



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 20 February 2013

Session 4

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INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT COMMITTEE
4th Meeting 2013, Session 4

CONVENER

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Adam Ingram (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)

*Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)

*Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)

*Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Lab)

*Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Tom Ballantine (Stop Climate Chaos Scotland)

Keith Brown (Minister for Transport and Veterans)

Peter Hawkins (Spokes)

Councillor Lesley Hinds (City of Edinburgh Council)

Nigel Holmes (Scotland's 2020 Climate Group)

Colin Howden (Transform Scotland)

Keith Irving (Living Streets Scotland)

Ewan Kennedy (City of Edinburgh Council)

Peter Lloyd (Scottish Government)

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP) (Committee Substitute)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee

Wednesday 20 February 2013

[The Deputy Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Deputy Convener (Adam Ingram): Welcome to the fourth meeting in 2013 of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee. I remind members to switch off mobile phones, as they affect the broadcasting system. We have received apologies from Maureen Watt, and I am standing in as convener for the meeting. I welcome Gil Paterson as a substitute member. I think that this is his first time at the committee. Is that right, Gil?

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): That is right, convener.

The Deputy Convener: We have also received apologies from three witnesses for our round-table discussion on RPP2, the draft second report on proposals and policies, "Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027": Dr Maja Piecyk, Professor Iain Docherty and Dr Jillian Anable.

We have a busy agenda, so we will get started. Agenda item 1 is a decision on taking business in private. I seek the committee's agreement to take agenda items 6, 7 and 8 in private, to allow the committee to consider our approach to the community transport inquiry, the evidence that we will hear from the City of Edinburgh Council on the Forth Road Bridge Bill and the evidence from stakeholders on the transport aspects of RPP2. I also seek agreement to take consideration of reports on the bill and RPP2 in private at future meetings. Do members agree to take those items in private?

Members indicated agreement.

High-speed Rail

10:01

The Deputy Convener: The second agenda item is evidence on high-speed rail from the Minister for Transport and Veterans, Keith Brown, and Peter Lloyd, rail policy executive with the Scottish Government. Welcome, gentlemen. I invite the minister to make any opening remarks.

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the emerging plans for high-speed rail in the United Kingdom and Scotland's response. The committee will know that, at the end of January, the Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin, announced the UK Government's initial preferred route for new high-speed rail lines to Manchester and Leeds. That of course built on the earlier announcement on the route from London to Birmingham.

The route is currently being developed to detailed design level to support the passage of what will be a hybrid bill to approve the scheme. I understand that the bill will be submitted to the UK Parliament by the end of this year. Indeed, the UK Government's plan is that the phase 1 hybrid bill will receive royal assent in 2015, with construction work starting as early as 2016. The design and approvals process for phase 2 will follow closely behind that.

The Secretary of State for Transport and his Cabinet colleagues stand firmly behind the proposals. There is no doubting that the UK Government has a real commitment to high-speed rail. For our part, we have voiced our support for the development of high-speed rail, but we have done so with a caveat. As our partnership group for high-speed rail, the fast track Scotland group, has clearly stated, the case for high-speed rail in the UK is significantly stronger when Scotland is fully connected to the new network. That recognises Scotland's strong economic contribution and the strength of the Glasgow-Edinburgh city region. The convener, Maureen Watt, witnessed the strong support that there is in northern England for faster rail connections with Scotland at the faster and further high-speed rail conference in November last year.

The business case also recognises the environmental benefits of Scotland's inclusion and the ability of high-speed rail to capture domestic aviation's leading market position. However, there are threats to realising those benefits. From 2026, new services will run from London to Glasgow on new high-speed lines where those are available, but then they will have to run on the existing network. Over existing tracks, the services will

actually run more slowly than the trains that currently operate on the west coast main line. Therefore, any improvement in journey times to Scotland will be modest. The situation will improve when high-speed rail lines eventually reach Manchester and Leeds, as proposed for 2032, so journey times will be better but, north of Manchester, nothing as yet is planned to improve line capacity.

Incidentally, Network Rail says that capacity will be exhausted by the mid-2020s. There will be little scope to provide additional services on the line and to meet rising passenger demand. We have always said that it does not seem sensible to spend all the money that it is proposed to spend on high-speed rail and then have to undertake a substantial upgrade to the west coast main line because of capacity problems, particularly given that billions of pounds were spent on that line just over a decade ago. It seems to us that there is a more efficient way to spend public money.

The phasing of the high-speed railway's construction is also of concern to us. In 2026, when phase 1 is completed, journey times from London to Birmingham will fall from one hour 24 minutes to only 49 minutes, which is a 42 per cent time saving. In 2032, when the Manchester to London line is completed, the journey will take one hour and eight minutes. That is an hour quicker than at present, which represents a 47 per cent saving on today's journey times. At that point, Glasgow to London journey times will fall to three hours and 38 minutes, which is a saving of less than 20 per cent.

In Scotland, we will not have overall journey time reductions of the magnitude that will be enjoyed by others until a full high-speed line connects Edinburgh to Glasgow. There is real potential for an extended period of relative economic disadvantage that would fall not just on Scotland; it would also impact on the north of England. That was identified in "Fast Track Scotland"—and the partnership group that prepared that report is made up of leading businesses and civic and transport groups. That is why we have been pressing for high-speed rail to be developed both faster and further than the current plans, and it is why we are playing our part in the plans so far.

Our approach has been twofold. First, I have already agreed with the UK Government on Scotland's leading role in planning for phase 3 of high-speed rail—north of Manchester and Leeds. We will work with the Department for Transport in developing route options for high-speed rail to Scotland. As you will be aware, Patrick McLoughlin has already spoken of his ambition of achieving London to Scotland rail services within a three-hour journey time, which was reflected in

last month's command paper. That paper reiterates the need for a study to address both journey time and capacity benefits on lines to Scotland. My officials are progressing the proposals with the DFT and we will be able to provide updates on the terms of the study, and on the timelines and outputs, once they have been agreed.

Alongside that, we have already announced planning for new high-speed rail infrastructure in Scotland, which will link Edinburgh and Glasgow—crucially, planning ahead, with provision to link that line to the south and the existing west coast main line in the interim period, before new cross-border infrastructure is delivered. That would provide faster access to the cities for current cross-border services, as well as the new high-speed services that are planned for 2026.

A new line of this type would not only benefit Edinburgh and Glasgow, important as those benefits would be in terms of reduced travel time and economic advantage. A new line would provide a step change in rail capacity across the central belt. Separating cross-border services from internal services would free capacity for better local and commuting services. A new line providing the majority of end-to-end Edinburgh to Glasgow journeys could relieve pressure on existing services and could allow better connectivity for communities on existing lines. It could allow for the development of new stations and better train paths and times for services between the central belt and Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth and all the intermediate stops. Those potential benefits will be considered in our outline business case planning, which will report to me in spring 2014.

I do not doubt the UK Government's commitment to press ahead with a high-speed rail project, and we have to plan ahead to ensure the greatest and earliest benefits to Scotland from those proposals. That is why we have adopted a twin approach, with partnership planning for high-speed rail from the north of England to Scotland—I hope to go to the north of England again in the next few weeks to build that case with some of our partners there—and our wish to realise the benefits of a new line from Edinburgh to Glasgow at the earliest possible opportunity, and to spread those benefits as widely as possible across Scotland.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

I ask the minister to expand on how, specifically, the Scottish Government is engaging in the development of HS2 at a political and official level.

Keith Brown: We had a number of meetings with the previous transport secretary, Justine Greening. We asked her to come to Scotland to discuss the issues, and we exchanged a number

of letters and correspondence. There have also been a number of phone calls, including with Patrick McLoughlin, and we have been putting the case for us to be involved as soon as possible. We have been trying to work in concert with the partnership group for high-speed rail. That has been a real strength, as the group includes businesses, trade unions, civic partnerships and those who are very much involved in transport. That adds a different dimension to the representations that we have made to the United Kingdom Government, in which we have highlighted the broad base of support in Scotland.

In the meantime, as we are a bit further away from some of the more contentious issues that require to be dealt with, especially along the furthest-south parts of the proposed new line, we have the opportunity to keep that unity going and that is what we have tried to do. Substantial discussions have taken place between DFT officials and Scottish Government officials, we have had debates in the Parliament and letters have been sent. We have had fairly constant dialogue with UK ministers to put the case for Scotland to be included at the earliest possible opportunity.

Alex Johnstone: The minister made clear in his introduction how he reacted to the latest announcement on phase 2 of the HS2 project. I am inclined to agree with him that the project must be tackled on a UK-wide basis. Does he not see that it is very much a UK project and that any break in the relationship between Scotland and the rest of the UK might simply mean that Scotland would have to bear a much greater part of the cost?

Keith Brown: Absolutely not. If we look at how the UK has dealt with rail services in Scotland in the past, we can remember promises from previous UK Governments that Euro services would go from Scotland straight to Paris. A train from London to Paris can take two hours, but it still takes four hours to go from London to Edinburgh or Glasgow. It cannot be said that the development of rail services and particularly of cross-border rail services has been well served by previous UK Governments.

Across Europe, there are high-speed and non-high-speed rail services between any number of countries, so it is perfectly possible to adapt such services. If we wanted to be superficial, we could say that Belgium, France, Holland and Germany have managed—despite being different countries—to develop high-speed rail services far better than we seem to have managed to do in the UK. Future constitutional change can do nothing but help the possibility of improving the services that we have.

Alex Johnstone: Would the minister expect a future UK Government to engage in the construction of railways in an independent Scotland?

Keith Brown: The question raises a vital point. People sometimes assume that our arguments are all about the benefits for Scotland, but having proper high-speed services to Scotland would have massive benefits for London and the rest of England. The potential for benefiting both countries in respect of the amount of trade that is carried on is huge, and that would persist, regardless of the constitutional settlement.

Gil Paterson: A couple of years ago, the Parliament visited America for tartan day. I was there and I was struck by the fact that American plans for developing a high-speed rail link relied on a route into Canada and on close co-operation. Do you have comments on or knowledge of how two economic units approach such matters to achieve their interests?

Keith Brown: The USA and Canada have substantial co-operation, which they realise benefits their economies and both countries. I think that I am right in saying that the Canadian national railways were developed by a Scot many years ago. The USA and Canada seem to have no problem in collaborating.

Interesting thinking is coming from the United States. Professor Richard Florida has had the idea of mega-regions, which he says can benefit the economies of areas hugely if they are served by high-speed rail. He does not specify countries; he talks about areas—usually served by large cities—that can benefit massively from improved rail links. That is not about borders but about developing the economic potential in areas. We can learn a lot from how the US and Canada co-operate.

Gil Paterson: On the point that Mr Johnstone made, since we and business have been totally ignored and carriages that were built and promised for Scotland have been used elsewhere, is it more likely that we would get a better deal—such as a vital route through the Channel tunnel—as an independent country than from relying on folk who make promises that never materialise?

10:15

Keith Brown: There is no doubt that there is some cynicism because of past commitments that have not been fulfilled. However, Justine Greening previously and Patrick McLoughlin have seemed willing to address the issue. We have had a fairly constructive discussion with the UK Government.

It remains the case that neither the previous Labour Government nor the current UK Government has committed to bring high-speed

rail to Scotland, but it is promising that the current Government is engaging with us constructively.

We have said to the UK Government that we can do a lot to help out. We can crack on fairly quickly with the development of high-speed rail; in fact, we have announced our own proposals for Edinburgh to Glasgow which, in a way, might be much quicker to start on than it will be to implement high-speed rail in some of the more problematic areas such as the Chilterns. There is no reason why a line has to be started at one point and move in a linear fashion to another point. It can start at different points, which is what we are doing with the Borders rail project.

It is important to keep a constructive discussion going. I do not think that constitutional change will be a driver. It is understood that Scotland will have to contribute financially to high-speed rail in any event, so it is as well to maintain a productive relationship with the UK Government right through the process.

The Deputy Convener: The estimated completion date for phase 2 of high-speed rail is 2033, which is a long time away. Does the Scottish Government hope to get something under way within the next decade or so? Is that a possibility?

Keith Brown: We will do that. Our proposal is to have the Edinburgh to Glasgow electrification completed by 2024. The date that I have been given for the completion of phase 2 of high speed 2 is 2032. To underline the point that you made, convener, we have said to the UK Government that we do not think that we have to wait that long; in fact, we think that there are real benefits to be had from moving more quickly on high-speed rail.

We have not accepted the position that we will not start looking at further development until 2032; we are pushing for it to happen just now, and I have tried to point out where that is in the UK Government's interest as well as in Scotland's interest.

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab): You said that the business case will be produced in 2014. Is that the timescale for having more information about indicative routes, costings and so on? Will that information be part of your business case or will there be further detail earlier?

Keith Brown: I think that the 2014 business case that I referred to was for our Edinburgh to Glasgow proposal. Obviously, how that would tie in with the routes going south is important. We will receive that business case in spring next year.

Elaine Murray: I know the west coast main line fairly well and I wonder how and by how much high-speed rail will reduce times. At the moment, people can change at Carlisle, Lockerbie or

Carstairs, where the route branches between Edinburgh and Glasgow. I cannot envisage how going up to Glasgow and taking the high-speed train from there to Edinburgh will make the journey faster than changing at Carstairs or Lockerbie.

Keith Brown: I will ask Peter Lloyd to comment on that. Part of what the Glasgow to Edinburgh proposal is about is showing our eagerness to get on with things. There has been mild criticism in the past, with people asking what Scotland was doing. We are putting our cards on the table and showing a real level of commitment. The Glasgow to Edinburgh proposal will make improvements, which Peter will talk about, although not nearly as many as should be made if the part between the central belt of Scotland and the rest of the west coast main line going south is improved. By 2024, when we hope to have established the Edinburgh to Glasgow high-speed link, the west coast main line will have reached capacity and will be clogging up.

Peter Lloyd (Scottish Government): The proposition that we will test through business case planning will include a direct Edinburgh to Glasgow line as well as an option of a connection to the existing west coast main line.

There would be an advantage to cross-border journey times from bypassing the congested parts of the existing rail network. That would improve cross-border journey times and support the introduction of high-speed services that will run on a high-speed line to Birmingham and then Manchester, and then continue to Scotland. There are journey time benefits to be investigated.

As the minister alluded to in his statement, separating cross-border traffic as part of that scheme could benefit the existing network, as it would release capacity and enable the delivery of better local commuting services across the central belt.

Elaine Murray: I can certainly see that if you separate the fast services and the commuter services, you will be able to improve the commuter services. My difficulty is in understanding how that will work in 2024, when the line will link to the west coast main line, given that we will still have the freight, the other slower stopping services and so on on that line.

Peter Lloyd: There will still be considerable capacity problems on the west coast main line. We will work with the DFT and HS2 Ltd on the planning of, if you like, phase 3 of high-speed rail—the parts from Manchester or Leeds northwards. That might not be the west coast main line; it might be an eastern line or a western line. That will come out through the appraisal of the options. We cannot rule anything out at this time, given those processes.

What the secretary of state has offered in his command paper is a joint study that will consider connections northwards. Under the terms of the command paper, that could involve building an entirely new line or parts of a new line or upgrading the line. The options are open under the terms of the study.

Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland (Lab)): Good morning, minister. The Scottish Government published an update to its infrastructure investment plan earlier this month but it does not refer to the proposed Edinburgh to Glasgow high-speed line. Can you tell me why it was not included?

Keith Brown: As the cabinet secretary has said, the proposal came forward very recently and we are not at a stage where we can put it in. Just as the UK Government does not yet know how it will fund its high-speed rail proposal, we have to work out, first of all, the costing for our proposal and what the potential is. We are in the very early stages. It is perhaps just a question of timing as much as anything else.

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): Staying with the Edinburgh to Glasgow high-speed line, will you put some further meat on the bones of the proposal? In your opening remarks, you highlighted a number of potential benefits. If I heard you correctly, you said that rail capacity across the central belt could be improved and that there would be better connectivity, perhaps new stations and possibly improved journey times. Has a cost benefit analysis been done to allow us to put some figures on the assertions that have been made and to better understand not only the benefits but the costs of providing them? How do those compare with other transport investments that the Scottish Government is making?

Keith Brown: It will have to be done on that basis, as the cost benefit ratios are a fundamental part of any major transport project that we undertake. We are just starting the process now, and we will have the report in the spring next year, but even at this stage it is possible to see the benefits. For example, we have a number of requests for additional stations on different lines between Edinburgh and Glasgow. If we agree to such requests, that inevitably has an impact on journey times because there will be further stopping and starting to pick up passengers at different locations.

The establishment of the high-speed link between Edinburgh and Glasgow will take the bulk of the direct services between those two cities. We will therefore free up capacity elsewhere, plus we will give the option to those who are most concerned with fast journey times. There is a figure, which I cannot bring to mind just now, that shows the economic benefit of every minute that is

taken off journey times, and the benefit is pretty huge—it is surprisingly large. If the high-speed link takes the direct journeys, we can get the best possible journey times but also free up capacity elsewhere.

West Lothian Council would like a station to be developed at Winchburgh. One factor that we would have to consider now is the impact that that would have on journey times on the line, but that will be less of a consideration if people have the option of fast journey times. The proposal releases capacity and enables us to look at serving more places with the other lines that we have. We know that, but actually working out the costs and benefits will be part of the study that we have commissioned, which will come back in the spring next year.

Jim Eadie: Just for completeness and for the record, who is conducting that piece of work?

Keith Brown: Who specifically? I think that Peter Lloyd can tell you—

Jim Eadie: Also, do we know how much it will cost?

Peter Lloyd: It will be taken forward by Transport Scotland. We will identify costs. We are going into a tendering exercise to bring in advice on that at present. We can certainly update the committee on that later. It is an on-going process, but we hope to have it completed shortly.

Jim Eadie: The tendering process for the work has not begun, but you expect a report to be produced by the spring of next year.

Keith Brown: A report will come to me in the spring next year. Yes.

Jim Eadie: Thank you.

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): In evidence to the committee in December, you said that Justine Greening had agreed that you could

“interact with HS2 Ltd—the high-speed rail company”.—
[*Official Report, Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee*, 12 December 2012; c 1197.]

Is the intention to establish a company to build the Scottish end of the high-speed line, which would operate along lines similar to those of HS2 Ltd? What is the delivery vehicle?

Keith Brown: There is currently no intention to establish a separate company to do that. We do not want to duplicate what is already there. HS2 Ltd is a particular type of organisation, which was created for a specific purpose and considers all the planning, route development and costings. We would not necessarily want to replicate that.

It is unfortunate that we have not been involved in the process until now. We have to start with the

people who are working on the high-speed rail proposals for phase 1 and phase 2 in England, because things obviously follow on from the routes and development that they are working on. At this stage, the best option for us is to work with HS2 Ltd. We asked to do that a number of months—possibly even years—ago and it is now happening, and we must see how that develops before we work out delivery options. We have no agreement from the UK Government to deliver high-speed rail north of the areas that I mentioned, and until we have such agreement we cannot have a clearer idea about delivery options.

Gordon MacDonald: You have said in the past that investment in the Edinburgh to Glasgow rail improvement programme was made in the context of an understanding of the impact of high-speed rail on the project and consideration of how best to facilitate the development of high-speed rail. You said that the two projects are complementary. Will they be developed in tandem, or will they be separate projects?

Keith Brown: On the high-speed rail link between Edinburgh and Glasgow, for which we have responsibility, we propose that the study that will take place when the tendering process is complete will take into account what EGIP is doing. In our announcement on EGIP, we said that we did not want to undertake work or incur expense that would be superseded by high-speed rail. We will have the benefit of a study that will be done in the full knowledge of what EGIP will produce, to ensure that the projects are complementary and expenditure is not duplicated.

Peter Lloyd: Currently, there are about 82 million passenger journeys in Scotland a year, and we reckon that by the middle of the next decade the number will have risen to about 100 million. As the minister said, the majority of activity will be across the central belt. As we consider how the lines will cope with that demand we must consider how best to serve the needs of the end-to-end and intermediate markets—we cannot have fast journey times and additional stops.

The high-speed project will allow abstraction of a lot of demand from the existing lines and the improvement of local commuter services. We will have to model in more detail the effect on key junctions to the north and the congestion there. If the option is to deliver a faster Edinburgh to Glasgow connection on existing lines, there could be adverse effects in the context of realising wider benefits on the network. It is about abstraction and taking the bulk of the end-to-end Glasgow to Edinburgh rail travel market out of the existing network, which would enable the existing network to be used for more services that are developed to meet more local needs.

The Deputy Convener: Can you provide an update on the work and current objectives of the Scottish partnership group for high-speed rail?

Keith Brown: The group's work so far has culminated in the report that it produced. It has been important in enabling us to get as far as we have done. UK ministers, in particular, are more receptive to broad-based representation, which includes the business community, councils and civic Scotland. We want to ensure that such representation continues. As I said, I hope to go to the north of England in the next few weeks, to continue to build the case that we have started to build with partners there. The partnership has a crucial role to play in ensuring that representations continue to be made to the UK Government.

The UK Government's announcement was contentious, because the line will go through sensitive areas of England and there are very different views on whether high-speed rail is the best option. The unanimity in Scotland that is exemplified by the partnership group is reassuring for the UK Government.

That is not to say that, when we get to specifying routes, there will be no contention, because it is bound to happen. However, the partnership group has played a crucial role so far and will continue to do so. It is not for me to prescribe exactly what its role is. We will have to come to an agreement with the group about how it carries that out in future.

Gordon MacDonald: I have a question on an unrelated matter. Later on, we will take evidence on another issue that is in your portfolio so, while you are here, I ask you to provide clarification about suggestions in the press that the City of Edinburgh Council fears that it could be left with liabilities and that the Scottish ministers are not prepared to meet all the Forth Estuary Transport Authority's liabilities in the event that it is wound up. Is the council right to be concerned?

Keith Brown: I saw that this morning in the press and it puzzles me. We have made it clear that FETA will pick up all the compensation claims. That will be organised through the Scottish ministers.

The Deputy Convener: I think that you will be asked to give the committee some evidence on that next week, minister, so we can follow up the point with you then. I thank you very much for your evidence.

I suspend the meeting briefly to allow the witnesses to leave.

10:31

Meeting suspended.

10:32

On resuming—

Forth Road Bridge Bill: Stage 1

The Deputy Convener: The third item on the agenda is stage 1 evidence on the Forth Road Bridge Bill from the City of Edinburgh Council. The council submitted a written statement to the committee on 1 February and supplementary written evidence on 13 February.

I welcome the witnesses and thank them for their written submission. We have with us Councillor Lesley Hinds, who is the convener of the council's transport and environment committee; and Ewan Kennedy, who is the transport policy and planning manager.

I invite questions to both witnesses.

Margaret McCulloch: Good morning. In your written evidence, you raise concerns that the dissolution of the Forth Estuary Transport Authority would remove councillors from any front-line role in the management of the Forth bridges. What practical implications could that have for cross-Forth transport?

Councillor Lesley Hinds (City of Edinburgh Council): I am sure that you are aware from the evidence that, at the moment, the FETA board has elected members from a number of local authorities. We have a number of elected members who sit on it. Our representation is all-party, but the local elected member also sits on the board. That gives us not only a strategic transport view but a view from the local level.

If a forum is to be set up to replace FETA, it would be beneficial to have directly elected councillors on it. We have two bridges at the moment and are about to have three. They are important to the economy of Edinburgh. As iconic buildings—I do not know whether we want to call them buildings, but their situation is iconic—they are important to tourism, which is obviously extremely important not only to Edinburgh but to the local community in South Queensferry in particular.

I am sure that all parties want fewer quangos with unelected members. We therefore feel that the forum would be an opportunity to have directly elected members representing the community and addressing transport strategy.

Margaret McCulloch: What do you think having councillors as members would add overall to the operation that would not be given by the proposed approach?

Councillor Hinds: I mean no disrespect to officers, but we are elected members. I mentioned

the local community in South Queensferry, which has had a very good relationship with the FETA board, and there has been good consultation. I believe that having elected members on the forum would give added impetus to community representation. Obviously, officers will provide more of a technical background, but elected members represent the local community and the council as a whole.

Gil Paterson: Do any changes need to be made to accommodate councillors on the forum? Would those councillors be the local ward councillors, or just councillors in general?

Councillor Hinds: That would be up to recommendations from the committee or the minister. However, in principle, we feel that we should have perhaps one or two elected members on the forum to represent the local community. The City of Edinburgh Council is the most affected authority. The other affected local authorities have not commented on the issue, but we feel strongly that the forum should have at least one elected member. It would be up to the local authority to decide whether it would be appropriate to have the transport convener or a local elected member, for example, on the forum. However, we would like to have at least one elected member from Edinburgh on the forum.

Gil Paterson: In effect, there would be two elected members on the forum, because there would have to be one from the authority on the other side of the bridge, would there not? Is that what you are suggesting?

Councillor Hinds: A number of elected members, including from West Lothian, are on the FETA board just now. However, the two authorities that are most affected are Fife Council and the City of Edinburgh Council. Edinburgh and Fife councillors have traditionally alternated as FETA's convener and vice-convener. I am not saying that other local authorities are not important in this context, but the local authorities in Edinburgh and Fife are those that are most directly affected by the bridges, in relation to their economies and so on.

Gil Paterson: I just want to press you a wee bit further. You think that there should be two elected members on the forum in any case. However, all the associated councils might have elected members on it. That would mean that there would be quite a number of councillors on the forum.

Councillor Hinds: I would not like to suggest what the membership should be, but I suggest that the two most relevant local authorities are Fife Council and the City of Edinburgh Council. If the committee or the minister wanted to recommend that councillors should be on the forum, those two local authorities should be represented.

Gil Paterson: Okay.

Elaine Murray: I want to touch on the issue of compensation. The City of Edinburgh Council is concerned about compensation arising from the M9 spur/A90 project. Transport Scotland disagrees with the council's view and has said that there would be adequate cover from the £600,000 referred to in the financial memorandum. However, the City of Edinburgh Council believes, on the basis of submitted claims, that compensation could be as much as £4.4 million and that when FETA is dissolved the liability would not automatically transfer to Scottish ministers but could rest with the council. Can you say a bit more about your concerns?

Councillor Hinds: I will ask Ewan Kennedy to talk about the more technical aspect, but in principle we as a local authority need some comfort that we will not have financial liabilities when FETA is abolished and we move to the new system. I am sure that you, as an elected member, want us to ensure that we protect council tax payers' money. If you do not mind, I will ask Ewan Kennedy, who has been more involved in the process, to say a bit more. I understand that we have had further discussions with Transport Scotland that have been reasonably fruitful.

Ewan Kennedy (City of Edinburgh Council): Good morning. I will give the committee a quick indication of the background to the issue, which relates to the construction of the M9 link road. FETA promoted the link road shortly after it came into being in 2002 as a transport authority, which gave it powers not only to maintain the existing bridge, but to introduce or construct measures in and around the bridge.

After considering how best to procure the M9 link road, FETA asked the City of Edinburgh Council to act as its agent and to design, construct and deliver the road, on the understanding that all costs that the council incurred would be reimbursed by FETA. An issue has arisen around where the liabilities sit. The council proceeded and entered into contracts so, in effect, the liabilities sat with the council. Obviously, the road is now built. The particular issue is that the council used its compulsory purchase powers to acquire land, but there are outstanding claims from landowners that could still end up at arbitration. That situation will pertain until October 2013.

In drafting the bill, Transport Scotland considered FETA's liabilities, but the City of Edinburgh Council's liabilities were not totally transparent. Before the submission by the council and subsequent conversations with Transport Scotland, Transport Scotland was unaware that the council used its powers to acquire land. On the figures that are in the public domain, the best estimate of the likely level of compensation is

£93,000. However, there are 180 claims from former landowners on the table, with a combined sum of £4.4 million. Those could end up being resolved through arbitration by the Lands Tribunal for Scotland, so there is no certainty about the outcome. We believe that it is not likely that the figure of £4.4 million will come to pass, but it is perfectly possible that the figure could be higher than £93,000.

The issue is about the council safeguarding its position. The relationship between FETA and the council has been absolutely fine, and all the council's expenditure thus far has been covered by FETA. However, with FETA being dissolved, we obviously want to ensure that the liabilities are properly taken account of.

Elaine Murray: I presume that the concern is about the valuation of land that was compulsorily purchased.

Ewan Kennedy: Yes.

Elaine Murray: There are two sorts of compensation—there is compensation for things such as noise and fumes, but there is also compensation for the value of land, over which there is dispute. Will the land remain in the ownership of the City of Edinburgh Council?

Ewan Kennedy: No. The road in question is becoming a trunk road. In fact, it is probably a trunk road now, because it became a trunk road by virtue of the bill to construct the new bridge.

Elaine Murray: I presume that the land that was purchased will transfer to the ownership of Transport Scotland.

Ewan Kennedy: That is correct.

Elaine Murray: The issue is important, given the sums of money that could be involved. Did Transport Scotland make any effort to consult the council as it was drawing up the bill?

Ewan Kennedy: The first formal consultation with us was the official consultation in late autumn or early winter. At official level, there have been on-going discussions between the city council and FETA with regard to the outstanding matters relating to the construction of the road. I am not sure how the current situation has arisen. Somehow, the liability that sits with the council has not been transparent and it has not been picked up as, in effect, a FETA liability.

Elaine Murray: What comfort do you need? Would a declaration on the record by the minister when he comes to see us that the liability is definitely not the City of Edinburgh Council's be sufficient, or do you require something greater than that?

Ewan Kennedy: We would like a statement that all liabilities that are associated with the

construction of the M9 link road will pass to the Scottish ministers.

Councillor Hinds: I must say that there have been constructive discussions following the statements that were given to the press. There is now an understanding in Transport Scotland of where the council is coming from and there have been constructive discussions. We feel that we have a bit more comfort now that those discussions are on-going.

Gordon MacDonald: When Barry Colford spoke to the committee on 6 February, he said:

“Anyone can put in a claim and I imagine that the council’s figure comes from an accumulation of all those claims. All I can say is that our budgeted cost is £623,000.”—[*Official Report, Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee*, 6 February 2013; c 1336.]

That is made up of £190,000 of potential claims and £433,000 of outstanding fees.

You said that the total of £4.4 million is not likely to come to pass. Have any of the 180 claims around the compulsory purchase of land been settled? Has settlement happened outwith those 180 claims?

10:45

Ewan Kennedy: Yes. There are 180 claims outstanding, and there has been settlement around other land deals that were part of the construction of the road.

Gordon MacDonald: What proportion of all the compulsory purchase deal claims are those 180 claims? Are the vast majority still outstanding or is it only 1 or 2 per cent?

Ewan Kennedy: I do not have that detail with me. I could submit it separately if required.

Gordon MacDonald: I know that there have been discussions about this, and Keith Brown started to allude to the fact that ministers would be picking up all liabilities relating to the situation. If that was not the case, what effect would it have on the council’s budget, bearing in mind the size of that budget?

Councillor Hinds: I am sure that to the council tax payer, it does not matter whether it is £1,000, £1 million or £1 billion—the fact is that we have not budgeted for the liabilities and therefore if they were not picked up by ministers we would have to find the money from savings or from somewhere else. It would have an effect on the budget because the liabilities are not in the budget.

Gordon MacDonald: There would also be savings in the council’s budget because you would no longer be responsible for some of the services that you provide to FETA.

Councillor Hinds: That is not until 2015, and will be planned in our budget, in the same way as we have planned for police and fire services this year. There will be budget planning come 2015 when FETA is no more. We will obviously have to take into account the financial and committee support that we provide. Work is already being done on that for 2015.

Jim Eadie: I have a couple of questions. One is on the Forth bridges forum and the other is about the public and active travel corridor.

I was interested in the point, which I thought you made rather effectively, that there is a need for directly elected representatives to be on the Forth bridges forum, given that there had been such representatives on the FETA board previously. Are there any other mechanisms that you think would help to facilitate and foster the good working relationship that you want to see between the road operator and local authorities? Clearly, the forum is an important one, but are there others that would be helpful?

Councillor Hinds: There has been a very good relationship involving the bridgemaster and the team that is in place. I know South Queensferry reasonably well and I know that the feeling is that the relationship has been very good. I would not like to speak on the team’s behalf but some of the mechanisms that have been in place, such as regular meetings with the bridgemaster to address any issues that arise, would be helpful. I am sure that, as staff transfer over, the same staff will be dealing with the community. If there was an elected member on the forum, that elected member could ensure that they regularly met the communities in the Edinburgh area that are directly affected, particularly the community in South Queensferry.

Jim Eadie: So having a local elected member provides a voice and a platform for the local community to raise any concerns and issues that they have about how the bridge is being operated and what impact it is having on surrounding roads.

Councillor Hinds: Yes, particularly where there are problems, as there have been in the past. There is a good relationship between the bridgemaster, their staff and the community council in particular, which is very active. The benefits of that include the fact that there is now a business improvement district in South Queensferry, which links into tourism and so on. It would be helpful if there was a councillor on the forum, even if they were not the locally elected member—I hope that we work on an all-party basis in Edinburgh—to ensure that the community’s voice was heard.

Jim Eadie: I will now ask about the public and active travel corridor. My colleagues will be aware

that I regularly ask questions about active travel, particularly cycling. I have a lot of constituents who cycle to and from work. What is the council doing to ensure that, following the opening of the new bridge, buses, cyclists and pedestrians have as smooth and quick a journey as possible to and from the southern access to the bridge?

Councillor Hinds: Our active travel action plan, which deals with cycling and walking, is viewed throughout the country as being one of the best. It is being reviewed in the next few months, and one of the matters for review will be how we can ensure that provision for active travel is worked out in the context of the construction of the new bridge.

Discussions are taking place with Fife Council, given the number of people who live in Fife and work in Edinburgh or who live in Edinburgh and work in Fife. Funding has been available from the minister, which will improve conditions for active travel, particularly the cycle network from the bridge into Edinburgh, which I think is being constructed at the moment. We welcome that money.

As I say, we will be reviewing the active travel action plan, and one of the key points will be to encourage people to walk and cycle in the area around South Queensferry—and in Fife, at the north end—once the new bridge is open.

Jim Eadie: You mentioned the iconic status of the bridge, and you have spoken about active travel to and from Fife. Have there been any discussions between the City of Edinburgh Council and Fife Council to ensure that we maximise the benefits of having a cycling corridor between Fife and Edinburgh?

Ewan Kennedy: There is a public transport access strategy—

Jim Eadie: I am asking about what discussions have taken place between the two councils specifically to maximise the benefits of this opportunity.

Ewan Kennedy: In terms of cycling?

Jim Eadie: I am talking about a cycling corridor—an active travel corridor between the two local authority areas.

Ewan Kennedy: It is part and parcel of the package that West Lothian Council, Fife Council, the City of Edinburgh Council and the south east of Scotland transport partnership put together, along with Transport Scotland, when the Forth Crossing Bill was being promoted. The output from that included a range of facilities, including park and ride, bus lanes and cycle facilities. We continue to work with Transport Scotland and our partner authorities. A range of measures are provided, covering the short term, medium term

and long term. It is all part and parcel of a sustainable transport approach to managing growth in cross-Forth trips. The aim is to have the key parts of that package in place from 2016, when the new bridge opens.

The range of measures in the package include those for active travel and cycling. We made a strong point when the Forth Crossing Bill was going through about the facilities for walking and cycling on the existing bridge, and we went as far as to suggest that there should perhaps be those facilities on the new bridge. That package is the key strategy that is shared between the councils and Transport Scotland.

Jim Eadie: As an Edinburgh MSP, I am well aware that the City of Edinburgh Council is an exemplar in this area and that it has very good policies in place, but I wanted to give you that opportunity to put those comments on the record.

The Deputy Convener: On that pleasant note, I thank Councillor Hinds and Mr Kennedy for their evidence this morning. As was intimated earlier, we will address the matter with the minister next week.

10:54

Meeting suspended.

11:00

On resuming—

“Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027”

The Deputy Convener: Agenda item 4 is consideration of the transport element of the Scottish Government’s draft second report on proposals and policies—RPP2. I welcome our witnesses. The round-table format is intended to enable the free flow of discussion. There will be no opening statements from witnesses; we will have an open discussion. Please catch my eye when you want to speak, so that that can happen through the chair. I invite our guests to introduce themselves and say which organisations they represent.

Tom Ballantine (Stop Climate Chaos Scotland): I am chair of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland.

Peter Hawkins (Spokes): I am from Spokes, which is the Lothian cycle campaign. I also represent the CTC—Cyclists Touring Club—which is the national association for cyclists.

Keith Irving (Living Streets Scotland): I am head of Living Streets Scotland.

Colin Howden (Transform Scotland): I am director of Transform Scotland.

Nigel Holmes (Scotland’s 2020 Climate Group): I represent the 2020 climate group’s sub-group on transport.

The Deputy Convener: Thank you. We hope to address a number of themes: progress since RPP1; the content and format of RPP2; and the four decarbonising initiatives in RPP2, which relate to vehicles, road network efficiencies, sustainable communities and business engagement around sustainable transport—I think that that includes intelligent traffic systems.

Will witnesses comment on progress on reducing transport emissions since RPP1 was published? How should that be reported in RPP2?

Tom Ballantine: I can start with the general comment that it is difficult to say how well we have progressed, because of the lack of clear data. However, we know that we have missed our first target on overall emissions and we know that transport emissions have gone up, not down, so the big-scale indicators are certainly not encouraging.

Nigel Holmes: Further to Tom Ballantine’s point, I see a big contrast between the clarity of

reporting on energy by means of the renewables route map, which sets out annual progress and targets for 2020, and the clarity of reporting for the transport sector.

Colin Howden: The Scottish Parliament information centre said on page 5 of its briefing, “RPP2 and Scotland’s Climate Change Targets”:

“having examined the documentation, SPICe conclude that we could not provide any detailed breakdowns for some critical sectors, most notably transport.”

SPICe has considerably more analytic capacity than Transform Scotland has, and if SPICe has not been able to make sense of the document it will be difficult to us to make a detailed assessment of progress since RPP1. There is not sufficient information on monitoring in RPP2 to enable us to do that.

The Deputy Convener: If other witnesses have nothing to add to that, will you articulate your thoughts on whether RPP2 contains sufficient detail on transport policies and proposals?

Tom Ballantine: I have been given the task of giving you the big picture—if I can. We have three markers. Is RPP2 ambitious, credible and transparent? By ambitious, we mean: is it sufficient to meet our targets? By credible, we mean: does the plan, when we look at it in detail, provide comfort that we will meet the targets? Transparency speaks for itself.

From what we have seen so far, we know that RPP2 relies heavily on the European Union shifting its targets for reductions in emissions and, unless we deliver on all the policies and proposals, we will not meet our targets. That leaves us no headroom. There is no room for error in any of that, and we must deliver everything to the maximum, which is not a very good situation. The big concern is that too much of RPP2 is unfunded and unspecific, and it is difficult to tell how it will deliver particular amounts of emission reductions. There is a great concern there. A lot of the stuff on transport is given as proposals. There is virtually nothing in the way of policies—it is basically just about there being a shift in EU policy.

It is fairly obvious what we are looking for regarding transparency. We want to be shown precisely what will be done and how that will meet targets. That needs to be monitored and evaluated, and we can then come back and think about it again. A lot more should be done on transparency.

Jim Eadie: Those points are a fairly damning indictment of the current position. Presumably you have made them to Government, and you have had a response. What has that response been?

Tom Ballantine: The Government position is that, for many aspects of delivery and

transparency, it is difficult to be certain how particular policies will play out over time. For instance, when it comes to 2025 to 2027, there is to be a fairly large reduction in emissions at that stage, but there is no clarity on how it is to be delivered. I understand the Government position to be that it is difficult to be clear about that period because it is so far away; others might have other comments to make on that.

Alex Johnstone: There are many subjects to discuss, and we have a range of figures that we may or may not achieve. The table on page 136 of the document mentions “Lower Emission Potential in Transport”. Does it surprise you that we expect to go from a cold start in 2025 to achieving savings of 750 kilotonnes CO₂e a year by 2027?

Tom Ballantine: It does surprise me, particularly because there is no explanation of how that is to be done. The short answer is yes—that does surprise me.

Alex Johnstone: Are we in think-of-a-number territory with regard to that particular column?

Tom Ballantine: We are certainly in the territory of wanting evidence as to how that figure is to be achieved. We want to see the detail that will show us how it is to be achieved. At the moment, it certainly has the look of a figure that has been plucked out of the air, slightly, without any apparent justification.

Colin Howden: The emission saving that comes in during the final three years—2025 to 2027, I think—comes at no additional financial cost. The table shows that the total costs of the proposals are essentially flat. Such a large emission saving of 750 kilotonnes CO₂e in the final year is almost as large as the whole emission saving from decarbonising vehicles, with electric cars and so forth. What is that saving, and how will it be funded? A charitable reading is that it could involve road traffic demand management measures coming in, which could be delivered in a fiscally neutral way, or potentially through raising revenue. The Scottish Government’s current position is quite averse to road traffic demand management, however.

Pass; we do not know. The figure needs to be explained. Why is the reduction being put off until the end? Surely we are trying to reduce emissions quickly, so that saving should surely be coming in at an early stage, rather than right at the end.

Nigel Holmes: I will make a few points on the content of RPP2. In moving towards lower emissions, we can also improve air quality, but I do not see a strong link in RPP2 with the benefits for air quality from different technologies.

RPP2 is a bit light on road haulage and on how we might work with that sector to decarbonise

freight logistics. There could be opportunities for not total but partial decarbonisation by using different fuels, such as liquid natural gas—work is starting on that, but that does not seem to be reflected in RPP2.

Linked to that is the fact that a lot of work is happening in Europe. Recent pronouncements on clean power for transport in Europe have set out a raft of measures that involve alternative fuels to move transport away from petrol and diesel. If we do that right, we can use it as part of the platform that helps us to move forward in Scotland. Linked to that are opportunities that could come from the use of natural gas, not just in road transport but in the marine sector.

Peter Hawkins: There is not much about cycling in RPP2 and we are missing out on possible easy wins. The deputy convener asked about progress since RPP1. There has been virtually no progress on cycling. We have had no extra funding—funding is still 1 per cent of the transport budget—so it is not surprising that no progress has been made.

The vast majority of RPP2 is about decarbonising cars. The document contains almost nothing about alternatives to the car, yet we know that 40 per cent of car trips are of less than 2 miles and that two thirds of car trips are of less than 5 miles. Distances of up to 2 miles could be walked and distances of up to 5 miles could be cycled. A possibility exists, which will require behaviour change by the public, but the Government does not seem to be making any effort to encourage that behaviour change. RPP2 makes virtually no mention of behaviour change.

We can consider what other European countries have achieved and are achieving in leading on getting people on bikes, which has a big knock-on effect on health. Countries that have high car usage levels also have high levels of obesity and all the other diseases that are associated with that. Nobody in the Government is standing up to say, “Look—transport and health are related.” By making changes in transport, we can get benefits on the health scene.

It is time that people in the Government stood up to say that the two aspects are linked and that we cannot have a society in which everybody drives around in cars, even if they are electric. Such behaviour is bad for health and has bad implications in other social ways. If RPP2 is looking forward over a longer period, it should take such issues into account.

I am unhappy about the string of zeros for 12 years from transport in RPP2. We should bring down transport emissions now and we should see some effect in two or three years—not 12 or 13 years. It is nonsense to have all those zeros. I

suspect that they really mean that transport emissions are increasing and will continue to increase, because of the present policies of building more roads. The zeros should in fact be negative values, because they are helping to increase emissions rather than positively reduce them. Do you see what I mean?

The Deputy Convener: Yes. Something like a quarter of all emissions are from transport, and two thirds of that is from road transport, so we should look at putting downward pressure on that.

I will bring in the committee's cycling guru, Jim Eadie.

11:15

Jim Eadie: I do not claim to be a cycling guru; I will always defer to those who have expertise in the area. However, in order to balance the conversation we need at least to recognise that there is a cross-party group of MSPs in the Parliament who are working hard to raise cycling's profile. We are beginning to see some progress. I accept that the additional £6 million that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth announced in the budget will not go far enough to meet the aspirations that have been set in the cycling target. However, when the Barnett consequentials were allocated recently for capital investment projects and £300 million was released to the Scottish Government, all the shovel-ready projects that had been identified for cycling—to the tune of £3.9 million—were given the go-ahead. That was as a result of the pressure that MSPs and cycling organisations have brought to bear on the Government. We are at the base camp, perhaps, rather than the mountain top, but we are beginning to see a shift in attitudes.

What would be helpful would be an exemplar project, perhaps, which is something that I am working with colleagues in the cross-party group on cycling to promote. For example, there could be an award for a local authority to provide a designated cycle route that shows what good practice looks like. We have a cycle corridor in Edinburgh, which cost £600,000—not an insignificant amount of money. However, it is on-road and cyclists still compete with cars and buses. It is not like the designated cycling routes that we would recognise in Denmark and Amsterdam, which is the kind of cycling infrastructure that we want to see in Scotland.

If we had one good project, which would not necessarily cost a lot of money, that acted as an example of good practice for other local authorities to follow, we could begin to see the modal shift that people aspire to.

Keith Irving: I will make a general point about what the transport section of RPP should try to achieve. All members around the table will know that some people have a major objection to taking action on climate change, because anything that we do in Scotland can be dwarfed in an instant by what can happen in rapidly industrialising countries such as China and India.

I talked to Malcolm Buchanan, who is a leading transport expert, who has been working with authorities in Shanghai and across China and advising them on what their transport objectives should be. Officials in China told him that they wanted to move away from the stereotypical image of a mass of cyclists, lots of pedestrians and buses moving through their giant megacity, because that was seen as a symptom of China being a backward country. In order for China to be seen as a modern country, everyone should be driving their cars—that was the lesson that officials had taken from development in the western world.

The challenge for the RPP and Scotland is to demonstrate that a modern country is not a car-based economy, that we have learned from all the difficulties that that creates and that we are trying to turn back the clock, if you like, to a time when walking, getting on a bike and using public transport were the natural choices.

That anecdote illustrates the ambition that the RPP could have. Scotland could demonstrate leadership and show what a low-carbon economy looks like.

I will be slightly more specific about what that means for the transport section. It is important to highlight a very clear difference in the RPP. There are two fundamental objectives in the energy section: decarbonising the energy supply and reducing demand, which are objectives that everyone around this table would sign up to.

When we look at the transport section, decarbonising transport is an objective, but it says absolutely nothing about reducing demand. Everyone would admit that that is a difficult challenge, but it is a nettle that needs to be grasped. We would like to see an acknowledgement within the RPP that more transport is not necessarily the objective of Government. Transport is a means rather than an end in itself.

Elaine Murray: Are you saying that there is an overreliance in the RPP2 on electric cars, hybrid vehicles and so on, and on decarbonisation as a solution, rather than demand reduction? Just today, the UK Government has made an announcement about infrastructure for electric cars. Is that being overemphasised in our policies at the expense of demand reduction and traffic reduction?

Keith Irving: Decarbonising transport is an essential part, but it has a long timescale and it involves worldwide action within—

Elaine Murray: I suppose that what I am saying is that it does not necessarily drive behavioural change. People might just think, “We can have a more efficient car that produces less carbon.” Are you saying that we need to go further than that and effect behavioural change?

Keith Irving: Behaviour change is a fundamental aspect of cutting climate change emissions. There is action that we can take now and in the medium term to create an environment in which we do not need so much transport and goods and services are available within shorter distances.

Tom Ballantine: I reiterate what has just been said. It is not a case of either developing decarbonised transport or dealing with demand. We need to do both. There is an emphasis in RPP2 on the electric car-type approach. If we look at the UK Committee on Climate Change’s first progress report of January 2012, it mentions the need to address demand management. It is interesting that paragraph 7.4.6 in RPP2 states that the policies and proposals in RPP1

“are not yet being implemented at the intensity required for the abatement figures in this document.”

Even within RPP2, there is an acknowledgement that more needs to be done on the demand management measures that we are discussing.

One of the obvious ways forward is to introduce demand management measures. Our position is that, if you are going to do that, you should look at introducing measures in, say, four major cities in 2016. You might argue that there should be workplace levies for parking places. If people know what is going to happen and there is a lead-in, they can prepare for and deal with it. There are a number of demand management measures and, although they might not be easy, they need to be looked at. However, they are not mentioned at all in RPP2.

Nigel Holmes: I will pick up on Elaine Murray’s question. As the 2020 group, we are looking to take positive actions that will help us to meet some of the targets, and we have just launched the transport challenge. I reiterate that we are not looking at a single measure. We are offering four options for organisations to consider, including using electric vehicles, using more public transport, better use of videoconferencing in business and organisations, and fuel-efficient driving training. There is a raft of measures because we do not believe that any one measure will take us to where we need to be. We must keep all options open and push as far and as fast as we can on all of them.

Colin Howden: I return to Jim Eadie’s question, in which he asked for an exemplar project. I am sure that you are aware of it, but I would direct you to the smarter choices, smarter places programme, which is a sustainable transport towns programme on which the Scottish Government has been leading in the past few years. It is a shame that we do not have Jillian Anable here today, because I gather that she has been involved in the monitoring and appraisal of that project, but it might be—

Jim Eadie: I think it is recognised that Scotland has some of the best policies, strategies and targets in the world, but when we come to identify designated off-road cycle routes, it is more problematic. That is where we need improvement. Cycling needs to be seen not as something quirky or alternative but as a normal mainstream form of transport.

Colin Howden: I certainly agree, but the smarter choices, smarter places programme was not a policy but a programme of investment in a number of towns across Scotland. It followed the sustainable travel towns programme in England, which demonstrated very high benefit to cost ratios with regard to delivering emissions reductions and a modal shift to cycling. I encourage the committee to pursue the sustainable travel towns line, because it would be a really good way of driving really good examples of cycle use in Scotland.

I draw members’ attention back to the overall Scottish budget. Although we welcome the small funding increases for cycling over the past few years, I note that, looking at the Government’s own figures, the £72.9 million for sustainable transport measures represents only 3.6 per cent of the total transport budget of £2 billion. That percentage needs to be driven up if sustainable transport is to be delivered and if we are to see much higher cycling rates.

Peter Hawkins: I will make the same point with reference to Jim Eadie’s comment about the additional £6 million for cycling measures. As you know, the overall transport budget is £2 billion. RPP1 called for 5 per cent of that to be devoted to active travel—which, by my calculations, should be about £100 million a year. It is difficult to disaggregate walking, cycling, the use of electric charging points and so on to find out how much is going towards cycling, and I would like the committee to work on that issue, if possible, to ensure that, instead of having to look at some aggregated mass, we can actually see how much money is being spent in that area.

RPP1 called for 5 per cent several years ago. Given that there has been no investment in cycling, that figure will have to be increased; indeed, a number of organisations have called for

10 per cent of the transport budget to be spent on active travel. It is time that the issue was addressed. At present, 10 per cent would be between £100 million and £200 million, so Jim Eadie's figure of £6 million looks rather puny in comparison.

Jim Eadie: It is not my figure. I have been arguing that as much money as possible should be going in.

Peter Hawkins: I am sure you have. I am simply putting the issue in context.

Gordon MacDonald: As everyone has pointed out, achieving carbon reduction as quickly as possible will require a modal shift, and the easiest and quickest way of making such a shift is in public transport.

In that respect, Edinburgh is a success story. In the past 20 years, a substantial number of people have moved to public transport, with growth of roughly 30 million to 40 million additional journeys a year. In my view, that has happened because the bus company in Edinburgh is still publicly owned, has newer, cleaner and safer vehicles with closed-circuit television and radio connections for drivers, and works on a low-fare, high-volume model.

Of course, Edinburgh is the exception with regard to bus company ownership in Scotland but how can we make passenger transport such as buses, which serve the vast majority of people, more attractive and ensure that more people use it? In Edinburgh, a cross-section of society uses the buses but that is not necessarily the case elsewhere. What can the Scottish Parliament do to help that modal shift to public transport?

Colin Howden: Given that my organisation campaigns for investment in public transport, we obviously want more of a shift to and greater use of it. However, I slightly contest your initial suggestion that public transport is the best way of reducing emissions. In the "Mitigating Transport's Climate Change Impact in Scotland" report in 2009, which formed the basis for RPP1, and in RPP1 itself, which came out in 2011, the Scottish Government identified smarter choices measures—such as travel plans, car clubs, car sharing and so on—speed reduction, freight technology and eco-driving as the four areas that are most cost effective in driving emissions reductions in the transport sector.

The MTCCI report also identified that one of the most cost-effective measures to reduce emissions is bus quality contracts, which head towards bus regulation territory. The Government has therefore provided an evidential base that would support Mr MacDonald's contention. I think that the smarter choices measures and general speed reduction

are the most cost-effective methods of reducing emissions from transport.

11:30

Nigel Holmes: One of the measures that the 2020 climate group is looking at in the transport challenge is greater use of public transport. One route is to consider whether businesses can help their employees make that choice and take the bus to work, for example, rather than the car. We could also work with the retail sector to assess, for example, whether retail locations can use more public transport routes to get people to shopping centres and the like. We are not working directly with everybody on the issue, but we are starting to target certain areas in which we think public transport could play a part.

A linked issue is that of air quality. For example, the investment by Lothian Buses in not just hybrid buses but buses with an emissions reduction system on the exhaust contributes to improving air quality in Edinburgh. If we can get people out of cars, which still create quite a lot of pollution, and into buses, that will benefit air quality, which helps active travel and other things as well.

Gordon MacDonald: I have a point on the issue of Lothian Buses getting cleaner engines for buses other than the hybrid ones. The result of that is that the miles per gallon figure drops dramatically as each new engine comes on board. Working in my previous capacity, I saw a figure for the fall of MPG over 15 to 20 years from 6 miles per gallon to 4.8. Although the engine is cleaner and produces fewer emissions, it uses more diesel.

Nigel Holmes: That is absolutely correct. The progression from Euro 1 to Euro 6 has seen air quality get much better but the miles per gallon figure get much worse. However, hybrid buses can claw back some efficiencies in that regard.

Another potential option, which Aberdeen is leading in, is the use of hydrogen buses. That would mean that the bus fleet would be completely decarbonised. What is more important is that Aberdeen is making a link between hydrogen buses and the renewables sector, because the hydrogen comes from a remote wind farm site north of Aberdeen. That is an example of getting the benefits from renewables into transport.

The Deputy Convener: On the decarbonisation of vehicles through having electric vehicles and hybrid buses, for example, could the Scottish Government do more to encourage switching? As somebody pointed out earlier, we seem to depend on EU directives to progress the issue. Is there anything that we can do that can add value to that movement?

Nigel Holmes: I will try to answer that one.

Let us take the example of cars. The performance and efficiencies of petrol and diesel engines are getting better all the time. In addition, other technologies are being introduced in the shape of electric vehicles, plug-in hybrids and fuel-cell vehicles—you name it. The consensus seems to be that in the future there will be no dominant type of transport platform. It will not be like the choice that we have at the moment, which is petrol or diesel; there will be a wider range of choices.

The type of vehicles might vary according to the type of use. Electric vehicles could be well suited to city centre transport with small cars, because they have the right range and performance. As we move up to bigger vehicles and longer ranges, even with the improvements in battery technology it will be a challenge, so that is where plug-in hybrids and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles could start to take a key part of the market.

I do not think that anybody has all the answers yet. The key thing is that the Scottish Government needs to keep a close eye on how things evolve. It should participate actively in UK and EU projects that are helping to demonstrate the technologies as they come out, so that Scotland is ready to take the technology at the point when that makes sense. You should therefore be a close follower, taking advantage of the technologies as they become available and not closing off any options. There will not be one silver bullet. We will not find that the battery vehicle or hydrogen fuel cell vehicle will do everything. In freight, it might be necessary to stick with something such as liquid natural gas to get the performance on big articulated lorries that the freight companies need.

I do not know whether that helps, but there is no simple answer on the issue. The Scottish Government can facilitate the process by keeping an open mind and ensuring that the strategy is adaptive, so that it can reflect what is happening at a point in time and take advantage of that. The Government should not say now, "This is what we will do," because 2030 is a long time away and a lot will change between now and then. It could be a mistake to be very prescriptive about what to do.

Keith Irving: I want to reflect on the difficult balancing act that the Government would have in supporting more decarbonised vehicles. Subsidy schemes can be run, but it is important to reflect on the fact that, at a time of austerity, subsidy schemes often subsidise reasonably well-off people to have a second car. Unfortunately, that has been proven south of the border. It is difficult to balance the aim of tackling inequalities in Scottish society with subsidising additional transport, when half the Scottish population cannot drive a car because of age or income.

Colin Howden: I want to return to buses. I am no expert on bus vehicle technology so I will not be drawn on that topic, but the deputy convener asked what the Government can do. Obviously, I would say that it can continue with the Scottish green bus fund to allow Lothian Buses and others to purchase hybrid buses. The Government could also consider opportunities for retrofitting the existing fleet, which might be more cost-effective than the purchase of hybrid buses.

In Scotland we have a real opportunity in buses. We have one of the world's largest bus manufacturers in Alexander Dennis and we have two of Britain's five largest bus operators in FirstGroup and Stagecoach. As a nation, we should be making more of the situation. There is a real industrial opportunity.

Tom Ballantine: I will again make a point on the bigger picture. One good aspect of the RPP2 is the way in which it lays out principles on behaviour change. It gives 10 insights on that, which include "Show leadership", "Be consistent" and "Make change as easy as possible".

We should not talk about asking people to get out of their cars and on to buses or to cycle and then reward people for staying in their cars; we have to push the rewards towards the people who cycle and use public transport. We should think about that when we look at measures that could be taken.

Let us go back to traffic demand measures and workplace parking levies, for instance. The money from people who take cars into work can be used to fund the people who want to cycle or use public transport—there are ways in. As I said, in the RPP2 the Government has given us good and sensible principles on what drives behaviour change, but those principles must inform policy, not just on transport issues but across the board.

Elaine Murray: I have a brief question about Colin Howden's suggestion that speed-limit reductions are a cost-effective method of reducing carbon emissions. Were you referring to the reduction of speed limits in towns from 30mph to 20mph, or were you talking about faster driving? If you were to recommend a policy change, would it be to have 20mph speed limits in urban areas?

Colin Howden: Yes. In general, we are very much in favour of moving to 20mph as the limit in urban areas, but that is less to do with climate reasons and more to do with improving quality of life. Keith Irving might have more comments to make on that.

Speed reduction was one of the four things that I identified—

Elaine Murray: What sort of speeds are you talking about? Are you referring to urban driving?

Are you suggesting that the speed limit be brought down from 60mph to 50mph?

Colin Howden: My notes indicate that RPP1 looked more at motorway speed-limit enforcement. In other words, it was more concerned with enforcement of the 70mph speed limit than it was with reducing urban speed limits. Some literature suggests that reducing speed limits in urban areas has mixed results as far as emissions-reduction impacts are concerned.

Keith Irving: The RPP seems to focus on trunk roads. Elaine Murray asked about a reduction in speed limits in towns from 30mph to 20mph. That would address the number 1 barrier to people cycling more, which is fear of traffic and fear of being in a crash. Colin Howden is absolutely right—the reason for reducing the urban speed limit is to improve people's quality of life. As Gordon MacDonald highlighted, the important point is that, if we want to achieve modal shift, cutting the speed limit in urban areas will have a positive result.

Nigel Holmes: I want to add only that the 2020 climate group recently held a public debate on reducing speed limits, and part of the evidence that was presented was that, in built-up areas, 40mph is seen to be the optimum speed limit from the point of view of emissions reduction. That is not to say that we should have a 40mph limit everywhere; it is just what the academics came back with. That speed is seen as the sweet spot for minimising carbon emissions. The climate group is trying to get the discussion going, so it is tackling some of the difficult questions as well as some of the very difficult ones.

The Deputy Convener: One of the four packages that are identified in the chapter on transport is road-network efficiencies, which includes use of average-speed cameras and intelligent transport systems. What role could they play in reducing emissions? Is that a significant area in which we should be investing? If we want to reduce speeds and so on, we must have a mechanism to do that, and it is clear that such mechanisms are developing.

Colin Howden: Yes, that is something that we are broadly in favour of. The table on page 165 of RPP2 shows that the figures in the network efficiencies line are very small compared with those in the other lines—for example, decarbonising vehicles and sustainable communities, so I am not sure that network efficiencies are the most important aspect that we should be looking into.

In addition, from my reading of RPP1 and the research that it was based on, network efficiencies did not come through strongly as one of the most cost-effective areas. Earlier, I outlined the four

areas that I think are most consistently effective in reducing emissions: speed-limit enforcement, smarter choices, freight vehicle technology and eco-driving.

11:45

Keith Irving: The focus on eco-driving in RPP is good. As for intelligent transport systems, they are very important on trunk roads, but there is less evidence on their impact in urban areas.

That said, coming back to a previous point, I think that this is all about creating an environment that is conducive to making low-carbon transport choices—walking, cycling or taking the bus. Some London boroughs adjust traffic lights in order to smooth traffic flow and get a green wave, which means that if you drive at 20mph you hit green lights the whole way. There is no point in accelerating then braking—which, as we know, is an inefficient way of driving—because you will just hit a red light at the next set of traffic lights. Such systems play a role in creating a better environment but, as far as I am aware, there is less evidence of their direct impact on climate change.

Nigel Holmes: In the table in RPP1 showing the costs per tonne of CO₂ reduction for different approaches, intelligent transport systems emerge as the most expensive measure. I found that to be quite surprising for a number of reasons; the issue should be revisited and the numbers examined carefully.

ITS can take all shapes and forms. In the haulage sector, for example, it is not what you might call common, but it is pretty standard practice for lorries to be linked by satellite to a data-monitoring station that knows exactly where the vehicles are, how fast they are moving, whether the driver has got his foot to the floor, whether he is braking roughly and so on. All that translates into fuel economy, and the hauliers are doing it because it saves them money. If such things are starting to work in the commercial sector, it might not be very long before they become more widely used.

The key thing about computerised communication systems is that their cost is going down steadily, so it is becoming more viable to roll them out more widely. I am suggesting only that we take another look at the cost benefit analysis of ITS in RPP1, find out whether it is still valid, reference it with what is going on in the commercial sector and see whether that might give any pointers.

The Deputy Convener: SCCS has called for proposals to be upgraded to policies in RPP2 and has suggested that although the Government has allocated funds for a number of proposals that will

help to reduce emissions, the support is not intensive enough. Peter Hawkins has made that clear with regard to cycling.

As has been pointed out, transport spending is very much focused on road building, repairs and maintenance and so on. Do we need to shift substantially from where we are in order to get to where we need to go?

Tom Ballantine: Yes, we need to shift; after all, transport emissions have gone up instead of down. Moreover—to come back to my point about behaviour change—as I said earlier, if you want people to change their behaviour, you have to reward them for the behaviours that you want. As far as roads and transport are concerned, we are actually rewarding the behaviours that we do not want.

More funding needs to go into things like travel planning and cycling and into active travel in general. If that is done, we will have a far better chance of achieving our targets.

As I said, when it comes to leadership, consideration needs to be given to what happens when people take cars into towns. We need to think about demand management. Is it appropriate not to have congestion charging? Should there be workplace parking levies? Those are difficult questions, but they need to be considered. It would be useful to know what will happen in those respects.

Colin Howden: It is certainly true that RPP2 as drafted has no policies that are led by the Scottish Government. The only policies are EU measures; they are European Union car-emissions standards, in essence. It is important that the Scottish Government move one or more of the proposals in the transport section up into the policies section.

I said that the Government is not spending enough money on sustainable transport measures, although it is spending some: it is investing in cycling, walking, car clubs and eco-driving, for example—all of which will reduce climate emissions. The Government not only has policies in such areas but is investing in them. Such items should be moved above the line from proposals to policies. A specific example is the Government's target to hit 10 per cent modal share for cycling by 2020. It is imperative that that be moved into the policies section.

Peter Hawkins: I agree. I always understood that the cycling action plan for Scotland—CAPS—was a policy. It is certainly referred to as such in other documents. That is definitely an example that could become one of the policies.

Nigel Holmes: In considering which proposals might become policies, we should consider the

overall cost benefit that is delivered. For example, the numbers suggest that for the investment that is put into eco-driver training there is a much bigger return in cost savings and consequential benefits. Can we bring forward the measures that bring the greatest return and do them sooner rather than later? The Government is talking about training people in eco-driving by 2027—I think that that is the objective. Why do we need to wait 13 years to get people through eco-driver training? If something will deliver good, positive results, we should be doing it sooner rather than later.

The Deputy Convener: Do members have further questions? We seem to have exhausted our discussion on RPP2. It is clear that all the witnesses are singing from the same hymn sheet.

You suggested that road building should be downgraded in the current transport budget. However, investment in such projects generates an economic stimulus and there is an imperative to boost economic activity. How do you respond to the suggestion that holding back on road-building projects will not help to promote the economy?

Peter Hawkins: We are told that building trunk roads benefits the economy, but the evidence is not necessarily all there. You are perhaps aware of the principles that Transport Scotland uses to measure cost benefit analysis—the Scottish transport appraisal guidance. The principles were devised by Transport Scotland or its predecessor, and they are implemented by Transport Scotland. You can therefore see that there is no independent assessment of the cost benefit analysis of, for example, a trunk road scheme.

By the same measure, the STAG principles do not take into account the benefits from walking and cycling—cycling in particular—that can accrue in relation to health, reducing congestion and preventing urban sprawl, for example. There are definite benefits to society that should be taken into account, but they are currently not taken into account when the assessments are made.

I would like to see the committee taking charge of the principles on which schemes are assessed to see whether the benefits and costs are being attributed properly and fairly, and to ensure that non-vehicular schemes, such as active travel, get a fair share of the balance.

Colin Howden: I agree with Peter Hawkins that the economic impact of capital investment in transport is contested. In fact, the committee received evidence from Professors Tom Rye and Iain Docherty in autumn 2011 on the Scottish budget 2012-13, and they led evidence to contest the economic impact of capital investment in transport more generally. However, I will not go over that ground and will instead address the question more specifically.

If the overall economic imperative is capital investment as an economic stimulus, we contend, based on evidence prepared by Sustrans Scotland and others, that if we spend money on smaller-scale projects it is more likely that the money will be retained locally. In such projects, the money is spent by local authorities and local contractors rather than going overseas.

Let us take the example of the second Forth road bridge. If I remember rightly, the four companies that are building that bridge are German, American and Spanish. We could argue the toss as to whether it is the right project, but it is incontestable that a lot of the funds for it are going overseas. If we spend money on local investment—walking, cycling, road maintenance and so on—the money will be retained in Scotland.

Keith Irving: I want to make two brief points. First, Colin Howden just mentioned maintenance. It is very important to maintain what we have, and we all know that there are huge challenges in maintaining the assets that we already have, without even considering adding to them.

My second point is that we are not just your typical bearded, hairy environmentalists saying, “No road building, ever. We will sit in the trees to prevent it.” Let me take an example from the deputy convener’s constituency. The village of Maybole has been campaigning for a bypass for 40 years. We are working with the community to improve the high street both now and in anticipation of the bypass being built, so that we can create an environment that is conducive to people walking and being physically active. It is currently very intimidating for children to walk to school in the community.

It is not a simple, black-and-white case of us being opposed to all road building; we believe that it needs to be the right scheme in the right location. The bypass of Maybole is a good example as it will retain some benefits. Investing in the town centre will also generate an economic stimulus for the local economy. As the deputy convener well knows, the town centre is currently an extremely unpleasant place to go or in which to do business.

When we look at the transport budget, we have to consider the fundamental objective, which is economic growth in Scotland to allow all to flourish—and the key test is whether we allow all to flourish.

12:00

Tom Ballantine: I want to make a comment about sustainability. We are not, of course, interested in just economic growth, but in sustainable economic growth, so the committee

should be looking at roads in the round. That involves weighing up the benefits of there being less emissions, lower fuel costs, fewer accidents, less congestion, improved health, improved air quality and more biodiversity. You must weigh all those in the balance and consider whether or not, by using roads less and putting more into active travel and the like, we are contributing greatly to the sustainable economy and to some of the bigger values that we measure, which are, I suppose, happiness and prosperity.

Peter Hawkins: It has been established that, for cyclists, rough roads require a lot more energy to ride on than do smooth roads. I suspect that the same would be true for other vehicles. If maintenance of existing roads—of course, they are mainly local roads—were to be improved there would be fuel savings for the vehicles that use them, which would also have an impact on the climate change targets. Certainly, employing local people to maintain the roads would also be a good thing.

The Deputy Convener: Nigel Holmes will finish off our session for today.

Nigel Holmes: Infrastructure can be looked at in different ways. The Aberdeen bypass should bring air quality benefits, emissions reductions and so on. The key point that I would like to make is that the infrastructure investment of the future needs to be linked to some of the other changes that are happening; for example, we need to consider how the national planning frameworks develop and how modal shift—moving freight from roads to sea and other water transport—could be achieved.

In the wider context, climate change is happening. The Arctic ice is melting, but that is opening up transport in the north-east and north-west passages, which could become freight routes from Europe to the far east. That would put Orkney in a potentially very good position. Orkney is already mentioned in NPF1 and NPF2 as having a strategic port. Can such ideas be developed further? Can we get from this the improved infrastructure that is consistent with doing things better with low-emissions transport options?

The Deputy Convener: I thank you all very much for contributing. We will digest your evidence in putting together our report.

12:03

Meeting suspended.

12:05

On resuming—

12:07

Meeting continued in private until 12:17.

Subordinate Legislation

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (Assistance to Registered Social Landlords and Other Persons) (Grants) Amendment Regulations 2013 (SSI 2013/7)

The Deputy Convener: Agenda item 5 is consideration of a Scottish statutory instrument that is subject to the negative procedure. The instrument will amend the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (Assistance to Registered Social Landlords and Other Persons) (Grants) Amendment Regulations 2004, otherwise known as the 2004 regulations, which provide the mechanics for several grant schemes that are operated by local authorities.

The committee is invited to consider whether it wishes to raise any issues in reporting to Parliament on the instrument. No motion to annul has been lodged. I invite members to comment.

Elaine Murray: On the issue that we discussed before the meeting started, I know that there is a problem technically in that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has not been consulted. Is it possible to find out from COSLA whether it feels that the two local authorities that were consulted represent its views? We may want to draw it to Parliament's attention that the matter was not proceeded with correctly, but there is no point in delaying the instrument if everyone is happy.

Gordon MacDonald: I agree. That is common sense. We can ask COSLA whether it has an issue before we make an issue of it.

Alex Johnstone: I am certainly happy to go down that road. I have no desire to deny the Government its policy intent; I am just concerned to ensure that we deal with the matter correctly. I understand the Government's position, in that it consulted on the previous instrument and consequently believes that it has, in effect, consulted on this one. If there is a loophole, we need to be cautious and to ensure that everybody moves forward at the same pace.

The Deputy Convener: Okay. Do members agree to seek a written submission from COSLA and from the Scottish Government, which we will, I hope, review and make a determination on at our meeting next week?

Members *indicated agreement.*

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