



Scottish Association for Public Transport

SCOTTISH TRANSPORT MATTERS

Contents

- 1 Regional Transport Issues and Meetings
- 2 HS2 Latest Developments
- 3 Air Passenger Duty
- 4 West Coast Refranchising
- 5 Minutes of SAPT AGM
- 6 News Around Scotland



International Transport Co-ordination: Buses to Italy (Mals railway station), Austria (Landeck) and Switzerland (Samnaun) connect at Martina on the Swiss border. Scotland may need bus legislation to enable bus co-ordination here. This will be discussed at the SAPT members meeting in Aberdeen (see below).

SAPT Area Meetings 2016: All members welcome

Aberdeen Friday 30th September 13.30 - 16.00 *Aberdeen Station Hotel, 78 Guild St*
Glasgow Tuesday 25th October 18.30 - 20.30 *Mercure Hotel, 201 Ingram Street*

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1 Regional Transport Issues and Meetings

HIGHLAND: A SAPT meeting held in Inverness on 28th June was attended by Councillor Allan Henderson (Lochaber) and Finlay Macrae (CalMac) in addition to seven SAPT Highland members. Issues raised:

- HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy Refresh: SAPT's submission identified declining bus usage, ferry RET levels for passengers, lengthy rail journey times, and transport reliability issues as issues needing attention. Lineside tree cutting to facilitate views from trains for tourists was still an issue.
- Bus timetables shown on bus stops are often incorrect or non-existent, there is no comprehensive route map, and few reliable bus/rail connections. But Highland Council do not have a statutory obligation to provide bus stop timetables, and are under increasing financial pressure. SAPT are working on a bus paper, to be discussed at the 30th September meeting in Aberdeen (see below).
- Ferries have frequently been disrupted by worsening weather in winter. The current summer ferries on the Skye-Mallaig route had also experienced tidal restrictions. Two ferries now being built at Port Glasgow for the Arran and Uig triangle routes should allow a "cascade" of ships to improve Skye ferry reliability. However, there is a backlog of investment needed for ageing ferries and harbours.
- There is a high rate of cancellations on the West Highland and other Highland lines caused by crew unavailability. On a recent typical week the 16.05 Mallaig-Glasgow train was cancelled on 50% of the days. North of Inverness, trains skip stops when running late, with Conon Bridge and Beauly missed on 80 occasions in the last year. SAPT will raise this with Transport Scotland and ScotRail.
- Rail infrastructure upgrades have started between Aberdeen and Inverurie. On the Highland Main Line, plans may be limited to upgrading passing loops at Pitlochry and Aviemore. An update will be given at the meeting in Aberdeen (see below).

ABERDEEN & NORTH-EAST: Members Meeting on 30th September 13.30 Aberdeen Station Hotel

Topics to be discussed:

- BUS SERVICES in rural and urban areas: Is there a need for a new legislative and funding framework?
- Update on FRASERBURGH and PETERHEAD to ABERDEEN STRATEGIC TRANSPORT STUDY
- Progress with Aberdeen-Inverurie and Inverness-Elgin-Inverurie rail upgrades
- Train service developments from Aberdeen to the south

GLASGOW Area: Members Meeting on 25th October 18.30 Mercure Hotel, Ingram Street, Glasgow

- Network Rail's Scotland Route Study: electrification, capacity increases including Glasgow Central
- Firth of Clyde ferry developments
- Glasgow Airport access study

With the local government elections due in May 2017, there is an opportunity to put forward the case for developing urban transport strategies based on public transport co-ordination, more pedestrianisation in town and city centres, more effective bus priority lanes, and reduced traffic and exhaust emissions.

The transport strategy for **Edinburgh** should include extension of the tram network to Newhaven, and a TramTrain link from Haymarket via the South Suburban Railway to the Royal Infirmary. Bus traffic on Princes Street should be reduced, if possible by re-routing buses and increasing tram frequency on an extended network, to create a people-friendly zero emission zone along Princes Street.

South-West Scotland: SAPT committee member Tom Hart met officials of SWestrans on 13th July. Bus support is being cut by 10% to £3.2 m per year, with pressure for further cuts due to reduced council funding. Stagecoach has maintained a relatively good level of Dumfries town services without subsidy, but the main hospital has been relocated to the western edge of the town and this will increase bus costs. Co-ordination of school bus, subsidised bus, taxi and NHS transport may be worth pursuing.

A number of station re-openings have been assessed. The best prospects are Thornhill and Eastriggs. Relocation of Stranraer Harbour station to a site closer to the town is now ruled out, but redevelopment of the harbour area is being considered. Action is needed to attract greater use of the new two-hourly Ayr-Girvan-Stranraer train service, focusing on tourism and leisure.

SWestrans favour a west coast route for HS2 extension, with trains calling at Carlisle.

2

HS2 Latest Developments

Transport Scotland and the DfT held High Speed Rail Stakeholder meetings in June in Dundee (SAPT was represented by committee member David Giles) and in July in Motherwell (attended by J McCormick).

Topics ranged from key connections and priorities for Scottish HS2 services, and whether incremental upgrades or a continuous high speed link are needed to Scotland.

There was unanimous agreement that the first phase of HS2 extension to Scotland would most realistically involve a mixture of upgrades to existing route, and construction of targeted high speed bypasses to achieve the desired 3-hour Glasgow/Edinburgh-London journey time.

However, SAPT pointed out that 40% of the Scottish population live outwith the Glasgow-Edinburgh metropolitan areas. Some HS2 services should we suggest be extended north of the central belt. A railhead in Stirling could provide connections from Aberdeen, Dundee, Inverness and Perth, with extension of HS2 trains further northwards beyond Stirling dependent on future ScotRail electrification. Some HS2 services should also call at Carlisle to provide connections from south-west Scotland.

Low advance fares for optional travellers were deemed to be necessary to compete effectively with low cost airlines, while the ability to work onboard was seen as a key advantage for business users.

Further meetings are being organised in the north of England. It is hoped an overall strategy for extending HS2 to Scotland can be put together by the end of 2016.

Following the resignation of David Cameron as Prime Minister, and the appointment of Theresa May as replacement, the ensuing cabinet changes led to press speculation that the future of the HS2 project could have been at risk. However, the new transport secretary Chris Grayling has backed the high speed rail project, confirming that the additional rail capacity to be provided by HS2 is needed.

3

Air Passenger Duty

The Scottish Government consultation on scrapping APD closed at the end of July. The SAPT response, which was given prominence in *The Times*, focused on five major issues:

- Effectively subsidising air travel by reducing APD will increase air travel and CO₂ emissions, against the Scottish Government's environmental policy.
- Cheaper domestic air travel would reduce the potential revenue benefit of extending HS2 to Scotland, which is a Scottish Government transport objective.

It would also adversely affect revenue on the East Coast and West Coast Main Lines, causing financial problems for Stagecoach and First Group, two of Scotland's most successful companies.

- Economic benefits claimed by the study funded by Edinburgh Airport underestimate the adverse economic effect of increasing outbound tourism from Scotland encouraged by cheaper air fares. "Staycations" are reported to have boosted Scotland's economy by £400 million last year. Offering cheaper air fares for overseas holidays would reduce the "staycation" contribution to the economy.
- Loss of part or all of the APD tax revenue (£309 million in 2014) at a time of North Sea Oil tax revenue also collapsing, would reduce funding available for education and other government priorities. How will this shortfall be made up?

The government's stakeholder forum from the aviation and travel industries has unsurprisingly backed APD reduction. But airline revenue and profits are rising, while fares are falling. Ryanair are reporting a 43% rise in profit, and predict a 7% fall in average fares, backed by a sharp drop in the price of oil, which has fallen 70% since June 2014.

Expecting Scottish taxpayers to fund a further drop in the cost of all airline tickets is unnecessary. A more limited reduction in long distance ("Band B" > 2000 miles) charges (currently £73 upwards) could however be targeted towards improving connectivity on intercontinental routes to North America, China, the Middle East and India. This would be aimed at developing connectivity to strategic markets but would avoid some of the negative results of reducing the Band A (<2000 miles) charges of typically £13.

SAPT recommended leaving Band A charges unchanged, and considering a reduction in Band B charges

4

West Coast Rail Refranchising

The InterCity West Coast (ICWC) franchise ends in April 2018. The Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport Scotland held an event on 17th June, attended by SAPT Vice Chairman David Murray-Smith, to explain the consultation that will inform the Invitation to Tender for the new franchise.

The SAPT response to the consultation focused on measures that could increase rail's market share on ICWC services north of Preston. There were 2.5 million air passengers annually between Glasgow and London airports in 2015 (nearly 7000 per day), a steep rise of 10% from the previous year. The DfT should specify rail improvements targeted to attract more passengers from air travel. SAPT's suggestions are:

1. **Journey time:** The London-Glasgow journey currently takes over 4 hours 30 minutes. Most trains make intermediate stops at Warrington, Wigan, Preston, Lancaster, Oxenholme or Penrith, and Carlisle. We suggest adding an hourly London-Preston train (continuing every two hours to Carlisle) to call at intermediate stations. London-Glasgow trains could then stop only at Preston and Carlisle (with **Dumfries** connection), and **Motherwell** (see below), with a target 4 hours 15 minutes journey time.

The emerging HS2 strategy is likely to identify a series of infrastructure upgrades and high speed bypasses to reach Scotland. The upgrade programme should be brought forward to start from 2019 so that ICWC Anglo-Scottish journey times are progressively shortened during the franchise.

2. **Customer experience:** Getting a seat on the train, clean toilets, good catering and refreshments, more space for luggage, and regular updates when delays occur, are important areas for improvement.
3. **New Services:** Growing popularity of rail travel justifies re-introducing trains from north of the central belt to destinations on the WCML. New bi-mode trains (as now being introduced on the Great Western Main Line) could be used on the London-Birmingham-Preston-Edinburgh route to enable extension of some trains to operate onwards from Edinburgh to **Inverness** (a new "Clansman") and **Aberdeen**. **Bristol** is a significant destination for travel from Glasgow yet there are no direct trains via the WCML.
4. **Station Facilities:** Glasgow Central should be upgraded to provide a proper departure lounge for InterCity passengers, a drop off/pick-up arrangement for passengers being driven to/from the station, and better information for onward travel by train, bus and ferry for passengers arriving on ICWC trains.
5. **Fares:** To compete effectively with low cost airlines and increase rail's modal share, a reasonable number of cheap tickets should be available on ICWC Anglo-Scottish trains. From 2021, First Group plan to operate open-access trains between Edinburgh and London with average fares of less than £25. A similar fares model should be adopted for standard class on ICWC Glasgow-London trains, although a first or business class charging higher fares with at-seat catering would also be needed.
6. **Motherwell Railhead:** Most people flying from Glasgow Airport arrive by car. A Park+Ride station linked to the motorway network would help to attract some of these passengers to use rail to the main English destinations. Motherwell is close to the M74 and also is the hub for Lanarkshire local rail services which serve local authority areas with a population of over 600,000. Motherwell should be developed as a Park+Ride Railhead, with most ICWC trains calling there.
7. **Connections** to other train services to towns and cities throughout the national rail network are a key advantage of rail travel and should be made more reliable. Consideration should be given to holding principal connections for a short period (without penalising the train operators) in the event of ICWC trains running late, where this can be done without causing network disruption. This is particularly important if the connecting service runs infrequently. The new franchisee should co-operate with other TOCS (including **ScotRail**) to improve connections. An agreement with **Caledonian Sleeper** to jointly market the advantages of Anglo-Scottish rail travel could also boost rail's overall market share.

An ambitious ICWC franchise specification for Anglo-Scottish train services from 2018 will pave the way for successfully extending HS2 to Scotland from 2026.

Presentations to AGM on High Speed Rail, Glasgow Subway Modernisation, and Smart Ticketing

SAPT President Stewart Stevenson welcomed those attending and looked forward to the presentations. He hoped to live long enough to travel on Anglo-Scottish HSR, and have a thinner wallet helped by smartcards removing the need for multiple cards. He was a keen rail and bus user and hoped that the press present would see the importance of giving greater, and positive, attention to improving public transport. In his area of the north-east, there were new and comfortable coaches operating from Aberdeen to Peterhead and Fraserburgh but entry and exit involving the use of several steps rather than the easy entry norm on local buses. A rail link might be the best eventual solution for trips between the north-east and Aberdeen.

Anglo-Scottish HSR SAPT Chair Dr John McCormick then introduced the speakers starting with himself expanding on the HSR notes included in Issue 170 of 'Scottish Transport Matters'. He noted that SAPT had first raised this issue in 1989 and relaunched an Anglo-Scottish HSR campaign in 2005. London-Birmingham HS2 was now costed at £18bn plus a further £32bn for Phase 2 on to Wigan/Manchester and Leeds/York. Extending new HS2 track to both Glasgow and Edinburgh could cost a further £42 to £45bn but the recent HS2 Ltd Report had included a less expensive £18 to £21bn mix of new and upgraded route which could provide 3 hour trip times to London by the early 2030s. Joint government decisions on a finalised option were expected in 2016/17.

His view was that funding issues could be critical in final decisions which would also have to take account of the need for more investment in, and some extensions of, the existing Scottish rail network.

Use of tilting trains, as the present Pendolinos are, and the replacement of present plans for HSR trains to split at Carstairs could allow the 3 hour times needed to attract more passengers from air with a lesser degree of new construction north from Preston. The recent ORR decision to introduce competing rail services on the London-Newcastle-Edinburgh route could worsen HSR funding prospects as could the abolition of APD as planned by the Scottish Government. The ORR decision needed a review by DfT. The Scottish Government could perhaps reduce the present higher rates of APD over longer distances while retaining the existing level of tax on domestic and short distance European routes. He felt an HSR route via Carlisle offered the best prospects of 3 hour times to both Glasgow and Edinburgh but, due to Newcastle interests in extended HS2 route and rising usage of trains between Glasgow, Edinburgh, north-east England and Yorkshire, he expected that finalised plans will see sections of 140mph running on the route via Newcastle plus a bypass to avoid the severe speed restriction at Morpeth. Alastair Young of Transport Scotland provided further comments and answers to questions.

Questions: A plea was made to retain the recent improvements in services to Carstairs and to consider reopened stations at Symington and Beattock. A Young stressed that HSR services had to have only a few stops but need not involve any loss of local services to Carstairs and some local service improvements. On the East Coast Main Line, a new station at Reston was included in current plans. S Stevenson added that plans also involved fewer stops on intercity trains north to Aberdeen. Abellio will provide improved services serving intermediate stations.

Malcolm Reed felt that there was a danger of HS2 distracting attention from the need to improve the existing network, including some 'bypasses' and more quadruple track. HS2 could also cut the franchise payments made to government by existing Anglo-Scottish operators. Faster action was needed on viable phased schemes for intercity routes and increased capacity. Differing views were also expressed on the cuts in trip times needed to attract to rail well over 50% of current domestic air travellers to and from London. Could fare cuts not be more effective in increasing rail use? Virgin Rail stated that it already has 30% of Anglo-Scottish air/rail traffic and expected to reach 60% when rail times fell to 3 hours 45 minutes.

Glasgow Subway Modernisation: John Binning of SPT gave a brief history of the Glasgow Subway, opening in 1896 and the second subway in Britain after London. Plans were now well advanced for a £288m modernisation (with £246m provided by the Scottish Government) of the Subway by 2020/21. Apart from a one-month closure in July (to replace ramps into the depot), the Subway would continue to operate during modernisation. The new trains being built by Stadler/Ansaldo would be driverless with lower noise levels, a better ride and more spacious interiors (though with no increase in height levels). Train frequencies would be further improved with existing usage already showing a rise in evening demand. Present usage was around 13m a year (compared to 5m on Edinburgh trams) with a rise of around 30% expected due to smart ticketing and modernisation. He drew attention to the new entrances to St Enoch subway station (immediately outside the building where the AGM was being held) and to work already completed at several other stations – including Hillhead and Buchanan St – and about to be completed at Govan. Special attention had been given to the needs of blind and deaf users though very high costs and the nature of existing stations meant that only Govan and St Enoch would have wheelchair access.

Smart Ticketing: As part of Subway modernisation, John Binning explained that the SPT 'Bramble' smart ticketing had already been in use for more than a year and was compatible with extensions to other rail operations, buses, ferries and community transport. SPT had developed the system in conjunction with Ecebs of East Kilbride, formed in 2000, with the Nevis organisation set up to deal with 'back office' functions dealing with payments to operators. The system is about to be extended to ScotRail services and discussions are in progress on attempting to get bus operators to co-operate. Almost half of Subway trips are now by Bramble, which also includes Subway P+R. Smartcard technology is still preferred, as the alternative mobile phone technology is only available on advanced phone models not possessed by everyone. The system works well despite problems caused by bus deregulation (London's Oystercard does not have this problem as London buses are regulated).

Alastair Richards of Transport Scotland talked about the issue of adapting smartcard technology to allow the new Saltire card to apply to transport throughout Scotland with appropriate payments to operators being made. There have been difficulties in dealing with 230 bus operators but the existing travel concession card provides a base for development. Work on a Smart Ticketing Delivery Strategy started in 2012. The aim is to have 65% of rail trips on smart ticketing by 2021 with smart ticketing also a condition in the new CalMac ferry franchise. Bus companies such as McGills, Lothian, Stagecoach and National Express (in Dundee) have been developing their own systems but connections between systems are needed under the Saltire brand.

Advantages of smart ticketing include speedier bus boarding times leading to shorter journeys, helping to reverse the fall in bus use. More car users could be attracted to public transport as smart ticketing simplifies paying for multi-leg journeys. Smart watches might soon be more widely used while provision has to continue to be made for people without bankcards or mobile phones. Allowing payments other than for travel is a tricky issue since it would involve the 'back office' meeting more complex banking regulations. But Bruce Kiloh, Head of SPT Policy and Planning, added that Nevis was already examining this problem and saw ways of contactless 'transport' cards also being used for library, swimming pool, school meal and other small contactless payments.

Questions: There were many questions about how future smartcards would work in practice, especially if extended nationwide to companies having a wide range of special offers and incentives to stay travelling with a particular company, in preference to encouraging multi-operator integrated trips and easy interchange. How would concession cards fit in and could users be sure that they got the cheapest fares on offer? Tapping-out was also seen as a major issue, especially in relation to bus travel. Users could be penalised for forgetting to tap-out while, on buses, there were difficulties in providing the physical space to tap-out as others were trying to board. For local travel, it was suggested that only a tap-in system might apply, possibly applying a maximum one-day charge or giving a discount for multiple local trips within one day. How would discounts be applied for multi-modal travel and what impact would this have on payments to operators? If asked by inspectors, how could people prove they had paid?

Replies did not fully resolve these issues but it was noted that inspectors could have access to cards to check payments while Stagecoach still offered paper tickets with smart payments. Systems already included provision for discounts but there was the possibility that smart ticketing could reduce the number of 'special offers' in the future. Another option would be to develop auto-readers to record when a vehicle was left rather than a physical 'tap-out'. Abellio and McGills had already signed up with Nevis on structures for 'back-office' payments. Direct payments using contactless debit/credit cards or mobiles are likely to be supported in the future. This could remove the need for 'back-office' arrangements but could reduce opportunities for discounts.

The session ended with a vote of thanks for the speakers from SAPT Vice Chair Prof David Murray-Smith.

Minute of SAPT AGM in the Teachers Building, St Enoch Square, Glasgow 20 May 2016

Chair Dr John McCormick welcomed members and reported apologies. He explained that the accounts would be taken first, as the Treasurer had to leave soon due to the over-running of the session prior to the business meeting

Annual Accounts John Ferris circulated the Annual Accounts and External Examiner's Report. Income was slightly down but there was an overall surplus due to no repeat of the major computer renewal costs in 2014. There was a significant bank reserve available for spending. Subscriptions would be unchanged. He intimated that, after his third term as Treasurer, he would retire having completed the Accounts for 2016. The Accounts were approved. The Minute of the 2015 AGM was also approved.

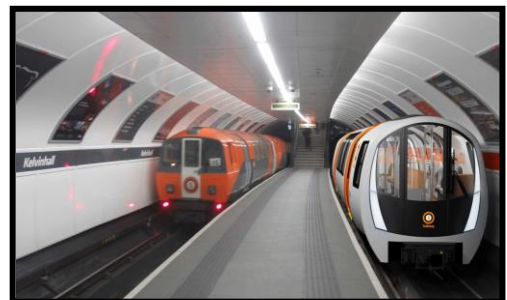
Chair's Report In addition to his report in Scottish Transport Matters 170, John highlighted the need for further work arising from the papers on HSR and Ticketing given earlier. Attention would also need to be given to the content of a finalised HS2 strategy within the promised revision of Scottish Transport Strategy and Network Rail Scotland's Five Year Programmes. Abellio were complimented on the apparently smooth handling of alternative timetables during closure of Queen St HL. SAPT planned more activities in the Aberdeen area as well as Inverness. Glasgow Airport also offered tramtrain opportunities and a response was required to the consultation on abolition of Air Passenger Duty. The local bus network was under increasing threat and required a stronger SAPT input and possible application in Scotland of parts of the proposed Buses Bill for England

Election of Office Bearers: Existing office bearers were reappointed as shown below

President: Stewart Stevenson Vice Presidents: Dr Malcolm Reed and Lawrence Marshall
Chair John McCormick (though John re-iterated that in the longer term a successor is needed)
Vice Chairs: Prof David Murray-Smith Bob Barnes-Watts
Secretary: Arthur Homan-Elsy Membership Secretary Scott Simpson
Treasurer: Robin McGregor appointed as successor to John Ferris from January 2017

Intimation of Area Representatives on SAPT Committee

Strathclyde David Brown, Stewart Leighton
South-west Tom Hart
Borders Prof. Chris Harvie
Lothian Paul Tetlaw, Alastair Reid
Fife Laurie Naumann
Tactran David Giles
North-east John Whyte
Highlands Dr John Logie, Rolf Schmidt



17 driverless four-car trains are being built for the Glasgow Subway.

Elected Committee Members: Dr Ann Glen and Ralph Barker were re-appointed unopposed.

Any other business: The Committee was asked to give further consideration to additional Vice Presidents with wide political representation. It was also agreed that stronger efforts be made to attract younger members and those, including students/ research students, within the Scottish academic community. Prof. David Murray-Smith agreed to arrange a meeting with representatives from these bodies

AVIATION

New London Mayor Sadiq Khan is thought to be more supportive of an early decision on Heathrow expansion allowing growth in both international and domestic routes. Scottish opinion is divided on the proposed cut and eventual abolition of APD. Labour, Green and Liberal Democrats leaders in the Scottish Parliament oppose cuts in APD but, after the current consultation, a controversial combination of SNP and Unionist votes could ensure early cuts. Liz Cameron, Chief Executive of Scottish Chambers of Commerce sees APD cuts as the best way of growing Scottish connections with the rest of the world.

Low-cost carrier Norwegian has launched a new route from Edinburgh to Barcelona and, in spring 2017, will launch budget flights to Boston and other US cities with return fares as low as £200. Ryanair is also cutting fares by an average of 7% on European flights in order to boost demand. Edinburgh Airport is again consulting on revised flight paths to allow more traffic to be handled.

Prestwick is continuing efforts to ensure a spaceport role, aided by £250,000 of support from Scottish Enterprise and South Ayrshire Council over two years.

There is pressure to ban alcohol on what have become 'flights from hell' due to hen and stag parties.

Glasgow Airport had its busiest ever May with 828,544 passengers, a 5.5% rise on the previous year with domestic growth, aided by new Flybe routes to Newquay, Exeter and Cardiff, almost as high as international passengers. Aberdeen passengers in May were down 10.4% but Edinburgh saw 8.5% growth to 1.11m passengers with international passengers up 15.7% but domestic passengers down 0.5%.

FERRIES & SHIPPING

Following the Scottish Parliament election, the Scottish Government announced a decision to award an eight year contract to CalMac as the present operator of most Clyde and Hebrides ferry services. The franchise is seen as a good deal for island communities and includes commitments to smart ticketing by 2021, extra port and vessel capacity and a 10% rise in passenger/vehicle traffic and 12% in commercial traffic over the period of the franchise.

CalMac continues to experience severe criticism for poor community involvement and increased problems for island residents and commerce after the extension of RET for passengers and cars to more routes without sufficient port and vehicle capacity to handle traffic at peaks. Summer and week-end peaks have intensified with particular problems affecting the Mull-Oban, Mallaig-Armadale, Ardrossan-Brodick and Largs-Cumbrae routes.

Communities say that frequencies on some routes are still too low to give islands reasonable access and reject the Scottish Government view that EU rules require ferry services to be put out to tender (H20May)

Cumbrae residents complain that Millport has been packed solid with cars, campervans and tourist buses with the local roads becoming more dangerous for children and cyclists, spoiling the special attraction of the small island for visitors.

The 80 year old TS Queen Mary has returned to Greenock after £300,000 of fundraising to bring it back from dereliction in London. A further £2m is needed to restore it to its 1930s splendour.

After a break in 2015, the return from Ireland of the MV Renfrew Rose (a ferry at Renfrew until 2010) has allowed restoration of a passenger ferry (with space for 3 cars) between Cromarty and Nigg.

Stirling Council sees waterbus services on the River Forth from Bridge of Allan to Forthside as an important feature of £2m plans for City Development.

Transport Scotland has invited tenders for a 12 year contract to operate the Gourock-Dunoon passenger ferry from June 2017. Frequency must be no lower than half-hourly with operators having the commercial option to carry vehicles. Following complaints about the service reliability of the present small vessel on the route, the minimum length of vessel used is being increased from 62 feet to at least 131 feet.

RAIL

The £28m Dundee station project should be complete by early 2018.

A seven month delay until July 2017 has been announced for completion of Glasgow Queen St- Falkirk- Edinburgh electrification, though the Queen St tunnel works were completed one day early on 7th August (see photo on right). ORR has again expressed concern about inability to control rail project costs.

Borders Rail has carried almost 700,000 passengers in the first six months of operation, 22% above forecasts. ScotRail has arranged steam trains to operate on Sundays in August and September. Transport Scotland is evaluating extending the line to Carlisle.



Electrification masts are visible as the 13.56 to Maryhill leaves the re-opened Glasgow Queen Street on Monday 8th August.

The volume of rail freight in Britain is now at its lowest since the 1980s, mainly due to the collapse in coal traffic. Prospects for container and other longer-distance movement remain good with consideration also being given to introducing high-speed, 'small container' freight services, possibly using passenger stations.

The SERCO Caledonian Sleeper is in talks regarding an extension of Anglo-Scottish sleeper services to Oban and a new overnight service from Caithness to Edinburgh. These would require additional Scottish Government support but could aid tourist travel to the Western Isles, the Far North and Orkney.

DfT has warned that the ORR decision to allow First Group to compete on Kings Cross-Edinburgh services from 2021 could prejudice HS2 financing, and franchise premium payments by Virgin to the DfT. The Herald favours the ORR decision as completion of priority track works on the ECML will also allow Virgin to increase services in competition with First on both services and fares of benefit to passengers.

ScotRail has offered a £20 add-on rail fare for users of Scottish FlyBe services wishing to travel on by rail.

Two retired engineers have proposed a £300m 7.5mile monorail from central Glasgow via the Riverside Museum, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Braehead to Glasgow Airport in 18 minutes. They argue that this would see better usage than the proposed 'tram-train' via Paisley. Much construction would be needed alongside, or over, the Clyde and Cart. A City Deal spokesman saw the monorail scheme as interesting but not viable while William Forbes stressed the value of integrating airport rail services into the Scottish heavy rail network. Improved public transport airport access is seen as urgent (H 30&31 May, 1,2,3&4June)

Alastair Dalton (Scotsman) argues that compared to Central Belt experience, the Far North and Kyle lines need a new approach to end the chronic unreliability of the infrequent services north of Inverness. More community and tourist involvement, more passing places, and improvement in frequency are needed.

Frank Roach (Hitrans) has criticised the ferry/train/bus interchange at Oban as looking like a 'prison camp'. Talks have started on possible improvements. Phil Verster, MD of the ScotRail Alliance, agrees that ScotRail's overall performance on train operation had to be improved. Passenger satisfaction with ScotRail remains at 87% compared to a British average of 80%.

A dispute by RMT on the extension of services with drivers operating doors has disrupted many services beyond the SPT area (where drivers have been responsible for electric train door openings and closure for more than thirty years). RMT claims such extension is a threat to safety and the role of train guards, but have also attacked ScotRail for failing to expand staff to avoid growing numbers of train cancellations due to staff shortage. RMT strikes by guards hampered plans for improved rail access to the 'T in the Park' event at its new location close to Gleneagles. However, despite guards again being on strike during the Open Golf Championship at Troon, extra capacity from Glasgow to Troon was provided as Ayrshire trains are operated by drivers and conductors – though passengers to Largs had, temporarily, to change trains at Kilwinning. RMT has now suspended the strikes while discussions continue on who opens and closes train doors.

Vandals have caused £60,000 of damage at the Edinburgh Gateway rail/tram interchange due to open in December. £6m is to be spent to reduce rail disruption due to high seas between Saltcoats and Stevenston.

ROADS & PARKING

Opening of the new Queensferry Road Crossing is now expected to be mid-May 2017 due to days lost by weather problems in April and May.

The additional £22m Diamond Bridge Don crossing and approach roads has opened in north Aberdeen and options are being studied for an additional Dee Bridge crossing in south Aberdeen

Continuing work on £500m M8, M73 and M74 improvements in Lanarkshire will involve two months of lane restrictions in July and August. Grants from SPT will ensure more work on Arran roads and an improved Hawkhill roundabout. North Ayrshire Council also plans a £2m scheme to remove five bends on the B714 link from the Three Towns A78 Bypass to the planned A737 Dalry Bypass.

The first of Edinburgh's 20mph zones across the city will operate from the end of July but other schemes in Edinburgh and Scottish pilots elsewhere are likely to be slowed until local government elections in 2017

A study by Esure has found that residents in Edinburgh are paying more for parking near their homes than residents of several affluent London boroughs. Edinburgh annual fees are now £475 for high emission cars compared to £250 in Glasgow and £190 in Perth.

Glasgow residents wishing to park near their homes close to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital are battling plans to charge £50 a year for a residents parking permit with no guarantee space will be available. 4000 objections have been made to Glasgow City Council proposals

Despite record fines for parking violations in Marischal St in Aberdeen city centre, little progress is being made in persuading visitors to the city centre to leave their cars at home or park further.

New laws banning pavement parking are expected to be considered by the Scottish Parliament in 2017.

GB road traffic reached an all-time high in 2015. It is now 1% above the previous 2007 peak but road movement per head is down due to population growth. Compared to 2014, car traffic is up 1.1% but with zero growth in most urban areas and steeper falls in London. Bus miles continue to fall while van and HGV traffic is 4.2% and 3.7% up on 2014. By region, East England (excluding London) saw the highest growth in traffic – up 7% since 2002/03 with Scotland following at 6% (despite a lower rate of population growth).

BUS, TRAM and TAXI

Following the lifting by the CMA of restrictions in Scotland on First cutting bus services (in the interests of maintaining bus/rail competition when First operated the ScotRail franchise), First has withdrawn all East Lothian bus services and reduced services in the Borders – especially between Galashiels and Edinburgh where there is strong competition from the restored rail service. 90 First jobs are threatened but most gaps in East Lothian have been filled by other operators, including Lothian Buses (EN26May, H25&28May) Stagecoach is also considering cuts in the west of Scotland due to falls in profitability. SWESTRANS has cut bus support in Dumfries and Galloway, including support for the Stranraer-Port Ryan electric bus. SPT expects that 2017-18 cuts in Scottish Government funding will require real cuts in bus support.

A new Buses Bill has been introduced in England allowing nine areas to introduce bus franchising, with other areas also able to apply for permission to use such powers. The Bill also prohibits local authorities from setting up new municipal bus companies (LTT698 27May). Operators remain concerned about a potential loss of profits without compensation. In Scotland, a Bus Bill is not presently proposed but SPT has taken the initiative to develop a Strathclyde Bus Alliance of bus operators and local councils to reverse a 22% fall in bus use since 2005. The aim is to arrest the fall in patronage by 2020 and move to 3% annual growth through more reliable, greener and better integrated public transport – including effective bus priorities on principal corridors and smart ticketing (H19May).

The bus industry is making stronger calls for effective road demand management, including enforced bus priorities and a review of parking charges. Prof David Begg has expanded on these issues in a report for the Greener Journeys bus lobby group, including action in London and Edinburgh to reverse the threats to bus reliability from expanded cycle lanes as well recent changes in Edinburgh to remove bus priorities outwith peaks. He criticises vocal middle class cyclists for ignoring the needs of a larger number of bus users.

Others see bus lanes as a money-making scam (raising funds from penalty fines) 'without a shred of evidence that bus lanes assist traffic through Glasgow city centre'. Glasgow operator City Sprinter Ltd has lost its licence for two years due to unlawful operation, including lack of insurance.

Edinburgh trams saw a 9% rise in passengers to 5.38m in the second year of operation. The Glasgow Subway closed for 3 weeks in July to allow renewal of depot access. SPT provided alternative bus services.

A debate is developing on the extent to which automated cars could impact on the present expansion of Uber type weakly regulated taxi operation and on existing taxi and local bus services. Minimal impact is expected by 2020 but subsequent impacts could be dramatic – including a fall in demand for car ownership.