

Transport News Notes - 10 May to 14 Aug15

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

The surprising, but narrow, UK government majority gained by Conservatives in the General Election has led to rapid proposals for a further £12bn cut in government spending but with protection for the NHS and defence spending requiring more severe cuts in other Departments. This has consequential implications for a Scottish Government attaching priority to both equity and economic growth yet with falling oil revenues.

This could lead to higher levels of income tax in Scotland from 2018 and/or other measures to ensure extra income or a rise in borrowing within limits under UK control. Options may include permission for fracking or coal gasification off-shore in the Firth of Forth and a review of UK decisions to cut support for on-shore wind in Scotland which remains a more cost-effective way of boosting renewable energy than off-shore wind. Unlike the UK government, much informed opinion takes the view that excessive austerity and 'short-termism' will prejudice sustainable yet faster economic recovery.

Ranging from President Obama and the Prince of Wales to the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate Change and the UK Committee on Climate Change, world, UK and Scottish Governments have come under increasing attack for failing to agree the programmes needed to accelerate cuts in greenhouse gas emissions to, and beyond, 2020. Problems are being intensified by forecasts of greater welfare and resource issues if world population comes close to the projected high of 9.7bn by 2050.

At present, both the UK and Scottish Governments are aiming to maintain, or increase, levels of strategic road investment. The Scottish Government has announced completion of a '**Refresh**' of **National Transport Strategy** by December 2015 but maintaining present levels of infrastructure investment. However, a review of infrastructure programmes after the Scottish Parliament elections in 2016 may lead to changes in programme priorities.

Chancellor Osborne's Budget has been criticised for changes slowing cuts in greenhouse gas emissions – in particular the rise in Car Excise Duty to £140 a year from 2017, apart from the first year of duty on new cars when duties will remain based on the level of carbon emissions. In addition, from 2020 the increased income from higher duties is to be set aside for strategic road development in England. 'The Government's green policy is looking a shade paler' (Herald editorial 25 July)

The option for an increased level of fuel duty, perhaps with some extension of 'deep rural' rebates has been ignored despite the evidence of total greenhouse gas emissions from transport continuing to rise. Road pricing also remains low on the political agenda though with some signs of renewed interest. With rising air travel, income from APD is rising but with the Scottish Government facing the dilemma that, if duty is halved or removed under new powers, what could replace this lost income?

GOVERNANCE

A more subdued, but still significant, media theme is the implications for transport and other sectors of the upsurge in the theme of devolution within England. In addition to City Deals announced by the UK government before the election, the UK government is planning further devolution to cities in England and is also proposing bus franchising powers for Cornwall. Rather than 20 year City Deals with complex procedures before actual funding is released for projects, greater funding and responsibility transfers from central government are being proposed as a means of assisting more innovative approaches to regional strategies and funding with greater competition between cities – but with an underlying theme of increasing economic activity in a 'Northern Powerhouse' relative to London and the South-east. Better

connectivity within the north rather than only towards London is being urged. Scottish interests have expressed concern that this 'North of England' Powerhouse approach could disadvantage Scotland but SNP MP Stewart McDonald also sees an opportunity to extend the Powerhouse to Scotland with HSR construction in Scotland starting at the same time as in the south (H editorial 12 Aug).

The Scottish Government is set to gain greater powers with the possibility of an eventual federal-style arrangement but also a weakening of the funding presently received from UK sources. Within Scotland, there has been a further review of an 'unsustainable' frozen level of Council Tax. Alternatives remain unclear but may include new property and land taxes or reconsideration of a local income tax or tourist taxes. Greater sharing of local government services remains an issue but the Scottish Government is also pushing for localised 'empowerment' for areas much smaller than existing local government units.

AVIATION

Herald editorial (7 August) commended a proposal by Green MSP Patrick Harvie for the Scottish Government to increase, rather than cut, APD provided that those flying only once a year are exempt but a PwC report for the aviation industry claims that halving APD could boost the Scottish economy by £1bn and create 4,000 jobs. Abolition could create 61,000 jobs across the UK by 2020 with income lost from APD more than made up by rises in other tax proceeds. At present, the annual income from APD paid in Scotland is £230m.

The Airports Commission has recommended an additional runway for Heathrow Airport but there are disputed views on the benefits for Scotland. There is a risk that new slots would be taken by global, not domestic, carriers with a depressing impact on direct long-haul flights to and from Scotland. Within the Conservative party, there are also strong opponents of any Heathrow expansion.

Jet2 is to double operations at Edinburgh, including four new routes. Etihad introduced direct flights from Abu Dhabi to Edinburgh in June. Edinburgh and Glasgow are competing to attract direct flights from China. easyJet is to start direct flights from Glasgow to Milan in December.

Two new 19-seater planes are operating on services between Glasgow, Campbeltown, Tiree and Barra. Two new air ambulance helicopters are now part of the Scottish Ambulance Service. The existing two helicopters have also been refitted. The fleet is based at Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness.

Edinburgh Airport has apologised to passengers for severe delays in the new security hall

Pre-tax losses at the Scottish Government owned Prestwick Airport are up from £4.6m to £8.9m, mainly due to a writedown of assets. Passenger traffic is 30% down on previous year. Writing in the Herald (27 July) Pinstripe has urged closure as the best option for the Scottish economy.

Calls have been made for Scottish airports and ports to minimise continuing disruption of freight and perishable goods due to immigrant problems at the Channel Tunnel and Eurotunnel.

FERRIES & SHIPPING

Grangemouth is now handling 155,000 containers a year with just under one-third of Scotland's gross domestic product going through the port. It is the UK's largest feeder port and the only one that exports more than it imports. Facilities for refrigerated containers are being improved. A feasibility study of deepening the channel to the port has started

BG Freight Line, wholly owned by Peel Ports, has extended its Irish Sea network with a new service connecting Rotterdam, Liverpool, Dublin, Belfast and Greenock. The service is expected to increase containers handled at Greenock from 50,000 to 58,000 a year.

The next round of West Coast ferry tendering has provoked further strikes and disputes regarding union and public fears of services passing out of CalMac hands to Serco, already running services to the Northern Isles. Public opinion surveys favour retention of CalMac with continuing dispute on whether EU law requires ferry service tendering. But CalMac also faces criticism from Roy Pedersen and Alf Baird of being out of touch with modern ferry techniques which could offer better island services at lower cost. A Scotsman feature by Alastair Dalton on 24 July is also more favourable to fresh thinking.

The successful bidder will be named in May 2016 and will be required to take forward smartcard ticketing allowing a single national travel card to be used on trains buses, trams, subway and ferries – including non-CalMac services (*see also Cross-Modal Section*). An Arran correspondent says that reliable access to a mainland port is more important than smartcards while the revised North Ayrshire Council Transport Strategy has made improvements at Ardrossan a priority.

Both weather and technical cancellations of CalMac services are now most double 2004/05 figures.

Jim McColl who acquired bankrupt Ferguson Marine Shipbuilders in September 2014 has doubled the workforce and has hopes of acquiring a larger, covered yard again allowing the building of larger ships at Inchgreen on the lower Clyde.

A passenger only 'Pilgrims' Ferry' between North Berwick and Anstruther has been re-introduced this summer in a collaboration between the Scottish Seabird Centre and Safari Adventures aiming to strengthen tourist links. The Princess Royal has officially opened the Kelpies attraction at Falkirk/Grangemouth. This includes an extension of the Forth and Clyde Canal

RAIL

Though aware of the situation before the General Election, the UK government delayed an announcement of major cuts in the rail programme until after the election. Network Rail costs were seen as out of control with delays in Midland and Trans-Pennine electrification essential to keep within available funds. ORR confirms that NR is over-spending and under-achieving. Future support for Network Rail is to be channelled through rail operating companies, allowing them to influence infrastructure & signalling priorities and cost control. NR is also expected to gain extra funding from property development, especially at major stations.

The situation in Scotland remains unclear but, since the preferences of operating companies may be different from those of government, contributions from the Scottish Government and from RTPs/local government and other interests remain probable.

Two of the candidates for the UK Labour leadership have committed to renationalisation of both rail track and services yet this conflicts with concept of devolution and the greater use of non-profit-distributing companies. Labour is also more cautious about a high level of HSR spend which could threaten worthwhile and more quickly implemented smaller schemes. With several Conservatives unhappy about HSR through Buckinghamshire, this could involve HS2 delays.

The official UK government view is to press ahead with new route from London to Lichfield with construction starting in 2017. A further report, and two conferences, on HSR and Scotland are expected in September but the respective Transport Ministers Keith Brown and Patrick McLoughlin have indicated that upgrades of existing route are more likely north from Crewe with some new construction on the approaches to Glasgow and Edinburgh Haymarket. In a Herald feature on 27 May, Ian Bell saw little value for Scotland in HS2 plans.

Scottish Water is to start a £100m 3 mile waste water tunnel under south Glasgow in 2016. It will be 15 feet wide with enough height to take a double-decker bus. This cost seems much lower than that of a single track rail tunnel. Reasons for the difference deserve investigation.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) considers that passengers could benefit from more competition on long-distance rail services though capacity issues on such routes make it difficult to add extra services without damage to other users.

On appeal, the Scottish Government has given permission for a major inter-modal freight terminal expansion in the Eurocentral/Bellshill area. This would allow operation of 775m rail freight trains, raising West Coast and East Coast freight capacity but also requiring lengthening of other passing loops. A report from the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee of the Scottish Parliament has stressed the merits of a large expansion of rail freight, including better terminals and a return to rail of timber traffic.

ScotRail Abellio has suffered criticism for confused management and poor union relations since the franchise transfer from First in April. A union ban on Sunday overtime for drivers forced severe cutbacks in Sunday services though a two year-agreement on pay and revised rosters should improve the situation. Shortage of rolling stock and track/platform capacity bottlenecks remain serious problems as rail use in Scotland rises year on year.

ScotRail plans for an over-50 Discount Club have been heavily criticised. A Herald editorial (29 July) called for more prominence for concessions for the unemployed and low-paid and others under 50 who could help fill the spare seats still available on many trains. There have been further complaints about the large number of cancelled trains on the northern section of the Far North Line to Caithness plus cancellations on recently improved Glasgow-Oban services

Network Rail and train operators are being urged to do more to improve the passenger experience in stations and access to and from them – in particular problems caused by moving taxis out of Waverley.

Throughout Britain, passengers delayed are now to receive cash compensation rather than vouchers. Transport Focus has urged more passengers to claim compensation for delays above 30 minutes. Abellio has also promised to improve wi-fi coverage across Scotland – the company also took over management of Dunbar station from 1 July. But a Transport Focus poll has also found that almost 9 out of 10 ScotRail passengers are satisfied with the service provided – higher than most of the rest of Britain

Various comments have been made on the history and impact of Borders Rail reopening in early September. This is being linked with a programme of steam excursions using the line yet ticket sales have been disappointing. Steam excursions have also required changes to the half-hourly diesel service to be introduced in September though this itself will use 25 year old trains.

Closure of the Winchburgh Tunnel as part of EGIP electrification lengthened many trips and there is rising concern about alternative arrangements for travellers during the four month closure of Queen St High Level in summer 2016 to lengthen platforms and enlarge the concourse. The situation has been further complicated by the late announcement by Land Securities of delay in their plans for an enlarged Buchanan Galleries integrated with Queen St improvements.

Shortage of rolling stock is expected to delay the opening of new stations at East Linton and Reston until 2018. NESTRANS is considering a new station at Bucksburn once doubling on the Aberdeen-Inverurie route is completed. Other stations on existing route being studied by local authorities/RTPs include Allander, Woodilee and Westerhill (in East Dunbartonshire), Abronhill, Glenboig and Plains (in North Lanarkshire) and Robroyston (in Glasgow). Portobello is a suggested, but difficult, site in Edinburgh. In west Edinburgh, the Gateway station and tram interchange is due to open in 2016. Decking at Johnstone station has increased parking spaces from 340 to 423. Construction has started on a £13.5m new link at Anniesland as part of EGIP plans. A ballast train collision closed the Kilmarnock-Dumfries line for 2 weeks in early August.

Richard Ardern of Inverness has called for electrification of the steeply graded Perth-Inverness line rather than the route north to Aberdeen. Scottish Government favours the latter but not until late 2020s.

CROSS-MODAL & BUS, TRAM, TAXI

Transport for Greater Manchester has terminated a contract with ATOS to design, build and operate an Oyster-style smartcard for the conurbation on the basis that the technology is being superseded by smart phone apps and contactless payment cards. This contrasts with the actual working of the SPT Bramble card designed and managed by Nevis Technologies, an SPT/Ecebs partnership. This is being adopted by ScotRail and is capable of bus use as well as the making of other small payments for newspapers, etc. The Nevis system includes arrangements for payments to those from whom purchases are made.

The ScotRail summer offer of free off-peak travel for up to two under 16 to travel with an adult has been extended to include 'the Loop' bus service linking tourist attractions, including the Kelpies, around Falkirk

A report to Edinburgh City Council finds that best value would come from extending the tram route the 2.5 miles from York Place to Ocean Terminal. Cost is put at £127m and extra passengers at 7.7m a year compared to the 5m using the present route. Funding remains an issue.

Edinburgh City Council has approved a trial resulting in bus lanes being open to other traffic except at peaks i.e 7.30 to 9.30 am and 4 to 6.30 pm on weekdays. Walking and cycling groups see this as a backwards move compared to Glasgow reserving bus lanes from 7am to 7pm all week. Edinburgh also becomes the first city in Scotland to allow motorcyclists to use bus lanes at all times.

North Ayrshire Council is spending £250,000 from an SPT fund to introduce bus lanes at the Hawkhill roundabout in Stevenston

Complaints have been made about the high cost and slow progress in completing Glasgow Bus Fastlink works to the new Glasgow South (Queen Elizabeth) Hospital. It is claimed that better results would come from a re-regulated buses, including action to improve bus times in the city centre

Since 2008, SPT has spent £10m on 110 smaller buses leased out to operators on a 'full-repairing basis' and cutting previous support costs for non-commercial services. However, 14 of the vehicles have proved 'extremely unreliable' and are to be replaced by 5 new vehicles.

Lothian Buses is now operating 20 new low-emission hybrid buses bought with help from the Scottish Government's Green Bus Fund. Edinburgh's brand new bus shelters, replacing older shelters over six months, have been attacked as a triumph of design over practicality. They increase weather exposure.

The court proceedings following 6 deaths in the Glasgow bin lorry crash in December have raised issues of failure to report to DVLA conditions affecting driving ability. The bin lorry driver had a history of giddiness and fainting, including when working as a bus driver. Police are investigating the abrupt ending of City Sprinter services from Eastwood Toll to Glasgow city centre. The Traffic Commissioner is also involved.

Stagecoach has opened the UK's first private bus park and ride in Stockport, Greater Manchester and looks to copying this in Scotland. The 400 space facility will be served by a £12m fleet of hybrid electric buses with free hi-fi. A part-subsidised cycle hub is included.

Aberdeen City Council is building a 999 space park and ride at Dyce close to the Airport business zone and the new peripheral road. The Council has no funds to provide dedicated bus services so it will be up to private operators to provide a service. The feature will include cycle parking and electric charging points but it is possible that it will be used as a parking zone for surrounding businesses rather than for trips into the city. The park is due to open mid 2016.

Edinburgh City Council has amended taxi regulations so that electric taxis can be used. Dundee is 1 of 8 British cities chosen by UK Government for an electric taxi study. £20m is available for the best bids

A surge in applications for private hire licences in Edinburgh has been linked to web-based Uber coming to the city soon. Gett Taxi has launched a similar service with both firms a threat to existing black cabs. Scotland's local authorities have spent over £90m in taxi fares over the past three years. £15m was spent by Glasgow (mainly on school transport for special needs children). Better organisation could cut costs.

ROADS & PARKING

Average speed cameras have virtually eliminated speeding on single carriageway sections of the A9 between Perth and Inverness despite HGV limits being raised from 40 to 50mph. The Scottish Parliament's Infrastructure Committee report on freight has urged consideration of raising HGV limits on other suitable sections of strategic single carriageway road to 50mph. The haulage industry is facing a crisis due to a shortage of young recruits and more drivers heading for retirement on into other jobs.

Requirements for a paper driving licence have been removed though this has led to some teething problems for those wishing to hire cars. June marked 80 years since introduction of the British driving test. Road deaths in Scotland are up for the first time in eight years. 200 people were killed on Scottish roads in 2014, 16% up on 2013 compared to a 4% rise across Britain. Causes are unclear but may relate to a resumption of road traffic growth, more motor cyclists and a tendency to drive faster and less safely. Pedestrian deaths were also up despite lowered speed limits. Further action on speed, the virtual ban on drink driving and other measures should improve results for 2015.

Glasgow had the most traffic offences per 10,000 people but figures are distorted by the large number driving into, or through, Glasgow. Rural areas, led by Dumfries and Galloway, continue to have the highest offences in relation to road traffic volumes.

Transport Scotland has provided information on injuries at trunk road junctions. Sheriffhall on the Edinburgh Bypass heads the list followed by the Pirnhall M9/M80 junction south of Stirling and the Broxden roundabout at Perth. Police Scotland are reviewing why it took 3 days to follow up reports of a car leaving the motorway at Pirnhall. The driver was killed and his passenger died in hospital.

The shift of the T in the Park event from Balado to Strathallan near Auchterarder led to complaints of travel chaos and clogged roads for thousands of visitors. Efforts are promised to improve arrangements next year.

A trial switch-off of traffic lights in Blairgowrie has improved traffic flow and has been made permanent. In an effort to revive Paisley High St, vehicles are being allowed back into the street between 6.30pm and 6.30am for the first time in 18 years.

To reduce delays during construction of £500m M74, M8 and M73 improvements east of Glasgow, speed cameras are being introduced on a section of the M74. Plans include completion of the M9 between Baillieston and Newhouse plus work on the M74 and at the Raith interchange due for completion in 2017. Outcomes include a saving of 18 minutes on Glasgow-Edinburgh trip times at peaks.

The Office for National Statistics has ruled that the £745m Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road must be classed as a public sector project despite being an NPD project with private funding. Deputy First Minister John Swinney has confirmed that the project will be completed on time and on budget by winter 2017.

In a Scotsman feature (17 July) Alastair Dalton has queried how the Scottish Government can afford to dual the entire A9 between Perth and Inverness when speed cameras are already smoothing traffic flow and reducing accidents.

Options for plans for an A96 Inverness-Aberdeen dual carriageway have raised objections from Pluscarden monks to a line taking a route through the valley in which the abbey sits to the south-west of Elgin.

For the first time in many years, diesel costs are now below petrol prices but car owners have been hit by a rise in vehicle insurance taxation. In June, the rural areas qualifying for a 5p per litre fuel rebate were

extended to cover larger areas in the Highlands, Argyll & Bute and some parts of England. In total, 125,000 local motorists can now benefit.

In a survey of 'Road Rage', Edinburgh has been found to have among the lowest levels. Only 38% regularly experience road rage compared to a British average of 46%. The Kids in the Car campaign, backed by the Scottish Government, is urging parents to set a good example for their children when behind the wheel.

Traffic wardens, using expertise from Edinburgh, are likely to return to Midlothian as the Council seeks to clamp down on parking and traffic abuses.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is seeking permission to add 500 parking spaces to the 3,132 currently available. Citizens Advice Scotland has launched a campaign against large sums for over-stays in private car parks. Villagers in Luss are seeking further action to reduce the number of cars coming into the immediate village area. Extra fringe car parking is being considered along with visitor charges.

Based on information from local authorities, the RAC says that Scottish local authorities took in £77.3m in fines and charges in 2013-14 with £33.6m of that being 'pure profit'. Two Councils did not have Parking Accounts and 14 claimed only to break even or make a loss but surpluses were reported of £15.3m in Edinburgh, £10.3m in Glasgow and £5.01m in Aberdeen. RAC is suspicious of claims that surpluses are spent entirely on transport-related projects (Daily Record 25 May)

Campaigners are celebrating victory in opposing NHS Highland plans to slash patient car travel allowances for those travelling more than 30 miles to appointments from 18p to 13p per mile when Western Isles is still offering 24p a mile. The proposed Highland rate has been amended to 15p

Plans are being made for a Visitor Centre on the A83 at Rest and be Thankful. They will also highlight former use of the 'old' road for motor sport.

WALKING & CYCLING

Living Streets Scotland is supporting the Footway and Double Parking (Scotland) Bill now in the Scottish Parliament. This will ban parking on pavements, a problem that has been increasing and aggravating problems for the blind and those with other disabilities as well as making walking more difficult.

The Mountains and the People Project has gained £3.26m of lottery funding matched by similar funding from other sources to repair and protect 77 miles of eroded upland paths in Scotland

A major upgrade has been completed on the cycleway from Roseburn (Edinburgh) to the Forth Road Bridge

There is dispute within the cycling and walking communities on the benefits of segregated cycleways compared to shared walking and cycling space on routes with reduced volumes and lower-speed motorised traffic. An alliance of healthy living groups in Scotland has called for segregated cycle lanes on roads in urban areas as part of plans to raise spending on cycling and walking in national and local budgets to 10% of transport spending. They aim to create comprehensive walking and cycling routes in towns and cities linked with active travel promotion and a 'Vision Zero' with no-one is killed on Scottish roads

Halfords has seen annual sales top £1bn for the first time as a result of renewed interest in cycling. Sustrans estimates that a 14,000 network of cycling routes across the UK has saved the economy more than £7 bn in the past 20 years, including £12m a year from cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and £133m from reduced traffic congestion and lower road traffic levels with 30 million car trips replaced annually by people using the National Cycle Network.

The heavy weight of the 15 cycles at the new Bike and Go hire centre at Haymarket has led to criticism and a slow take-up.

Eastern George St in Edinburgh is to be re-opened up to two-way traffic in September after a tatty increase in pedestrian and cafe space on the street. A revised design may be introduced in nine months

After the death of a jogger in Edinburgh, cyclists are being asked to reconsider their speeds. There are claims that Buchanan St in Glasgow is being polluted by cyclists disregarding pedestrians and the law.

Glasgow City Council is investing a further £1m in cycling, including a north-south route in the city centre, a commuter route between the southside and the city centre and a route from Paisley and Pollok to the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Transform Scotland has published a Car-Free Tourism guide making it easier to reach attractions on foot, by cycle or by public transport. Inverness is the Scottish city with the highest proportion using bikes to work. A Hitrans analysis of data from the 2011 Census shows that 5.6% of work trips were by bike

The National Walking Strategy launched in June 2014 is showing little progress in delivering a Scotland 'where everyone benefits from walking as part of their everyday journeys, enjoys walking in the outdoors and where places are well-designed to encourage walking'

East Lothian Council has been forced to declare Musselburgh High St the county's first Air Quality Management Area after a spike in toxic fumes. It is estimated that 20,000 vehicles a day, including 500 diesel buses, pass through the High St and worsen conditions for those on foot or cycling or working.

PLANNING & PROPERTY

Controversy continues on plans to extend housing into Edinburgh's green belt but Scottish Government approval is expected for significant incursions, including building between the A8 and M8. Plans already include 4,000 new houses at Shawfair, including road links to the new station on the Borders rail route.

Glasgow is developing business cases for specific aspects of the City Deal programme, including city centre public realm, waterfront and Collegelands developments but, in the heart of the city centre, Land Securities have shelved plans for a joint initiative with the City Council for a £400m expansion of Buchanan Galleries. North Lanarkshire is also developing City Deal infrastructure proposals. In Edinburgh, the £850m project by TH Real Estate to redevelop the St James Quarter between Princes St, Leith Walk and York Place has finally been approved but with limestone cladding rather than traditional sandstone.

Clyde Gateway in the Glasgow East End/Rutherglen area is showing encouraging signs of employment growth as well as new housing. Other large offices are also nearing completion in central Glasgow

Aberdeen City Council has approved a Masterplan to regenerate the centre of Aberdeen though more development is also expected close to the Western Peripheral Road now being built.

Colliers International report that traditional high streets and out-of-town shopping centres are losing out to prime city centre locations, aided by over £4.6bn of overseas investment in retail property in the UK

More than 1,000 new homes are to be built on rural land at Maidenhill south of Newton Mearns. Banks Property have gained approval for more than 1,000 new homes in the Glenboig/Gartcosh area as part of wider plans for 3,000 houses. This may include a rail station for Glenboig but an alternative is improved access to Gartcosh station. Fife Council is supporting a £500m revamp of Rosyth waterfront – including new employment, waterfront attractions and housing.

MCKINNEY Group has been chosen as the preferred bidder to regenerate Stranraer waterfront, adjacent to the former ferry port. This may also affect the rail station which remains open at the end of the pier.

Despite environmental protests, at least 1,500 additional houses are being proposed on upper Speyside.

RESEARCH & STATISTICS

Aviation Glasgow Airport has seen nearly 4m passengers in the first six months of 2015, up 13.8% on the same period in 2014. Within Europe, Glasgow saw the third fastest growth of airports in the 5 to 10 million category. Both Glasgow and Edinburgh enjoyed their busiest June on record. International passengers at Glasgow were up 15.6% to 532,430 with domestic traffic up 12.2% to 373,259 (with most growth being on services to London). The Edinburgh June total was 1.1m, up 10.6% (9.9% on domestic routes and 11.1% international). In July, Edinburgh international passengers were up 10.2% and domestic up 10.6% on previous July. At Glasgow, international users rose 15.3% with domestic use up 11.4%. Aberdeen passengers were 5.9% down on July 2014. Passengers at Prestwick have also been falling. HIAL saw passengers up 5.5% to 385,491 in the second quarter of 2015 with Inverness seeing a 12.1% rise, aided by strong demand on Dublin and Manchester services.

Rail Passenger trips are up 4.5% in the first six months of 2015 with the total rise since 2008 being 23%. The highest 2015 growth, at 4.9%, was in London and the south-east. The Scottish growth rate was 3.1%

Trams Edinburgh tram use around 5m a year now exceeds tram usage in Blackpool and the West Midlands. Some tram systems outside London have had a slight fall in usage but Nottingham usage is up 2.9% to 8.1m with Tyne & Wear trips (almost entirely segregated) up 6.7% to 38m. Manchester Metrolink tram trips were up 6.6% to 31.2m. No direct data is published on shorter-distance rail trips in the SPT area but there has been a strong rising trend. Excluding Ayrshire, total ScotRail trips in the SPT area may now exceed 40m a year plus 13m trips on the Glasgow Subway

Local Buses Little direct bus data is available but First report a rise around 3% in the Glasgow area with Lothian buses also having continued growth despite opening of the tram route. Overall local bus trips in Strathclyde and the South-west are down 22% since 2008 with the rest of Scotland down around 4%. In the past year, the NE, SE, Central and Tayside have had 2% bus growth (Scottish Transport Statistics No 33 Table 2.2b)

Cars New car registrations in Scotland to the end of July are up slightly up from 128,756 in 2014 to 130,029. There is a trend to smaller, more fuel efficient vehicles.

Overall, it has been a boom year for the British car industry, including substantial exports though a stronger £ against the euro is having an impact. Across Britain, sales of ULEVs (ultra-low emission vehicles) increased four-fold compared to January-May 2014 (but only to a total just under 12,000 vehicles). 20 ULEV models are now available, compared to 6 in 2011.

Walking & Cycling Data remains limited but a pedometer survey has shown that medical staff at the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital average 6.2 miles a day. Health experts point out that this can be seen as positive as the general health recommendation is that people complete a total of 10,000 steps per day – equivalent to 5 miles. Pedometer surveys will continue (H 20 July)

As part of revisions of Scottish Household Survey (SHS) questions, and use of other cost-efficient sources, efforts are being made to improve data on distances walked and cycled in Scotland, including trips to and from public transport. There is also a need to survey walking and cycling by tourists and visitors from outside Scotland. Work is being done to improve estimates of personal travel in Scotland, in total and by mode, following the withdrawal of the Scottish Government from the British National Travel Survey.

Research

Hammerson report a 5% rise in like-for-like sales at the Silverburn shopping/entertainment complex in south Glasgow. Footfall and dwell times were also up

A Persil study has found that 'indoor children' are on the rise as outdoor play is deemed too boring. It found that children now play outside only 49 minutes per day compared to 127 minutes of often sedentary play in the house.

A report by Social Research Associates to ORR has found that younger people are becoming less car dependent with implications for longer-term trends in movement and modal share.

In LTT 10 July, Mackie and Worsley argue for urgent efforts to make transport appraisal more relevant for policy concerns – notably greater rigour in assessing economic benefits and impacts on greenhouse gas emissions and on local air quality/ambience

The Scottish quango CMAL (Caledonian Maritime Assets) is seeking European funding for the development of zero emission passenger ferries powered by hydrogen fuel cells created by using surplus renewable energy. Scientific Alliance Scotland sees this as a waste of money due to risks of hydrogen storage and emissions. Also greenhouse emissions from island ferries were trivial on a global scale. Developments in battery storage for surplus power and more efficient batteries may be more promising.

Scientists at the Dunstaffnage Marine Research Centre near Oban are investigating using strains of ocean-based algae with a high oil content as biofuel.

Edinburgh-based Artemis Power has won the 2015 McRobert Award for developing braking technology cutting fuel consumption on diesel buses and trains

Scientists in California are developing electric self-driving taxis (robocabs) which could have greenhouse gas emissions 90% lower than a privately operated petrol car. Half of the savings are attributable to 'right-sizing' vehicles to occupancy needs. Electric vehicles would have to notch up at least 40,000 mile a year to be less expensive than owning and operating a petrol car.

BUSINESS & PERSONNEL

First Group reports a 13.3% rise in operating profits – with bus performance in Glasgow now seeing higher usage and income, aided by investing £37m in new buses for the city since 2012 plus £20m in the new depot on Cathcart Road. Aberdeen bus performance had also improved and the Group was weathering the loss of the ScotRail franchise with bus sector gains.

Stagecoach reports a modest rise in profits as its Virgin Rail joint venture offset a squeeze on rail margins and lower growth in bus markets. £140m is to be invested in the new Virgin East Coast corridor and it was argued that allowing further competition on this route would not benefit consumers. UK bus regional profits fell 4.3%. The group remained opposed to bus re-regulation but falling fuel prices were bringing greater competition from car travel.

McGills report increased bus turnover in 2014 with pre-tax profits up from £1.75m to £3.2m. A new depot in Lanarkshire is being considered as well as more open-top bus tours and expansion beyond Scotland.

The Chief Executive and Chief Commercial Officer at Prestwick Airport have resigned. Greater efforts are to be made to attract income, develop freight and start new passenger routes

Stewart McDonald, SNP MP for Glasgow South, has become a member of the House of Commons Transport Committee. Bill Barker of Dumfries & Galloway is the new Chair of Scots (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland)

Lady Susan Rice, Chair of Scottish Water is moving to chair the 2020 Climate Group in Scotland 'which will continue as a critical friend to the Scottish Government ensuring that the public and private sector support each other in work towards low carbon'

Salary of Gordon Dewar, Chief Executive at Edinburgh Airport, rose 55% to £547,000 in 2014 but David Wilson, Chief Operating Officer, has left the company following major problems with the new security hall

Edinburgh City Council has axed the bonus scheme for senior management at Lothian Buses. Edinburgh Trams boss Tom Norris has left to join ScotRail Abellio. Mike Connelly is the new Communications and Public Affairs Director for Abellio in Scotland.

New Publications

S Melia *Urban Transport without the Hot Air : Sustainable Solutions for UK cities*, 2015, PB £19.99
UIT Cambridge (reviewed LTT 10 July)

Roy N Pedersen *Western Ferries : Taking on Giants*, Birlinn £9.99

Ann Glen *The Waverley Route – its Heritage and Revival*, 2015 hardback £22.50 160p
To order contact nicola@lilypublications.co.uk