

RESEARCH FUNDING SHOULD LEAD TO LESS TIMBER LORRIES ON PUBLIC ROADS

The number of journeys made by timber lorries in South Ayrshire could be cut – thanks to research being carried out on alternative routing for trees felled in the Galloway Forest.

A £45,000 grant awarded by Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire on behalf of the Scottish Forest Industries Cluster to Forest Enterprise, the commercial division of the Forestry Commission. This is enabling research to be carried out to determine what improvements can be made to the private road links within the Galloway District Forest ... and how the methods of transporting timber can be bettered.

And as part of South Ayrshire's Integrated Transport Plan, a rail timber depot is being planned for Barrhill – to which new linking roads within and from the forest could lead. The Barrhill Rail Terminal was also recognised as a potential development by the forest industries themselves through an extensive consultative process.

South Ayrshire Councillor Paul Torrance, Convener of South Ayrshire Council's Rural Affairs Committee, and Councillor for South Carrick, believes the moves being undertaken could lead to a substantial cut in the journeys made by timber lorries on public roads in the Council's area.

Said Councillor Torrance: "The whole issue of timber lorries is one which frequently comes up at my public surgeries. While it is recognised that forestry is vital for rural areas, the inconvenience and damage to rural roads can cause problems.

"The question of how timber can be transported, without causing congestion on public roads is one which has prompted a lot of consideration."

Haulage companies, civil engineering firms, local authorities and specialist academics will all have an input into the Project which investigates ways to improve the construction and durability of forest roads.

Forest Enterprise District Manager at Newton Stewart, Mr Rob Soutar, has welcomed the grant from Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire saying that it will help in the development of planning for the future, and should provide a clearer picture regarding the affordability and practicality of improving construction methods for forest roads.

And Mr Soutar confirmed that in addition to an interim report which would shortly be given to Barrhill Community Council, officials of South Ayrshire Council will also soon be briefed on the proposals.

Plans being considered include the construction of new linking roads within the forest and the rail timber depot earmarked for Barrhill."

Said MSP Cathie Jamieson: "It seems that Forest Enterprise hope to increase significantly the distance travelled by timber wagons within the Galloway District Forest while in transit to sawmills. The average distance travelled from felling to a public road seems currently to be around 6 km.

"I am told it is hoped that this figure could be raised to 30 km. I am supportive of the steps to reduce timber lorries on public roads, and I am also actively encouraging the establishment of the railhead at Barrhill."

Steven Paxton of Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire explained: "Minor roads are of great importance to the rural economy and it is important that they are safeguarded. The research

project and the development of the Barrhill Rail Terminal are vital parts of Scotland's timber transport infrastructure.

"Working with the forest industries, Scottish Enterprise and its partners aim to help the development of a world class timber transport system".

Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire on behalf of the Scottish Enterprise Network has awarded the grant.

Scottish Enterprise, 24 October 2001