

Scotts Road Upgrade and Use by Logging Traffic Results of Contact with Residents & Proposed Approach

1. Introduction

Several plantation forest areas are located on Scotts Road. Gordon Kear Forest is the largest of these forest areas and its harvest is likely to commence within the next 2 years.

Harvest of these forest areas will require use of Scotts Road by logging trucks. This will require upgrade of some sections of the road.

A large proportion of residents on Scotts Road are concerned about the potential impact of upgrading Scotts Road and subsequent log transport. Failure to consult with residents of the road over these operations, and identify key issues that need to be addressed in planning, could result in unnecessary conflict with this community and possible safety issues.

To avoid these problems, contact with the residents on the road was undertaken between December 2003 and March 2004. The aim of this contact was to gain information on:

- Use of the road by residents
- Any particular issues or concerns that people had about the use of the road for forestry traffic.
- Any suggestions / solutions people had for reducing impact of the forestry operations on the residents of Scotts Road.

All residents on the road were contacted by mail in December 2003. A neighbourhood support group list was used to identify residents. Residents were then contacted by phone in January – February 2004. They were given the option of meeting in person to discuss the likely future operations and any concerns they had. Meetings were held individually with households, generally at their homes. Where residents were happy to talk over the phone, basic information and questions were covered by phone.

A total of 35 households were identified as living on Scotts Road. A total of 21 households were interviewed face to face. A further 9 were interviewed over the phone. Five households were not able to be contacted within the timeframe of the project.

Following this initial contact Palmerston North City Council and the owners of Woodpecker Forest entered detailed negotiations about an exchange of forest areas and their respective contributions to the upgrade of Scotts Road. Because of the commercial sensitivity of these negotiations and their impact on harvesting and road upgrade, contact with residents was interrupted. These negotiations have now been completed. Completion of final steps toward legal settlement that will see PNCC take ownership of the Woodpecker Forest block in return to the previous owners of Woodpecker taking ownership of part of Gordon Kear Forest. The flow of information to residents on the road can now resume.

This report summarises the results of initial contact with residents in 2004 and the intended approach to addressing some of the key points raised.

2. Results of Contact with Residents

2.1 Use of the Road – Peak Times

Commuting

From the interviews, the commuting times of approximately 37 vehicles were determined. Some of the times below may relate to more than one vehicle in a household.

Work commuting - Number at different times.

Time in	Number of Vehicles	Time back	Number of Vehicles
7:30-8:30 a.m.	12	4:30-5:30 p.m.	12
Varied	11	Varied	11
6:30-7:30 a.m.	6	5:30-6:30 p.m.	6
5:30-6:30 a.m.	2	6:30-7:30 p.m.	3
8:30-9:30 a.m.	2	2:30-3:30 p.m.	2
4:30-5:30 a.m.	1	12:30-1:30 a.m.	1
9:30-10:30a.m.	1	9:30-10:30 a.m.	1
1:30-2:30 p.m.	1	3:30-4:30 p.m.	1
2:30-3:30 p.m.	1		
Total	37	Total	37

School transport.

Approximate numbers of children in the different age groups from initial interviews are listed in the table below. There may be some children missing from this table.

Age group	Number
Pre School	3
Primary	10
Intermediate	3
Secondary	10
Total	26

Primary school transport

There is no bus provided specifically for Primary school children. They are delivered to school by car.

Intermediate and secondary school transport

Intermediate and secondary school children are collected by separate busses from the intersection of Scotts Road and the Highway between 7:45 and 8:00am each morning.

Children are dropped off back at the intersection on one of 3 buses (1 intermediate and 2 secondary) between 3:45 and 4:10 pm. A number of children cycle down the road to meet the bus in the morning, and cycle back up the road in the afternoon.

2.2. Other Use of Road

Interviews with residents identified a wide recreational use of the road. Other uses of the road such as stock droving also occur. Some households have a variety of uses (e.g. walking and horse riding). The table below summarises the use identified.

Use Type	No of Households
Walking	15
Horse riding	5
Stock droving	4
Cycling	3
View / sight seeing	3
Running	2
Grazing	1
Motorbike riding	1
Total	34

People were questioned about the most common times they used the road for these other uses. The responses are summarised below.

Morning or evening	No of Households
Varied	16
Evening	10
Generally only Weekends	4
morning or evening	2
Morning	1
Occasional	1
Total	34

2.3. Issues and Concerns Raised About Logging Truck Use of the Road

A summary list of the general issues raised is set out below.

Type of Issue	No of households
Safety - children	17
Noise	13
Intersection with highway	11
Vehicle conflict	11
Sealed section	10
Speed	10
Timing	9
Dust	8
Road access / standard	6
Boundary with road	5
Maintenance of road	4
Army	3
Bridge weight / width	3
Safety - driveway	3
Stock movement	3
Increased use	2
Property value	2
Visibility	2

As identified in the table above, the most common concern was over safety of children. This was expressed by those with school age children, but also by others who see children on the road.

Issues of noise and, vehicle conflict / safety, and vehicle speed were also commonly raised.

There was wide concern about the lower straight sealed section, and the intersection with the highway. The sealed section was seen as too narrow for cars and trucks, raising concern over vehicle conflicts. This section was also seen as likely to be damaged by truck traffic, reducing the quality of access for residents. The intersection with the highway was considered very dangerous for cars, due to poor vision, and that additional truck traffic would make this worse. Several residents reported "close calls" on the intersection.

Timing of the operations in the day – how early and how late trucks would operate was an important concern.

Dust was a very significant concern for those residents on the unsealed section immediately above the end of the seal.

2.4. Suggestions / Solutions for Reducing Impact on Residents

A summary list of the main suggestions / solutions put forward is set out below.

Type of Solution	No of households
Communication	21
Reasonable hours	12
Speed limit	10
Seal extension / Dust suppression	9
Engine braking restrictions, high truck driver performance etc	8
No weekend operations	8
Get school bus to come up road	5
Sealed section - widen / upgrade	5
Passing bays	4
Contact owners to discuss boundary issues	3
Community driver education	3
Develop adjacent walking etc access	3
Improve intersection with highway	3
Install traffic lights on hill section	2
Upgrade works on the road	2

By far the most important suggestion for reducing impact was to maintain good levels of communication with residents. Suggestions for communication included:

- Feedback on the issues raised by residents and how these would be taken into account in planning the upgrade and transport operations.
- General communication on the progress toward upgrade and when it was likely to be undertaken.
- Notification of timing – days of week and hours of day of operation. This was seen as important to allow people to schedule their use of the road (e.g. for recreation) away from operational times.
- Providing an effective mechanism for people to feedback problems and issues once the operation was underway. This could include a meeting or other contact after the operation had been going for six months.

The requirement for there to be a reasonable approach to hours of operation was commonly suggested. This included:

- Avoiding school transport times.
- Trying to avoid main commuting times.
- Not too early and not too late in the day.
- Focus on intensive operations during the middle of week days.
- No operations in the weekend.

The need for a speed limit (potentially a voluntary speed limit with transport companies) was important. This was seen as particularly important through the main section of lifestyle properties where houses are closer to the road.

The provision of a seal extension to the end of the houses was seen as a very important requirement by people in this area. As a minimum there was suggested that there must be effective and ongoing dust suppression.

Systems to ensure that truck drivers operated to minimise disturbance in terms of engine braking, acceleration, speed etc were commonly suggested.

Trying to get the school bus (at least the secondary school bus) to come up the road to pick up children was seen as being a very positive move.

A significant number of households felt strongly that some form of upgrade of the lower, straight sealed section was required. This ranged from providing a central road marking, to widening and improving the seal.

3. Timing of Road Upgrade and Harvest

3.1 Timing of Upgrade

It is intended to begin initial work on road upgrade this summer, with some work on the upper road section starting shortly.

3.2 Log transport timing and scale

Log transport operations are unlikely to begin until the summer season of 2006-2007.

One to two harvesting crews are likely to be working in the forest during operational periods. In most cases only one crew will be operating. These crews will generally produce around 4 - 6 truckloads of logs a day. Total truck movements (loaded and unloaded) are likely to be around 8 - 12 per day for a single crew

4. Proposed Approach to Road Upgrade & Transport Operations

Contact with residents has raised a wide number of important issues and brought forward useful suggestions for reducing impacts. It is not possible to address all concerns of residents on the road and there is a constant need to balance the needs of residents on the road with the needs and rights of forest owners with long established forests on the upper road.

The issues raised can be split into those associated with the road upgrade – various requirements for works on the road to prepare for logging traffic, and operational management of trucks on the road. Following consideration of these areas by the Council Roading Section and harvest managers likely to be carrying out the forest harvest, a summary of practical steps that can be taken has been developed. This is set out below.

4.1 Road Upgrade

Upper road

- Upgrade of the upper road will be undertaken. This will predominantly involve widening of some corners and clearing sight lines.
- Passing bays will be provided for light vehicles where possible. Larger passing bays for trucks will be developed at each end of the hills section.
- A radio communication system will be provided for upper road residents and landowners to allow them to check on truck locations before entering this section of road.
- Kilometre markers will be provided on the road to allow trucks and upper road residents / landowners to communicate their position.

Lower unsealed section around houses

This area will be upgraded with a thick top course of high grade metal with low levels of fines to minimise dust. This material has proved successful on Forest Hill Road. Sealing at this stage is not seen as a viable option as heavy traffic on this relatively narrow and windy section may rapidly break up the seal, providing poorer conditions for light vehicles and getting little benefit for the money spent. Once heavy traffic has travelled this area for the first six months this approach will be reviewed

Sealed section

Upgrade of the sealed section of the road is proposed. This is currently being investigated and will either involve widening along the length of the road, or a minimum of creating some wide lay by areas. This work will be aimed at providing easier passing of trucks and light vehicles on this lower area of the road where most vehicle use occurs.

4.2 Transport Operations

Safety was the key issue raised by residents. A combination of measures in relation to road upgrade (see above) and management of transport operations are proposed.

Radio communication for upper road residents and landowners: Two way radio communication will be installed at a main layby at the top and bottom of the hill section. Upper road residents and landowners who regularly travel the road will be given a key to locked radio boxes at these points. This will allow them to call up, check the position of any trucks and identify they are entering the road.

Voluntary speed limit: A voluntary speed limit of 50 km/hr will be applied through the more densely populated area around the end of the sealed section. A voluntary speed limit of 70 km/hr will be applied to the lower straight sealed section of road. Legal speed limits will be unable to meet the warrant requirements laid down by central government legislation hence the voluntary approach.

Community “children crossing” signs: Warning signs will be installed around the more densely populated upper part of the sealed section.

Basic information signage: Signage identifying that trucks are using the road and hours / days of operation will be installed.

No weekend transport operation: There will be no transport of logs during weekends.

No trucks at peak times: The harvest manager and transport contractor have agreed that there will be no heavy traffic on road between 7:30am and 8:30am in the morning, and between 3:30pm and 4:30pm in the afternoon. This is aimed at avoiding school transport times and, where possible, the peak travel times for residents.

Seasonal operations: Operations will normally be restricted to the drier summer months of approximately November to May.

Main highway intersection: Palmerston North City Council have discussed the issue of logging activities with Transit NZ in relation to Transit NZ undertaking work on the intersection. Transit NZ have advised that upgrades at the intersection do not meet their current criteria for work. Work around this intersection is under the control of Transit.

Signs warning of truck traffic will be placed on the approaches to the intersection. Initial comment from the harvesting manager is that the visibility from trucks will be acceptable at the intersection.

4.3 Ongoing Communication

Maintaining communication about the upgrade and transport operations was seen as a key issue by many residents. Below are some intended approaches to communication, but we would be very interested to hear any other ideas.

Notification prior to the start of harvest operations: Residents would be notified by post at least a month prior to the start up of harvest and transport operations. This would also identify the likely period of operations.

Community feedback meeting: It is intended to hold a community feedback meeting six months after the start of the main harvesting operations. This would provide residents and landowners an opportunity to identify things that are going well and not so well from their point of view. Based on this it may be possible to refine and improve the way we do things.

Key contact for the community: A key contact person for the community to communicate with will be identified.

Website: We could provide general information about operations on a web page for the community to access.