



Improving timber transport case study

North West Mull Timber Haul Road

What?	16.5 km in-forest and cross country haul road Strengthening and widening of a short stretch of public road
When?	2007–2012
Where?	Isle of Mull, Argyll
Who?	North West Mull Community Woodland Company, UPM Tilhill, Forestry Commission Scotland, Argyll & Bute Council
How much?	£2 254 813 (STTS £860 730)
Timber tonnage	140 000 tonnes plus 500 000 additional tonnes over the stretch of public road



Crusher providing roading material from rock along the route.

An in-forest Timber Haul Road provides a route to market avoiding weak minor public roads.

North West Mull Timber Haul Road

The community in the north west of Mull acquired the forests of Langamull and West Ardhru from Forestry Commission Scotland in 2006 with the aim of managing the forests for a wide-range of local social and environmental benefits.

Along with the forest, the community inherited the problem of how to haul 140 000 tonnes of mature, good quality timber to market. Weight restrictions on the single track public roads made them unsuitable for timber haulage and previous investigations had ruled out a floating pier on the nearby exposed stretch of coastline. The only realistic solution was a long distance haul road through the forests and over the hill, linking up with the Forestry Commission road network and the public road north of Salen.

The community company submitted their initial bid to the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme (STTS) in 2007. This was the first application from a community company, with both the scale and complexity of the

project raising several issues which required further information and discussion. By October 2008, the cost of the project had more than doubled, taking account of the additional costs of strengthening a stretch of public road and securing access servitudes over the hill.

The STTS agreed to an award of 40% of costs allowing Argyll and Bute Council to set to work on widening and reinforcing a linking stretch of the public road. The community company entered a contractual arrangement with UPM Tilhill as their harvesting partner and UPM Tilhill agreed to put upfront finance into the road construction, to be repaid from future harvesting income.

It took almost a year to sort out the access agreements across the intervening private land. Late in the day negotiations foundered over a short stretch of riverbank, requiring the haul road to be extended by a further 5 km along the hill before joining the Forestry Commission road network further south. Given their financial involvement in the road, UPM Tilhill agreed to take over the lead partner role from the community and manage the construction.

Timber Haul Road location map.



Work started at the north end of the haul road in May 2010, harvesting a road line through the areas of forest and forming the road base. Local rock was used in the road construction. The four bridges and 131 culverts were in place when the road was formally opened in August 2011. It took another few months to install the gates, the sixteen cattle grids and the two public road crossings, but harvesting started soon thereafter.

To minimise road maintenance costs, all of the haulage vehicles are using tyre pressure control systems. Much of the haulage over the 16.5 km route has been done by a specialised eight-axle low ground pressure vehicle. This was given a dispensation by the local authority to continue on the short stretches of public road as far towards the pier at Fishnish, from where the timber is taken onwards by boat to market.

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