



Provocative and Practical steps to encourage Gender Diversity in Scottish Transport Industry

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Summary

This piece aims to constructively provoke debate and discussion about the diversity challenges in the Scottish transport sector. It is a personal viewpoint written to raise awareness of the need to address these matters, and highlight the actions being taken to signpost information and resources to support further individual and collective action across the Scottish Transport sector.

Currently the Registers of Scotland figures for 2017 estimate the population is 49% male and 51% female, albeit people may personally identify differently. Only 6.25% "Head of Transport" positions in Public Bodies in Scotland are held by women. First Group as a major transport operator highlight that despite women making up 40.8% of their overall workforce, only 18% of senior managers are women and only a little over 11% of their Board.

The UK Transport sector's average pay gap is currently reported to be over 5%. Some see the diversity debate as against merit, but it is not the strongest and most intelligent that wins, it is the form with the most diversity, best able to respond to change and succeed.

The recent work in Scotland on local democracy shows that communities and individuals want involvement; not consultation; and they are acutely aware of the difference between these two approaches. This means going beyond centrally directed physical infrastructure improvements and enabling people who are near major improvements to feel a sense of ownership and benefit, that ultimately leads to them being less marginalised and more included enabling inclusive growth.

Success will be achieved if everyone is an ally for greater diversity, but especially men in terms of gender diversity. Men in the transport industry need to speak out and speak up. A virtuous circle of support will enable employers to reinforce employees' actions.

For some this is an issue of human rights, whilst for others greater diversity makes commercial sense and delivers comparative advantages. The challenge includes developing better evidence, organising a plan of action and disseminating best practice, creating a clear direction of travel with peer pressure within the industry to acknowledge and embrace change.

Celebrating and supporting women's achievements on Friday 8th March and every day, will help deliver a more gender-balanced world. STSG has a key future role in helping to close the evidence gap.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Why is diversity important to the transport industry? Do the best rise to the top? Is good performance all about merit? Some say all this diversity and equality stuff is for “snowflakes”.
- 1.2 I hope over the next few pages to outline why like the rest of the Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) collective sectors, we do have clear further continuous improvement work to do, whilst highlighting the good work going on already.
- 1.3 To be clear from the start there is no coincidence this piece is published on International Women’s Day 2019. The theme this year is “better the balance, better the world. How will you celebrate women’s achievement on Friday 8 March, while calling for a more gender-balanced world?”. That is a clear challenge for the Scottish Transport industry, and it is a journey that requires a clear roadmap for all travellers. When I say “we” in this piece, I am calling for action from all – we all have a role: users, employees, individuals, employers, consultants, companies, charities, public bodies, governance at all levels.
- 1.4 So, let’s address the issue of me, a man writing about gender diversity head on. I am a male ally, I see the under-representation of women in all economic and social contexts, as a fundamental human rights abuse. I am not seeking to speak for women in this piece or share their platform, merely add my voice to their voices over the centuries and highlight my support. Instead of leaving it to women to point out to us year after year, generation after generation, that they feel they must defy gravity to get ahead in this world it is time for men (yes, all men even self-proclaimed “good men”) to extract the digit and willingly and overtly commit to dismantle the gendered transport landscape we inhabit. It is in our interest, it is a social good, it is a commercial good and whisper it quietly it is even good for men and the toxicity of masculinity e.g. in a more gender equal society, World Health Organisation researchⁱ shows less men die from risk-taking behaviour such as speeding.... who’d have thought it! Even for the most ardent supporter of continuing patriarchy surely that is a good thing?
- 1.5 The intent of this piece is to constructively provoke debate and discussion about the diversity challenges in the Scottish Transport sector currently, raise awareness of the need to address these matters, highlight the actions being taken to signpost information and resources to support further individual and collective action across the Scottish Transport sector. This paper is not a comprehensive literature review, albeit that would be a welcome addition to the diversity “fleet” in Scotland. Let’s be clear most of us in the transport sector, are not against continually increasing diversity of transport as a sector, but many of us ignore the problems or see it as something that has nothing to do with us.

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- 1.6 We need to be clear though, that improving diversity is not about making the current transport industry customs and practices better, it is about making new spaces and places to include everyone and make it better for everyone. It is not about adding a new bus stop to the existing gendered network, it is about new routes and modes. The visual character and language of the transport sector is still not fully conversate with diversity, to be fair which sector is, but as argued by Urryⁱⁱ we need to pay attention to the visual character how sectors and services such as transport are produced and consumed as these actions are significant its implications for place and people of any society, Scottish included. Language and visual media are important, as are recognising that other aspects of diversity and gender will be less visible.

Are we lacking Diversity?

- 1.7 Currently the Registers of Scotland figures for 2017 estimate the population is 49% male and 51% female, albeit people may personally identify differentlyⁱⁱⁱ. So does the transport industry map to this general population distribution?
- 1.8 Equate Scotland estimate that in the STEM sectors across Scotland – transport included, women represent only 25% of the workforce, a significant under-representation^{iv}. The STEM industry also does a poor job of not retaining female talent long-term and certainly from the figures does not do a good job of promoting to senior roles. We in transport are part of the lack of tapping all talents across STEM sectors. Engender highlighted that only 6.25% of women held “Head of Transport” positions in Public Bodies in Scotland and for example First Group as a major transport operator in Scotland within their Corporate Social Responsibility publication highlight that transport is not traditionally a diverse sector and has struggled to attract and retain a diverse cross-section of talented people. First Group then highlight that despite women making up 40.8% of the overall workforce, only 18% of senior managers and only a little over 11% of their Board^v. These are not outliers; it is a depressingly similar story across the sector.
- 1.9 Also, if we were so inclusive as an industry already, why recently would major chartered institutions like Chartered Institute for Highways and Transportation feel it necessary to promote Diversity and Inclusion Charter and associated toolkit’s^{vi} and continue to champion need for greater diversity? CIHT are clear in their publications that the highways and transportation sector in the UK does not have a diverse workforce. In the majority of CIHT corporate partners who responded to their survey, 90% of the workforce and management is white, and 90% of management roles and board positions are held by men. Whilst, this provocation piece focuses on gender, in terms of diversity we cannot as an industry ignore the intersectionality of other groups or categories of individuals representation within the workforce.

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- 1.10 The focus of this short provocation piece is gender and I apologize for not having the time to focus on the importance of intersectionality as highlighted by the Scottish Government/COSLA Equally Safe Strategy in 2014^{vii}. Equally Safe highlights that alongside gender, women and girls have other protected characteristics that increases their level of risk of experiencing gender inequalities and abuse because of their sexual orientation, gender identify or both, minority ethnic communities and the potential for traditional gender roles to be stronger; those with different physical or mental abilities or older women or refugee/asylum seeking women and girls. In addition, they recognise that these intersectional factors can go beyond these categories and we need to recognise that balance of power factors such as socio-economic status are key factors to consider in an intersectionality debate on gender and transport is no different, they need to be advert and integral parts of the process around the development of outcomes and interventions that seek to deliver greater diversity across the transport sector.
- 1.11 CIHT outline in their toolkit several examples of interventions that members can take to address this issue: the importance of data and surveys, the need for a focus on recruitment and retention practices, changing organizational and sectoral culture and behaviour^{viii}. The vital nature of this work has been recognized by the Department for Transport's Skills Strategy as not only an issue of human rights and equal access to workplaces but as a necessary requirement to deliver a sustainable and resilient to the workforce within the transport sector. I would expect the workforce aspects of Scotland's second National Transport Strategy to take a similar view.
- 1.12 Even from a quick look and a few examples it seems quite a striking position, that transport is a service that serves most it not all the Scottish population; albeit like transport itself some individuals better more often than others. Yet, despite the diverse population it universally serves, it has services provided by a non-diverse workforce, hardly a great origin for understanding your market and certainly not a situation likely to lead to diversity as a destination!
- 1.13 You would have to subscribe surely to a view that talent is not evenly distributed across the population to think that the current level of diversity was optimum for a commercial business, never mind public bodies or voluntary organisations across the transport sector? We seem to be missing out on a lot of talent to address major societal challenges or drive commercial gains. Surely a more likely scenario is that talent is evenly distributed, yet there are clearly barriers to greater diversity across the transport sector, as implicitly recognised by major employers such as First Group and we need to collectively work on promoting more opportunities for diversity and continuously work to improve the championing efforts ongoing within the industry corporately and also individually as members of the workforce?

2.0 DO MIND the (PAY) GAP

- 2.1 Even if you ignore the issues above as barriers to entry (I do not know why you would but lots do), the fact that the pay gap exists across society between men and women. That this gap is present in the transport sector does not really send out a great message that we in the transport sector want to attract and retain the best workforce.
- 2.2 The BBC recently reported that UK Transport sector's average pay gap is over 5%, in the second year of pay gap reporting^x. A quick look through the now mandatory pay gap reports for organisations over 250 employees, show that from a sample or reported Scottish organisations with significant Scottish pay gaps there are some who are further from that median average: Scotrail^x 27% median pay gap; BEAR Scotland^{xi} is only 0.3% lower, but only 7.8% of women receive bonus pay compared to 30% of men; Calmac^{xii} the median pay gap is 6.6%; Logainair^{xiii} is 39.4%; Sustrans is 0%^{xiv}; and McGill's Buses^{xv} was 4%. This sample across the major modes requires further detailed analysis, but the headline conclusion is that action is needed to fix the pay gap. That requires significant work now and going forward, including employment retention and recruitment, and also primary prevention work to ensure a greater balance and diversity of applicants into traditionally male-dominated industries.

Why is Diversity important?

- 2.3 Some see the Diversity debate as anti-intellectualism^{xvi}, against the "survival of the Fittest", and against merit. The continuing arguments around these types of appeals to "authority", speaks to the existing structural norms that has created over generations, a situation not reflective of society itself in terms of diversity of workforce, governance representation, or user involvement.
- 2.4 It is quite striking on an anecdotal level the amount of times as a male ally for change I have heard Darwin being misquoted to justify the continuity of a system of non-diversity society. The whole survival of the fittest argument is an economic argument that originated from Darwinian evolutionary theory as a way of poorly describing the mechanism of natural selection. The biological concept of fitness is defined as reproductive success. In Darwinian terms the phrase is best understood as "Survival of the form that will leave the most copies of itself in successive generations". It is not the strongest and most intelligent that wins, it is the form with the most diversity. This is not because it is the "strongest" or most "qualified/ intelligent/ knowledgeable in an academic or applied sense", but instead the most able to respond to change and succeed. The logic of planning for survival for successive generations of an industry requires greater diversity but the signalling of change by major transport players like Jacobs^{xvii} or AECOM^{xviii} is not enough.
- 2.5 The issue of Diversity and success could be applied at several levels across the transport sector. It could apply at a Board level in Transport, where whether for example First Group or transport public

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bodies women tend to be under-represented. Why is this important? Well the Scottish Government's "On Board" guidance^{xix} outlines several reasons of importance alongside, an expectation that all public bodies will champion diversity and mainstream equal opportunities in their work. However, the following benefits of greater diversity of representation on the Public Boards are not limited to the public sector and could benefit all groups/committees/boards across the transport sector. When any group is making decisions, diversity of any forum is one clear mechanism for driving greater value. The on-board guidance references evidence that "groupthink" or having a non-diverse Board can be a risk to any organisation and that having a more diverse Board can lead to better decisions and avoid over-exposure to risk. Surely any transport related committee, be that a voluntary group, a professional society, a publicly limited company would see benefit from such greater value?

- 2.6 However, whilst increasing visible diversity is important the current evidence recognises that even a "visibly diverse" group, workforce or user group will not necessarily be immune to "groupthink". Visible diversity is simply an indicator but no guarantee that the Board's members have the diversity of skills, knowledge, experience and perspectives needed to make it effective. Gender diversity is important but as the Scottish Government acknowledged there is currently insufficient visible and invisible diversity on the Boards of Scotland's public bodies, which can be evidenced in relation to factors ranging from gender, physical or mental abilities, to black and minority ethnic (BME) status, employment sectors and income. By extension, based on current distribution of diversity statistics for the industry, the same could be said of transport bodies across voluntary, public and private sectors.

taking action

- 2.7 There is lot of advice and support across the issue of governance at all levels that transport could utilise to ensure our journey to diversity is taken by the best route possible. We need to plan or make a clear timetable across the transport sector, setting out a clear direction of travel and signposts.
- 2.8 If modes of transport e.g. active travel, can have a Task Force and subsequent Commissioner, and we have 10 Infrastructure Commissioners, surely a Task Force and a Commissioner is not too much to ask for in terms of diversity across the transport sector?
- 2.9 Many organisations within the transport sector already have, with some of the examples already referenced, but more could be done by all. However, I would advocate we do need a task force or working groups on the issue of diversity: more consideration of the issue: more tackling head on the already mentioned issues of pay gaps, merit, and survival of the fittest. We need to highlight the evidence in a rational way.
- 2.10 These discussions offer those under-represented and their supporters the opportunity and platform to outline that increasing diversity in the

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transport sector and will encourage new and innovative thinking and maximise the use of the talent available to the sector, lead to better decision making and more inclusive governance. Do we need the Scottish transport sector to clearly pledge to support the recommendations of the First Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Girls and perhaps a transport organisation to be a part of the specific recommendation for a Gender Beacon Collaborative^{xx} to then provide wider learning and dissemination to other stakeholders?

- 2.11 Should more stakeholders across the sector be looking to publish clear plans for diversity, outlining key actions to be taken and be held accountable for them? I think so. It is a clear sign to your audience that you are taking serious action not lip service to the issue. For employers, an action could be to audit the diversity of skills, knowledge and lived experience across your organisation. Ask employees under-represented in your workforce to identify potential barriers that need to be removed to increase diversity. Seek a more inclusive method of publicizing your vacancies, widen the scope of your corporate publications, partner with equality and diversity organisations to seek help and use your media outlets to show your efforts for visible and invisible diversity. Then act with positive action to address the issue and let's see the Scottish transport sector over-represented in the programmes like Equate Scotland's Careerwisexxi or Women Returners^{xxii} programmes.
- 2.12 Then consider your language. Equate Scotland^{xxiii} offer language reviews of STEM sector organization. In sectors lacking in diversity, corporate communications tend to speak to those over-represented, because the dominant language/narrative is spoken by those over-represented and inadvertently even from diversity supporters, language and design is aimed at men. It is important to recognise that even despite best effort we could all be subject to unconscious bias and there is help available for that^{xxiv}
- 2.13 Society is gendered and transport is not an exception or special case, women and men use the transport system which transport policies need to acknowledge and also women suffer more harassment on public transport and places waiting for or walking in their local areas after dark^{xxv} which could include from transport or for transport, yet without greater diversity in decision-making context we do not have that key participative involvement in these decisions, making our system less optimal and a less welcoming space or commercial offer.
- 2.14 The World Bank highlights several actions and research on transport and gender we could take into the Scottish transport system. We certainly should not delude ourselves that our system is immune to such issues of gendered abuse^{xxvi}. In terms of say public transport usage, Women represent the largest share of users, yet they face many barriers that limit their mobility including less access to certain modes of transport or more "encumbered" journeys^{xxvii} than men reducing the probability of women participating fully within the labour market with economic consequences on the economy including the inclusive growth of the Scottish economy.

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- 2.15 The aim for greater diversity does not mean we do not need experts such as the recently announced Infrastructure Commission for Scotland. There is a clear need for rationalism, research and knowledge to guide a discussion. However, there does need to be a balance between top-down intellectual decision-making or advice and involvement of all in decisions empowering communities and particularly users.
- 2.16 Expertise cannot be used as a rationale for experts to tell communities what is best for them. Even going back to 2005, the Scottish Government in Transport Guidance^{xxviii} on the original membership of Regional Transport Partnerships noted the need for RTPs to consider recommending lay members to give a different perspective, albeit alongside a quite expertise ordained language, but at least it highlighted the diversity others can bring to strategic decision-making. You could follow the example of Scottish Canals and others and introduce Observers on any form of governance to target people who have interest but little experience to create a pipeline of talent for governance but also for the group to bring a different view to discussions.
- 2.17 Therefore, it was good to see at the launch of the recent Infrastructure Commission the Cabinet Secretary clearly state that it is important stakeholders and people across Scotland have their say about what is needed and how it might best be delivered. This process needs to be participative and involving and not just consultative; it needs to take evidence and data from communities of place and interest and use it to deliver its recommendations.
- 2.18 The recent work in Scotland on local democracy shows that communities and individuals want involvement; not consultation; and they are acutely aware of the difference between these two approaches. The visible and invisible diversity of the Commission might not be reflective of Scotland as a whole, but therefore in any consultation for the Commission, NTS2 or other transport related plans, it is vital as a sector we recognise and reach out to a more diverse audience.
- 2.19 This means going beyond centrally directed physical infrastructure improvements and enabling people who are near major improvements to feel a sense of ownership and benefit, that ultimately leads to them being less marginalised and more included enabling inclusive growth. You may ask why this a problem for the Scottish transport sector. Engender in their Power and Sex Report highlight the World Bank's conclusion that women's perspectives and contributions are vital to the equitable delivery of our public services and structures, whether arms-length government bodies, the civil service, education and lifelong learning, health and social care, vital infrastructure like transport, justice and law enforcement, or collective workplace bargaining. International evidence suggests that lack of a gendered power balance in the wider public domain ultimately has a major impact on equality of outcomes. Diversity is crucial for inclusive growth and sustainable growth and as such is good for all. However,

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that means we need to continue to increase diversity of the sector, involvement and representation.

- 2.20 So, I hear you say this is all industry-wide issues, I can't do anything about this as an individual? I am just a bystander/witness to the continuing road-traffic accidents that is transport and diversity. Wrong. Speaking up adds volume to the calls for diversity. I am not advocating all members of the transport sector to undertake some form of high-level study on diversity, albeit diversity and equality training should be a basic across the industry to challenge attitudes and current behaviours especially around "banter" as some call it, sexual harassment as all should call it. We all need to be allies for greater diversity, but especially men in terms of gender diversity. Men need to speak out and speak up. We need to continuously challenge the attitudes and behaviour of those around us who speak out against diversity. We need men to talk about the issue of gender diversity, the more we talk about, continually breaking the silence, the more we make our sector one where it is known these things are unacceptable. Could more of the transport sector engage with campaigns like the White Ribbon Scotland^{xxix} campaign or Zero Tolerance^{xxx} to consider how individuals can be supported to act and considering actively the materials of organisations like Close the Gap^{xxxi} how employers can reinforce employees' actions and increase their feelings of efficacy offering a a virtuous circle of support.

3.0 SIGNALLING CHANGE

- 3.1 In terms of the clear visible signals for diversity, we need to take positive action to ensure that key symbols or groupings of our sector are diverse. We need; as CIHT express; clear positive and visible role models in the promotion of gender diversity. Gloria Steinem's famous quote is "You can't be what you can't see", it points to the lack of role models that make it harder for women to say I'm going to be [head of transport]. She was also keen to say at the time that to ensure change you need to support candidates in many ways, but that it is not a passive question, it is not when will it happen, it is an active question, when will we make it happen. So, in this context, for the Scottish transport industry, how will we make it happen? There are many ways. I have chosen a previous "manel" issue. For example; the judging panel^{xxxii} for the "Scottish Transport Awards" from a visible diversity viewpoint being overtly male based on their biographies does not message well in terms of diversity. Indeed, last year the gender balance was 66/33 but in 2016 it was an all male judging panel. Seems strange to suggest they are National Awards when they are awarded by representatives of less than 50% of the population. Neither does having one of the premier national transport conference agendas being visibly male dominated^{xxxiii}. The same for significant transport bodies such as Glasgow Connectivity Commission^{xxxiv}. This is a reflection in a way of the under-representation and occupational segregation of the transport industry. So how do we change it? That is a question for us all, not just say Transport Scotland.
- 3.2 As Aristotle said, "Democracy arose from men's thinking that if they are equal in any respect, they are equal absolutely". Based on decision-making, advice giving or conference speaking, quotas seem to be needed given men's general historical domination. We are not going to have democratic balance without action. It is sad that we still need to be considering what some "meritocracy supporters" would view as "abhorrent" quotas to ensure other genders are less equal in terms of their numbers in the Scottish transport society. As one participant at a previous session of the Commission on the Status of Women the 60th session of which is currently taking place at United Nations Headquarters in New York said, "we don't just want numbers, but effective participation of women in decision-making and leadership roles". Hopefully Scottish transport society won't be making up the numbers in terms of quotas for too long but in the short term seems a necessary action to me alongside numerous other interventions to redress the historical masculine domination of civil, ceremonial and commercial decision-making roles; transport industry included. Certainly, in terms of the Scottish Transport Awards, perhaps a pledge for progress on gender parity in panels of all forms would be welcome as would creating an award at the national awards ceremony that recognises work on Diversity by transport industry stakeholders. Then rather than being part of the current problem, they could take positive action to be a continuing part of the solution and progress.

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- 3.3 Even from a wider public messaging having transport engineering successes celebrated based on gendered time e.g. Queensferry Crossing opening, see cover picture; could be seen to be reinforcing stereotypes around the industry, diminishing the efforts of transport sector employers to change perceptions and drive further inclusivity across the sector. The phrase was changed in the First Minister's speech^{xxxv} for the opening. It is often argued this is political correctness, rather than recognising that this is maybe unintentionally embedded language requiring review to avoid further negative marketing. No one argues transport marketing to create modal shift is just language, it is psychological/behavioural marketing in that context. We as a sector invoke different arguments over the same logic of communication when it suits it would seem. We need to recognise all communication is important and all language has impact especially when it concerns our efforts on gender diversity.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 I am not advocate here for an “off the shelf” route to greater diversity across Scotland, as with any process of change it will be a process of evolution. I have sought to highlight a number but not exhaustive list of the examples of good and continuing progress across the sector to improve diversity in transport. They are good actions, but as Thomas Edison would say the value of an idea is in the using of it, we need more of the transport sector to use these ideas to increase diversity and the volume of this debate above the other traffic noise.
- 4.2 Whilst, for me personally it is an issue of human rights it is also for commercial issue of comparative advantage in terms of skills and user involvement. Organisations who are better corporately equipped through such diversity of thought, respond to corporate challenges and ensure continued operation and profitability. There clearly is a need to continue to change and challenge attitudes and behaviour of those existing over-represented groups in the Scottish transport sector. Those over-represented in the sector are not necessarily themselves anti-diversity but may either ignore the challenges overtly or implicitly or view it as something that has nothing to do with them or a threat to them rather than an opportunity for further growth and development of the sector. This requires people to speak out raising the key challenges and seek to continuously improve representation and diversity across all forms of society, the transport sector included.
- 4.3 There is clearly the need for the transport sector to response to the challenge of increasing diversity with evidence, a plan of action and identification and dissemination of best practice, creating a clear direction of travel and peer pressure on all members of the industry to acknowledge and embrace change. You also need to actively challenge the idea of merit and “survival of the fittest” type arguments head on, it is the volume allowed for these types of attitudes that are a key part why people from across all spectrum of Scottish society do not apply to the transport sector. Having a clear plan, regularly reviewing diversity actions and auditing the skills base of your sector are key actions, as are reviewing the language used across the sector and how significant bodies or gatherings of the transport sector actively promote diversity.
- 4.4 STSG could commission further provocation pieces in the year of the new NTS to focus the headlights on the important issues of diversity, equality, socio-economic inclusion.
- 4.5 Behaviour change takes time and diversity will not be addressed overnight. However, action can continue and increase to address gender diversity and other under-representation within the transport sector. Clearly in terms of NTS2, Infrastructure Commission and perhaps linking to the Poverty and Inequality Commission in 2019 the time for a Social Justice Group on Transport to seek to address diversity and barriers arising from inequalities and inequities concerning gender, physical or mental abilities, to black and minority

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ethnic (BME) status, employment sectors and income may be needed^{xxxvi}.

- 4.6 We need to get more of the transport sector on the diversity journey. Bettering the balance, bettering the world of transport, celebrating and supporting women's achievement on Friday 8th March and every day, and get more men calling for a more gender-balanced world. If half the passengers you serve as an industry cannot easily get on board and the other half of your population are simply passengers in the diversity debate, we won't achieve sustainable mobility let alone diversity in transport.
- 4.7 "Driving around the city, it didn't take long to realise that if you didn't have a vehicle, a machine of speed, you owned poverty. It was yet another city dying of a disease whose anatomy was just beyond the inhabitant's grasp". David Wojnarowicz, Close to the Knives 1991.

5.0 References

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^{xxxv} <https://firstminister.gov.scot/official-opening-of-the-queensferry-crossing/>

^{xxxvi} <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Still-Not-Visible.pdf>