

Timber rail trial on track in Scotland

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A six-week timber by rail project in the north of Scotland aims to demonstrate that moving timber by rail is a viable and greener alternative to using roads in the long distance movement of timber.

The Scottish Government, through the Scottish Strategic Rail Freight Fund, has allocated £195,000 to Victra Railfreight to undertake the trial.

The trial, which is nearing completion, has been operating between two and three trains a week. The equivalent by road would need around 250 lorries driving around 55,000 miles.

Visiting the project in Inverness to see it at first hand, Rural Economy Secretary Fergus Ewing said: "Timber haulage is a key part of Scotland's £1 billion industry and a key part of the forestry life cycle. It is important that all opportunities are sought to minimise the environmental and social impact of transporting timber.

"This is an exemplary partnership project and I'm delighted to see this type of collaboration which also supports a sustainable green economic recovery from the current COVID-19 pandemic."

The trains have been operating from Georgemas Junction to the Inverness Millburn Yard for onward

delivery to wood processing company Norbord at Dalcross and James Jones at Mosstodloch.

Once the project has been fully completed and assessed, the findings should help to shape future policies in how timber is transported to market.

The partnership in the six-week trial sees Transport Scotland, Victra Railfreight, Network Rail, HITRANSs and Scottish Forestry working together.

Timber has been supplied from Munro Harvesting and Kelpie Woodlands with Georgemas Energy and Logistics Park providing access to the terminal.

Victra Railfreight is also being assisted by DB Cargo for the wagons and West Coast Railway Company for locomotives and drivers.

Photo credit: Scottish Forestry

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