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SCOTLAND'S TRANSPORT THINK TANK



## The Best of Scottish Transport

## Transport Delivery at a Time of Unprecedented Change

## Editorial by STSG Chair John Yellowlees

In this first STR of 2019 we record key events of 2018, the year when the Queensferry Crossing was revealed to be not quite finished after all, the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road edged ever closer to completion and the Rest and Be Thankful confirmed our continuing vulnerability to climate change.

Edinburgh Airport gained flights to Dubai, but courted controversy by increasing dropping-off charges, and FlyBe was put up for sale. Caledonian MacBrayne suffered from poor ship availability, and demise of the Rosyth-Zeebrugge ferry gave a boost to railfreight. Virgin Trains East Coast yielded to publicly-owned LNER, new trains for the Glasgow Subway were exhibited in Berlin, and the E&G went all-electric with the help of Class 365 "happy trains" drafted in to augment the Hitachi Class 385s which had had to have their windscreens replaced.

Buses became recognised as our most problematical mode of transport, and new transport secretary Michael Matheson came to the rescue with a Bill whose merits were the subject of some debate. Driverless vehicles were promised for a route between Ferrytoll and Edinburgh Park. And then there was Brexit, Brexit and yet more Brexit .... !

Looking forward to 2019 a clear positive future seems possible if only we can work out how to get there. This issue of STR therefore seeks to learn from history. Historian Christopher Harvie tells us that our Scots fathers were active, and ingenious, and daft. STR is a place to collect analysis and anecdotes, taking time to reflect on what we can learn from those around us.

The best of Scottish transport is celebrated in this issue of STR. However, transport is at a time of unprecedented change so we cannot expect that past successes will carry forward without ongoing refinement

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The aims of the Scottish Transport Studies Group are to raise awareness of the importance of transport for the Scottish economy and Society. STSG is a charity registered in Scotland SCO14720.

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## A Challenging Time for Scotland's Railway

John Yellowlees

2018 was a challenging year for Scotland's railways with major reconstruction works and new trains giving short term headaches.

Within this turbulence it is easy to lose track of the good news. A few of the headlines by month were:

- January : A new customer lounge in Dundee
- February : Westerton footbridge
- March : Falkirk High new car-park
- April : Dumfries, the first Farmers' Market on a British station
- May : Motherwell restored to the Trans Pennine Express network
- June : Class 365 Happy Trains enter service
- July : the new Class 385 enters service
- August : first all-electric day on the Edinburgh & Glasgow line
- September : Breich rebuilt!
- October : first refurbished Inter7City train carries passengers
- November : Armistice 100 branding
- December : electric trains to Dunblane and Alloa

**Motherwell was restored to the Transpenine Express network**

## The Best and the Worst of Scottish Transport

John Yellowlees

You Told Us the Best and Worst Things about Scottish Transport – Now Let's Work out How to Make them Better

Thanks to everyone who contributed to our review of the best and worst of Scottish transport either by e-mail or face to face at our networking event.

We have collated and ranked the responses and the most frequently stated issues coming top and bottom have been identified below. The sample does not aim to be either comprehensive or representative, but if many of the best informed people about Scottish transport hold these views they deserve further consideration.

**A scheduled air service has planes landing on the beach in Barra – This iconic transport service is famous across the world promoting everything that is best about Scotland.**

First let's look at the best of Scottish transport. How can we protect and promote this better and extend the best approaches across more of the country?

A scheduled air service has planes landing on the beach in Barra – This iconic transport service is famous across the world promoting everything that is best about Scotland.

Many of the best roads in the world to drive and cycle – View from the road, discovery, and freedom were all emotions mentioned.

The Lothian Buses real time information app – Designed with the customer's needs in mind users have no problem planning journeys and watching the count-down till the bus arrives.

Travelling with a Calmac hopscotch ticket in the Hebrides.

The flat fare on Lothian Buses in Edinburgh – The buses are used by every part of Edinburgh society and the flat fare makes the service offer more simple and understandable



The ease of movement in pedestrianised Buchanan Street in Glasgow – The space for people creates a social and economic magnet.

How paying for buses and parking by phone has removed the need to collect pound coins – e.g. the apps now in use across most of Scotland for parking, bus and rail tickets (on cross border rail services).

Superb views from the trains on the West Highland rail line.

The worst aspects of Scottish transport came up time and again in responses. How can we fix these issues and who needs to be involved?

Poor standards of road maintenance – The timing of these views at the end of winter may partly have affected this but road maintenance has been near the top of concerns of households for decades.

Pedestrian death and serious injury on the roads at a level not consistent with a civilised country – Pedestrian casualties are still relatively high per head of population (even compared to England).

The lack of easy ways to pay for bus, tram and rail services – It is still much harder to pay for bus and rail than for other transport and other products and services. From cumbersome slow ticket machines at tram stops to the lack of simple and transparent ways of paying for bus and rail services, many different concerns were

mentioned.

Bus journey times – Bus travel is often slower than walking and usually slower than cycling in urban areas

Pricing issues for some rail journeys – The Glasgow to Edinburgh service in particular was criticised for its high cost with transport prices inconsistent with policy goals.

Delaying and humiliating bus passengers by asking them to find the correct fare when boarding buses (with little prior information about what the fare might be) – unfamiliar travellers don't want to appear foolish.

Clutter on streets with unnecessary signs and lines and poorly managed parking

The old and decaying bus fleet used for services across much of the country – Operators seem to celebrate doing a heroic job in difficult circumstances rather than seeking to do better.

The inequitable distribution of public funding for transport – Government spending on transport is targeted at the wealthiest people.

Too little tax on transport capital (e.g. land for car parking) and far too much tax on revenue (e.g. wages of drivers) – The tax system incentivises greed and lack of productivity.

## Managing Uncertainty at a Time of Change

Derek Halden

Joint working between government and industry has not been one of the traditional strengths of UK transport delivery, with more adversarial approaches like franchising or competition between public and private sectors being much more common. Too often partnership aims have broken down in the practical detail.

However connectivity, not just transport is increasingly being seen as a utility. Transport authorities are not currently prepared for the challenges that will affect this integrated planning. Current transport regulation reflects separate markets defined by modes of transport, but increasingly cross-sector regulation using different metrics is required.

Currently the planning system lacks ways to favour sustainable solutions, but increasingly transport performance defined in terms of its ability to deliver connectivity will be needed.

Even the metrics for monitoring and enforcement of transport performance are inconsistent and lacking. People can fly a drone more easily than run a bus in some places so will this mean that flying personal vehicles are being favoured relative to buses.

Perhaps regulation was more fit for purpose with previous transport changes. The 1903 Motor car Act required that cars displayed license plates at a time when there were only about 20,000 private motor cars in the country but there are well over a million drones currently being used in the UK, and most cannot be easily identified. Some drone manufacturers have developed software for use by police, security services, and airports to identify their drones, but there is no statutory requirement for this yet.

Similar issues apply for land based autonomous vehicles, but public concern has prompted better debate about potential new rules.

Government has a key role in mapping economic activities and character to illuminate opportunities to develop competitive advantage in the transport sector. Partnerships between government and industry are proposed. To avoid constraining innovation self-regulation within the industry is already encouraging members of

the public to highlight concerns. However this will lead to government being forced into reactive positions when seeking more sustainable approaches, which may be less well placed to influence the direction of technology development.

DfT say that they want to work with industry to ensure that robust data is available in convenient formats. There is always a danger when government chooses to work with a few large companies, that it ends up agreeing procedures, data formats or other restrictions that protect big companies from competition.

To avoid this, a good start would be to provide real time data describing the locations of all publicly recognised transport from buses to taxis. In the technological 21st century one of the most important regulatory functions is to ensure accurate open data and recent government guidance expresses this principle clearly.

How these principles will play out in practice is as yet far less clear. There is currently a lack of trust that can make consensus hard to achieve. Operators are concerned that any new technology imposed on them by transport authorities would be excessively complex and could be used to attack their performance, whilst authorities explain a lack of operator data in terms of perceived commercial benefits from poor public accountability. The main casualty of this stand-off is a lack of public trust in transport.

Partnership between government and industry on new technology is important but it needs to be built on strong foundations that only robust shared data can provide. If trust can be built on transparency then in times of uncertainty the information will be available from which to build a positive future.

## Personal Reflections Scotland's History and Trains

### Synopsis of a talk by Christopher Harvie

Chris Harvie joined the Scottish Railway Preservation Society in 1963, as well as what's now the Scottish Association for Public Transport. He wanted a socialised transport system rather than Beeching's butchery and soon saw Labour tear up his own line through the Borders. He backed a home rule Scotland because his Royal High history master Sandy Aitken, a convincing John Laurie double, at eleven met the guard of the West Linton train in tears with the news of the navy's apparent defeat at Jutland, just after the Irish Rising: 'Laddie, we're done for!' Aitken went on to be treasurer of the SNP in the days of Douglas Young, and he wasn't sentimentalising. 'Something seems to be the matter with our bloody trains' has been the story ever since.

The Scots fathers of Crystal Palace days were active, and ingenious, and daft. Between 1812 and 1845 they inflicted more than six different track gauges 3'3", 3'6", 4'0", 4'6", then added 5'0" in Russia, 5'3" in Ireland and Victoria in Oz, 5'6" for the Indian Empire, Argentine, Chile. Two of these really took off: metre gauge for mineral lines, like Scotland's first, the Tranent and Cockenzie of 1722 and the 'universal' 'Northumbrian' gauge of four foot eight-and-a half inches. Scots artists like Nasmyth and D O Hill got trains right from the start. There was then a third gauge, invented by I K Brunel in 1836: seven feet. Worked well, then vanished – first in the USA civil war, then elsewhere.

But there was enthusiasm! It hit the nursery. Edith Nesbit's *Railway Children*, Betjeman, Hamilton Ellis, C J Allen on 'Marvels of Modern Railways', and real Train-spotting, invented by his son Ian Allen: very English ... and it worked. Aged 18, Chris organised his first rail history exhibition in the Royal Scottish Museum in 1962, and Ellis opened it. 50 years later the journalist David Ross in the Herald found a Holyrood debate on the death of John Burnie, organiser of the SRPS, an argument for the parliament: not just mourning a loss but catching a bright spirit who fired up people's desire to see another possible life.

Scots children have been wretchedly disadvantaged. At St Boswells Chris and his friends at 12 years of age were cycling to Galashiels to the cinema and swimming. Under an hour's journey. Now impossible, anywhere, owing to the fate of our greatest social-science breakthrough: the bicycle. Young Scotland, chauffeured everywhere for security, is already overweight before the secondary.

We have to face up to the fact that our road boom since 1955 has been an aberration, making money for hauliers and contractors, hell for everyone else. Think of Anthony Trollope, seeing his railway compartment as a 'mobile office'. As it has been with Chris: for drafts, then corrections of essays and proofs, background reading, empirical improvement. Without it, what future is held out? Not just boredom but cash-register morality: history as retreat to battles long forgotten, omitting mention of the railway pioneers whose influence spread out from Scotland across the globe.

**The promising sociology of Patrick Geddes suffered an assault driven by philistines who wrecked Princes Street and speculators who ran up mushroom satellite cities which crumbled fast**

Our car-culture has wrecked reading since combining driving with any sort of serious thoughts was lethal. The promising sociology of Patrick Geddes suffered an assault driven by philistines who wrecked Princes Street and speculators who ran up mushroom satellite cities which crumbled fast. The motorways ate Glasgow as well as its rivers, with gruesome results. Milton Keynes is the real horror of a system based on the low-density idiocy of mass motorisation – though Glasgow's victims

Resilience and European openness can be traced back to that huge element of the 'pre-enlightenment' accessible in Scottish-Flemish relations just after the reformation

got an unimaginably worse longer-term result: fat city followed by wet city as 'door-to-door' mobility took its liquid toll, and a massive flood hazard had expensively to be avoided. The recent farce of the Edinburgh Trams was even sadder in its civic consequences.

Did we need a third Forth Bridge? In the SAPT we did not think thus, but compromised to get the Tram and the Borders Railway: but the costs have been coming in. The sandstone heart of our towns is broken, with a complete eclipse of the stonemason tradition.

So where now? Appreciate that Fordism plus Trump is now destructive at all costs. The fragile road system of the Highlands is being smashed to bits by the SUV classes. Forty years on from the South Hebrides' transport ecology – fuel out, whisky in – being served by small motor-ships, we now see the annual crisis of the mastodons on the 'Rest and Be Thankful'.

What is to be done? We can do worse than use the cruise liners to follow and civilise John Ford's American west. It is time to start dismantling the publicity moloch by reimagining the likes of the anti-rail Borders Party (2008-12: remember it?) as something closer to 'joabs oan ra tarr', and civilise this by a tourist rail programme to reopen the sleeping lines of the Highlands.

We've good form: John Thomas, Eric Lomax of The Railway Man, the Spaven family, Tom Hart, activists from Madge Elliot to Bruce MacCartney, Terry Gourvish: his History of Nationalised Rail, Prof John Hume at the RCAHMS.

The contribution of Bartholomews and Johnstons has been resurrected by Birlinn and Hugh Andrew and Derek Rodger at Argyll. There was John Ransom's Iron Road and David Spaven's magnificent Atlas, and the propaganda of Paul Salveson. Not to speak of feisty women from Madge Elliot to the much-missed Tessa Ransford and Aileen Paterson, and that fine Fife film 'The Happy Lands' about the General Strike – filmed partly at Bo'ness.

We can discuss the technology from now on. Resilience and European openness can be traced back to that huge element of the 'pre-enlightenment' accessible in Scottish-Flemish relations just after the reformation. John Buchan, as ever, gets the mood in The Thirtynine Steps: a verbal brawl in a South-Western railway compartment – 'the impidence o' that gyaird!' - makes Richard Hannay realise he's in Scotland.