



Scottish Association for Public Transport

SCOTTISH TRANSPORT MATTERS

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Covid-19

We hope this Newsletter finds you in good health. Hopefully there will be an improving picture through 2021 and we can look forward to travel and holding meetings whenever safe.

Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, our Committee decided to cancel all SAPT meetings including the 2020 AGM. As a result, the constitutional requirements for annual office-bearer elections and approval of the accounts have been suspended. The committee agreed to continue in post. Any member with comments about this course of action or the content of Section 1 (abridged annual report and accounts) should follow the procedure below.

We have continued to hold committee meetings using Zoom. While this loses the personal contact, it avoids the need to travel, a benefit for our committee members in the Highlands (though a loss to ScotRail!).

National transport conferences have continued on a virtual basis, as have meetings with Transport Scotland and Transform Scotland. Responding to local authority and government consultations (both Scottish and UK) have kept us busy.

While we, like everyone else, are unclear of the speed of progress towards restoring something like normal life, we are tentatively planning a 2021 AGM for September or early October. We will keep you informed of progress through “Scottish Transport Matters” and the website. However, as a letter to the Times recently said, *“the only way to make sense of the current pandemic situation is to assume no one knows what they’re talking about!”*

With good wishes for the New Year from all the committee.

We are asking members to approve three emergency resolutions to deal with this year’s situation:

- 1 the 2020 summary accounts should be approved (see Section 1 overleaf)
- 2 the committee should be authorised to remain in office until the 2021 AGM
- 3 the date of the 2021 AGM should be delayed until it can safely be held.

If you agree with these resolutions, it is not necessary to take any action.

If you have any reservations, please email to sapt@btinternet.com or write to the SAPT office at:

SAPT, 11 Queens Crescent, Glasgow G4 9BL

SAPT's ClydeMetro proposal was adopted in the Glasgow Connectivity Commission report. Discussions with SPT and the Leader of Glasgow Council in August 2019 confirmed that a Glasgow Metro is now in the council's strategy, linking housing and development areas on the Glasgow-Renfrew-Airport-Paisley corridor.

SAPT contributed to the government's Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) and National Transport Strategy (NTS) consultation and Edinburgh Council's transport consultation. We were pleased that the council decided to carry on with Edinburgh Tram extension to Leith and Newhaven.

SAPT issued a paper advocating bus/rail co-ordination. This was discussed with CPT (Confederation of Passenger Transport) whose approach was generally negative, regarding rail as heavily subsidised competition while bus funding is squeezed. SAPT agreed to draft a revised paper looking at funding issues.

Vice-chair Professor David Murray-Smith followed his 2019 AGM talk on *Powering Future Transport in Scotland* with further research papers on battery and hydrogen train propulsion.

SAPT continued to contribute to the Scottish Government's High Speed Rail Stakeholders Group. As controversy over HS2 raged, SAPT urged the UK Transport Minister to take a higher profile in stressing the benefits of the project to counter the misinformation being spread through the media.

CalMac updated SAPT members on ferry issues at a members meeting in June 2019 in Inverness.

The committee contributed to meetings and consultations on low emission zones, autonomous vehicles, the Williams Rail Review, ScotRail Class 153 cycle coaches, and West Coast Anglo-Scottish train services.

Vice-chair David Giles has started the task of redeveloping the SAPT website which was previously based on web design software that was no longer supported.

The committee during 2020 was:

President Stewart Stevenson MSP

Vice Presidents: Tom Harris, Lawrence Marshall, Dr.Malcolm Reid

Chair Dr John McCormick

Vice Chairs Prof.David Murray Smith, David Giles

Membership Secretary Scott Simpson

Minutes Secretary Arthur Homan-Elsy

Treasurer Robin McGregor

Strategy Officer David Murray-Smith

Regional Representatives:

Strathclyde David Brown, Stewart Leighton

Lothian Paul Tetlaw, Graham Atkins

Borders Prof. Chris Harvie

Southwest Tom Hart

Central & Tayside David Giles

Fife Laurie Naumann

Highlands & Islands Dr John Logie, Rolf Schmidt

Shetland vacant (meantime covered by H&I)

Nestrans vacant

Elected Member Dr Ann Glen MBE

There are 3 vacancies unfilled.

Thanks are due to Scott Simpson for maintaining the membership database, distributing membership renewals and newsletters, David Giles for bus issues and also work on upgrading the SAPT website, Arthur Homan-Elsy as Secretary, Robin McGregor as Treasurer, and Tom Hart for the news section in "Transport Matters" which also includes items from John Yellowlees and John Wilson.

Accounts summary:	2019 (£)	2018 (£)
Receipts	2504	1494
Meeting expenses	664	595
Office Bearer's expenses	124	169
Postage, printing,stationery	230	772
Computer replacement	490	-
Subscriptions and donations	100	210
Conference expenses	-	144
Website costs	<u>64</u>	<u>64</u>
Total payments	1672	1954

Funds at year end 2019 stood at £ 8482 (£7650 at year end 2018) Notes:

- 1) Total income was greater in 2019 than 2018. Income from individual members was at its usual level. Corporate subscriptions were higher due to catching up on invoices not paid in 2018.
- 2) Postage & printing cost was high in 2018: effectively two years' worth (2017 costs were slow in coming through). 2019 cost was back to normal, and smaller than before as more newsletters are sent online.

There is no need to increase subscription rates for the year 2021.

R. McGregor SAPT Treasurer

The accounts were checked by D. Brown and provisionally approved at a Zoom committee meeting

This is a brief summary of the situation of main rail and bus operators caused by the pandemic.

ScotRail and Caledonian Sleeper:

Emergency Measures Agreements (EMAs) have been extended for both **ScotRail** and **Caledonian Sleeper** until January 2021. Transport Scotland estimates that Covid-19 has imposed additional costs of £250 million on the taxpayer for operating the ScotRail and Caledonian Sleeper franchises during the initial six-month EMA. Discussions on a longer-term agreement beyond January 2021 are underway. Caledonian Sleeper losses worsened 48% to £4.8m in 2019-20 despite £15m of Scottish Government support for the franchise. Worse outcomes are expected in 2020-21. The ScotRail timetable from December to May 2021 has according to ScotRail cut train services by 20% but many Central Belt services appear to be cut by 50%. Main changes to daytime weekday services are:

Edinburgh-Glasgow via Falkirk:	Half-hourly clockface pattern instead of every 15 minutes.
Edinburgh-Glasgow Cen via Shotts:	Hourly all-stations service instead of two per hour
Edinburgh-Glasgow via Bathgate:	Half-hourly all-stations instead of four per hour (extra peak trains)
Edinburgh-Glasgow via Cumbernauld	Reduced from half-hourly to hourly, with peak extras
Edinburgh-Borders:	Reduced from half-hourly to hourly (with peak extras)
Edinburgh-North Berwick	Hourly (with peak extras) as now
Edinburgh-Dunblane	Reduced from half-hourly to hourly off-peak
Edinburgh-Fife	Largely unchanged
Glasgow-Barrhead-Kilmarnock-Carlisle	No Barrhead trains, Kilmarnock retains 2 tph but irregularly spaced Glasgow-Kilmarnock-Dumfries service cut from 11 tpd to 7 tpd
Glasgow-Ayr/Largs-Stranraer	Many Ayr limited stop trains withdrawn off-peak. Ayr all-stations and Ardrossan/Largs services remain half-hourly Stranraer-Ayr cut from every two hours to every four hours
Glasgow-Gourock	Reduced from 4 per hour to 2 per hour plus express every 2 hours
Glasgow-Lanark	Reduced from 2 per hour to hourly with some peak extras
Glasgow-Stirling	Remains half-hourly (hourly continuing to Alloa, with some extras)
Aberdeen-Dundee-Ed/Glasgow	Reduced from 34 per day to 21 per day
Inverness-Aberdeen	Remains at 11 trains per day
Inverness-Perth-Ed/Glasgow	Reduced from 12 per day to 9 per day
West Highland:	Oban-Glasgow cut from 6 to 4 per day, Mallaig-Glasgow unchanged
Far North:	Inverness-Wick and Inverness-Kyle retain 4 trains per day

It's not clear when services will return to pre-Covid levels. There could be a need to restructure timetables in the longer term to improve viability, as passenger numbers are expected to remain lower for a while.

Stagecoach While COVID-19 significantly affected the profitability of the Stagecoach regional bus business, the profitability of Stagecoach's London bus business grew over the past year or so. The London Transport concession system pays the concessionaires a management fee for operating bus services specified by Transport for London, whereas the viability of deregulated regional bus routes depends on farebox revenue which this year has fallen disastrously.

In Section 4, we make the case for bus franchises or concessions in Scotland in future to ensure timetable stability and revenue growth for urban and rural bus services.

First Group operating profits fell 18% to £256M in 2019/20, but write-downs due to Greyhound buses and increased bus insurance costs turned this into a loss of £299M. More than 40% of First Group revenue comes from train franchises – Great Western, South Western, Trans Pennine and Avanti West Coast. UK buses account for 11%, and US bus operations for 48%.

National Express with bus services in Dundee and Birmingham, coach services and US school buses, saw revenue for six months to the end of June fall 22.7% to just over £1 billion. 40,000 of its 51,000 staff were on furlough. A healthier picture has emerged from July, but this is at risk with the latest Covid restrictions.

Transport Times organised a virtual conference on 28th November 2020 to coincide with the Scottish Transport Awards. Speakers included Roy Brannen (Chief Exec of Transport Scotland), Alison Irvine (TS strategy), Bill Reeve (TS rail), Laura Murdoch (TS bus), Iain Docherty (Stirling University), Alex Hynes (ScotRail Alliance), Giles Fearnley and Andrew Jarvis (First Bus), Paul White (CPT), and Keith Anderson (Scottish Power).

The following notes summarise the discussion about some of the changes that are likely to lie ahead.

Decarbonisation: The pandemic has caused great uncertainty to life in the short and longer term. Everything hinges on a vaccine or other medical advances by summer 2021. Public transport is likely to reduce in the future. Rail has been worst affected. But the climate change emergency has not gone away. There will have to be real changes in the way forward. Unemployment and the economic downturn will reduce funding available for public transport.

Developing an integrated nationwide public transport network with higher modal share will be more important than peak travel into cities. A regional approach to transport collaboration is needed. The Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) has been delayed by uncertainty over future travel trends.

Rail: Recovery from the pandemic will focus on attracting more optional leisure travel, with commuting unlikely to recover to anything like former levels. This will reduce costs as train fleets will no longer be geared to such pronounced peaks. Priority will now be electrification rather than capacity enhancements.

Future rail power technology will be overhead electric and battery. Hydrogen trains are possibilities for the West Highland and Far North lines, but hydrogen is not energy efficient using 3.5 times more electricity to produce the same power. Conversion of a ScotRail Class 314 to hydrogen operation is progressing.

The “digital railway”, including ETCS level 2, delivers little or no benefit to mixed traffic railways: doubling some single-track sections of line would be better value.

Bus: Most bus traffic has fallen by 40 to 55% of pre-covid levels. Fares have risen by 9% over the last 5 years. Capital expenditure on new buses has now been cancelled by First Group.

Bus networks will be decimated if the government’s covid grants cease. Operator consolidation is now inevitable. An alliance has already been formed involving Glasgow bus operators.

Rebuilding bus traffic in 2021 will depend on regaining customer confidence. A government initiative to change advice will be needed once the pandemic subsides.

Bus speeds on urban routes have fallen steadily over the last 20 years due to congestion. The Scottish Government has allocated £500M for bus priority measures to reverse this decline. But vocal opposition from shopkeepers and motorists to parking restrictions will have to be overcome.

Decarbonising buses will involve introducing battery and hydrogen buses. Hydrogen buses have higher capital and running costs than diesel buses which will affect future profitability.

Road: “Electrification” of road transport as part of transport decarbonisation plans will require heavy investment in power generation and distribution networks. For instance, installing 20 hypercharge points at just one refuelling area on the A9 would need a dedicated electricity substation costing between £20 to £30 million. Providing rapid chargers all over the country would be “a disaster” for the distribution network. Charging cars overnight from normal domestic power points would be the most sensible approach. To encourage this, the tariff for rapid chargers should be much higher than the standard tariff.

A regulatory structure for installing charge points will be needed as the commercial market will not fund chargers in low demand areas. But installing charging points should not be paid for by taxpayers or domestic electricity consumers. Electricity charging tariffs should recoup the full cost of infrastructure.

Electric vehicles will be cheaper to run than petrol or diesel ones, potentially encouraging more car use. Government revenue from fuel tax will be lost. Road charging is the solution to both these problems, but this is unlikely to be adopted as a policy by any political party wishing to be elected.

As mentioned in "Scottish Transport Matters" 2020/2 SAPT has put together an Integrated Transport paper which attracted interest from Transport Scotland and was discussed at a virtual meeting with the TS Directors for Strategy, Rail and Bus on 23rd November. A brief summary of our argument follows.

Transport Recovery: A recovery plan for public transport is needed now that vaccine for Covid-19 should end the pandemic. ScotRail passengers have fallen by around 90% costing taxpayers £1 billion to keep trains running in 2020. Home working and on-line shopping have changed travel patterns, reducing bus profitability. But one in three households have no access to a car and need good public transport.

Emissions Target: The Scottish Government has an ambitious target of net zero by 2045. Transport accounts for 37% of carbon emissions. Scottish transport **emissions increased by 9%** from 2012 to 2017. Electric trains, trams and battery or hydrogen buses are energy-efficient and carbon-free and must play a greater role if the target is to be met. To attract modal shift from car to public transport, a new approach to organising and funding Scottish train and bus services is needed.

Public transport is organised differently in many European countries. Switzerland is a good example of successful integrated public transport. The Swiss national railway (SBB) is a limited company owned by the Federal Government. On average people make 54 journeys annually by rail in Switzerland compared with only 18 in Scotland. In most Swiss cities, buses and trams operate as an integrated municipal network co-ordinated with local trains. Rural communities without stations are served by PostBuses mostly connecting with trains at interchanges. From 2000 to 2018 Swiss road public transport use **rose by 31%** whereas for the same period **Scottish bus journeys fell by 17%**.

Action Plan: Emergency measures to support ScotRail during the Covid pandemic are due to stop in early 2021. Rail franchising is not now seen as the way forward. Pre-Covid, 82% of Scottish bus-km operated commercially. Post-Covid profitability of many bus routes is uncertain. The Scottish Government should now evaluate introducing an integrated public transport system like Switzerland. Four features underpinning a Scottish transport framework modified along Swiss lines would be:

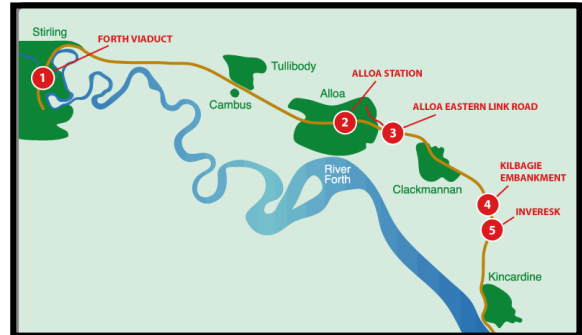
1. **ScotRail** operated as a public company or long-term concession let by the Scottish Government.
2. **City bus networks** coordinated by local transport authorities with ring-fenced government funding. Edinburgh City Council is already planning to integrate bus and tram services to improve service to the public, reduce costs, and cut bus traffic along Princes Street. Glasgow City Region would benefit from reorganisation of bus operation to integrate with the Subway and suburban rail network, making the best use of zero emission electric transport, and reducing costs and city road traffic.
3. **Rural bus routes** Services would be coordinated by local transport authorities with ring-fenced government funding to ensure connectivity across rural areas. Many routes could link rural towns to the national rail network, interchanging smoothly with trains at railheads, for example Newton Stewart/Girvan, Kelso/Galashiels, Lossiemouth/Elgin, Grantown/Aviemore (to name a few).
4. **National smart ticketing system** giving seamless changes between bus, train, tram, subway and ferry

Funding: Scottish Government bus funding of £257M (BSOG and concessionary scheme) in 2018 is spread across all bus services. Frequent and busy Central Belt routes get more government funding than lifeline rural routes. Adopting the Swiss-style integrated transport model would reduce bus and rail duplication. Public funding would be concentrated on a strategic network of urban and rural bus routes co-ordinated with, rather than competing with, rail services. This approach would secure the future of bus services in rural and deprived urban areas with no trains, and would improve revenue on state-supported ScotRail services. A review of public transport in Argyll ("Access for all in Argyll and Bute", SAPT, 11/2020) confirms that bus/rail/ferry integration would transform rural public transport.

Legislation: Replacing the rail franchising system will require new legislation. Bus coordination is difficult under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019: the complicated bureaucratic procedures involve bus companies, the Competition and Markets Authority, the traffic commissioner with a panel of three persons, and public consultations. If these hurdles prove to be insurmountable, the 2019 Act should be amended to give local transport authorities responsibility for co-ordinating bus services to benefit their local communities, with ring-fenced government funding.

Development of the rail network is continuing, showing confidence in longer term transport recovery.

Network Rail is surveying the former 11.5 km freight line from **Alloa to Longannet** (TS map on right). Three new stations could open at Clackmannan, Kincardine and Longannet. The line closed to passengers in 1930 but was used by coal trains to Longannet power station until 2016. The Glasgow-Alloa electric train service could be extended to Longannet (just east of Kincardine). It is understood the project depends on Spanish train manufacturer Talgo building a factory at Longannet if Talgo win an HS2 train supply contract. Ultimately trains could be extended to Dunfermline.



The **Levenmouth** line from Thornton on the Edinburgh-Dundee route is due to re-open by 2023. The line is mothballed with track still mostly in place (see photo on right), though major work budgeted at £70 million will be required to bring it back to use. As the track remained as a Network Rail asset, there was no need for an Act of Parliament.

The SAPT 1992 AGM involved a special train from Kirkcaldy to Levenmouth ("The Methil Special"). So it is good that only 30 years later trains will return! This gestation period is not unusual for rail projects, such as Alloa, Borders Rail and HS2 (below). Watch this space for news on Glasgow Metro (first suggested as ClydeMetro at the 2001 SAPT AGM). Patience is a virtue!



Above: Cameron Bridge island platform on the Levenmouth line Photo: Laurie Naumann, November 2020

HS2 construction between Euston and Birmingham is now gathering pace with £12billion of construction contracts being let, 22,000 jobs being created, and two tunnel boring machines now delivered.

HS2 Ltd has carried out a consultation on changes to the Western Leg Phase 2b from Crewe to Manchester and beyond. A northern connection from Crewe to the HS2 line to Manchester is now proposed.

HS2 Ltd also propose a dead-end terminus station in Manchester Piccadilly for HS2 trains from London. In our response we advise against building terminus stations, advocating a through station allowing future extension towards Preston. This would allow Glasgow/Edinburgh-Manchester trains to continue on HS2 to Manchester Airport and beyond, and via the future Northern Powerhouse upgraded line to Sheffield.

The main depot for Anglo-Scottish HS2 trains is proposed to be at Gretna. A small number of HS2 trains will also be stabled at Polmadie. Alternative sites at Ravenscraig near Motherwell and Ravenstruther south of Carlisle were surveyed but were not suitable. The site needs to be 3 km long and 500 metres wide. SAPT suspect that a depot at Gretna would involve some uneconomic empty running from Glasgow and Edinburgh back to the depot. There would also be implications for employment in Scotland as some of the HS2 crew would presumably have to be based in Carlisle rather than Glasgow or Edinburgh.

SAPT have suggested to HS2 Ltd that they should investigate alternative depot sites much nearer Glasgow and Edinburgh, not necessarily on the West Coast Main Line. A level site north of Edinburgh Airport (adjacent to the proposed Dalmeny chord), and a site to the south-west of the Glasgow-Gourock line between Paisley St James and Bishopton were two of the potential sites suggested.

The final Report from the National Infrastructure's Commission on their Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and the North will inform the UK Government's Integrated Rail Plan, which is due to be published in January 2021. This will determine the strategy for rail developments in the north of England, which will in turn affects the future investment in rail upgrades and new HS2 construction to Scotland.

with contributions by Tom Hart, John Yellowlees and John Wilson

The Scottish Governments transport policies over the past decade have failed to achieve any significant shift away from car use, says the Committee on Climate Change. Proportion of commuters using a car or van to work has risen from 66% in 2008 to 68% in 2018. Walking remained at 12% of trips with commuting by cycle only up from 2.3% to 2.8%. Bus commuting fell 2% with rail up only 1.2%. Scottish Government says that in 2020 many more were working from home but more were cycling to work (LTT810 30Oct p9).

AVIATION

Michael O'Leary of Ryanair predicted passenger numbers for its financial year of 50 million, down from 149 million last year. This is much lower than previous predictions. Travellers are not booking flights "because they don't know what their idiot governments will do next on quarantine", according to Mr. O'Leary. The impact could see closures of aircraft bases at Shannon and Cork, and Dusseldorf and Toulouse. Schedules will be cut by 60% up to March 2021, with 3000 redundancies.

British Airways owner IAG has suffered losses of £1.26bn over summer 2020. From October, winter flight capacity will be no more than 30% of the 2019 level (S23Oct).

A rescue deal for Flybe has been agreed, allowing a resumption of flights early in 2021 (H20Oct). Total 2020 UK air passengers will be far below 2019 level with the industry receiving little help compared to surface transport.

Emirates KLM and Finnair all reduced flights to Glasgow and Edinburgh in late September. Ryanair report a 75% fall in booking. Airlines have been pressing for quick testing for Covid at airports and development of test, trace and isolate (S18&25Sept; EN14 Oct Easyjet is facing its first ever full year loss (S9Oct))

US has increased spending on fuel at Prestwick Airport, possibly as part of an effort to safeguard Trump Turnberry Hotel (S23Oct).

BUS and TRAM

The Scottish Government has awarded over £9.75 million to 19 bus and coach operators to retrofit 594 vehicle exhausts in 2020/21. This step will reduce harmful emissions and air pollution which damages health. Scottish businesses that specialise in exhaust retrofitting will also benefit – helping to drive a green recovery out of the Covid-19 crisis, whilst improving air quality and supporting the programme for Government commitment to introduce Low Emission Zones in Scotland's four biggest cities.

The Edinburgh tram and Glasgow Subway will share a further £4m to support services until the end of December but SPT says it is facing a multi-million pound deficit in the current year. Scottish Government's Bus Priority Development Fund has led to temporary bus lanes on the A90 and A89 approaches to Edinburgh plus build-out of kerbs and bus stops in central Edinburgh (EN 2Sept)

Lothian Buses has been hit by a £12m loss of income due to lower ticket sales (EN31Oct). Stagecoach report a steady recovery in sales income to around 50-60% of 2019 levels. Vehicle mileage is now at 93% of 2019 levels (S10Oct) The Edinburgh tram extension to Newhaven is now expected to open in 2023.

The world's first hydrogen double-deckers are being delivered to Aberdeen with a 300 mile range on a single tank. Ember will start UK's first 100% electric bus service between Edinburgh and Dundee in October (S22Sept)

Glasgow City Council is to lead a feasibility study into a new public transport system for the city region. Harjinder Gharyal, Glasgow's divisional director for transport will be project director for the new feasibility study and chair of a Metro Strategic Advisory Group including Glasgow Airport, SPT, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and other bodies.

More information on Light Rail in Edinburgh and Glasgow will be in the next "Scottish Transport Matters".

Edinburgh's council-owned tram company is wary of a full merger with Lothian Buses but sees a unified board as a stepping stone to a single company structure. Unite trade union says it will not support a merger that leads to redundancies and cuts in bus services.

Milton Keynes is to replace most supported bus routes with more effective and lower cost DRT, a decision influenced by usage of supported buses falling to only 20% of former levels. In 2019, only 1.2m passengers used supported buses in a total of 8.8m town bus trips (LTT810 30Oct p15)

RAIL

The vital Edinburgh-Glasgow line linking Scotland's two largest cities reopened for passengers on Monday 21 September. Engineers worked around the clock to repair the line which was partially washed away near Polmont when the Union Canal burst its banks in August. The scale of the challenge of repairing the damage was huge as the force of thousands of gallons of water flowing from the breached canal bank washed away sections of track and undermined the railway's embankments along a 300 metre stretch of the line.

Engineers had to completely rebuild the foundations of the line over six weeks, replacing more than 15,000 tonnes of soil and stone beneath the track. A kilometre of new double-track railway has also been laid, consisting of more than 4500 metres of new rails and 4424 concrete sleepers along with 10,000 tonnes of new ballast requiring 27 engineering trains. Over 3000 metres of signalling cables have been re-laid and two new twin track overhead power gantries installed.

Closed south of Stonehaven by a landslide-related accident causing three fatalities in mid-August, the rail route north to Aberdeen reopened in early November (H31Oct).

In July, Network Rail restarted work on all its major rail enhancement projects, namely Queen Street and Kintore stations, as well as the preparatory work to support future electrification of the East Kilbride line.

Caledonian Sleeper has appointed a new managing director, Kathryn Darbandi, to replace Ryan Flaherty from January 2021. She previously held travel and tourism roles in Travel Leaders, Thomas Cook and TUI.

The Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive have announced a feasibility study of high-speed rail linking Belfast with Dublin and Cork.

Office of Rail and Road has issued rail passenger usage data for the first quarter of the financial year 2020/21. ScotRail was bottom of the list of rail passenger trips with a fall to 1.01million, just 4.3% of rail trips in first quarter of 2019-20. Transport for Wales was second bottom with 0.37million trips, just 4.5% of trips in same quarter of 2019-20. The lowest falls on 2019 were to around 15% in the London area. All percentages had risen slightly by June 2020.

Cross-country, owned by Arriva, has been awarded a new contract for the next 3 years. Trains provide links between Scotland, England and Wales (H17Oct)

Total UK governments package to keep rail passenger services running in 2020 will cost at least £3.5bn. Fares income has collapsed with only very modest recovery. Details of a replacement for rail franchising have still to be announced (S22Sept)

Scotland's first hydrogen-powered train is to be showcased at the COP26 conference in Glasgow (S12Sept)

Welsh Government is to take over rail services currently operated as part of Wales and Borders franchise, hard hit by falling usage (LTT810 30Oct p22). There is speculation over similar action in Scotland (S23Oct).

ScotRail has unveiled the carriages being adapted to carry bikes and large sporting equipment on rural routes – with initial use on the Glasgow Oban/Fort William-Mallaig line (LTT810 30Coct p3)

Borders Rail has celebrated first 5 years since reopening. 7.7m passengers have been carried and options for extensions are being examined (EN9sept)0

Costing £15m Kintore station reopened on 15 October almost 60 years after closure under the Beeching cuts. The station includes 168 parking spaces with 24 fitted for electric charging (H10Oct)

Business leaders have called for more flexible rail season tickets after rises in working from home (S9Oct)

Scottish Government and HIE have awarded £16million to allow the Cairngorm Mountain Railway to reopen in winter of 2021-22 (H10Oct)

A Dalton of the Scotsman has cast doubt on the ability of ScotRail to recover passengers with Scottish Government and ScotRail publicity reinforcing perceptions of rail being unsafe until a longer-term Covid solution (S9Oct). Peak hour ScotRail commuting is down 80% but there has been a stronger revival in rail leisure travel with Saturday now the busiest day of the week (EN21Sept)

Despite complaints, "Edinburgh" is now the official title of Edinburgh Waverley railway station (S12Oct)

FERRY & PORTS

Dutch transport company Samskip has expanded its Amsterdam-Hull container service to include a weekly call at Grangemouth (S10Oc).

The world's first hydrogen ferry is operating in Orkney following around £34m of public funding (H18Oct).