

Autumn Meeting - Saturday 20th November at 14:00

Quality [Central Station] Hotel, Gordon Street, Glasgow

Speaker: Alistair Watson (SPT)

Meeting for Members - Non-members welcome

Alistair will give a presentation, which will be followed by questions and discussion.

At some stage there will be a break for refreshments (not at the start at 2 o'clock).

This is members' half-yearly opportunity to discuss any matters of interest and to assist the committee in formulating the policy and campaign strategy of the Branch.



The last two meetings have focused on the east of Scotland (Waverley Station and the Edinburgh Airport link). This meeting gives us an opportunity to focus on the west, as well as to discuss matters of great importance nationally - for example the First ScotRail franchise, the planned *Transport for Scotland* authority and its relation to the area transport organisations, and UK matters such as the July 2004 DfT paper *The Future of Rail*.

Ken Sutherland writes:

Councillor Alistair Watson was previously a train driver with ScotRail, and chaired the Land Services Committee (which has transport responsibility) with Glasgow City Council. He currently is Chairman of the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority, and a key figure on the wider WESTRANS grouping of west of Scotland councils, and doubtless current/previous COSLA experience. Ralph Barker and Ken Sutherland had a very positive discussion with Alistair in September 2003 - primarily on the Glasgow Airport Rail Link/CrossRail issues, as well as progress on the Hamilton-Larkhall/Anniesland-Maryhill re-openings.

Obviously whilst these projects are key elements in rail regeneration within the SPT area, Alistair would be delighted to discuss a range of other issues/concerns here, as well as elsewhere in Scotland, and the UK, as best he can - including Virgin Trains developments (as Alistair now works for Virgin management).

It's getting late now, but if you have burning questions or issues, could you drop a note of them to Ken Sutherland (12A Dirlerton Gate, Bearsden, Glasgow, G61 1NP) as soon as possible.

EDITORIAL

It's been difficult to separate fact from fantasy over the last few months as new and revived schemes for public transport have been released. At last the summer is over, and perhaps the silly season for the media is now over too.

'Big Projectitis'

'Big projectitis' is a part of the problem. There's much more publicity mileage for government and local authorities in large expensive projects than there is in modest spending in upgrading and extending existing facilities. An example is the question of Glasgow-Edinburgh. There are two routes and half of a third. Railfuture has long been campaigning for the Falkirk route to be upgraded especially by electrification, which would solve many of the problems and bring the line back to the speed it was many years ago. But it's obviously much better publicity to propose a bullet train between the two cities (at a cost of £1.5bn to £4bn). This would be fantastic for a few users of the route, but a very large number on that line are not travelling between the two cities, they are travelling from Polmont to Edinburgh or Falkirk to Glasgow (or even Linlithgow to Croy). Then there has had to be the discussion as to whether a bullet train would need a completely new dedicated track or whether it could be accommodated on the existing track.

And what about a tunnel under the Forth? I thought we had killed that idea in our April 1st article in the last Branch News, but it's surfaced again. It was even quoted in the press that TRANSform Scotland was in favour of a tunnel. The four members of Railfuture who are on the Board of TRANSform have never heard of this 'policy'! Add to this Brian Soutar is backing a Forth Ferry - which would be a modern vessel and not like some of the previous ones (10 minutes from Kirkcaldy to Edinburgh has been quoted!).

The Third Forth Bridge

In 1996 a proposal to build a second Forth Road Bridge was put down assisted by a campaign of a number of bodies of which RDS was one. The group worked together under the name of the Forthright Alliance. Now FETA (Forth Estuary Transport Authority) is resurrecting this plan, but with significant modifications. Their argument is that the Forth Road Bridge is carrying far more than was envisaged when it was built and there are problems in normal use exacerbated when repairs are necessary. They see a second road bridge as taking mainly public transport but also HGVs as normal, and then other traffic when the old road bridge is under repair or otherwise restricted.

This second road bridge is Package 4. Packages 1,2 & 3 propose a variety of measures, most of which are sustainable such as managing demand or developing public transport which almost no-one would oppose. There is a big hike in the cost for Package 4, which includes a new multi-modal bridge which would carry the kind of road

traffic listed above, but would also have provision for either light rail (trams from Dunfermline to Edinburgh?) or heavy rail. The bridge would be a two-span suspension bridge using the Beamer Rock for the middle pier. Technically it is possible, but of course this is the most expensive Package. Once again 'big projectitis' is a factor. FETA (which has Fife, Edinburgh and West Lothian council representatives on its board) would love the glory of creating this big project (cost about £750m), but the Packages 1 to 3 contain measures which have no glamour but would actually solve a lot of the problems.

The dilemma for Railfuture is acute. With the 1996 proposal for a road-only bridge it was easy for Railfuture to be against that proposal. With the possibility (but not the certainty) of this including a rail facility we have to consider the possible benefits for rail. In a brief discussion at the last Committee Meeting we felt that for the moment we should sit on the fence - we cannot automatically oppose a bridge which would enhance the rail service, but know that there are many other measures at a much lower cost (like improving the signalling on the present Forth Rail Bridge) could make a significant improvement to the services. Yet we would still oppose a new bridge which was for road traffic only. The Scotsman Transport Correspondent wrote a clear summary of the situation complete with supplementary 'For' and 'Against' pieces. You can read this at <http://news.scotsman.com/archive.cfm?id=1024962004>

There is a consultation which closes on 30th September, and there is now a web-form for your views. Beware, the questions are loaded so that one tends to go through saying 'yes' to most of the questions (it is generally blindingly obvious that most of the things suggested make sense), it's easy to go on and click 'yes' to build a new bridge without realising that building a bridge has several variants in the plans. The least expensive is a new road bridge which, while relieving the load (physically) on the current road bridge, would inevitably mean more cars. The next option is to have light rail included, but as far as I know there are no plans for any other light rail nearer to the estuary than Newbridge. The ultimate option is for a full road and heavy rail bridge, which is what FETA and especially Fife Council would like. Many feel that this is unrealistic and that it would not be funded, and also that the estimated costings do not include approaches by either road or rail to such a bridge. So be careful if you just say 'yes' to a new bridge. Railfuture opposed the 1996 proposals for a new road bridge saying that there were demand management measures which could make it unnecessary. This is still the case. However, we would not necessarily oppose a bridge which included heavy rail. It would still be the case that many other measures at much less expense could make the present Forth Bridge more effective. The reinstatement of the Stirling-Kincardine line, for example, would take the coal trains off the Forth Bridge, and resignalling the bridge (and electrification of the lines to the north) would all reduce the need for another bridge. So be careful with the questions about a new bridge - not any type of bridge will do for us.

If you ignore that and actually write a letter please send Railfuture Scotland a copy. The consultation is at www.feta.gov.uk.

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First ScotRail

First have indicated that they are going to tread softly. After keeping quiet for some time after gaining the franchise, the indications now are that there will be a range of improvements but no sudden sweeping changes.

The initial statement said:

“FirstGroup said customers would see improved punctuality and reliability, and increased passenger capacity. The company plans to introduce almost 30 new trains providing around 5,900 more seats throughout Scotland.

There are also plans to reduce overcrowding so that no-one should have to wait more than 10 minutes for a seat.

Mary Dickson, managing director for First ScotRail, said, “We are delighted to have reached agreement in terms of the First ScotRail franchise.

“This new partnership marks a fresh start for Scotland’s railways and an exciting time for First ScotRail.

“We are committed to improving rail services across Scotland and are making a real investment in rail infrastructure to improve reliability, punctuality, performance and enhance customer service.

Toilets and trolleys and new uniforms for staff seem to be top of the agenda at present. Hopefully it will develop to cover reliability, punctuality, seating capacity and getting people where they want to be when they want to be there.

Glasgow is to benefit from later evening trains. This will not be of use to many clubbers, but will help people wanting an evening in the city at a concert, opera or cinema who will not have to leave before the final curtain.

‘Play it again, Sam – Say it again, Nicol’

Tied in with the ‘big projectitis’ syndrome is the ‘announce it more than once’ syndrome. Whether or not the intention is to deceive, it is quite common for a package of actions to be announced and a cost to be given while a part of the measures have already been announced and costed. The impression is thus given that more money is being spent than is actually the case. The announcement of an extra 5900 seats and 30 trains has been proclaimed in such a way that many think that this is the result of First gaining the ScotRail franchise, when in fact it was arranged prior to the change of franchise.

Power handover

Three months after the announcement it’s still not clear exactly how the powers which used to be with the SRA will be exercised by the Scottish Executive. It’s almost certain that Transport Scotland (or it may be intended to call it ‘Transport for Scotland’) which was proposed over a year ago will be the body which will actually manage processes, but as Transport Scotland hasn’t been set up yet it’s all rather nebulous. Scotland on Sunday had a spread on this in July, and quoted the Minister as saying that one advantage might be the speeding up of the preliminaries – the committees which Parliament has to set up for every new line (currently there are committees for the SAK line and the Waverley Line – as well as for Edinburgh’s Tram lines 1 and 2). And it takes the Committees several years for each process. Rail franchises are now being granted for longer periods than before, and the Minister is also keen to see the Executive thinking more long-term. If much is devolved from the Scottish Executive to Westrans, Sestran, Hitrans & Nestrans, what about the unaligned areas – Dumfries & Gallo-way, Perth & Kinross, and Angus?



Scottish Web Site....

www.RailFutureScotland.org.uk

The UK Railfuture web site is worth looking at if you don’t already use it. Railfuture also has a campaigners’ bulletin which is emailed to those who request to be on the list. This is quite useful to find out what’s going on in other areas without the 2-3 month time-lag of waiting to read about it in Railwatch.

Partly to try to provide a similar service on specifically Scottish matters, we now have a website for Scotland. In general it tries to avoid UK matters and is acting as a cuttings agency for Scottish affairs. The press (as already mentioned) has been having a bit of a field-day on transport matters in the last 3 months, and we have not always kept up with it. In addition our research officer Ken Sutherland is keen at spotting press articles and making responses. Quite a number of his letters have been published recently under the Railfuture name. We are grateful to him for the time he takes with this, and the quick response which means that our viewpoint is often published.

Also on the site is a miscellaneous collection of links to rails sites technical, operator, user and ‘anorak’ oriented.

There is the option to add a discussion forum (not yet implemented) and to provide a resource list of reference material.

The website is at www.RailFutureScotland.org.uk Not all sections are completed (or even started) yet, but a core is there, including recent past issues of Branch Notes.

Airport Links

It was announced in early August that there would be public meetings and consultation in Edinburgh during September and early October. If so, they have been holding these in secret, as at least the Editor of this newsletter has not heard of any such and can find no reference to any in the local press.

Glasgow has come up with another problem – to connect Paisley St James to the airport would involve laying the track across the St James Playing Fields (some 20 pitches). This is a much-loved and much-used facility, and it’s almost certain that equivalent facilities would have to be provided elsewhere if they were lost on this site.

Integrated Transport

Everyone talks about it – few do it, but here are some encouraging signs recently:

The City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) and tie (Transport Initiatives Edinburgh) have got together to promote Transport Edinburgh. To enable people to make an informed choice, the ‘big picture’ is being presented for the first time under the banner of ‘Transport Edinburgh’. This simple title brings together all the completed, ongoing and future transport projects. They list the current position, what is planned to be achieved by 2006 and what will be done after 2006. It covers trams, trains, buses, road, congestion charging, parking, walking and cycling and safe streets.

Moir Lockhead, interviewed by Scotland on Sunday, is also quoted as saying “A journey doesn’t start at the railway station or bus stop. It starts where you are. Our aim is to make it end to end.”

RAILFUTURE SCOTLAND

RESPONSE TO WESTRANS JOINT TRANSPORT STRATEGY TO 2025

Railfuture has prepared a detailed (20 page) response which only makes sense to someone who has the consultation questions in front of them. Note that this is a 20-year plan. Note also that Dumfries & Galloway is now included in Westrans. Formerly D&G and Tayside were 'non-aligned' areas. This is a logical extension of Westrans. Tayside is more difficult as it links into Sestran, Nestran and possibly even Hitran. Reproduced here is the summary which gives the flavour of the response. Members who would like the complete response emailed (not printed!) can ask the Secretary for a copy.

Introduction

Railfuture campaigns for better and expanded rail services, including connecting bus services and railfreight. Railfuture represents a wide cross-section of the public, including a high proportion of car owners, people with restricted mobility and businesses. The JTS (Joint Transport Strategy) advocates many of the projects for which Railfuture has campaigned over many years.

Railfuture Scotland is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the JTS Consultation. It is a necessarily complex document and, because of the wide interest of Railfuture, the response is also complex. A response is made more difficult because of numerous smaller items in the JTS which are mentioned several times at different points in the JTS. The reasons for this are understood but it does not facilitate a concise response. While reference is made to local projects at a local level several clearly local items are mentioned in the JTS which leaves respondents unclear as to whether the list is exclusive or not. It is also recognised that many factors are beyond the control of Westrans and that several external controls have been re-organised even since the JTS was first published. It is emphasised that Railfuture welcomes the JTS content which is considered the most progressive and most viable of the many, many transport consultations of recent years.

Railfuture also welcomes the inclusion of Dumfries & Galloway within Westrans as the former exclusion of this council rendered the concept of regional transport authorities invalid. A detailed response is made to the JTS and, although not concise, is made item by item corresponding to the JTS document. However a summary is provided of the main points with the detailed response following as an appendix.

Summary

- 0.1 Railfuture supports the main policy of the JTS consisting of improvements to public transport, including the standard rail network, and transfer of heavy freight off the roads and onto other transport modes.
- 0.2 While not having a detailed interest in roads it is noted that the majority of the JTS proposed new infrastructure investment is for major roads and motorways, that the Scottish Executive target of stabilising road traffic at 2001 levels by 2021 is not mentioned and is unlikely to be achieved in Westrans because of the massive capacity increase in urban motorways and major roads combined with insufficient, although still politically courageous, traffic demand management measures. Some reference to the future availability and cost of petroleum fuel for transport may have been expected.
- 0.3 It is welcome that the main proposal is to improve public transport prior to more effective demand management for road traffic but it is considered that this improvement must be on a scale not even imagined for over fifty years and must be combined with reductions in fares well below the incremental cost of car use.
- 0.4 The major rail projects are very strongly supported and the JTS is commended for its strength of support for:-
 - 0.4.1 Glasgow CrossRail with new links, stations and interchanges including Glasgow Cross and West Street and high a capacity junction and passenger attractive station location at High Street as well as the Strathbungo Link.
 - 0.4.2 Glasgow Airport Rail Link including the essential restoration of capacity by multi-tracking between Glasgow and Paisley.
 - 0.4.3 Airdrie to Bathgate railway re-opening linking former mining communities and

linking North Lanarkshire with Edinburgh and West Lothian with Glasgow.

- 0.5 The medium rail projects are also welcomed including many station re-openings and shorter extensions such as the Larkhall Line now under construction.
- 0.6 The proposals for capacity increases on many lines are supported, especially on the Glasgow, Kilmarnock to Carlisle Line where it is believed this should aim for re-doubling throughout with restoration of overtaking loops rather than just a passing loop.
- 0.7 Relatively simple restorations of passenger services on existing lines are also welcome, e.g. Motherwell to Stirling, but should also include South Lanarkshire to Edinburgh.
- 0.8 There is concern that some good proposals are dropped in out of context and without a route strategy, e.g. station at Abington, which should be emphasised as part of the West Coast Main Line Corridor strategy for local passenger services and railfreight as well as for long distance passenger services.
- 0.9 The emphasis on railfreight in the JTS is particularly welcome although there are many details, capacity and industry planning issues to be involved along with the main problem of the excessive effective subsidy to road haulage in contrast with the requirement for railfreight (and water freight) to operate commercially with grants only for certain specified facilities and flows.
- 0.10 The inclusion of longer-term line re-openings is welcome, including the Kilmacolm Line and possible Cairnryan links. Other long-term re-openings not specifically mentioned should include Kirkintilloch, East Kilbride to Hamilton, Larkhall to Lesmahagow and Dumfries to Locharbriggs with planning protection for a Dumfries to Stranraer direct route.
- 0.11 There is a concern about the "Internal" or "External" connectivity issues as many external corridors are essential for local and regional transport needs.
- 0.12 Ticketing issues are important for both cost to the user and convenience of interchange. They should cover the whole of the JTS area and preferably beyond and should not be restricted to within the SPT Boundary.
- 0.13 To meet the increase in public transport use with reliability there is agreement about concerns for not only platform capacity but also train access capacity at Central and Queen Street High Level stations. Extra tracks into these high level stations should be planned in the long term not withstanding possible diversion of services through the low level stations. Although agreeing that the deep cross-city tunnel proposal does not mutually exclude Cross-rail the proposal, as described previous to the JTS, did not appear attractive to passengers.
- 0.14 Proposals for "Mass Transit" and LRT are poorly defined and have little credibility as yet although there must be a role for transport intermediate between standard rail and deregulated bus. Standard rail does work and is popular and should not be converted or foregone unless a clear advantage is shown for "Mass Transit" other than it avoiding the artificial failures of bus deregulation and rail privatisation.
- 0.15 Completely omitted is the subject of electrification of the Glasgow to Edinburgh via Falkirk High route. Although presently unfashionable its advantages are essential in the long term. It will be extremely difficult to implement and a strategy should be considered as a matter of urgency.
- 0.16 Also not mentioned are the essential overnight sleeper services and the aspiration for direct services through the channel tunnel. The success for passengers of the Rosyth to Zeebrugge Ferry shows the demand for long distance services is not totally met by air travel.
- 0.17 Modern regional hospitals require transport for all sectors of society and are major traffic generators. A strategy is required for rail links with hospitals.

The JTS is commended and Railfuture Scotland would be pleased to meet with Westrans whenever convenient.

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All possible effort is made to ensure that facts in this newsletter are accurate. Please tell the editor of any inaccuracies.

Opinions are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the policies of *railfuture* and *railfuture* Scotland.

Branch Notes 58 edited & compiled by Mike Harrison, 11 Stead's Place, EDINBURGH, EH6 5DY © 2004 railfuture Scotland

Where is it?

Branch Notes 56 had a photo (Glasgow coat of arms in stone on a building) with this caption. The answer is St Pancras Station. Did you get it right?

What about the photos on pages 2 & 3 of this issue?