



IFA Submission
to the Public Consultation on Review of COFORD Forest Road Manual

27th January 2017

1. Introduction

The current specifications for forest road design and construction are in line with standards elsewhere in Europe and should be maintained. However, there must be greater scope for the specifications to be reduced or modified with Forest Service Inspector approval. This flexibility is particularly important when designing and constructing forest roads in smaller private forests, where options may be limited.

The main issue for forest owners is the inconsistent implementation of the Forest Road Manual across the inspectorate. The Forest Road Manual was intended as a guidance document, providing advisory information on good forest practice for forest owners. However, increasingly the specifications in the Forest Road Manual are being enforced with limited opportunity to adjust as required.

IFA would propose that when the review process is completed, that the Forest Service would hold a training day to ensure a consistent implementation of the updated Forest Road Manual nationally. This would ensure that forest roads are constructed appropriately and reduce the cost of construction.

In addition, IFA would propose that a simplified version of the Forest Road Manual be published, similar to the Forestry Commission Road Specification note, to encourage more forest owners to construct forest roads and actively engage them in the management of their forest. The specification note should be included in all Forest Road approvals so forest owners are aware of the requirements, even if they are not constructing the road.

2. Planning & Design

2.1 Road junction

IFA would encourage the design and construction of right angle bell mouth or skew junctions where possible. The T type junctions are proving to result in increased anti-social behaviour, such as dumping. Typically, T junctions are required due to sight line concerns, however, this could be addressed by clearing the hedgerows on either side of the junction to improve visibility.

2.2 Loading bays

IFA would recommend the introduction of a minimum length of 40m for the Back in Type Loading Bay and that the maximum length be extended to 60m.

2.3 Passing places

IFA would recommend that the passing places be extended to 20m long and at least 3m wide. Spaced to be inter-visible with a maximum spacing to be agreed.

3. Construction and features

There needs to be flexibility to vary construction methods, depending on depth of peat and the base material that is available in different sections of the site. A common sense approach to construction method should be adopted appropriate to the site.

3.1 Build on Top Roads

IFA would support that the current guidelines are maintained and where possible closely spaced, felled poles, covered with brash be spread across the formation base width to help load distribution. Available soils could be used to level up depressions. Geo-synthetics should be used as necessary over peat formations. This is the most cost effective road construction on these sites. This should be an option on all peaty sites.

3.2 “Reversal” of Embankment Roads

This is the most cost effective method of construction and must be the preferred construction option of forest roads where appropriate.

4. Conclusion

The specification of the Forest Road Manual must allow for the forest road to be constructed and maintained at minimum cost. It should provide a smooth, durable surface that can carry a range of vehicles from light vans to 46 tonne and in-forest machines, without damaging the surface materials or the sub-grade.