Railfreight, Arvika Consult, Creel Consulting, Transport Scotland. HITRANS acts as facilitator.

Project detail

Lineside loading to rail c.400 tonnes/train- 22 trains of ten wagons, 2 trains/week to permit replenishing of stacks in quarry, but possibly alternate 3 trains a week: 2300-0500 under possession. Material currently available: c. 9000 tonnes largely 3m/3.1m chip, up to 30% sawlogs 3.7m/4.9m. Also, some 1.7m posts, 1.9m slats. Destination is likely Inverness for Norbord, possibly sawlogs to Mosstodloch.

Infrastructure/earthworks

South end of loader roadway requires building up to rail height to create 7m roadway c 90m long at 3m from rail edge. Double stacking area to be created on forest side of roadway. Access road to quarry requires widening/regrading to ease the steep slope. NB phone cable to level crossing phone requires to be moved to the other side of the track and troughed or buried to remove tripping hazard. Walking route for strapping on offside to be ensured 2m from rail off ballast shoulder. Current timber is on the north side of the railway, meaning direct access to the loading area without crossing the railway line.

Timescales

Victa note loco/driver resources available end November after leaf fall duties, therefore optimum loading is early 2022, pre-nesting season (Mar-Sept), although weather may cause some problems.

Planning

Arvika to commence planning process to flesh out any planning issues.

Funding

Potential funding identified- Transport Scotland Rail Freight Fund (capital) for rail works, Freight Facilities Grant (capital), Mode Shift Revenue Support Grant (operational costs).

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact –Economy, transport efficiency

Policy

Impact – Decarbonisation, mode shift, network usage maximisation.

Financial

Impact – The study is fully funded.

Equality

Impact – n/a

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to approve the report.

Report by: Frank Roach
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 1st September 2021