

Transport News November 2015 to February 2016

Prepared by Tom Hart based largely on unverified reports in the press

Wider Issues

Energy economist Tony Mackay has criticised the Scottish Government for inadequate progress towards delivery of green energy. As well as more emphasis on energy conservation and biofuels, he seeks more action to reduce transport energy demand, including better public transport (H 8 Dec). Others fear that failure to expand storage of energy from renewables may require 'standby use' of the coal-fired Longannet plant (H23Nov). A potentially acute energy supply position has been eased by extension of the lives of the Hunterston and Torness nuclear stations to 2023 and 2030 plus completion of extra gas supply from Shetland, new gas powered electricity plant and possible electricity imports at peaks

The 136m mile 'power super-highway' from Beaully to Denny is now open. Given the go-ahead in 2010, this line is designed to carry renewable energy from the Highlands to Scotland's Central belt – but available energy, and storage capacity, is likely to be less than expected due to cuts in UK government support for renewable energy

UK Government cuts in capital spend in the November Spending Review proved less severe than expected but, in transport and other unprotected sectors, 30% or higher cuts in recurrent costs are being sought over the next five years. Though sources of funds are expected to include private sector contributions, rail capital spend in the 2016-17 Scottish budget shows only a marginal rise compared to a larger increase in trunk road spending. Under the terms of the Abellio Scotrail franchise, payments made to Abellio have fallen. From January, regulated fares rose by only 1% with other fares frozen, or falling at the discretion of the ScotRail franchise operator. But rising ScotRail usage and cost control has produced additional income.

Finance expert Jeremy Peat warns of the impact of the requirement that large infrastructure projects not directly funded by the Scottish Government, but based on annual payments to providers of the initial capital, must be included in public sector capital funding. This will place severe limits on any rise in existing levels of spending on large infrastructure projects and may require contraction given the worsened financial position of the Scottish Government under a revised fiscal framework still to be finalised. On the other hand, the Scottish Government now has borrowing powers within defined limits. These will add borrowing charges to annual budgets already including higher contributions to Design, Build and Operate schemes already adding almost £90m to annual trunk road budgets.

Naomi Eisenstadt, the poverty expert made an SNP adviser in June 2015, has warned SNP against spending cash 'on those who could fund themselves'. More cash needed to focus on those in greatest need (H30Dec) Further steep cuts in local authority spending, with health and education protected, are producing further proposals to cut local road maintenance and look for savings in bus support. The Scottish Government has rejected proposals to raise income tax and ruled out rises in Council Tax pending a review of alternative ways of funding a higher proportion of Local Authority spending from local taxation.

Forecasts of more prolonged periods of high winds, high rainfall and more rapid rises in sea levels are leading to consensus that budgets, including those for transport, need to include larger amounts to combat adverse impacts from climate change. Herald editorial (11 Dec) calls for government to explain what its strategy for public transport is. 'There are still no signs of truly joined up thinking – such as a card that can be used on different types of transport. The Forth Road Bridge closure is a crisis, but it is only part of a much bigger problem : the lack of a coherent, joined-up and efficient transport infrastructure'

AVIATION

The decision between an expansion of London Airport or an extra runway at Gatwick has been delayed until after the London mayoral election. Flybe is calling for the opening up of RAF London Northolt for domestic services from Prestwick, Inverness, Liverpool and Londonderry. Andrew Miller, chair of Glasgow Prestwick is keen to attract other operators in addition to Ryanair. With a link to London, Prestwick could also interconnect with small plane links to Oban and the western islands as well as having an expanding role in air freight. An end to APD for small airports with routes beyond Scotland would also help (H21Nov)

In a City Deal for the Aberdeen area hit by the oil downturn, the Scottish Government has announced details of a £20m revamp increasing by 50% the size of the Aberdeen Airport terminal. Retail expansion at Edinburgh Airport is expected to produce a further 200 jobs by June. Re-introduction of the trial additional flightpath could assist future passenger growth at Scotland's leading airport.

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland has attacked Scottish Government Plans to cut APD while others have queried the wisdom of foregoing over £200m a year in tax revenue at a time of pressure on public finance.

Loganair, flying under the colours of Flybe, has come under attack for a meltdown in service reliability for Scotland's islands and remote communities. More engineers are now allocated to ageing aircraft (B Wilson, former MP in S 21 Dec)

PORTS & FERRIES

In the annual review of Scotland's ports (H 22Jan), prospects are seen as encouraging despite problems in the oil sector. Ports had limited aid from public funds yet were investing more. Cruise calls continue to expand. Grangemouth is investing in improved container facilities and employment at the port of Dundee is expected to double. Public funding is aiding Argyll and Bute Council developments, especially at Campbeltown and in the 'Lorn Arc'. ABP has completed a £3.7m investment at Ayr harbour. New pontoons have encouraged a large rise in visiting yachts at Girvan and, in the north-east, Peterhead is seeking EU funds for fishery expansion

As part of a City Deal, £14m is to be spent on expanding Greenock's ocean terminal and building a visitor centre for cruise passengers and other visitors. Annual passenger numbers are now over 100,000. The Dunoon-Gourock Ferry Action Group is seeking a 'proper' ferry for both passengers and vehicles on this route. The Group says a new operator is interested but is being deterred by CMal, the public body owning the Gourock terminal, seeking pier dues and berthing charges of £3m a year. Ferguson Marine has delivered the third hybrid diesel/battery ferry for the CalMac fleet. Costing £12m, it can carry 150 passengers and 23 cars.

Scottish Government has approved continuation, and year-round operation, of the Campbeltown-Ardrossan ferry. The summer-only trial service has been used by 10,000 passengers and 2,000 vehicles with an expanded service seen as giving extra benefits for the Kintyre economy. Glasgow firm George Leslie Ltd has won the £22m contract to transform Brodick ferry terminal but the issue remains of poor weather delays at the Ardrossan terminal for Arran.

From summer 2016, Barra will have a direct daily return service to Oban with Lochboisdale gaining a direct daily return service to Mallaig. P&O announce that, with rising losses, it will no longer operate the service from Troon to Larne.

Islanders have attacked CalMac plans to deploy a smaller ferry on the Mallaig-Armadale route while the Isle of Mull ferry committee has criticised the large rise in winter cancellations on the Craignure-Oban route.

A water taxi service on the River Tay is expected to start next year after Perth and Kinross Council approved plans for a series of pontoons along the river with Venice-style vessels.

RAIL

UK Government has announced that new HS2 route from London to Crewe will open by 2027, six years ahead of previous plans. Though with uncertainty on funding, costings and final route/station choices, new line from Crewe into Manchester and from Birmingham to Leeds will follow by 2033, possibly including a new interchange station on the east side of Crewe. New route open by 2027 should allow London-Preston non-stop timings around 1 hour 20 minutes with further adjustments to existing route between Crewe and Preston and north of Preston giving 3 hour London to Glasgow and Edinburgh trip times by 2030. A further report on HSR and Scotland is imminent.

Amid political criticism, the Scottish Government has dropped earlier plans for 140mph services between Glasgow and Edinburgh in 30 minutes by 2024. This proposal remains linked with the outcome of studies into Anglo-Scottish HSR services.

Russell Imrie, chair of SEStran, is seeking accelerated improvement of the East Coast main line corridor between England and the east of Scotland, linking with the planned HS2 link from Birmingham to Leeds (S15Dec) The Network Rail preference has been for upgrades throughout the inter-city network but with the West Coast corridor offering the best prospects for 3 hour, or better, timings from London to both Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Additional East Coast services to be introduced in May will offer half-hourly services from Edinburgh to London for most of the day. Virgin is also introducing refurbished trains on this route with a fleet of new trains arriving by 2018

As well as interrupted services to Inverness, the north-east and Ayrshire, high sea and river levels created particular problems when damage to the Lamington viaduct closed the West Coast main line from mid-January until mid-February. Repairs were completed earlier than an expected March date.

First Group has retained the misnamed Transpennine Express franchise until 2023 with a commitment to provide 125mph trains giving improved services from Glasgow, Motherwell and Edinburgh to Manchester via Carlisle and a direct service from Glasgow to Liverpool by December 2018 and from Edinburgh to Liverpool via York by 2019 (H16Feb) Abellio/Serco has lost the Northern England franchise to Arriva who have committed to substantial improvements and a large, phased reduction (from £281m to £53m) in the annual support sought over the ten years of the franchise (Rail, Issue 792, 20 Jan)

The success of the Borders rail reopening (with 500,000 passengers in the first four months) has led to UK coverage and calls for more extensive line reopening or new construction to widen access to the rail network in addition to improvements in city transit – and, in part, replacing elements within the HSR programme. Design needs to be appropriate for expected usage, rather than the penny-pinching on Borders Rail with some new bridges designed for single rather than double-track (S&H29Jan; Times 20Jan)

Network Rail Scotland published a draft *Route Study* in December with a request for comments by 10 March. This examined options for improving the network over the five-year Control Periods to 2044. Stress is placed on improvements within the existing network, including more platforms at principal stations, higher line speeds, grade-separated junctions and electrification. As well as continuing passenger growth, much attention is given to schemes of benefit for both passenger and freight use.

Electrification is expected to have extended from Dunblane to Perth and Dundee by 2024 and onwards to Aberdeen by 2034 but with technical issues delaying electrification through Fife. Electrification may follow from Perth to Inverness by 2044. Fife would gain a Dunfermline Bypass and upgrades of the inland route on to Thornton by 2029 allowing shorter trip times from Edinburgh to Perth and Dundee.

Initial comments have called for more emphasis on city transit improvements, additional stations on existing route and examination of network extensions to places such as Hawick, Leven, St Andrew's and Ellon with Borders Rail groups also seeking a future extension through to Carlisle, providing another alternative route for the West Coast main line north from Gretna. A public petition has sought introduction of a passenger service on the Alloa-Dunfermline line as part of proposals by the Logannet Task Force considering the implications of closure of the rail-served Longannet Power Station. A Parliament debate on 3 February saw cross-party support for restored rail passenger or tramtrain services on the Edinburgh South Suburban line still open for freight and passenger diversions and now scheduled for electrification

Public transport access to Glasgow Airport has also attracted media attention. SAPT has called for a Metro service direct from the forecourt to link the Airport with Glasgow Central station by 2025 as part of City Deal plans and avoiding worsened bus reliability as M8 traffic rises. Other commentators see the express bus link as good and capable of improvement while RailQwest want a phased heavy rail link from the Airport including services using the existing City Union/Glasgow Crossrail route to reach other destinations as already in operation at Manchester Airport (H18Jan & 16/17Feb) For those in Inverclyde and Ayrshire, R Buntin of Skelmorlie wants action to replace the slow, infrequent and poorly publicised bus link from Paisley Gilmour St rail station to the airport with a frequent and faster service.

Calls have been made for the Scottish Government, RTPs and local authorities to take positive action to safeguard former rail routes with significant prospects of reopening. January 1983 saw the last major rail closure in Scotland when trains stopped running on the Paisley Canal and Kilmacolm line. The Glasgow-Paisley Canal line was soon to reopen but most of the trackbed to Kilmacolm remains available apart from a short section to the immediate west of Paisley Canal station and where the new A737 crosses the route. A recent study for NESTRANS includes possible reopening of the former Dyce-Ellon rail link

Abellio ScotRail has a £475m 7-year programme to revamp two-thirds of the existing fleet and add seven 3-coach electric trains leased from Eversholt in 2016 plus new electric trains arriving from 2017. Complaints continue about severe overcrowding on Abellio ScotRail services between, and around, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Securing more rolling stock is proving difficult due to a British shortage of rolling stock and delays in releasing diesel sets from routes experiencing delays in electrification. Some rolling stock was found to improve capacity on South Fife-Edinburgh services after the unexpected closure of the Forth Road Bridge but only at the expense of halving services on the Queen St to Anniesland line via Summerston and replacing the Queen St HL-Cumbernauld-Falkirk Grahamston service with a bus service.

Helen McArdle, Herald Transport Correspondent, criticises the Scottish Government for long delays in ensuring that extra seats match the rising number of passengers on ScotRail services. More trains are promised but that *'is cold comfort for commuters who have seen their morning train scrapped to cope with a road bridge defect on the opposite side of Scotland'* (H17Dec)

Glasgow Queen St HL is due to close between 20 March and 8 August to allow replacement of trackbed through the approach tunnel and the lengthening of platforms so that most can take 8 coach trains. This EGIP project will not be fully completed until 2019 but electric trains will start to replace existing Queen St HL- Edinburgh diesel services from December 2016. Alternative travel arrangements for the closure period have been announced, including strengthened trains on the Bathgate route to Edinburgh, some diesel services through Queen St LL and diversion of Perth and north trains to run to and from Glasgow Central. Some passenger may also shift to Glasgow Central-Edinburgh services

Overall satisfaction with ScotRail has remained at a high level since Abellio took over the franchise but complaints about overcrowding have risen. Trade unions say they find this level of satisfaction hard to believe. Network Rail plans for a Forth Rail Bridge visitor centre have been put on hold due to funding issues on this £15m scheme. Virgin West Coast is introducing a scheme for guaranteed seats for pregnant mothers on busy services

BUS, TRAM & TAXI

In principle, Edinburgh City Council has agreed on a three mile tram extension from York Place to Newhaven at a cost of £145m (H20Nov). £5m is to be spent on further assessments to refine costs and means of funding. There are concerns about adverse impacts of the project when city funding is under severe pressure. Lothian Bus employees and some members of the public fear that use of bus profits to support the tram project could weaken the bus network and slow progress on electrified buses. Overall, tram extension is expected to improve the quality and usage of the local public network as well as aiding air quality. A final decision is promised by 2017 with any extension unlikely to open until 2021. (H 28Nov)

Former MSP and former SAPT President, Prof Chris Harvie, has argued that Edinburgh tram extensions need to be secured by bringing construction and operating costs down to the levels prevailing elsewhere in Europe. He saw possibilities for introducing tramtrains over the present Forth Road Bridge to ensure improved frequencies between south Fife and Edinburgh. In addition, the tramtrain approach may help other lines reopen – such as from Dyce to Ellon, to St Andrews and restored passenger services on the Alloa -Culross- Dunfermline line (H28Dec). But others are happy with the high quality and low cost of existing Edinburgh bus services. More than 75% of appeals against bus lane fines are now being rejected

The Scottish Government expected 2016//17 allocation to SPT for Subway modernisation has been cut from £45m to £20m. The total allocation to the Subway has not been cut but will take place over a longer period. SPT anticipate that this may require an earlier move to short-term borrowing for the project but expect to be in a position to place orders for the new trains later this year.

Fiona Kerr, the new MD of First Bus Scotland, has repeated calls for speedier action to shorten bus trip times by greater use of bus lanes, especially in and around city centres. She seeks a change in the balance of bus and rail support in Scotland from only 25p (exclusive of £200m of concession travel reimbursement) per bus passenger to £9.30 per rail passenger. Herald editorial is sympathetic provided that bus lane signage is unambiguous and that motoring fines for using bus lanes or crossing bus gates are clearly used to benefit road users (H19Feb).

First Scotland East is introducing 31 new buses for use in the Lothians, especially on links from Livingston to Edinburgh (S18Nov). The Fastlink bus route from Glasgow City Centre is now in full operation between Broomielaw and the new Queen Elizabeth University Hospital. Further improvements in the city centre are proceeding to public consultation with the aim of completing major works in the Union St/Argyle St area by 2017. McGills have declined an SPT offer of funds to accelerate provision of low emission Fastlink buses and now operates on only part of the route with a local service improved from 4 to 6 buses an hour from the city centre to, and beyond, the Hospital.

The Northern Ireland Regional Development Dept, has ordered 30 single-deck articulated hybrid buses from Belgian manufacturer Van Hool for use from September 2018 on 20km of route linking east and west Belfast via the city centre. The 18 metre vehicles have capacity for 106 (including 44 standing) and DfT is considering approval for 24 metre vehicles in the West Midlands (LTT 687, 11 Dec)

R Ardern of Inverness complains at the lack of progress on bus/rail co-ordination in the Highlands, poor or wrong information at bus stops and curtailed evening bus services due to pressure on local authority funding while the Scottish Government continues to support an acceptable level of evening rail services. Herald Transport Correspondent, Helen McArdle, argues that cheaper bus and rail fares, relative to motoring and parking costs, could be one of the biggest priorities for reviving bus use and encouraging modal shift from cars in the decade ahead.

Complaints continue about the 'worse than useless' design of many new bus shelters in Edinburgh. SPT has been criticised for selling at well below cost unreliable minibuses bought for local and dial-a-ride services. SPT response was that overall savings had been made on bus service contracts with new orders shifted to more reliable vehicles.

In a Transport Scotland initiative, East Lothian pupils can now pay for school travel via their Young Scot National Entitlement Card (YSC). Several Scottish councils are considering raising the limit beyond which school travel is free (for those over 8 years) from 2 to 3 miles. In January, First Scotland East offered free travel on Sundays for those buying a ticket for Saturday travel.

Five British bus companies, including Stagecoach and First, have announced plans for contactless payments on every bus by 2022. Rail companies have also launched pilots to allow barcoded mobile tickets – known as m-tickets – to be extended within three years for use on several rail companies. Scotland is included in a pilot scheme covering 230 stations in Britain. Passengers on Edinburgh Trams and Lothian Buses can now access real-time service information on Google Maps

Iain McGill, a Scottish Conservative candidate for the 2016 Holyrood election has welcomed the start of Uber, the unlicensed taxi booking service straight from your phone, in Glasgow and its extension to Edinburgh. It should encourage taxi drivers to respond to meet this competition – as has GetTaxi with a generous £5 rate across the city. 65,000 people in Edinburgh have already opened the Uber app.

Edinburgh Evening News editorial (8 Jan) is generally supportive of the increased taxi competition provided by Uber. Uber prices had been higher than Edinburgh taxis at Hogmanay but lower at other times.

ROADS & PARKING

The unexpected closure of the Forth Road Bridge for repairs during December led to major delays in Fife, on the approaches to the Kincardine Bridges and in West Lothian. Measures to ease delays were put in place, including reserved lanes for buses and HGVs on the A985 approach to the Kincardine Bridge. Capacity on rail services between south Fife and Edinburgh was also raised. Temporary repairs allowed the bridge to reopen for cars, buses and light vans on 24 December but HGVs remained restricted until 21 February. Hauliers are seeking compensation for extra costs.

A side effect of the closure was the reappearance of the suggestion that consideration should be given to electronic tolls and peak charging on major crossings with mainly local benefits but costs spread across taxes paid in Scotland – or met by cutting back on other Scottish schemes which could have offered greater benefits. The new £1bn plus crossing is expected to open in December.

Glasgow City Council has approved the £60m final section of the East End Regeneration Route from Parkhead via the east side of Alexandra Park to join the M8. The Institution of Civil Engineers and others involved with trunk and local roads are seeking increased funding to counteract the impacts of climate change and the backlog of road maintenance, especially on local authority roads. The 'final' solution for the A83 at 'Rest and be Thankful' may be a tunnel. A survey by the RAC Foundation shows that only one-quarter of the major road network in Scotland is within 20 miles of an electric vehicle charging point.

In the Scottish Budget, Finance Secretary John Swinney announced approval of an A737 Dalry Bypass and improvements at the Haudagain roundabout in Aberdeen. On rail, work on EGIP will continue but with no new projects. December saw the 40th anniversary of the opening of the long-delayed Ballachulish Road Bridge in 1975. Serious planning for this crossing started from an SCDI Report in 1968 (also calling for a Skye Bridge). Later in 1968 proposals were also made for Beauly, Cromarty, and Dornoch Firth road bridges. These opened in 1982, 1979 and 1991 – together with the Kylesku Bridge in 1984 and the Skye Toll Bridge in 1995 (H21Dec) Rather than a railway to Fraserburgh, local road users have called for priority for dualling the entire road from Aberdeen to Fraserburgh.

Drink-drive offences in Scotland continue to fall since the new low limit was introduced but there is concern that overall road deaths are rising after years of reduction. The risk of drug driving in Scotland is reported to be rising due to inadequate legislation. UK has signed an international deal making almost all vehicles sold in the UK zero emission by 2050.

Proposals for large extensions of 20mph limits in Edinburgh remain controversial due to enforcement issues and concerns about a rise in bus operating costs due to increased trip times. A more selective approach may be acceptable. The £2.2m costs of introducing the limits could be better used on road and pavement maintenance. The six phases of introduction will be over a two-year period with the first phase from Queen St to the Meadows introduced in July.

The Institute of Advanced Motorists is concerned at the widening use of average speed camera with fines in Scotland now close to £1m a year. For the first time since the 1970s, there were no fatal accidents on the A9 between Dunblane and Inverness between June and December 2015 but there is argument about how far the introduction of average speed cameras has contributed to this outcome. Increasing delays for ambulances are reported on roads close to the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Glasgow

Calls have been made for drivers over 70 to resit driving tests every 5 years with younger drivers also re-sitting every 10 years. But evidence suggests that older drivers are the safest drivers with the greatest problems affecting younger drivers who had newly passed their tests.

Dundee has been picked to share a £5m fund to improve plug-in access for electric cars. Due to abuse, car users will no longer have free access to on-street charging bays in Glasgow

Edinburgh comes second after London as the dearest city in which to park. Some Edinburgh residents are also starting to rent out their driveways as parking space using the JustPark website. In the city there is strong opposition to rises up to 50% in parking charges while funds for emergency road repairs are being slashed. Under new arrangements for the St Andrew's Links Trust, there is a possibility of parking charges for visitors to the West Sands though local residents could be exempt.

Multi-car households are intensifying parking problems in cities and towns with some households having 4 cars but only one or nil off-road parking space.

Scotland is facing a critical shortage of HGV drivers with many due to retire and recruitment difficult. Proposals to ban HGVs at rush hours in towns and cities have been criticised as impractical by FTA though Living Streets Scotland has pointed to large benefits for those walking or cycling

Government monitoring has confirmed dangerous levels of toxic fumes from cars, lorries and buses in 13 urban streets in Scotland – with highest pollution in St John's Road in Edinburgh and Hope St in Glasgow

WALKING & CYCLING

Using WHO methods, Sustrans has calculated the health benefits of walking and cycling from an estimated 121m trips on Scotland's 2,100 mile National Cycle Network (now 20 years old) at £321m in 2014. 6 out of 10 using the network were found to meet the recommended target of at least 30 minutes of physical activity five days a week. Benefits are higher if all walking and cycling is taken into account. This should be taken into account when allocating transport investments and maintenance spending.

Route 74 (Glasgow-Gretna) on the National Cycle Network is to gain from a £1m conversion of the southbound carriageway of the B7078 between Lesmahagow and Happendon to a two-way walk and cyclepath with the northbound carriageway becoming a two-way road

If gaining power in the Council elections in 2017, SNP has promised to make Glasgow's George Square a mainly pedestrian area rather than a 'giant roundabout'.

Motorists fear a loss of capacity and traders fear a loss of business if new priority cycle lanes proposed by Edinburgh City Council are established between Roseburn and Haymarket. These would provide a more direct route than the present National Cycle Route. Rather than new cycle routes, it has been suggested

that more attention be given to tackling cycling blackspots. Edinburgh is to raise cycling to 9% of net capital and revenue spend on transport.

A petition to change presumed liability in accidents involving cyclists has reached the 10,000 signatures required for a response from the Scottish Parliament. Locals are campaigning to end the 10 year delay in completing an upgraded foot and cyclepath between Drem and Gullane.

PLANNING & PROPERTY

The Scottish Government has published a Refresh of Transport Strategy with the promise of a fuller and longer-term review of transport strategy and of the Scottish Planning Framework after the May elections for the Scottish Parliament.

Plans are likely to be approved for 1,500 new homes north of Currie within easy reach of Curriehill station and bus services into Heriot-Watt University. A 65 acre former chemical plant in Paisley close to Hawkhead station is earmarked for new housing by Miller Developments who are taking an increasing interest in brownfield redevelopment.

Sir Tom Hunter, involved in the 3,500 home new community at Winchburgh, says that development of this site, also involving a new rail station, may be slowed unless local authorities reduce their requirements for contributions. 500 homes are already completed (H24Dec)

Murray Estates have submitted plans to Edinburgh City Council for the £700m new International Business Gateway on a 90 acre site close to the Airport. Plans include shopping elements and 2,000 houses. Good transport links are seen as crucial for the development of this centre (S15Dec). It lies on the Edinburgh tram route and, from December 2016, will be served by the new £48m Edinburgh Gateway rail/tram/bus interchange on the Fife line. Network Rail has revived plans for an Almond chord allowing this station to be served directly by trains from Glasgow Queen St HL and Stirling

Edinburgh City Council has approved plans for major development at Granton Harbour, including a marina and homes for more than 4,000 people. Finalised plans may include a revived tram route from Haymarket to Granton and Newhaven

Developers are proposing 450 houses at Longniddry Farm and plan a contribution to enlarge the car park at Longniddry station

The £100m Central Waterfront development in Dundee close to the rail station being upgraded is now completed as a key part of the £1bn plan to transform the waterfront. A £5m office development in Rutherglen has been completed. There is easy access to the M74 and the rail station

Aberdeen City Council has approved a new £333m Exhibition and Conference centre to open by 2018 and situated in Bucksburn close to the airport and a potential station on the Aberdeen-Dyce rail route

The Hydro in Glasgow ranked third on the list of the world's busiest venues in 2015 but increased usage of the SECC complex has led to increased traffic and parking problems in the area. There are plans to increase service frequency to the already busy SECC station on the Argyle line

The T in the Park team, now operating from Strathallan close to Gleneagles, have responded to Perth and Kinross Council requests to take action to avoid the traffic chaos at the event in 2015

Go Ape report a record turnover at the three Scottish sites in the Trossachs, Peebles and Aberdeenshire. despite a very rainy summer. Kelvingrove Park in Glasgow is to be a pilot centre for a 'Bean Yet' community initiative providing free mobility scooters for those over 55 and free bikes for the under 10's.

RESEARCH & STATISTICS

British Chambers of Commerce warn that productivity of firms will be severely affected unless urgent action is taken to improve the reliability of broadband and mobile connectivity. Data in the National Transport Strategy 'Refresh' produced in January confirms stability in Scottish car vehicle miles since 2006 with a 2% rise in road traffic accounted for by growth in light van movement. Rail passenger trip growth has been higher at 29% but bus trips are down 12%. Cycling is up 30%. Due to 'wasted' years seeking to boost green travel, car use for commuting trips in Scotland has risen from 68% to 69%. But working from home has also risen as has the use of rail for both commuting and other travel. Tom Hart seeks greater use of transport data based on passenger kilometres rather than trips. Road and rail data, but not bus data, is already available on this basis (H25Jan). Data in 'Refresh' indicated a slight fall in average car occupancy since 2006 to 1.5 persons but a higher fall is shown in the published UK National Travel Survey

The number of rail passenger trips in Britain has risen from 590m in 1995/96 to 1.4bn in 2014/15. Much growth is in London and the south-east but Scotland has also experienced a substantial rise (Source: ORR) The ScotRail Alliance forecast a rise from 90m passengers to 139m in the coming decade. Many stations have shown high growth in usage though four had fewer than 100 passengers in 2014/15 – Barry Links and Golf Street in Angus, Breich in West Lothian and Kildonan on the Far North Line.

Scotland had a fractional fall in new cars registered from 222,000 in 2014 to 221,000 in 2015, hit by a 10.3% fall in new registrations in the north-east. A slight recovery in oil prices is now expected

The Institution of Mechanical Engineers say UK roads will be 'highly automated' by 2040 and fully driverless by 2050. More rapid change is expected from 2025. Self-driving cars have experienced major problems in tests in California. Insurance firms have started to consider the legal implications of driverless cars. Trials of two-seater electric pods have started in central Milton Keynes. Initially, they have manual control with a date for automated operation still to be decided (LTT 687 11 Dec)

An International Comparator Study, commissioned by Cycling Scotland, has urged that more should be done to put 'cycling at the heart of primary school life' along with greater investment 'enabling cycling through changing the physical environment'. In the Netherlands, two-thirds of children under 12 cycle or walk to school, encouraged by changes in planning and educational policies since the early 1970s (H28Dec)

A survey by Sustrans Scotland and Edinburgh City Council has found that 73% of car drivers support higher spending on cycling

A study commissioned by the British Heart Foundation has found that 17% of Scots have not done any regular exercise in the past decade and say that nothing could motivate them to be more active. But another report from the Physical Activity for Health Unit at Edinburgh University has found that 64% of adults in Scotland meet targets for physical activity compared to 59% in England and 53% in Northern Ireland. However, there is concern at the lower level of physical activity in older adults and recommends continued policies to encourage walking as one of the easiest places to start to increase everyday activity.

Glasgow Airport, 50 years on since its relocation to Abbotsinch, saw international passengers up 17.6% in January with domestic travellers up 10.2%, aided by new flights to Exeter and Cardiff. Total passengers are set to exceed 9m for the first time in 2016. 2015 saw a 13% rise to 8.7m. At Edinburgh, international passengers were up 21.7% in January with domestic users up 3.1%. The majority of Edinburgh passengers are now on international flights. Edinburgh passengers in 2015 totalled 11.13m, of which 5.9m were on international flights. Aberdeen remains affected by the oil industry recession.

Total users at the 11 HIAL airports rose 3.2% in 2015 with Inverness (678,683 passengers) the busiest airport up 8% on 2014, driven by rising use of international flights. Prestwick Airport reports an 8% rise in passengers in December but only to a total of 20,265 passengers – far below previous aims for the airport to reach 2m passengers a year. Extra Ryanair flights to Pisa and Malaga are expected this summer.

Scotland received almost 5m tourist visits between July and September 2015. For the year to September, visitors totalled 15m but the strong £ also encouraged more UK residents to holiday abroad

A survey by Scottish Widows shows that fewer than one-third of firms gave staff the option of working part-time from home. But full or partial working from home is still rising.

Brake, the road safety charity, has called for more motorists to leave their cars at home amid fears over the health and environmental toll of driving. It finds 2000 deaths a year in Scotland are related to toxic air pollution while 4 in every 10 Scots are physically inactive. Residents in Clackmannanshire are the most likely to drive to work with 67% in this category and only 1% cycling, contrasting with 37% commuting by car in Edinburgh with the rest walking, cycling or using local public transport.

Due to further falls in oil prices, petrol and derv costs have fallen below £1 a litre in much of Britain but may show a modest rise in 2016.

Right of centre think-tank IEA has argued for fully privatised railways, stating that present NR spending 'bears little or no relationship to maximising economic benefits'

Several dial-a-ride services have been experiencing reduced funding and falling demand – influenced by changes in behaviour as well as less funding. David Hunter, associate research fellow, Napier TRI examines this issue in LTT 690, 5 Feb., p 27.

SYSTRA has completed a report to Fife Council on a reopened rail passenger service to Methil/Leven. Short-term bus measures costing £3.4m give the best early results but a rail link at £91m is evaluated as a possibility for opening by 2022 (LTT 686 27 Nov). Network Rail proposals for shorter trip times via the inland route from Edinburgh to Thornton may improve prospects for reopening.

Prof. Chris Harvie is seeking explanations of why the costs of rail and tram schemes in Scotland seen so much higher than in mainland Europe. He fears many good schemes will never proceed unless initial costs are reduced. Scottish Water is using a German company to create a 3 mile Queen's Park to Craigton drainage tunnel in south Glasgow. It is big enough to fit a double-decker bus yet the cost is £100m (H8Dec) Making such a tunnel fit for rail or bus use would involve higher costs (especially for safety and underground stations) yet costs could be well below those quoted for new rail tunnels.

In a new report, '*From Fragile to Agile*', SCDI has argued for independent commissions for productivity and infrastructure as part of a partnership approach to trade and investment. Scotland was presently 'under-performing'. It supports City Region deals 'to accelerate reversal of 100 years of centralisation in the UK'

A Folly from the Past On 20 Jan. Herald archive photo shows the Bennie overhead monorail designed to run up to 120mph above tracks with conventional trains below. The pilot track built at Milngavie in the 1930s ended up sold for scrap in the 1950s. The inventor went bankrupt but 125mph trains were running as a commercial success on conventional upgraded track from the 1970s.

BUSINESS & PERSONNEL

Loganair report a rise in turnover but a dip in operating profits from £5.77m to £5.39m. Steps have been taken to improve punctuality and an apprenticeship programme will address the global problem of a shortage of aviation engineers. A replacement is being sought for chief executive Stewart Adams who will step down in April.

FTA is holding a UK 'Skills Summit' in Coventry on 17 March to explore means of tackling the growing shortage of skills in the haulage industry. Network Rail is also expanding training to deal with skill shortages in the rail sector.

A team of business, academic and environmental leaders has been established to advise the National Infrastructure Commission on future infrastructure needs in UK. The team includes Gareth Williams, director of policy at SCDI

First Group has warned that profits will be dented by severe UK weather and lower shop footfall at Christmas. Like for like bus revenues are flat but progress is being made on trimming costs. Income from rail operations was up and the Group had secured the Transpennine franchise to 2023.

Fiona Kerr has been appointed as MD of First Bus Scotland

Stephen Heriott has been appointed head of infrastructure and transportation at Dumfries and Galloway Council and also interim lead officer of SWestrans

Jillian Anable has moved from Aberdeen University to the Chair of Transport and Energy at Leeds University Transport Institute.

Due to the former head office being demolished as part of the upgrading of Queen St HL station in Glasgow, SPT has moved from West George St to 131 St Vincent St.

Due to the ending of an existing lease, SEStran is planning to share space in the Scottish Government's Victoria Quay building in Leith.

Glasgow-based Allied Vehicles, manufacturer of specialised motor vehicles, reports a profit rise from £1.65m to £4.03m with turnover up 19%. Scottish Enterprise has supported a £2.5m three-year programme of research and development of new products

Western Ferries (Clyde) report a 6% rise in turnover and a 32% rise in annual profits to £2.7m. Net debt was reduced to £1.1m. Two new ferries were proving more fuel efficient and required less maintenance. Attention was now turning to improvements at terminals but the company could not afford the large sums on new ferries and terminals being spent on publicly-supported ferries elsewhere in Scotland

Decorated war hero, George Lowder, is to become Chief Executive of Transport for Edinburgh, working with Richard Hall as MD of Lothian Buses and Lea Harrison as General Manager of Edinburgh Trams. Brian Sutherland has stepped down as Finance Director at Prestwick Airport, only weeks after taking up the job.

Pedestrian Law Scotland has been formed to deal with the growing number of cases where pedestrians are killed or seriously injured by motorised vehicles

US luxury brand Tesla has launched an Edinburgh show room for zero-emission cars

Publications and Events

National Transport Strategy – published by Transport Scotland, January 2016, 66p plus three supporting documents on - *Transport Statistics – Change since 2006*
Table of Delivery against 2006 NTS Commitments
Record of Engagement and Consultation

21 June The third annual Scottish Transport Conference will take place in Edinburgh with a focus on the five-year transport agenda across all modes for the new Scottish Government

