

Meeting of the Cross Party Group on Rail in the Scottish Parliament

Minute of the meeting held on Tuesday, 17th June 2014, 5.15pm

Present:

Michael Connelly (Abellio); Iain MacDonald (Light Rail Transit Association); Geoffrey Evison (Campaign for Borders Rail); Ross Williams (Pagoda PR); Tom Thorburn (RAGES); Barrie Forrest (RAGES); Roderick McDougall (Rail Future Scotland); Ian Richard (RailQwest); Vic MacKinlay (Light Rail Transit Association); Robert Samson (Passenger Focus); Stephen Young (Attending in a personal capacity); Ken Sutherland (RailQwest); Niamh Hegarty (Network Rail); Nigel Wunsch (Network Rail); David Dickson (Network Rail); Martin Brown (Beattock Station Action Group); Ron McLean (Beattock Station Action Group); Phil McGarry (RMT Union); Jim Gray (RMT Union); Gordon Martin (RMT Union); Garry Clark (Scottish Chambers of Commerce); Roisin Milligan (Scottish Chambers of Commerce); Richard Carr (SAYLSA); Margaret Smith (Arriva); Gordon MacLeod (Transport Scotland); Margaret McDougall MSP; Graeme Dey MSP; John Mason MSP; Neil Bibby MSP; Maureen Watt MSP; Keith Brown MSP

Apologies:

Eric Guthrie (TACTRAN); Ian Cochrane (Glasgow Prestwick Airport); Allison Cosgrove (RAGES); John Finnie MSP; Dr Richard Simpson MSP; Lawrence Marshall (Capital Rail Action Group); Norrie Innes (Rock DCM / Action Barras Calton); Patrick Harvie MSP; Hugh Henry MSP; Mark Griffin MSP; Allan McLean (Secretary)

Welcome from the Chair

The Minister opened his remarks focussing on the significant amount of rail investment undertaken by the current Scottish Government.

Questions to the Minister

1. John Mason: Mr Mason asked is there a right amount to spend on rail?
2. Stephen Young: What will the Government do to prioritise spend on transport projects?
3. Graeme Dey: Are we getting the right balance between fast journey trains and getting the right number of stations?
4. Margaret Smith: Ms Smith asked about the integration of bus and rail.
5. Ken Sutherland: Indicated that he felt that the Government was failing to take a more long term view of rail investment.

6. Phil McGarry: Mr McGarry indicated his unhappiness about the decision to award the sleeper contract to Serco.
7. Geoffrey Evison: Mr Evison asked when a railway would be built to Tweedbank and could it be extended to Hawick?
8. Mark Brown: Mr Brown indicated he felt that Beattock Station is the best and most practical station to open and would the Minister be prepared to visit Beattock and undertake a site visit?
9. Robert Samson: Mr Samson indicated that passengers wanted a greater frequency of trains.
10. Barrie Forrest: Mr Forrest drew the attention of the Minister to Berwickshire and East Lothian and spoke positively of the outstanding bid for works.
11. Roderick MacDougall: Indicated that although the subsidy per head in England is £2.16, the subsidy in Scotland is over £7 per head and this was obviously not sustainable. He also asked if the Minister agreed that it is best to open up more stations.
12. Richard Carr: Mr Carr asked if the Government could re-evaluate Stena passengers' integration with local rail stations.
13. Neil Bibby: Spoke about links to Glasgow Airport, Crossrail and the Government's position on both issues.

The Minister left at 17:59 hours.

Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were moved by Michael Connolly of Abellio and seconded by Roderick McDougall. Phil McGarry asked if Stephen Boyd at the Trade Union Congress could be added to the Group's Mailing List.

Transport Scotland

Members raised the point that it had been useful to have Transport Scotland at the meeting and they would be invited to every meeting. Mr Mason and Mr Bibby undertook to write to Transport Scotland and raise concerns about this. It was further asked if concerns about small rural communities and rail could be raised with Transport Scotland. It was agreed that Richard Carr would draft a letter to which Mr Mason and Mr Bibby could put their names.

Topics for Future Meetings

It was agreed that the following would be added to the list of potential items for future meetings:

High speed rail

New Scotail operator

Hitchi / East Coast Trainline

Light Railway UK

Regional Transport Partnerships

Glasgow Subway

Edinburgh Trams

Trade Unions

GARL

Freight

Sleeper / Serco

Electrification

Public Ownership

Transport Scotland

Integration of bus operators

Heritage Rail

Date, time and venue of next meeting

The meeting closed at 18:35 hours and the date for a future meeting would be established.