Cross-Party Group on Sustainable Transport

12 March 2026, 13:00 - 14:00

Minute

Present

MSPs

Graham Simpson MSP
John Mason MSP

Invited guests

Christopher Whetham, Port of Aberdeen
Veronica Boyce, Edrington
Sara Duncan, William Grant & Sons

Non-MSP Group Members

Laura Hyde-White
Allison Cosgrove
Andrew Sumner
Callum Maxwell
Colin Howden
Dave du Feu
David Giles
David Prescott
Jack Jardine
Jenny Milne
Kathryn Hardacre
Keith Irving
Kyle Paterson
Martin Bignell
Suart McLuckie
Mike Harrison
Murray Glen
Neil Gould
Patrick Miner
Peter Clark
Rodney Kumar
Scott Prentice
Sue Terpilowski

Apologies

Mudita Chauhan
Mark Shields

Agenda item 1: AGM

Chair Graham Simpson opened the call, explaining that this was the final CPG meeting of the parliamentary session and had been rescheduled from 17 February because parliamentary events were cancelled ahead of the May elections.

The Chair announced that AGM items on election of office-bearers and new member proposals were not necessary in light of the parliamentary session ending.

As per the AGM requirements, Laura Hyde-White (Transform Scotland, Group secretariat) reported on the CPG's activities over the past 12 months, namely:

- Mind the Gap equalities series (first half of 2025): Focused on transport inequalities and accessibility, with evidence and updates from Transform Scotland, Scottish Youth Parliament, Disability Equality Scotland, Public Health Scotland, and the Scottish Women's Budget Group. The series culminated in a final event in Parliament attended by the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, presenting recommendations for the Scottish Government on how to leverage transport policy to alleviate inequalities related to gender, poverty, health, disability, and age.
- Future of Freight series (second half of 2025): Covered sustainable last-mile deliveries and cross-border freight, with input from Clean Cities Campaign, Royal Mail, Grid Smarter Cities, Transport & Environment, and Highland Spring Group. The current meeting will conclude the series by exploring international supply chain and export perspectives, featuring speakers from the Port of Aberdeen and the Scotch Whisky Association.

Agenda item 2: Sustainable shipping, a view from the Port of Aberdeen

Christopher Whetham (Port of Aberdeen) provided a summary of the Port's decarbonisation efforts and an industrial perspective on decarbonising shipping, covering low-carbon fuels and promotion of modal shift. He noted that the Port have set their Net Zero target as 2040 and will be the first Port in UK to deliver Net Zero including Scope 3. He also highlighted that around 50% of Scottish goods currently move via English ports, emphasising the need to increase use of the Port of Aberdeen, support renewable energy, reduce transshipment at the South Harbour,

promote modal shift from air to sea as the cleanest way to export large volumes, and develop a skills hub in Aberdeen to build the workforce needed for the future.

Agenda item 3: Sustainable exports - a view from the Scotch Whisky Association

Veronica Boyce (Edrington) and Sara Duncan (William Grant & Sons) gave an overview of the reality of exporting whisky overseas, including rail and sea freight challenges. They highlighted the movement of goods from production sites to ports, issues with rail connectivity and payload limits, the need for reliable schedules to avoid costly delays, and the constraints of ocean freight, including limited deep-sea infrastructure in Scotland, commercial pressures, and geopolitical factors, while discussing approaches to make supply chains more sustainable and commercially viable.

Agenda item 4: Discussion

The discussion explored ways to better utilise rail capacity and promote modal shift, including challenges around infrastructure, cost, and revenue support, noting that schemes supported in England are not currently available in Scotland. Participants highlighted the commercial pressures of ocean freight, the lack of deep-sea port facilities in Scotland, and the need to pursue commercially viable and sustainable routes. The debate also covered innovative approaches to reduce emissions, including intermodal rail benefits, electrification challenges, and potential solutions such as renewable energy and battery storage, alongside the importance of building trust with carriers and attracting more trade to Scottish ports.

Graham Simpson concluded the meeting, noting that Transform would prepare a summary of recommendations for Scottish Government on supporting sustainable freight in Scotland, based on the evidence presented to the Group throughout the series. He thanked members and the secretariat and closed the meeting at 14:02.