



Scottish Association for Public Transport

SCOTTISH TRANSPORT MATTERS

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The Transport Bill (Scotland) was published in June 2018. New Bus Service Improvement Partnerships, envisaged in the Bill, should make it easier for local transport authorities, bus operators and ScotRail to agree connections between local buses and trains, as seen (right) at Mals (South Tyrol, Italy) in June 2016. This will be discussed at the SAPT members meeting on October 30th.



SAPT Members Meeting, all members welcome:

Glasgow Mercure Hotel Ingram St Tuesday October 30th 18.00-20.00

Topics:

- Scottish Transport Bill**
- Bus/rail/ferry integration**
- Update on High Speed Rail**
- ClydeMetro latest progress**
- Smart ticketing and rail fare simplification**

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Bus use in Scotland has been dropping for many years. Bus deregulation in 1986 failed to halt the decline. Evidence from continental countries shows that where public transport is properly integrated, travel by trains and buses is increasing. SAPT has campaigned for transport integration in Scotland and we were pleased that one of the main objectives of the National Transport Strategy (NTS, refreshed in 2016) was to “improve transport integration, particularly across the public transport system”.

The draft Scottish Transport Bill was published on 8th June 2018. The Bill has six main parts:

1. Bus services including provision for Bus Service Improvement Partnerships
2. Low emission zones, with the draft legislation enabling local authorities to set these up
3. Smart ticketing arrangements to establish a national technological standard
4. Pavement and double parking prohibition (though local authorities can exempt some areas)
5. Road works provisions giving a greater role to the Road Works Commissioner
6. Miscellaneous items including greater financial flexibility for Regional Transport Partnerships

The following analysis considers whether the proposed legislation will enable local transport authorities to co-ordinate public transport in their areas, and whether it will deliver the government’s own transport objectives as set out in the National Transport Strategy. The bus provisions cover a number of areas:

Bus Service Improvement Partnerships (BSIP): The Bill introduces a new form of partnership between local transport authorities and bus operators. Local authorities can formulate a BSIP plan with bus operators in their area. The BSIP scheme then has to be voted on by operators before it can go ahead. This voting procedure has been devised as a way of ensuring that the BSIP plan has support from the bus operators. (the BSIP concept replaces the Quality Partnerships and Quality Contracts under the existing 2001 legislation which have not been successful). It remains to be seen whether bus/rail co-ordination schemes, which have in the past been unpopular with bus operators, would be voted for under this procedure.

Franchising: A new process for franchising is contained in the Bill. This makes it easier for local transport authorities to develop a franchise (as an alternative to a BSIP) to implement their transport policies. However, any franchise proposal will have to be assessed by an independent panel, appointed by the Traffic Commissioner, before going ahead. This runs the risk that democratically agreed multi-modal public transport development could be rejected by three individuals appointed by the Traffic Commissioner!

The BSIP and franchise proposals included in the Bill should allow local transport authorities to develop transport co-ordination schemes. But the Bill needs to be amended to reduce the potential hurdles.

Information for the public: All bus operators will be required to provide information on routes, timetables and fares in a specified format. This will give a welcome improvement to the consistency of Traveline data.

Information for Local Transport Authorities: The Bill will give powers to authorities to request revenue and patronage data for loss-making bus services about to be withdrawn. This will allow authorities to assess the financial implications of giving support for continuation of the service.

However, there is no provision in the Bill for transport authorities to obtain information on bus patronage where it is needed when planning and justifying public transport infrastructure investment.

The Bill is now being scrutinised by the Scottish Parliament Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee (RECC). The SAPT written submission to the committee raises our concerns about the franchising process, particularly the role of the panel of commissioners. We also suggest that local transport authorities should have the power to require bus operators to supply, on a confidential basis, patronage figures on routes where needed as part of a transport planning process. These changes are, we believe, critical to developing a Transport Act that can help reverse the downward trend in bus patronage.

SAPT will attend the RECC Committee meeting on October 24th. The Transport Bill will also be discussed at the SAPT Members Meeting on Tuesday October 30th (see front page).

The new ScotRail timetable from December will introduce full Edinburgh-Falkirk-Glasgow electric operation, using new Class 385 trains. Average Edinburgh-Glasgow journey time will be reduced initially from 51 to 47 minutes, with further reductions from May 2019.

A new half-hourly service from Edinburgh via Falkirk Grahamston, Cumbernauld, Greenfaulds and Steps to Glasgow Queen Street will improve transport from North Lanarkshire to both Edinburgh and Glasgow, also calling at Polmont, Linlithgow and Edinburgh Park. This will also be operated by new Class 385 emus.

This will allow Edinburgh-Stirling-Dunblane trains to omit calls at Linlithgow and Polmont, accelerating Edinburgh-Stirling journey times by 5 minutes. Initially these will mostly be operated by older 4-car Class 365 emus (seen on the left of the photo, leaving Haymarket, passing a Class 380 electric from Glasgow). Around 25% of services will still be diesel.

Hourly Dundee-Arbroath trains will be introduced, giving Broughty Ferry, Monifieth and Carnoustie a much better service frequency. There will also be a new hourly Montrose-Aberdeen service calling at Laurencekirk, Stonehaven and Portlethen (this will be extended through Aberdeen to Inverurie from December 2019).

Elgin will have nine additional trains to Inverness, giving an almost hourly service. North Berwick, Neilston and Airdrie-Balloch trains will be lengthened to relieve overcrowding.

By May 2019 all EGIP electric services will be operated by new Class 385s, and the Edinburgh-Glasgow journey time will be cut to 42 minutes for 3-stop trains.

Work is continuing on the final phase of EGIP, electrifying the Holytown-Midcalder section of the Edinburgh-Glasgow line via Shotts. Overhead masts had been erected at Shotts station (right) by June. The timetable will be restructured in 2019 with most stations getting at least two trains per hour.



Above: Haymarket, July 2018

Below: Shotts, June 2018



The Highland Main Line is now being upgraded for introduction of an hourly frequency from Inverness to Perth/Edinburgh/Glasgow. Loops are being extended at Aviemore and Pitlochry, with platforms at Pitlochry being extended northwards (left, seen in September 2018).

All these improvements will give Scotland an excellent rail service with more frequent trains on most lines. This, together with the (amended?) Transport Act, is an opportunity to upgrade local bus services to connect with trains. SAPT will now be pursuing this.

Left: Pitlochry, September 2018

Photos by John McCormick

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Obituary: Bob-Barnes-Watts

We were very saddened to hear of the death of Bob Barnes-Watts on 13th August 2018. Bob was a SAPT and FoFNL committee member, and was a former SAPT Vice Chairman. Bob started his working life as a clerk at Paddington station where he quickly became interested in connections. After a spell in the US, he returned to England and worked on a transport website, before joining Wessex Trains to computerise timetable production. Bob then moved to Inverness where he continued work as a transport consultant specialising in timetabling. He was particularly keen on bus/rail integration and regretted the demise of postbuses in the Highlands. His informed input to SAPT committee discussions was invaluable and he will be sorely missed.



Right: Bob Barnes-Watts, photo courtesy of John Yellowlees

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Class 153s for Rural Lines Notes by Scott Simpson

I attended a stakeholder workshop at Transport Scotland on 26 July, on the topic of introducing additional dedicated carriages for cycles and other outdoor sports equipment on Scottish rural routes.

The background is that in 2017 the Scottish Government committed to exploring the idea of dedicated carriages on rural lines in the north and west of Scotland. An opportunity to progress this arose when a number of Class 153 units became due to come off lease in England. This started as an apparently easy proposition but was made more complicated by delays with electrification now leading to a shortage of diesel units. However, Transport Scotland has managed to secure the lease of five of these units with two due to arrive in the summer of 2019 and the remaining three to follow in late 2019. This will be a trial, due to run until the end of the current ScotRail franchise in 2025. No significant changes are planned to timetables.

Class 153s are single coach diesel trains capable of being driven from either end (like the old diesel railbuses). Technically, they are very similar to the Class 156 units extensively used in ScotRail services. They are compatible with 156s to be operated in multiple; and fitted with corridors. Once they have been repainted in Saltire livery, to the public it will just look as though the trains have been made longer.

As is conventional at workshops, we were divided into tables for discussion with each group reporting back at the end. I made it clear at the outset that SAPT's view is that the additional capacity should be used for the benefit of all passengers, not just cyclists. We do not want to see an inefficient, open-plan configuration but a mix of cycle storage area, general storage area and seating. There was discussion whether bikes should be stored vertically or horizontally with no conclusion reached. Transport Scotland will look at this. There was no enthusiasm for a premium fare, not least because it was unclear what 'premium' benefits would be offered and this could reduce flexibility in the allocation of seating (with, as I put it, the cyclists sitting and the pensioners standing). Slightly to my surprise, there was no real opposition to the idea of charging for bikes on the assumption that proceeds would be reinvested. There were mixed views on whether cyclists would expect to remain with their bikes. It seems the present booking system does not cope well with cycles. It creates an additional 'virtual' ticket for each bike, which confuses the system. A 'real-time' booking system was suggested. This sounded complicated but the idea was to have an app that would show actual available space on each train and allow bookings to be made.

In summary, there was agreement that flexibility should be the objective. Extra capacity is welcome. This was an encouraging meeting. A follow-up meeting on October 8th will be covered in the next newsletter.

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Report on Scottish Transport Summit

Professor David Murray-Smith, SAPT Vice Chair

Professor David Begg opened the event in June in Glasgow with the statement that devolution had proved good for transport. In particular, the rail sector in Scotland continues to grow while in England it is static. However, in spite of recent major investments there is still a need to increase rail capacity and this requires even more investment in infrastructure. This positive situation with rail transport development contrasts with the bus sector which continued to show a decline in most urban areas. Glasgow has the biggest decline in bus usage of any UK city.

In contrast to David Begg's opening remarks, which had highlighted public transport issues, Fergus Ewing MSP, Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity, put the main emphasis on road developments in his **Keynote Presentation**. Mention was, however, made of rail investment generally and the Borders railway in particular. He also talked about performance improvements on the Far North Line following the work of the Review Team for that route. The work to be carried out by the West Highland Review Group was also mentioned but there were suggestions that investment in road links to Fort William might need to be given priority. Other points that came up included low emission zones in cities, road equivalent tariffs for Northern Isles ferry routes and developments at the major airports, such as the new direct link with China.

In opening the session on **Rail**, Professor Iain Docherty of the University of Glasgow stated that much of the current success in the city depends on its transport network and this point was picked up later by other speakers. Alex Hynes, for example, stated that Glasgow has the densest suburban rail network of any part of the UK outside the London area. He emphasised that, in his view, the private car was the most important form of competition for rail within Scotland. Although recent passenger figures showed that the railway in Scotland was now the fastest growing mode of transport, he also made the point that rail operators should not be complacent and must be constantly aware of changes in the way people lived and worked. For example, although not so significant in Scotland as in the SE of England, the growth in the proportion of the workforce working, at least partially, from home could have an important bearing on the future use of rail in terms of travel to work. Bill Reeve, Rail Director, Transport Scotland, took over and, in his presentation, suggested that the pre-1948 watchwords of "speed, comfort and frequency" used by the Southern Railway should be emphasised in planning Scotland's rail services. He claimed that the HSTs in the 2+4 formation being introduced later this year on inter-city routes would give a 70% improvement in power/weight ratio compared with the currently used Class 170 DMUs and a significant improvement in terms of comfort as well as performance. In terms of improvements in frequency of services, he gave the example of the proposed hourly service between Aberdeen and Inverness, with trains every half-hour over the sections at each end of the route. In terms of tourism he suggested that the DMU improvements currently under way to provide scenic trains for the West Highland Lines was "just a start". Tim Roberts of Cubic Transportation Systems then gave an interesting account of ticketing developments, putting emphasis on what is termed "Account Based Ticketing" (ABT). This offers a future-proof pay-as-you-go travel scheme, with validation through tapping in and out and stored credit. A pilot scheme is apparently under way, but additional work is needed on integration with existing systems. During questions this was picked up by a representative from SPT who stressed that future thinking should, as far as members of the public are concerned, emphasise the carrot rather than the stick in terms of ticketing and integration. Bill Reeve also made the point that passengers get experience of excellent transport integration and highly flexible ticketing systems elsewhere in Europe and cannot understand why it seems to be so difficult to get equivalent systems working here. He added that one of the issues here is that we have a complex fare structure and, although everyone is in favour of a simpler structure they do not want to lose the special cheap fares that they have discovered are available if they look for them. Martin Bartos (Chair of SPT) pointed out that ScotRail cards should work on buses in Aberdeen and Dundee, but one question that arises in practice is that if the card does not work when presented to the bus driver who is it that the passenger should contact and how does the problem get resolved?

The **Buses** session was chaired by Ross Martin, Independent Advisor on Regional Economies and a Member of the Glasgow Connectivity Commission. The opening speaker was David Begg who, first of all, talked briefly about the work of the Glasgow Connectivity Commission. Its report will be published in November and, from his remarks it appears likely that this report may, among other things, put some emphasis on problems caused by the low population density in the city centre of Glasgow (compared with other cities such as Edinburgh) and the need to provide more schools in the central area if more families are to be attracted to set up homes there. He also stressed the current problem of bus transport in Glasgow where there has been a 40% decline in First Bus passengers.

He pointed out that there have now been eight UK budgets in succession which have not involved any increase in fuel duty so that it is perhaps not surprising that many bus companies are in difficulties. He did not appear to be in favour of immediate structural reform of bus transport in Scotland and suggested that a careful assessment must be made of best practice, both within the UK and in the rest of Europe. Joan Aitken, Traffic Commissioner for Scotland, then took the floor and she stressed that, in her opinion, passenger satisfaction rates of 70-80% are not nearly high enough. She felt that a Transport Bill would provide opportunities for change and local government must become more passionate about bus services. The operating environment for buses depends on local authorities and transport must be placed higher on local authority agendas. That thought was taken up by Councillor Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council, who spoke later. Although she did not appear to disagree with the Traffic Commissioner about the importance of transport issues, she said that one of the surprises from her experience in local government was the amount of time already spent by Glasgow Council on transport issues. She agreed, however, that “transport is an enabler” and felt that a “significant rewiring” of Glasgow transport is needed. For example, in her opinion too many bus routes cross the city centre at present. In general, she would prefer change to come about through partnership rather than compulsion. She put considerable emphasis on the low-emissions zone for Glasgow and the need to reduce road vehicle usage in the city centre. Interestingly, Giles Fearnley, First Group UK Bus Managing Director, agreed that partnership is the best way forward and saw 2018-19 as a key year for decisions on new frameworks in Scotland. He suggested that 75% of the decline in passenger numbers is due to factors outwith the control of the bus companies. While speeds are going down by 1% per year nationally, the corresponding figure for Glasgow is a decline of 1.5%. During the subsequent discussion a representative from Stagecoach raised an important point about the partnership model and the fact that a single local authority should not work in isolation from neighbouring authorities. Susan Aitken responded by saying that although she had talked about a Glasgow Bus Partnership what was really being planned was a city-region partnership. Significantly, Martin Bartos, Chair of SPT, stood up to say that he very much welcomed the news about the Glasgow Bus Partnership proposals.

The session on a **low-carbon economy** was chaired by Roy Brannen, Chief Executive, Transport Scotland. The first speaker was Stuart Greig, Assistant Director, Low Carbon Economy, Transport Scotland, who saw the low carbon economy as a catalyst for transport integration and behavioural change. Nigel Holmes, CEO, Scottish Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Association picked up on this theme and emphasised developments involving the use of hydrogen. He used some developments in Scotland to discuss potential benefits including Aberdeen where 10 buses are in routine operation and Orkney where there is considerable interest in the possibilities of using the local sources of renewable electricity to produce hydrogen for use in ferries and road vehicles. Steven Thomson, Head of Environment and Sustainability at Transport Scotland emphasised the need for consistency in the imposition of low emission zones in Scotland. These should work through access restriction based on number plate recognition using data provided by DVLA. Penalty levels need to be set on a consistent basis. He contrasted the situation developing in Scotland with that in England, where vehicle access charging is more common. Councillor Anna Richardson, City Convener for Sustainability and Carbon Reduction, Glasgow City Council, then pointed out that the city’s approach involved a phased introduction of a low emission zone for buses from December 2018 and all vehicles by 2022. An air quality modelling approach was being used to define the boundaries of the area involved. The timing is believed to be such that operators can make the necessary changes in terms of their vehicles that have to enter the city centre. A questioner from the floor asked about the use of hydrogen for trains in future. In responding Bill Reeve said that conventional electrification of routes in Scotland is not finished and a rolling programme continues. But he accepted that there is a need to examine other technologies and said that discussions are already underway with suppliers of battery-powered and hydrogen powered trains.

The main speaker on the **National Transport Strategy for Scotland** was Heather Cowan, Head of Transport Strategy at Transport Scotland. Her group develops strategy over a twenty-year timescale. She included a quotation that “A developed country is not one where the poor have cars but one where the rich use public transport”. She raised questions about how users in future should pay for road use and about the governance of public transport organisations. The conclusion was that planning for a period of twenty years is hard, with unexpected developments in technology being one of the reasons why it is difficult to make firm predictions. Dr Jillian Anabale, Chair of the research and Evidence Committee for the Scottish NTS Review, discussed areas that are assumed to be important in transport planning but where evidence was not always consistent and careful investigation is needed. These areas included transport investment links to economic growth, the significance in the short to medium term of electric road vehicles and the net gains from encouraging more walking and cycling. She also talked generally about the value of modelling in transport planning and it is perhaps appropriate to conclude with a quote from her: “All models are wrong: some models are useful”.

David Murray-Smith attended the conference following a personal invitation from David Beag.

Rail

16 May saw the controversial announcement that Stagecoach/Virgin East Coast trains is to revert to temporary public ownership. This change took place in June with East Coast name altered to a revival of the former LNER name (London and North Eastern Railway). LNER has been criticised for only 62.6% of services on ECML arriving within 10 minutes of scheduled times in July (H7Aug). Issues of signalling compatibility with the new Azuma trains for East Coast(LNER) route have arisen but may not delay their introduction in 2019 (H11Sept).

The competition for a new CrossCountry franchise has been suspended by the UK Department for Transport, while a wider review of the rail industry is carried out.

The Welsh Government has secured devolution of control of rail services and most local rail infrastructure around Cardiff where existing routes are to be improved to Metro/Light Rail standard including use of trains able to run on overhead electric power and on batteries (LTT749 8June) Publicly-owned CalMac confirmed that it has opened discussions on submitting a bid for the ScotRail passenger rail franchise (H31May).

A Dalton of the Scotsman has welcomed the elevation of Transport to cabinet rank in the Scottish Government reshuffle also including connectivity within the transport portfolio – but couldn't understand why the former Minister had permitted a £2.4m spend on, rather than closure of, the rarely used Breich station – hardly a sensible use of funds to improve public transport quality and usage.

Greengauge 21 has produced a *Beyond HS2* report arguing that a UK mainland high-speed rail network by 2050 is needed to raise productivity and put 'rocket fuel in Britain's economy' While still arguing for extensions of new 225/250mph route beyond Crewe and York, there is an emphasis on greater priority for upgrading sections of existing route to 140/150 mph including into Scotland, the London-Bristol-South Wales route, a link from the West Midlands to Wales and the south-west plus some sections of new track in other areas. In Scotland, new HSR route is proposed from Rutherglen to south of Carstairs with a spur eastwards to Breich. This is already under study by the Transport Scotland but Greengauge add the further idea of new route from south-west of Edinburgh through Edinburgh Airport and onwards on a direct route to both Perth (for Inverness) and Dundee. London-Glasgow/Edinburgh trip times would fall to 3 hours 15 minutes with the new link through Fife and other works cutting times from Edinburgh to Perth, Inverness, Dundee and Aberdeen by 30 minutes (H29May, LTT 749 8 June).

A consultation has been launched to review rail ticketing, providing a simpler but more effective way of encouraging modal shift and retaining the increasing numbers no longer travelling to work five days a week. NR has suggested that the aim should be that any changes are revenue neutral with no change in average fares and taxpayer support (H8May). Others have called for a fuller review of public transport ticketing and of charging for road use and parking to encourage modal shift from car use and lessen the burden of high fares for many below state pension age on restricted incomes.

Abellio ScoRail has faced complaints about delays in providing the new electric trains (with Class 365 and 380 electric trains drafted in to operate most Edinburgh-Glasgow trains in July) and also in the planned introduction of refurbished and popular High Speed diesel trains on the inter-city routes within Scotland. The first new Class 385 came into service at the end of July. Other recent complaints include unacceptable reliability following signalling and power-line faults – with services west from Glasgow to Balloch and Helensburgh particularly affected but also significant disruption from power failure on the approach to Glasgow Central High Level (H9,10&11 May) Calls have also been made for an upgrade of Glasgow Central Low Level and Queen St Low Level. The 'hamster cage' link from Finnieston rail station to SECC has been called a national disgrace (H15 May) and much work is still needed to make Edinburgh Waverley a top-quality station. NR had taken on 3 extra staff to aid disabled users of Waverley and is working on a Masterplan to cope with further large rises in passengers in the 2020s.

Russell Borthwick, Chief Executive of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, is seeking urgent action to improve rail links from north-east Scotland to the Central Belt. 'We head to the finish of the long-awaited Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route but we haven't even set the starting block for promised rail improvements south from Aberdeen' (H 24July).

Plans to merge British Transport (Rail) Police in Police Scotland have been put on hold for a further review.

EGIP costs have risen from £742m to £868m+ but NR (Scotland) remains within the current CP5 envelope for spending – largely due to savings on Perth-Inverness improvement costs.

Work is finally under way on expansion of the Peter Stirling rail freight terminal at Mossend. This will include 775m long sidings and related work is planned on provision of longer passing loops on the East and West Coast main lines to allow passenger trains to overtake freight. Some sections of route may also be quadruple-tracked (H17 May). David Spaven, Scottish representative on Rail Freight Group argues that rail freight growth needs much improved integration with land use plans (S29May).

Peel Ports and DB Cargo UK have introduced a new rail freight service from Mossend to its enlarged container-handling facility in the Port of Liverpool. Walkers Shortbread will be one of the first users of this service for exporting Scottish goods. Return containers will handle imported goods (H17Apr).

Iain Gray MSP has called for action to end the problem of East Lothian being 'back of the queue' in plans for local rail investment. Severe overcrowding could only be ended by longer and more frequent trains. The large Blindwells housing development close to the East Coast main line and Prestonpans is likely to depend on links to a possibly relocated Prestonpans rail station though with a further station at Blindwells still a possible option in later stages of housebuilding. All North Berwick line peak trains are to have six carriages by the end of 2018. Extra car parking is being provided at Longniddry.

The rebuilt Dundee station, close to the city centre and new Victoria & Albert Museum opened in July

NR has lodged plans with North Ayrshire Council for a new pedestrian bridge, including lift access to all four platforms at Kilwinning station.

Network Rail Scotland is creating 200 new jobs to improve project management and rail operations. ScotRail is creating 100 extra jobs to improve performance.

Deterioration of the empty Ayr Station Hotel has forced sudden closure of 2 of the 4 platforms at Ayr station with some Glasgow-Ayr trains terminating at Prestwick. Rail services from Kilmarnock to Ayr and south from Ayr to Girvan and Stranraer have been suspended for an indefinite period (H29Aug). SAPT is seeking urgent action, including 'pop-up' platforms to restore services.

As part of a Budget deal with the Greens Transport Minister Michael Matheson has announced £681,000 to aid assessment of the value of 10 Scottish Rail schemes, including St Andrew's and new or reopened stations on existing lines such as at Newburgh, in Clydesdale and at potential park-and-ride sites (S10Aug).

Buses and Trams

Scottish Citylink Coaches report a near 20% fall in profits to £4.3m in 2017, attributed to competition from trains, planes and other road operators. The company focus is on longer distance services linking 200 towns and cities (H15Sept).

Major changes in bus services between Dumfries and Edinburgh are taking place due to funding cutbacks in three authorities involved, Dumfries & Galloway, Borders and SPT. Through buses will be cut to 5 per day.

In major features on threats to Glasgow city centre and responses to the Connectivity Commission set up by the City Council, the Herald has highlighted the need for improved public transport, revised fare structures and an improved public realm as essential for a sustainable low-carbon city with better air quality and health – and improved job and tourism prospects. But shopkeepers say urgent action is needed to reduce parking charges, both long and shorter term in and around the city centre (H14&15May also H14June).

A Bus Alliance has been formed for NE Scotland, chaired by George Mair of CPT. The aim is to reverse a 35% fall in fare-paying passengers since 2009/10.

A Citizens Advice Scotland survey has found that two-thirds of Scots are unhappy with local bus services. Lothian buses has introduced a new tour bus service – Lothian Motorcoaches. It will expand services from the Edinburgh city area to points of interest in the Lothians and elsewhere in Scotland – including Loch Lomond, Stirling and St Andrews

East Coast Buses (a Lothian subsidiary) have opened a Travelshop in Musselburgh as part of a commitment to a strong high street presence - also introducing two special daily tours of East Lothian from Waverley & hourly from North Berwick. Live guides will showcase East Lothian attractions until end September.

Manchester Metrolink is moving from 18 to 4 fare zones with digital capping for contactless payments.

Both Stagecoach and Lothian Buses MD are seeking action to cut congestion as it was worsening and affecting the reliability of city bus services. Car users respond that buses themselves were the main cause of congestion and often far from full (EN20&30Jun)

Edinburgh trams had an operating surplus of £1.6m in 2017, five times higher than the previous estimate. Revenue rose 24% with passenger trips up 19% to 6.6m. New higher frequency timetable had helped increase trips with it also proving possible to cut Airport-city centre times to 35 minutes.

Hearings at Edinburgh Tram Inquiry have ended and have cost £9m. Tram costs at £776m were double the original estimate with serious shortcomings revealed in procedures.

Heritage and cycling groups are seeking modifications of the planned tram route down Leith Walk to Newhaven. They do not object to the principle of the route but others in Edinburgh have continued concerns on how the project will be funded and on the level of benefit compared to further bus network and road maintenance improvements.

Lothian subsidiary East Coast buses has added 8 new low emission buses to the East Lothian fleet. They will serve the fast-growing Edinburgh-North Berwick route. Lothian Buses also started services into West Lothian in mid-August. Two more routes were added in September with zone-based ticketing, taking services from Edinburgh as far west as Bathgate and Whitburn via Livingston. These fill gaps following cuts in First Bus services in the area.

Bristol and other English areas are experimenting with taxi-type feeders to and from conventional bus services plus further innovations for the 'first' and 'last' mile of trips

Edinburgh City Council has refused permission for electric tricycle trips in the city for up to 2 passengers due to a failure to meet standard conditions, including 4 wheels, windows and at least 4 seats (EN 30May).

Calls have been made for a review of policy to allow small scooters on Lothian Buses. These scooters are smaller than wheelchairs and the national CPT Code of Conduct permits their use on buses yet this is not observed by all operators

The UK government is bringing forward by a year a vehicle excise tax exemption for electric taxis. Edinburgh taxi fares rose up to 6% in mid-June

Aviation

Scottish Government has delayed reduction in ADT for a further year. SNP MPs abstained in the vote for a third runway at Heathrow. It passed by a large majority but there are other hurdles before work can begin. Some see a benefit in that it could allow more flights from Scotland for global connections at Heathrow but others argue most of these will be used for international flights and that Scotland, and some English airports, could gain from a deflection of extra flights away from Heathrow using the more economical aircraft now available for direct long-haul flights (H22&26Jun)

Edinburgh now has direct summer flights to Washington. Flights from Beijing also started in June. Glasgow and Edinburgh Airports are consulting on flight path adjustments which could increase airport capacity but bring more noise to some areas. Thomas Cook has introduced weekly flights from Edinburgh to Antalya in Turkey. Edinburgh has been ranked the 11th worst in Britain with flight delays averaging 15.8 minutes.

After severe winter conditions led to a marginal fall in Edinburgh Airport use in March, Edinburgh had its busiest-ever April with passengers up 5.7% to more than 1.2m. International passengers up 7.2%. Under new plans, air users may face criminal charges if drinking their own alcohol. Glasgow has had direct Dubai flights for a decade. Direct flights from Edinburgh will start in October. For the first time in six years, Loganair has re-introduced newspapers deliveries using the 7.15am flight from Glasgow to Benbecula.

Glasgow Airport has lost to Edinburgh its 14 year old route to Philadelphia. Derek Provan, the new chief of AGS (owner of Glasgow, Aberdeen and Southampton Airports), sees a stormy future for Glasgow with Ryanair due to move flights to Edinburgh in November plus the complications of Brexit and the postponement of cuts in APD. Some Loganair flights may also go back to Prestwick. He expects a fall in passenger numbers at Glasgow in 2018 (H25 Aug & 21 Sept).

Scottish Government has seen no return on the £40m of public money pumped into Prestwick Airport since it was acquired in 2013. Losses since then amount to £24m with hopes still pinned on prospects as a spaceport. Otherwise, Prestwick could be sold as a valuable building site (H21Jun)

FERRIES & SHIPPING

CalMac and the Scottish Government are facing complaints about chronic delays and cancellations on ferry services, due to delivery delays on new and arguably over complicated larger ships and rising tourist numbers aided by the extension of lower RET fares leaving no spare capacity at summer peaks. The lengthy breakdown of “Clansman” has exacerbated the problems.

CalMac’s four-year old Loch Seaforth with 299 passengers onboard suffered a major loss of power between Ullapool and Stornoway on 8 August. Lifeboats escorted the ship into port. Reliability and lack of capacity had been a growing problem in 2018. The terms of the short-term lease from Lloyds to 2022 of Loch Seaforth have been criticised (H20Aug).

The Scottish Government has clawed back £6m of ‘excess profits’ from publicly owned CalMac but has also released £3.5m of funds to help keep CalMac ferries in good working order (H28&29Aug).

The New Brodick Pier and Terminal has opened with plans for equivalent work at Ardrossan to follow. Action is being sought to shorten the distance for foot passengers between trains and the ferry at Ardrossan, together with integrated train and ferry fares with shorter times between ship and train.

The Outer Hebrides aims for a 20% rise in on the current 218,000 visitors by 2020 – also including increased per capita visitor spend in the area, especially away from high-peak periods. Western Isles Council is also studying fixed links to replace ferries between Harris and Uist and between Uist and Barra.

Funding towards these may come from Island Deals similar to City Deals (H7May). Western Islands Council is also calling for a higher proportion of CalMac staff to live on the islands (H19Apr) David MacBrayne, operators of CalMac ferries has gained £1.2m compensation from ATOS IT for failure to implement a workable ticketing system (H6Apr) Closure of island tourist offices has made it more difficult for tourists, especially foreigners, to gain information on ferry and island bus times.

Aided by EU Research Fund, Ferguson Marine will build a zero emission hydrogen ROPAX ferry in 2020. It will be used to ferry passengers around the Orkney islands (H23Jun)

CalMac has established a 12 member, independent Community Board to give islanders a greater say in the running of CalMac services (H25April)

Steve Dunlop, Chief Executive of Scottish Canals, has been lauded for much work to ensure canalside development and more visitors, especially to the Forth and Clyde Canal, but attacked for failing to ensure funds to repair lock gates which have led to canal closure for through traffic by water.

DFDS has closed the freight ferry between Rosyth and Zeebrugge. Passenger cruises to Scotland continue to rise with Fort William having its first ever cruise ship, with 800 passengers and crew, in April. Further work is planned to allow larger cruise ships to call. A local company working on harbour development believes Fort William could host up to 200 cruise ships per year (H30Apr) Port of Cromarty has lined up £25m for a longer berth able to take larger cruise ships. Cruise ships are expected to be worth £17m for the Highlands and Islands in 2018. Invergordon is expected to handle 170,000 passengers, up from 150,000 in 2017. 85 excursions have been organised for cruise ship visitors (H4Jun).

Roy Pedersen, the original architect of Road Equivalent Tariff (RET), has called for a review – including introduction of a peak surcharge for camper vans, whose users contributed little to island economies and also withdrawal of RET from commercial vehicles. Scottish Government has announced a review of the present situation published by the end of 2019 (H24 Sept). SAPT has supported an early review including higher charges for camper vans and fare changes to encourage more users to access ferries by public transport (H26Sept).

In evidence to the Scottish Parliament’s Rural Committee, senior CalMac officials say that fleet renewals have been seriously underfunded for years with no response forthcoming. They agreed that better value, as islanders have argued, could come from more orders for smaller ferries rather than large and complex vessels. Herald editorial supports the case for more urgent government action to deal with major ferry issues (H27Sept).

Maid of the Loch has had Heritage Lottery funding rejected – further fund-raising is to be pursued but there is now no possibility of the Maid being able to provide a service on Loch Lomond in 2019.