

GLASGOW AIRPORT RAIL LINK BILL COMMITTEE

Monday 8 May 2006

Session 2

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GLASGOW AIRPORT RAIL LINK BILL COMMITTEE **4th Meeting 2006, Session 2**

CONVENER

*Margaret Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)

*Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Douglas Dewar (Scottish Airports Ltd)

Douglas Ferguson (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport)

Steven Fitzgerald (Infratil Airports Europe Ltd)

John Halliday (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport)

Derek Hendry (Scottish Airports Ltd)

James King (Passenger Focus)

Marjory Rodger (Confederation of Passenger Transport UK)

Robert Samson (Passenger Focus)

Simon Temple (Faber Maunsell)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Terry Shevlin

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee

Monday 8 May 2006

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:12*]

Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill: Preliminary Stage

The Convener (Margaret Jamieson): Good morning. I welcome everyone to the fourth meeting of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee. We are waiting for two members. Michael Matheson has had difficulties with his travel arrangements. I understand that there is a problem on the line between Motherwell and Edinburgh. Brian Monteith is also on his way. However, we are quorate because three members of the committee are present.

I remind members and members of the press and public to ensure that their mobile phones and pagers are switched off.

This is the second meeting at which we will take oral evidence on the general principles of the bill. Unfortunately, TRANSform Scotland and the Scottish Association for Public Transport were unable to provide witnesses for today's meeting. Three panels of witnesses will still provide evidence today, the last of which will speak on behalf of the promoter. I indicate to the promoter's witnesses that when we take evidence from you, we will seek your comments on the evidence that we will have heard from today's other witnesses.

As with all our meetings at the preliminary stage, various broad themes will shape our questioning. They are: a general overview of the bill and the need for the rail link; the transport impacts of the scheme; and airport policy use and growth. I ask members to try to stick to those topics as far as possible because we will consider other relevant topics at later meetings.

I welcome Douglas Dewar, the financial director of Scottish Airports Ltd, and Derek Hendry, development director of Scottish Airports group, both of whom are here to represent Glasgow Airport Ltd. Steven Fitzgerald is chief executive of Infratil Airports Europe Ltd and he is here to represent Prestwick airport.

At the moment, we are not taking opening statements from those who are here to give evidence. We will just go straight to questions.

Do the representatives of Glasgow airport believe that the final GARL design at the airport is

the best possible option for passengers, or is it a reflection of recommendations or demands that were placed on the promoter?

10:15

Derek Hendry (Scottish Airports Ltd): We have worked closely with Strathclyde Passenger Transport on the design during the past three years, and we are satisfied that it fits with the long-term development plans for the airport and will serve passengers well.

The Convener: Do you believe that the route is appropriate for transport to and from the airport?

Derek Hendry: We are satisfied that the alignment of the railway line is the correct route for getting passengers to and from the airport.

The Convener: Do you believe that it will properly integrate with the existing transport network and allow for the future development of enhanced interchange opportunities with the bus, car, rail, cycling and walking?

Derek Hendry: As I think I said earlier, the design and layout of the scheme have been integrated with our long-term development plans for the airport and it is our long-term intention to capture all public transport in the one area at the airport.

The Convener: As they stand, the plans indicate a requirement to move the fuel depot because of the proposed line. Did you have plans to resite that depot at any time?

Derek Hendry: Our long-term plans for Glasgow airport are to expand the facilities to the west. The fuel farm is in the west area of the airport. In the longer term, we would either have to design our facilities around the fuel farm or relocate it.

The Convener: Now that we have the evidence from the Buncefield disaster, are you satisfied that the proposals for the fuel farm comply with all the health and safety requirements?

Derek Hendry: I believe that we are still awaiting a report from the Buncefield disaster. Any requirements that come out of that report will have to be accommodated when we relocate the fuel farm.

The Convener: Is the final design consistent with any future development plans? You have said that you plan to expand the airport to the west. Would that be consistent with any possible change in the ownership of the airport and its land?

Derek Hendry: We currently own all the land that is designated for the railway line—where it crosses the airport boundary—and the station.

Douglas Dewar (Scottish Airports Ltd): One of our main objections to the bill is to do with land

ownership. We believe that for ourselves or future operators of the airport to be able to operate, develop and run the airport and its operations and business properly, the bill will have to be changed. We do not believe that compulsory purchase is an appropriate way forward.

The Convener: Okay. I want to discuss the expected increase in the number of passengers who use Glasgow airport. Is it possible to speculate on the type of passenger and their likely travel needs? For example, is there a difference between the preferred onward travel methods of business passengers and economy passengers?

Douglas Dewar: The needs of business and leisure passengers may be different, but the differences between the needs of United Kingdom-based passengers and people who come from abroad are also significant. There are ranges of forecasts on the need for different forms of transport. Our master plan indicates how we see such needs going. In general, we recognise that improved access to the airport is needed to encourage the competitiveness of the west of Scotland, for example, but exactly what different classes of passenger need depends as much on the quality, price and appropriateness of the provision as on the physical engineering.

The Convener: Have you undertaken any surveys of passengers to analyse what their needs would be in an ideal world?

Derek Hendry: No. The surveys that we undertake examine where passengers have travelled onwards to and from the airport and the modes of transport that they have used. We have historical information about such things.

Douglas Dewar: Members must realise that, basically, we supply the airlines with a service; the airlines then supply their customers, who are the passengers. The passengers are also our customers in some ways, but the key requirement for us is not to do anything that discourages airlines from using Glasgow airport. If airport charges were to increase as a result of the rail link, that would clearly discourage airlines from using Glasgow airport.

The Convener: Okay. The promoter has quoted figures that show very large future increases in air traffic. Given the possible higher energy costs and some people's opposition to the environmental impact of air travel, are those increases likely to materialise?

Derek Hendry: There are two sets of forecasts. The Department for Transport produced forecasts for the aviation white paper that indicated that Glasgow airport's passengers would increase from around 8.8 million this year to 15 million in 2030. BAA subsequently produced forecasts for a master plan. Our draft master plan, which

indicated that the number of passengers could grow to between 16 million and 24 million by 2030, was published for consultation last year. The figures are only forecasts, but an expert forecasting team works for us. The team considers a number of factors, such as people's propensity to fly, fuel-cost increases and other economic factors.

The Convener: If the proposed rail link to Edinburgh airport goes ahead, what would be the impact on Glasgow airport's passenger numbers and, ultimately, on demand for using the Glasgow airport rail link?

Douglas Dewar: We have seen Edinburgh airport rail link proposals that indicate that the west of Scotland would form part of the catchment area. The Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill is at an early stage and, as members know, we will object to it. Whether the passenger forecasts will be fulfilled depends greatly on the quality and price of the service provision. Simply building a rail link under Edinburgh airport will not necessarily mean that people will use it.

The Convener: Okay. Thank you.

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): Good morning. My questions are about the economy and funding. Will the witnesses summarise the economic and employment benefits that Glasgow airport generates for the local economy?

Derek Hendry: In 2002, we commissioned a report by the Fraser of Allander institute, which we would be happy to provide to the committee.

Some 5,000 people are employed on the airport campus. The Fraser of Allander institute estimated a multiplier effect on employment that shows that we support a further 15,000 jobs across Scotland.

Marlyn Glen: Was the report published in 2002?

Derek Hendry: I believe so. We can provide the committee with a copy, if members wish.

Marlyn Glen: That would be helpful.

Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce said in written evidence:

"The Airlines presently operating from Glasgow do not wish to contribute to the cost of construction and servicing, as they remain unconvinced about the benefits."

Do you agree with that statement?

Douglas Dewar: It is difficult to summarise the airlines' views. I meet the airlines formally twice a year. The people I meet are purchasing people—because we are a supplier—and finance people. They would like to have a high-quality, efficient rail link, in the same way as they like nice shops and clean toilets. However, they are all clear that they do not want to pay increased airport charges. One

airline that has made its views clear is easyJet, which believes that rail links should be paid for by rail passengers, not by air passengers. In other words, if the airline's passengers choose to use a railway line, that is fine, but it should be paid for by passengers paying the rail company for their ticket, rather than through a subsidy from the airline. Glasgow Airport Ltd pays just under £1 million every month to the Exchequer in corporation tax, police charges and rates. We feel that we are already paying a fair whack and that the rail link should stand on its own two feet.

Marlyn Glen: What would be the economic impact of placing a levy on airport parking charges to contribute to the rail link?

Douglas Dewar: We have a modest levy on airport parking charges. I forget exactly how much it is, but at Glasgow airport it generates something like £200,000, which is not a huge amount of money. It is set aside in a fund that we use to support public transport initiatives. For example, we have committed to paying £1.5 million towards fees for rail links in central Scotland. I believe that the Scottish Executive has allocated that money to the Edinburgh airport rail link, but in our view it is our contribution to bringing the schemes to Parliament. We have a fairly good record of supporting public transport initiatives.

Marlyn Glen: Can you confirm that GAL will contribute to the funding of the rail link, given the claimed benefits for the airport?

Douglas Dewar: If by "contribute" you mean that we will make a payment for no return, the answer to your question is that we will not contribute.

Marlyn Glen: It is not a question of there being no return. I am talking about the claimed benefits for the airport.

Douglas Dewar: We can say positively that we will invest in, and expect to discuss with the promoter investing in, facilities where air and rail interact—in other words, facilities around the station area. We can see an investment being made there. However, you will appreciate that I would get sacked if I made such an investment without a return. We are in discussion with the promoter about the issue.

Marlyn Glen: We are still talking about claimed benefits for the airport and increased passenger numbers.

Douglas Dewar: The promoter has not claimed that the creation of a rail link will give rise to a material increase in the number of passengers who use Glasgow airport. We support that position. The rail link is about enabling Glasgow city centre to benefit from the airport, rather than allowing the airport to benefit.

Marlyn Glen: Among other things. There are many issues to tease out. In general, is the project likely to be more beneficial to the private sector than to the public sector?

Douglas Dewar: That is a question for the promoter. As I said, we believe that the airlines view a rail link as something that would be nice to have, provided that they do not have to pay an extra passenger charge for it.

10:30

Marlyn Glen: That is their bottom line. I can understand that.

Douglas Dewar: One of the reasons why Glasgow airport has grown steadily over the past 15 years is that we have continued to reduce our prices. In the past 10 years, we have reduced our charges to airlines by 35 per cent. We believe that that is a strong reason for not putting up our charges. We are not just in competition with my friend here from Prestwick, Steven Fitzgerald. When easyJet is considering where to place its planes, we are competing with Barcelona, Budapest, Oslo and every airport in Europe.

Marlyn Glen: I appreciate that. In your written evidence, are you implying that the promoter's cost estimates are inadequate, particularly for items such as signalling and overhead line electrification?

Derek Hendry: We think that, before the bill is passed, it is essential that the committee and the Parliament are satisfied that the project can be delivered within its cost plan. We are aware that something called optimism bias is applied in public sector projects, which we understand is a contingency to fund what are project unknowns at the early design stages. We are also aware that optimism bias factors for rail can be as high as 60 per cent for the stage at which the project is at, so we question whether 28 per cent is an appropriate figure for this stage of the project. However, we are satisfied that SPT has gone through a methodical and robust process in developing the design to the stage that it is at.

Marlyn Glen: That is about the estimates, but can you say why you believe the promoter's contingency fund is on the low side?

Derek Hendry: As I said, we are aware that Treasury guidance indicates that the optimism bias for a rail-link project at the stage that GARL is at should be around 60 per cent, so 28 per cent appears to be low.

Marlyn Glen: Okay, thank you.

Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): I want to consider the other transport options. You indicated in your submission that you

would like the M8's capacity to be improved. If that was done, would it not undermine one of the purposes of the GARL development?

Douglas Dewar: A number of issues are involved, one of which is that only 13 per cent of people arriving at or leaving from Glasgow airport go through Glasgow city centre, which is obviously where GARL would go. Although GARL would reduce the volume of traffic on the M8, it will do so by less than 1 per cent—0.8 per cent is our estimate. Airport traffic does not add to peak congestion on the M8. We have done recent research on the issue, which the committee is welcome to see. Many of the staff who work at airports do shift work, so the bulk of them arrive before 7 am. In fact, our peak hour of vehicle usage to and from the airport is between 1 pm and 2 pm, which I must say surprised me. Basically, our view is that we do not add to peak congestion on the M8, so the M8 is a problem for us and we are not a problem for the M8.

Mr Arbuckle: I want to ask a basic question. The promoter has said that the GARL development will

"contribute to a sustainable basis for the future growth"

of Glasgow airport

"in terms of government and regional objectives for airport surface access."

Do you agree with that? Do you envisage Glasgow airport booming because of GARL?

Derek Hendry: As the bill stands, we think that it is as likely to have an adverse effect on the airport as it is to have a positive effect, because it will grant the promoter compulsory purchase powers that will be open for up to 10 years. There is a risk that if those powers are exercised or the project is delayed, it will curtail airport expansion and development. Some sites at the airport that would be good for development would be blighted until the rail link was built.

Mr Arbuckle: Is it not a case of having your cake and eating it? You are getting improved transport links, but you do not want to be constrained in any way. What constraints are there on the Glasgow airport site?

Derek Hendry: There are currently no constraints. If the bill is passed, its effect would be to blight an area of land until such time as the railway is delivered. If the bill is passed, we would be keen for the railway line to the airport and the station to be delivered as soon as possible to take away uncertainty about future development of the airport.

Mr Arbuckle: Blight is a strong word. Which area would be blighted? Is it purely the area around where the rail link would come in?

Derek Hendry: It would be the area around the railway line and the station.

Douglas Dewar: The compulsory purchase powers that the bill grants are an issue not only during construction but for ever. Unless those powers are changed, our ability to operate the airport in 20 or 30 years' time might be jeopardised. If there were a serious burst in the water main that runs under where the railway will go, we would want to go in and fix the problem quickly, because if there is no water in an airport, it is necessary to shut it, because of the risk of fire. We do not want to have to fill in 20 forms for Network Rail before the problem can be addressed.

We believe that, in the long run, the only way to get control over the ground will be for us to enter into a long lease with the promoter or Network Rail, rather than for them to purchase the ground and us to have to go cap in hand to them if we want to do something.

Mr Arbuckle: Could there not be a partnership?

Douglas Dewar: We would like to have a partnership. However, it seems to us that if it were a partnership, there would be no need for compulsory purchase.

Mr Arbuckle: My first question was about upgrading the road. Could not GARL on its own give the airport the transport links that it will need to increase the business at Glasgow airport?

Derek Hendry: That comes back to my earlier point. Passengers who use the airport come from many parts of Scotland. Only 13 per cent of passengers start or finish their journey in the city centre. We believe that there is a need for a range of improvements to transport links, be they by road, bus or rail.

Mr Arbuckle: Your submission refers to baggage; I know that airports are obsessed with baggage. It states:

"It is unclear whether the provision of space for baggage fits with other local objectives relating to providing high capacity on rail routes and Scottish objectives relating to the cost of operating the railway."

Will you expand on that comment?

Derek Hendry: The proposed scheme will add capacity between Glasgow and Paisley, so there will be additional commuter traffic on the trains and the line will provide a link to the airport. A decision will have to be made about whether to maximise seat density for the commuter journeys between Glasgow and Paisley or to take out some seats to provide space for luggage. Currently that is not made clear in the bill.

Marlyn Glen: I would like to follow up on that point, because you said that the airport does not

contribute to road congestion at peak times which, I presume, is when commuters would travel.

Derek Hendry: That is correct, but it is reasonable to assume that some travellers with luggage will travel at peak times.

Mr Arbuckle: One of the promoter's objectives is to encourage social inclusion and accessibility. Has GAL tried before to encourage socially excluded people to take jobs in Glasgow airport?

Derek Hendry: A couple of years ago, we commissioned some work to consider the location of social exclusion zones around the airport. We provided that survey information to the bus companies to encourage them to consider bus routes to those areas.

Mr Arbuckle: You have said that you are concerned about compulsory purchase. Are there any other major aspects that we have not covered in our questioning that are of concern to you?

Derek Hendry: The other major aspect of concern to us is around the methodology for the construction proposals. In our detailed objection, we ask to have some influence over the promoter's plans for construction of the railway line, so that it does not interfere with the on-going operational and commercial business of the airport.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind): I want to pick up on some earlier answers. Given your experience of running Glasgow airport, do you feel that the transport needs are different for passengers who use charter, scheduled and low-cost airlines?

Derek Hendry: That comes down to where people are travelling to and from, and the purpose of their journey. A high proportion of passengers out of Glasgow are travelling for leisure purposes. If they are travelling from a distance, with luggage and a family, they generally use a private car to get to and from the airport. Anyone who starts or finishes their journey in the city centre, whether they are flying for leisure or business, can choose to use the 10-minute frequency bus service to and from the city centre.

Mr Monteith: In your experience, is there a difference between passengers who are outward bound—presumably if they are on a charter flight they will be returning—and passengers who are inward bound, who might be here for business or leisure but who will predominantly use scheduled flights? In a sense, the outward-bound passengers are residents, whereas the inward-bound ones are tourists—

Derek Hendry: If they are non-resident inbound, they will be considering options for onward travel, typically either taxi, bus or car hire.

The Convener: I take you back to your response on encouraging those who are socially excluded to fill vacancies at the airport. You said that you conducted a survey, which was provided to bus companies. What happened after that? Did the survey fall into a black hole?

Derek Hendry: We have an airport transport forum, which gathers together all the parties who have an interest in public transport: bus companies, SPT and the local councils. The bus companies at the airport operate under a quality partnership, which we chair. We seek to develop and expand bus routes where we can. The survey was commissioned, a presentation was given to the airport transport forum and we encouraged the bus companies to consider the possibility of extending or improving links to social exclusion areas. As yet, no new bus routes have been developed.

The Convener: Have you done anything to encourage those from socially excluded areas to apply for posts at Glasgow airport?

Derek Hendry: Are you talking about job applications?

The Convener: Yes.

Douglas Dewar: To give a bit of context to Derek Hendry's answer, we should explain that Glasgow Airport Ltd employs only about 400 people out of the 5,000-odd who are on campus. The bulk of the employment is with other companies, such as airlines and handling companies.

Derek Hendry: There is a specific example of our having been successful in getting people off the dole to work at the airport. When we built the multistorey car park a number of years ago, we safeguarded some money within the cost plan for the contractor to access people who had been on the dole for more than six months to do some of the work on the car park. A small company was formed to run a catering outlet for construction workers, which was eventually floated as a start-up company and was successful. The contractor was O'Rourke.

10:45

The Convener: Is that the only example in which you have made it a prerequisite of a company working in the airport that it bring socially excluded people into the jobs market?

Derek Hendry: That is a specific example and is the sort of measure that can be taken as part of a major construction project.

The Convener: If a new franchise was to open at Glasgow airport, would you ask where the staff would come from and whether provision had been

made to take staff from areas of social deprivation?

Derek Hendry: We would ask how any shop or concession at the airport would be staffed and we would put the company in touch with the jobcentres in places such as Paisley.

The Convener: It is natural for anyone who starts up a business to go to the local jobcentre to ask for assistance with recruitment. However, do you build in provisions on that? If a person is going to open up a franchise and believes that they will have 50 members of staff, do you say that 10 of those 50 must come from postcode areas that are identified as socially excluded? Alternatively, do you make other requests of them in relation to people with particular needs?

Derek Hendry: We do not require concessionaires or tenants at the airport to employ staff from specific areas.

The Convener: So you do not see that, in effect, you could be a generator of greater inclusion in the area.

Douglas Dewar: A large number of the employees at the airport work for other companies and so we do not employ them directly. For example, the handling company Servisair—

The Convener: Yes, but the companies are on your property, which you lease to them.

Douglas Dewar: They are on our property and we are their landlord, but their customers are the airlines. Where we can take action, we can do so by persuasion and encouragement. We cannot set rules or quotas, perhaps with the exception that Derek Hendry mentioned—

The Convener: That was an example. I wanted to tease out whether you had such discussions.

Douglas Dewar: The companies that one would expect to employ large numbers of staff, such as Servisair, have been well established at the airport for more than 20 years and tend not to come to us for advice on how they should handle their employment issues. If they did so, we would encourage them to employ people from areas of social exclusion, but the honest answer is that they have not come to us for that advice recently.

The Convener: I thank Steven Fitzgerald for being patient. We will start questioning him now.

Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I have a couple of questions for the other witnesses, convener. I apologise for being late, but my train into Glasgow Central station was late, which meant that I missed my connection to get here. It is just as well that I was not going for a flight.

Can the witnesses give us an idea of where outbound passengers at Glasgow airport come from? What is the geographical spread? Is there

any assessment of where inbound passengers such as tourists go to after they arrive at Glasgow airport?

Derek Hendry: We have good-quality data on where in Scotland outbound passengers come from. The Civil Aviation Authority has recently completed a survey on that in the past 12 months. I can provide the data to the committee.

Michael Matheson: That would be helpful. Can you give us a potted summary?

Derek Hendry: I do not have the paperwork to hand. The situation is diverse, although the majority of people—about 70 per cent, I think—come from the Strathclyde area.

Michael Matheson: What about the destinations of inbound passengers?

Derek Hendry: That information is included in the CAA data, which I will provide to the committee.

Michael Matheson: I apologise if this question has already been covered, but do you have any concerns about connectivity? I refer to the idea that, despite there being a link from the airport to Glasgow Central station, passengers might have to change to another train station to go on to north-east Scotland. There is also a large population of people in the conurbation to the north and east of Glasgow who will have to change twice or possibly three times if the crossrail comes in. Do you have any concerns about the impact that that might have on whether people use the airport link in the first place?

Derek Hendry: We have been clear in the past that we understand the Scottish Executive's desire to link Central station and Queen Street station through a crossrail scheme. We realise that that would provide opportunities to run trains from throughout Scotland straight through to the airport. Overall, that would make the airport more accessible by rail for customers who come from the wider regions of Scotland, so it would be better if the two stations were connected.

Michael Matheson: If Scottish Airports Ltd was deciding on a rail link to the airport, what would its preferred option be?

Derek Hendry: First, we would have to consider the investment and return and ensure that the option was viable. The proposed rail link will serve about 5 per cent of our customers, so it is quite a small proportion.

Michael Matheson: In spite of that, do you think that it is the best option?

Derek Hendry: We have worked closely with SPT and are satisfied that it has come up with a potentially good option for a rail link to the airport.

Michael Matheson: I will move on to questions for Steven Fitzgerald. Prestwick airport has the

advantage of having a rail halt close to the terminal building. I ask him to outline to the committee the economic and other benefits that the airport has gained from having such a direct rail link.

Steven Fitzgerald (Infratil Airports Europe Ltd): Glasgow Prestwick airport has the benefit of having a railway station, which was put in place by Glasgow Prestwick Airport Ltd. It was completed in 1994 and Glasgow Prestwick Airport Ltd funded a significant proportion of the cost directly. It was not an expensive project—it cost just over £2 million—because the main line from Ayr to Glasgow already ran down the outside of the airport, so no incremental investment was needed.

The rail link is an asset for the airport but does not currently make an enormous difference to passenger numbers. It provides passengers with an option. Passenger usage of the station is relatively high compared with that of other airport railway stations. The two most recent surveys show that 19 per cent and 21 per cent—an average of about 20 per cent—of ground transport trips are made by rail, but that could be much higher if the rail link provided a better-quality service. It does not run to meet the first flights or to take away passengers from the last flights, which are our two biggest peaks in the day. It is not possible to get to the airport by rail to leave on the cluster of flights that take off at around 7 am or to use rail to leave the airport if one arrives on one the cluster of flights that come in at 10.30 pm, so Glasgow Prestwick Airport Ltd runs bus services for those flights in partnership with the bus operator.

Before coming to Infratil Airports Europe Ltd, my role was as general manager of airport operations at Sydney airport, and I went through the introduction of the rail link there. Unfortunately, that was a financial failure and the private sector company that was involved remains in receivership. The quality and price combination was not competitive in relation to bus services and upgraded roads. Sydney's rail link was introduced just prior to the Olympics, at the same time that roads were upgraded and other things happened. The forecasters got the numbers on the demand for the rail link wrong.

I hold great hopes that the rail link at Glasgow Prestwick will be a good asset for the future, once we have addressed some of the issues. It would not have sustained a major investment, but Glasgow Prestwick Airport Ltd saw the opportunity to add—relatively inexpensively—a station on the rail line that goes past the airport. Given that scenario, it was probably a good investment.

Michael Matheson: Do you think that there are lessons to be learned from the experience that you have had with the halt at Prestwick for the proposed Glasgow airport link?

Steven Fitzgerald: There might well be. There might be similarities between the projects. The fact that the trains to Prestwick do not have a dedicated rail link but are really commuter trains that pick up airport passengers creates issues with carriage size, congestion and baggage. The problem with Glasgow Central and Glasgow Queen Street is that passengers who want to get to Edinburgh and other places have to change. That is a drawback. The scheme that the Executive supports, through the franchise holder, to discount rail travel is a positive one, but people are let down by service quality when they work out how they have to route their journey.

Our catchment population is probably made up of 50 per cent from Glasgow—Prestwick is very much a Glasgow airport—and 15 per cent from Ayrshire; the remainder is from the rest of Scotland. For routes that are not served out of Glasgow and Edinburgh airports, the catchment population for Glasgow Prestwick is Scotland-wide, particularly for people who travel by rail or private vehicle.

Michael Matheson: Is there a danger that a good-quality rail service between Glasgow Central and Glasgow airport could have a negative impact on business at Prestwick? Are you concerned about that?

Steven Fitzgerald: Yes, but Glasgow is lucky to have two airports that are 30 minutes from the city centre. The market is competitive. Not many cities the size of Glasgow have such a healthy, competitive airport market. I do not shy away from such competition, which I think is generally a good thing, particularly for the community. However, Governments need to be mindful of the fact that the airport market is a competitive private sector market when they make investment that might favour one private sector operator over another. Surface transport access is an issue. There is a role for the public sector to provide good general surface transport access for all industries in the economy, not just airports—I am thinking of transport from homes to shopping centres and other places of business. If businesses are going to be singled out, there needs to be equality among the competitors.

Michael Matheson: Given your experience with the airport rail link in Sydney, and given that airlines are going to be among the main beneficiaries of the airport link, do you think that they should contribute to the cost of providing it?

Steven Fitzgerald: I agree with the statement made earlier that the passengers should be left to choose how they want to get to the airport and should pay accordingly. People who decide to take a private car or bus service should not be subsidising a rail service by paying extra for their flight.

Each mode of transport must stand alone so that people can package up their journey and pay for what they use without having to pay for other people's journeys on a mode of transport they have chosen not to use along the way. There is competition among the transport providers. As well as the competition among bus providers, there is a competitive market in car parking and in private transport. To impose an overall charge on airline passengers to pay for one mode of transport is probably not the right direction in which to go.

11:00

Michael Matheson: Sure.

You heard the questioning about whether Glasgow airport recruited staff from socially excluded communities. Given that the creation of employment in socially excluded areas is one of the promoter's stated objectives, will you fill us in on how you go about ensuring that Prestwick airport recruits individuals who come from more disadvantaged backgrounds?

Steven Fitzgerald: We have a few such schemes running at the moment. Glasgow Prestwick is slightly different from Glasgow Abbotsinch, in that we employ about 450 people. For the size of the airport, that number is relatively large because we do a significant amount of ground-handling operations.

We work closely with Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire. Over the past few years, a job rotation programme has been highly successful in bringing people into the workforce and growing the skills of its existing members. As the committee may be aware, many of the people who live in Ayrshire work outside the area, so Ayrshire's gross domestic product is challenged. Getting skilled jobs that are viable in the long term into Ayrshire is a specific objective of Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire and we work closely with it on that.

Through Unity Enterprise, we have a passenger carer scheme that targets people from disadvantaged backgrounds. We bring them into the airport to assist in our handling operation by looking after disabled passengers and doing wheelchair handling, for example. That programme has been highly successful, in that a number of the young people who have completed it have been brought into our mainstream workforce.

Michael Matheson: You mentioned that the cost of building the halt at the airport was £2 million. Do you know what the original predicted cost was?

Steven Fitzgerald: The original predicted cost was around £2.1 million, I think, but the station ended up costing about £2.5 million or £2.6

million. The airport company received European funding and council funding and, as well as providing an initial £400,000, made up the entire shortfall, which more than doubled its contribution.

Michael Matheson: So there was almost a 20 per cent overrun on the costs.

Steven Fitzgerald: Yes.

Michael Matheson: That was helpful; thank you.

Mr Monteith: The promoter claims that the Glasgow airport rail link will

"contribute to a sustainable basis for the future growth"

of Prestwick airport

"in terms of government and regional objectives for airport surface access."

Do you agree that it will make such a contribution?

Steven Fitzgerald: I am not aware of the basis on which the promoter makes that claim. I came to the meeting to answer questions honestly, but I must admit that I have not had time to read all the material on the proposed rail link. It is not intuitively obvious to me that GARL will assist Prestwick in that way.

Mr Monteith: Have you discussed with the promoter how the generation of any extra rail capacity by GARL could benefit Prestwick?

Steven Fitzgerald: No, not directly, and I do not believe that my team has had discussions with the promoter. There are certainly issues to do with the capacity of the line through Paisley. Given that the link down to Ayr comes through that interchange, I can only assume that the proposed upgrading of that line's capacity may assist train timings through to Ayr.

Mr Monteith: Considering Prestwick more specifically, since the rail halt was established, what has been the percentage change, if any, in the number of passengers travelling by road to the airport?

Steven Fitzgerald: Interestingly, the owners of the airport built the rail link when the airport had virtually no passengers. That was when there was the biggest dip in passenger numbers. The rail station opened in 1994, which was when the first Ryanair flight was brought into the airport; the airport was virtually empty before that. Essentially, the rail link has been there for the entire recent growth of the airport; passenger numbers went from a decline to almost a zero base up to the current 2.3 million a year. My understanding is that the percentage of passengers who use the rail link has remained relatively steady.

Mr Monteith: Have you any knowledge of a change to those figures following the recent upgrading of the M77?

Steven Fitzgerald: No, I am waiting for the latest data on that from the CAA study that was referred to earlier, which will give us some insights. I believe that version five is the final version of the study and that it is due out this week. We will analyse it to ascertain whether the M77 upgrading has made a change. Anecdotally, the upgrading has certainly made the road journey between Glasgow city centre and Glasgow Prestwick airport far easier.

Mr Monteith: We heard earlier Glasgow airport's view on the costs of improving the M8 compared with those for establishing a rail link. Does your airport have a view on investment in GARL compared with spending on roads to give ease of access to Prestwick? For example, road bottlenecks in Glasgow could be improved for people driving through to Prestwick and roads north from Stranraer or roads that bypass Glasgow and go via East Kilbride could also be improved.

Steven Fitzgerald: The attraction of a rail link is limited. The figure of 20 per cent of airport passengers using rail is high for an airport rail link. Most airport passengers do not come by rail, so we cannot ignore other modes of transport. Most people will come by road. Public transport is a good option, whether by rail or bus, but many people will still want to use private cars, and what their incentives are is a separate issue. I believe that people like point-to-point connectivity, and rail generally does not offer that, particularly in the Glasgow context with the missing link between Glasgow Central and Queen Street stations. As a high-volume public transport solution that is not rail, high-quality bus services, with the potential for dedicated bus lanes, certainly have advantages.

In Sydney, we found that there was no impact on the healthy bus network when the rail link opened. More than 40 separate private bus operators operated out of Sydney airport and they continued to do well because they offered a service that took people from the airport to exactly where they wanted to go, without having to change modes. Even now, we do not have a rail service at Prestwick that meets all flights. I do not think that the bus service is a lesser service. For example, we have a late-night bus link from Glasgow Prestwick directly through to Edinburgh for late flights. That service is better and quicker than the rail service during the day.

Mr Monteith: I am not familiar with Sydney airport, but were there any particular influences, such as the type of passenger journey that was made? You will have heard earlier that I am interested in the differentiation between scheduled, charter and low-cost flights and the type of journeys that people make. I am particularly interested in whether there is a

relationship between the type of journey and use of the rail service. Do you have any experience from Sydney in that respect? Does the type of the journey that Prestwick passengers make help them to choose to use the rail halt?

Steven Fitzgerald: I want to clarify something. The low-cost airlines do not necessarily primarily serve a leisure market. My experience is that there is a lot of business traffic on the high-frequency services to London that easyJet runs from BAA's airport in Glasgow and that Ryanair runs from Glasgow Prestwick. The reasons for travel rather than the airline type should be considered.

An outbound market that consists of people who are relatively well informed about where the airport is and how to get around will potentially use rail or public transport links if those links are convenient. In Sydney, we found that, although trains went straight into Central station, which is in the central business district and has direct links to many parts of that district, people in the inbound business market were much more likely simply to jump into a cab and give the cab driver the address that they were going to so that they could be dropped off at the front door without having to navigate. Therefore, we found that there was a fairly low take-up of train travel. Taxis remained a substantial influence.

The committee may be considering the relatively rare experience of London. London and New York are much larger cities than Glasgow, and transport by taxi from their airports is difficult and expensive and takes a long time. The road networks have a different structure and the roads are congested. Sydney is a large city with a large airport that deals with more than 25 million passengers a year, but because the city centre is only 8km from the airport, taxi fares were competitive in relation to rail fares. The road connections had been upgraded and were reasonably good, so people did not suffer the effects of huge congestion. For most passengers, buses and taxis were therefore probably seen as a more convenient mode of transport than rail.

Leisure passengers, whether single or in couples, can be good users of public transport on short trips, but it is much easier for families with children, large amounts of luggage and so on to use a private vehicle and park it where they want to.

Mr Monteith: Can the number of people travelling by rail to Prestwick increase even more? If so, what part would a Glasgow airport rail link play in such an increase?

Steven Fitzgerald: Work that was commissioned or requested by the then Minister for Transport, Nicol Stephen, has been carried out on the Glasgow to Prestwick airport rail link. There

are structural shortfalls with respect to the capacity around Paisley and particularly with respect to use of the line at night. Huge drawbacks exist.

Of the things that could be changed, the easiest would probably be the timings of the rail services; indeed, they should be changed to allow trains to meet flights. Such changes would have a big influence on the rail link's benefit to Glasgow Prestwick. The structural difficulties in respect of the lack of a connection between Glasgow Central station and Glasgow Queen Street station would be much more difficult and expensive to solve. Another issue is that there are only two trains per hour at times when there is demand for more. The rail link has more potential, but we do not necessarily control that. If the rail improvements are not made, I think that the privately operated bus network will pick up the slack.

Mr Monteith: I have a further small point. I am interested in what you said about changing train times. Would there be enough time for a passenger who arrives on the final flight into Prestwick, for example, to collect their luggage, get over to the halt, catch a train and get to Glasgow Central station to find it still open? That station shuts at 12 o'clock. When a passenger arrives and has to go through the procedures, which add time, is there a knock-on effect that requires Glasgow Central station to open later?

11:15

Steven Fitzgerald: As you would expect me to say, Glasgow Prestwick is an extremely efficient airport. Ryanair, which operates the last service of the day, is the airline with the best on-time performance. However, flights run a little late occasionally because of knock-on effects during the day. If flights were on schedule, passengers would just make it, but they would not do so if any off-schedule movements took place.

Another benefit of a bus service is that a bus just waits. Our contract with the bus operator says that the bus meets the flight. When people from the flight have gone through the airport and been counted and people have boarded the bus, the bus leaves. That is a structural efficiency of the bus network that rail struggles to match.

The Convener: No one else has questions, so I thank the witnesses for their evidence.

I ask the members of panel 2 to take their seats. I welcome James King, who is a board member of Passenger Focus; Robert Samson, who is the passenger link manager of Passenger Focus; and Marjory Rodger, who is the director of Government relations at the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK. Ronnie Park was not available to appear this morning.

Michael Matheson: The confederation's submission says that before GARL proceeds

"those responsible must ensure that"

Scottish transport appraisal guidance

"has resulted in a thorough testing of the options."

Have the options not been thoroughly tested?

Marjory Rodger (Confederation of Passenger Transport UK): It is fair to say that we felt that the option of a more frequent bus service was given only cursory attention and that the emphasis was geared to a rail result.

I will give an example to explain what I have said. As you have heard, the operators that are involved in the quality partnership with Glasgow airport felt that the services that they provided were not valued enough and that they were not given the opportunity to show how they could be developed. If Scottish Citylink had a guaranteed 25-minute running time, it could offer a service to Glasgow airport with a seven to eight-minute frequency that picked up at Queen street station and Central station for, say, £1 million for 10 years—the figure would reduce as the service picked up—but nobody asked it about that.

Michael Matheson: Have you done detailed work on such options?

Marjory Rodger: As I said, we felt that those involved were seriously looking for a rail option. As the committee has just heard, 87 per cent of passengers do not go to the city centre. We felt that, rather than antagonising anyone, we would be better to work on improving public transport and to be involved early in the planning stage to try to service the 87 per cent.

Michael Matheson: Further details on what such a scheme might look like would be interesting.

Why do you now support GARL, which you initially opposed?

Marjory Rodger: We gave and still give the proposal qualified support. We are not anti-rail; we are pro-public transport and we want improved access to airports. We are not saying that a bus option should definitely have been chosen. We are saying that that option should have been considered more carefully, given that we now have tram-buses, which were not around at the start of the project. They look like trams but are buses and we can get about 300 of them for the cost of one train. I realise that a full STAG appraisal cannot be carried out at each stage of a project. If the project goes ahead, we want as much of the hinterland of Strathclyde as possible to be served, which means that there will need to be buses. We want to work with the promoter.

Michael Matheson: In your evidence, you refer to

“planning the ... ensuing multi-modal service network, and thus achieving multi-modal integration.”

Do you think that the plan takes sufficient account of the need for such integration?

Marjory Rodger: We have yet to see any detail. We know that BAA intends to develop a plan. We have not been involved in discussions with BAA, but we hope to be.

Michael Matheson: You have had no discussions on that to date.

Marjory Rodger: No.

Michael Matheson: What practical measures could the promoter take to ensure greater integration of different transport providers?

Marjory Rodger: You asked about the promoter, but I will start by talking about Glasgow airport. I was interested to hear BAA talk about the forum, which I am aware of. I point to the example of Manchester airport, which increases its bus service network by pump priming. As routes become viable, Manchester airport switches its funding to cover routes that serve other areas, which addresses the social inclusion point that you raised. The bus network that serves that airport has grown significantly. However, Glasgow airport has just put up its stance charges—Citylink alone will be charged an extra £50,000 a year—and we have not heard about any plans to improve the bus network.

Michael Matheson: Your view is that Glasgow airport believes that bus operators are living off the back of the airport and should therefore pay for what they are gaining, but that it should instead be working with bus operators to ensure that the airport is better served by different transport providers.

Marjory Rodger: We would certainly like to see the airport work more closely with bus operators. If there is a reason to pump prime, we will put money in too, but we need help.

Mr Arbuckle: A number of bus companies serve the airport. If GARL comes along, do you think that they will continue to offer the same service?

Marjory Rodger: If something is not done to ease congestion, that will be a bigger problem than GARL for the services to the city centre, which are the only services that GARL affects.

Mr Arbuckle: Are you talking about congestion on the M8, in Glasgow city centre or at the airport?

Marjory Rodger: I would say that there is more congestion on the M8.

Mr Arbuckle: The promoter has stated that 159,000 people will transfer from private cars and

taxis to GARL in the opening year and that that figure will rise to 279,000 by 2030. Do the bus companies have figures on the transfer from bus to rail?

Marjory Rodger: I am sorry, but I do not have such figures.

Mr Arbuckle: Are there no such figures?

Marjory Rodger: Not that I can think of.

Mr Arbuckle: I suppose that it is difficult to produce such figures, because, depending on how much Glasgow airport's business increases, you might end up with the same number of passengers, even with a transfer from bus to GARL. Is that a possibility?

Marjory Rodger: The airport bus services are in the national concessionary travel scheme for the elderly and disabled, who may not want to switch to GARL.

Mr Arbuckle: That is a good point. Will the interchange opportunities that GARL will create at the airport benefit bus operators?

Marjory Rodger: I am not familiar enough with what exactly is planned to be able to say. We have not felt involved, although we would like to be.

Mr Arbuckle: Would you like to make any points that we have not covered in questions?

Marjory Rodger: No. I do not want to come over as anti-rail, because we want to work with the promoter. Transport must be made as seamless and easy as possible, and a good coach service with guaranteed running speeds could serve both stations. A new Citylink service that serves the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre and the city centre hotels and goes straight to the airport will begin on 15 May. That goes against the analysis that is given in Weber Shandwick's GARL questions and answers document. There are opportunities that have not been fully explored.

Marlyn Glen: Why does Passenger Focus think that it is important that GARL should be part of the national rail network rather than a separate operation in the manner of the Heathrow express?

James King (Passenger Focus): It is clear from our research that passengers want interavailability of tickets and seamless end-to-end journeys. Without GARL being integrated, there is potential for that not to happen.

Marlyn Glen: You state that only 6 per cent of trips to and from the airport are currently made by public transport and that GARL will help to address that. However, given the large predicted rise in airport users, is the percentage not likely to remain the same or become even smaller?

James King: The evidence from other airports shows that a percentage of passengers transfer to

rail. With the improvements that are being made to the rail network—such as the Caledonian express and, potentially, Glasgow crossrail—the potential for longer through journeys, perhaps changing at Glasgow Central, will grow.

Marlyn Glen: So you envisage that the percentage will go up.

James King: Potentially. We are not in a position to question the figures that the promoter or its advisers have presented, but there is a strong possibility that that will be the case.

Marlyn Glen: From a passenger's point of view, what are the key factors that will make the rail link a success or otherwise? For example, we have already heard some details about the likely baggage requirements on the train for holidaymakers.

Robert Samson (Passenger Focus): The key factors for passengers will be the service's punctuality and reliability. One of the problems will be luggage. We have done a survey of passengers at Prestwick airport, where the mix of commuter and tourist passengers leads to problems with overcrowding of the trains, luggage being left on the floor and people having difficulty getting on and off the trains. A balance must be struck between the commuters who will use the service between Paisley Gilmour Street station and Glasgow and the mix of airport traffic. The carriages are a fixed size, so there must be a trade-off between seating and luggage space. It is a difficult question, but it is the same for all airports.

Another way in which the link could be made a quality service for passengers would be by staffing the station at Glasgow airport. It should not only provide rail information but give the passengers a choice by offering them information on the full range of bus and rail services to various destinations and the opportunity to purchase bus and rail tickets. That would be of benefit to all passengers, but particularly incoming passengers. Glasgow airport and the rail link will be their gateway to Scotland, so we want good-quality information. If there is good-quality information, passengers are likely to use all modes of public transport, so such information should be available at the station.

Marlyn Glen: I agree with you about the staff service, not only for information, but for assistance.

Robert Samson: It would be for assistance as well. I share the sentiments about the need for better early-morning and late-night rail services at Prestwick airport. Those would need to tie in with the rest of the rail network, so there would be costs for the First ScotRail franchise associated with opening Glasgow Central station earlier and

closing it later. However, one of the problems with Prestwick airport is the lack of staff presence and assistance at the station. There are no staff selling rail tickets at the arrival point at Prestwick airport, so it is not much of a first impression for anyone who is unsure about Scotland's rail network.

James King: We get many complaints from passengers who have got on the wrong train at Prestwick airport because there is no one to give them information or sell them tickets. Signage to and from the station at Prestwick is also poor. It is perhaps surprising that as many as 20 per cent of air travellers at Prestwick use the train; there is potential for many more to use it if the necessary improvements are made. In the past, we have recommended that the Prestwick station should be incorporated in the ScotRail franchise and run by ScotRail rather than by the airport.

Marlyn Glen: However, I would have thought that the signage could be fixed easily.

James King: Indeed.

Mr Monteith: Would passengers who live in Glasgow find it easier to get to Glasgow airport using a car, a private minibus or a taxi rather than travelling to Glasgow Central and on to the airport?

11:30

James King: I can answer that only by referring to the promoter's figures, which suggest that 80 per cent of people are in favour of the scheme. That suggests that people in the area will have a high propensity to use the rail service, if it runs to a certain timetable with regular intervals. The rail link will remove the uncertainty of travelling by road—people will not get stuck on the Kingston bridge or in other places.

Mr Monteith: Given your earlier comments, do you agree with the Scottish Association for Public Transport's suggestion that rail link trains could reverse out of Glasgow Central and then proceed to other stations on the rail network? That would be similar to what happens in Manchester, where trains from York go to Manchester Piccadilly and then reverse out to go to Manchester airport.

James King: There is potential for that, although, equally, there is potential for passengers to cross the platform at Glasgow Central. There is also potential for passengers to cross the platform at Paisley Gilmour Street, which, according to National Audit Office figures, is the third-busiest station in Scotland, after Waverley and Glasgow Central stations. According to the NAO, Paisley Gilmour Street is even busier than Glasgow Queen Street. That shows how much rail is used to travel between Glasgow and Paisley, which augurs well for the airport rail link. The link should

relieve overcrowding on existing services and provide new journey opportunities for passengers from that part of Scotland or, through Paisley, from Inverclyde.

Mr Monteith: We heard from Marjory Rodger about the effect that congestion on the M8 has on bus services. Is there not a danger that, for all your suggested changes to GARL, ultimately, if there is congestion on the roads, that will result in a modal change simply because people will no longer want to use various forms of road transport and will decide to use rail instead?

Robert Samson: That is possible. If there are capacity constraints on the motorway and people are held up, they might choose a more reliable option. The issue comes down to choice. That is why a rail service from Glasgow to the airport with a 15-minute frequency will probably attract passengers.

Michael Matheson: I have two short questions, the first of which is for Mr King and Mr Samson. Is the scheme that the promoter proposes the best option for passengers?

James King: We cannot conduct an economic appraisal of the options, so we must rely on the promoter's assessment.

Michael Matheson: But do you think that it has chosen the best option?

James King: It certainly seems to be the best option, on paper.

Robert Samson: Other schemes that may follow GARL, such as the Glasgow crossrail project, would enhance the scheme. SPT has been trying for several years to build Glasgow crossrail and we hope that it succeeds, as that would be even better for passengers and would give better accessibility.

Michael Matheson: My second question is for Marjory Rodger. At present, how many people a year go to and leave Glasgow airport by bus?

Marjory Rodger: I do not have those figures, but I will send them to the committee.

Michael Matheson: That would be helpful. I am also interested in how many people go by bus to areas outwith Glasgow.

Marjory Rodger: I will also send you figures on how the model that I talked about earlier—a quality bus corridor or hard-shoulder running with a seven to eight-minute frequency—would work.

Michael Matheson: That would be useful.

Mr Monteith: Robert Samson mentioned the Glasgow crossrail project. Given that we have heard that only 13 per cent of airport users travel from Glasgow city centre and the comments about

the importance of connectivity when people decide how to make their journeys, is the crossrail project not a prerequisite for the success of GARL, rather than something that it would be good to have eventually?

Robert Samson: We have always been in favour of Glasgow crossrail, but we have before us the bill for GARL, not for crossrail. However, GARL will add weight to the case for the crossrail scheme. Later this year, Network Rail will undertake a consultation on its route utilisation strategy for Scotland. We hope that that strategy will add greater capacity to the rail network, give more services and, possibly, point out the need for schemes such as Glasgow crossrail to deal with the growing number of passengers on the railway in the SPT area and throughout Scotland. Each year, more and more passengers use the railway, which is why we must address the capacity of the network. The crossrail scheme is one way of doing that.

The Convener: I thank the witnesses for their evidence and for their offers of further information, which we await. I suspend the meeting for a few minutes to allow people to get a coffee before we hear from the next witnesses, who are from the promoter.

11:35

Meeting suspended.

11:44

On resuming—

The Convener: We will now take evidence from our third panel of witnesses. I welcome back Douglas Ferguson, the director of operations for SPT, and John Halliday, the head of transport planning and integration for SPT. They are accompanied by Simon Temple, director at Faber Maunsell, and Brian Cuthbert, principal consultant at Faber Maunsell.

I want to clarify some issues that were raised earlier. We heard that only 28 per cent was built into your costs to deal with overrun, yet the Treasury guidance indicates that it should be 60 per cent. Why have you deviated from that guidance?

John Halliday (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport): We are absolutely in line with the guidance. The process of arriving at the estimate starts with a much higher figure. We started with an optimism bias figure of 44 per cent, which was the agreed figure across the project. The Scottish Executive agreed that that was the appropriate optimism bias for this type of project. Risk diminishes as you become more and more familiar with the issues and understand them more—that

is what optimism bias is about. By the time you have constructed the project, or just after, you should have arrived at almost zero risk. The issue is one of diminishing risk. The 28 per cent figure relates to the position we are in now. Having spoken to a range of people, I believe that that level of risk is appropriate. We started with 44 per cent and we now have 28 per cent.

The Convener: Did you discuss that with Glasgow Airport Ltd? Its representatives mentioned it this morning.

John Halliday: BAA has been part of the steering group and has been a partner in the project. I appreciate that it might have a different view but, nonetheless, it has been a party to the project. In essence, a lot of the risk is taken on by the airport and it is important that it works in partnership with us so that we can bottom out all of the issues that need to be resolved.

The Convener: This morning, the representatives of Glasgow Airport Ltd mentioned access to services, with particular emphasis on water mains. What is the position on rerouting services in such a way that the airport can continue to function if work commences on the rail link?

John Halliday: Our objective is to work in partnership with the airport operator. It is an absolute given that we have to be able to ensure the clear operating principles of the airport. That requires us to take account of issues such as water, electricity and the fuel farm. It is essential that we have a working relationship with the airport operator during the construction process and that the contingencies are properly planned. We need to have a clear understanding with the airport that it has an interest in solving any problems.

Earlier, Glasgow Airport Ltd asked about the powers that we are seeking. It is certainly important to us to put in place the powers that will enable us to build the rail link. If we do not have those powers, the project will be invalidated. We are intent on having a clear understanding with the airport so that the agreements between us allow for all the necessary infrastructure to be implemented.

The Convener: I have a general concern. The water main was identified as an issue. If it burst—which could happen because of the age of the infrastructure—there would have to be discussions with Network Rail and others. Are you absolutely sure that that issue will be overcome?

John Halliday: In setting out the agreements that we hope to reach with BAA, I am clear that it will be party to the project team and that it will have a front seat on all the arrangements and planning for the project.

The Convener: Would it not have been in your interest to ensure that BAA was advised prior to the bill's introduction that it did not need to be concerned about those matters?

John Halliday: I believe that we had such discussions with BAA and that we have sought to give assurances in that regard. You will see that clauses in the code of construction practice specifically address the matter. Indeed, the legal agreement that we are seeking to draft with BAA sets out that it is party to the project.

Douglas Ferguson (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport): The fact that utilities cross the infrastructure is not unique. Throughout the rail network there are examples of utilities—gas, electricity and water—crossing over or under railway lines, so Network Rail and the utilities companies are not unused to dealing with such situations.

The Convener: However, it is obviously a unique situation for Glasgow Airport Ltd, which raised the matter because it has no experience of it.

Douglas Ferguson: It is clearly a new situation. We can understand Glasgow Airport Ltd's concerns; it does not want something that could disrupt its business.

The Convener: The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK raised another matter of considerable concern this morning when it indicated that it appeared that you set out to use a rail solution instead of considering all aspects of public transport. Do you have any comment on that?

Douglas Ferguson: I was surprised at the CPT's comments in that respect. It is definitely not the case that the scheme started out with a presumption that a rail solution was the correct one. Through all its stages, the project has gone through the Scottish transport appraisal guidance procedure, which sets out clearly that there should be no such presumption. Some of the early stages of the project took place before the STAG was introduced but, nevertheless, all the options that were available at the time were considered and the rail option was clearly identified as the best of all options.

There was a suggestion that one of the options—the tram-bus—was new and that it had arisen since the project began. I do not believe that that is the case. I think that Marjory Rodger was referring to a new product called the *fitr* StreetCar, which is a specific type of tram-bus that has been built by Wright Group Ltd in Ballymena and that is being promoted by FirstGroup.

The Convener: Is that the one that she indicated was cheap?

Douglas Ferguson: That is the only new one of which I am aware. I was surprised by her figures on how cheap it is. I do not believe that the price factor is anything like she said it is.

The Convener: I am sure that you will come back to us at a later date on that. Marjory Rodger also alleged that the CPT was not involved in discussions with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport or BAA. What level of consultation was there with the CPT?

Douglas Ferguson: To be honest, I am not entirely clear how much consultation there was with the CPT. However, we engaged in extensive consultation with the bus operators, many of which are CPT members, in developing the proposal. In addition, the bus operators that serve the airport were consulted as part of the BAA master plan, which included the proposal for the transport interchange. As far as we are concerned, the bus operators in the area that are likely to be affected by the scheme were consulted.

The Convener: Finally, how would travellers with concessionary travel cards be served by GARL? That issue was raised at our previous meeting and it has been mentioned again today. Do you have any further information on that?

Douglas Ferguson: CPT is correct—travel on the bus/coach link to the airport is covered by the free national scheme. As far as GARL is concerned, the councils in the west of Scotland still operate a concessionary rail travel scheme, which GARL would be part of. That would entitle people with concession cards, such as the elderly or those with disabilities, to reduced-price travel on the link.

The Convener: Will you supply us with further information on that? That would be particularly useful for colleagues who are not from the west of Scotland.

Douglas Ferguson: I would be happy to do that.

Mr Arbuckle: I want to check up on the projected usage of GARL. Your initial estimate was that 500,000 passengers per annum would use the service. That figure was revised and went up dramatically. What caused that?

Simon Temple (Faber Maunsell): There has been clarification, rather than significant revision, of the figure. The rail link will have three sources of patronage: air passengers, airport employees and non-airport users, by which I mean people who will use the rail link between Paisley and Glasgow or who will use a bus to get to the airport and then change on to the rail link to travel into Glasgow. The figure of 500,000 relates to air passengers.

Mr Arbuckle: Okay. I will ask further questions about each of the three groups in due course.

You expect to run four trains per hour to the airport. You will have heard earlier this morning—although it will not have come as news to you—that airport usage fluctuates throughout the day. In the light of current flight patterns, do you expect some of the trains to be extremely busy and others to be nearly empty? Will you change the proposed train schedule to account for that?

Simon Temple: We will not change the schedule because it is important to offer a regular, clock-face service throughout the day so that passengers are familiar with when the trains run. It is clear that loadings will go up and down throughout the day, but the representatives of Glasgow Airport Ltd made the point that the peak time for travel to and from the airport is not, on the whole, the peak time for commuter travel. When the number of air passengers on the trains will be large, the number of non-airport passengers will be relatively small and vice versa. That will help to even out the loading on the trains over the course of the day and to address any potential problems with passenger baggage.

Mr Arbuckle: Have you worked out a model specifically for likely usage throughout the day that allows you to say to us that no train will be overcrowded?

Simon Temple: There is sufficient capacity to accommodate fluctuations in demand throughout the day. I cannot give an absolute assurance because there might be an exceptional occurrence. For example, if there were a European football match that involved a huge number of additional flights coming into Glasgow, the normal service might become overcrowded, so one would need to consider enhancing it on that day. ScotRail would be aware of such circumstances and could react to them. I would not expect there usually to be any overcrowding.

Mr Arbuckle: In answer to an earlier question, you identified the three components of your patronage figures. How did you estimate the number of non-airport passengers, that is, the people who would travel from Glasgow to Paisley?

12:00

Simon Temple: We started with the existing number of passengers who travel between Glasgow and Paisley. With GARL we will have 12 trains an hour instead of eight, so we would expect about a third of those passengers to use the GARL trains rather than the other trains. That will help alleviate overcrowding, particularly on the Ayrshire line and, to a lesser extent, on the Inverclyde line. Additional passengers will be attracted to use rail rather than other modes of transport as a result of the more frequent service. About a third of them will ride on the GARL trains

and the other two thirds will ride on the other trains.

Mr Arbuckle: I can think of few places in the country with eight trains an hour where one would expect to increase passenger numbers by providing 12 trains an hour.

Simon Temple: We expect a 10 per cent increase in passengers from a 50 per cent increase in frequency, which is a relatively small proportional increase. I expect the increase to be relatively low, given the frequency of the existing service.

Mr Arbuckle: Can you assure us that there is no double counting of the existing passengers and the passengers you hope will come forward?

Simon Temple: Absolutely. There is certainly no double counting.

Mr Arbuckle: I am sad to say that politicians always look at the basis of surveys before they take any great cognisance of them. In your survey, you contacted well under 1,000 people—only 600-odd. Does that provide an accurate enough picture of the use of GARL by air passengers?

Simon Temple: Yes. For the survey we used a technique called stated preference, which involves detailed interviews in which people are asked to choose between travel alternatives, having been given details of the times and costs involved. The respondents were asked to do that about nine times during the survey, so we got a lot of data from each of them.

Over the years, work has been done on stated preference to establish optimum sample sizes. The general professional opinion is that, provided that there are more than 100 respondents in each market segment, the results will be robust. We had significantly more than 100 respondents in each market segment. I think that we had 150 or 160 in the business market and well over 400 in the leisure market. We are confident that the survey is robust.

Mr Arbuckle: How many of the airport employees were surveyed?

Simon Temple: We surveyed only air passengers in the studies to develop the forecasting model. That was supplemented by the much larger CAA survey, which provided details of origin, destination and modes of travel used. Glasgow airport undertook a similar survey of employees, which gave details of origin, destination and modes of travel used to travel to the airport. We did not undertake a specific survey on the travel-choice behaviour of airport employees. We changed the methodology of the study to make it more robust after the air passenger survey was undertaken. We picked up information from a similar study at Manchester

airport, the outturn results of which have proved to be robust.

Mr Arbuckle: You checked your methodology against that used for the Manchester survey. Did you consider surveys of other airports?

Simon Temple: No. We think that Manchester is the most comparable example. Compared to Glasgow, Manchester is a broadly similar size and its airport is in a similar location in relation to the city centre. Although Manchester airport is larger, I guess that the profile of employees is relatively similar.

Mr Arbuckle: I want to return to a point that I do not understand. The 5,000 employees in Glasgow airport would surely provide the most regular passengers for the rail link, yet you have not surveyed them to find out how many would use it.

Simon Temple: The survey of employees that has been carried out gives us a lot of detail about their current travel behaviour, such as where they come from and the modes of transport that they use. To calculate the share of the employees who would use the rail link, we applied a travel choice model that was based on evidence from Manchester. We think that the situation in Manchester is similar to that in Glasgow and that people in Glasgow will make similar choices. My experience of forecasting for many airport rail links throughout the world is that, after differences in income between countries are taken into account, the way people choose between travel alternatives is pretty similar.

Mr Arbuckle: In carrying out the research on the three groups of possible passengers, did you include a pricing factor?

Simon Temple: Yes.

Mr Arbuckle: Yet the decision on pricing will be taken by Transport Scotland.

Simon Temple: That is correct, but price is clearly a factor in people's choice of travel mode. The forecasting models used the price that has been assumed for the project, which is the same as the price for the existing bus service—£3 for a single and £5 for a return. We also did sensitivity tests using higher and lower rail fares, which had little effect on the overall economic case for the scheme. In effect, with higher fares the loss of user benefits as a result of fewer people using the scheme would be counterbalanced by the increased revenue to support the financial case.

Michael Matheson: How long ago was the staff survey at Manchester airport conducted?

Simon Temple: I forget the exact date, but I think that it was about four years ago.

Michael Matheson: You will be aware that the system in Manchester is not comparable with the

proposals for Glasgow airport. People can get a direct train to the airport from 20 stations in the Manchester area, which means that connectivity to the airport in that area is much greater than it will be in the Glasgow area. Is it appropriate to use the Manchester survey, given that the Manchester area is entirely different from the Glasgow area?

Simon Temple: Two factors need to be taken into account. One is how people choose between travel alternatives and the other is what alternatives are open to them. I might have a strong preference for using a rail link to Glasgow airport, but there is not one, so I cannot use it. Alternatively, I might prefer to use a rail link to Manchester airport, but there might not be a through service from my local station, which reduces the likelihood that I will use the rail link.

The forecasting process calculates the likelihood that people will use rail, based on whether there is a through service, how long it takes, how much it costs and how good the competing alternatives are. We then apply that to the situation that people face. If people are willing to use the rail link and a good service exists, they will use it. However, if no rail link exists, no matter how willing people are, they cannot use it. The information that we took from Manchester is on how people choose between alternatives, not on the opportunities that people have. The opportunities that will be available in Glasgow, which we have taken fully into account, will be specific to the area.

Michael Matheson: The promoter suggests that, by 2030, 279,000 person trips a year will transfer from taxis and cars on the M8 to GARL. What proportion is that of overall M8 traffic?

Simon Temple: It is a relatively small proportion. It is less than 1 per cent of the total usage of the M8.

Michael Matheson: Less than 1 per cent?

Simon Temple: Yes.

Michael Matheson: Significantly less?

Simon Temple: It is about 0.5 per cent.

Michael Matheson: That is significantly less then. Are there any comparable figures for bus transfers?

Simon Temple: About 20 per cent of air passengers and 60 per cent of employees will transfer from bus. I do not have the figures for the proportion of bus passengers that that would be.

Michael Matheson: That is helpful. The promoter's written evidence states that by 2030 the revenue value for bus services is expected to be 50 per cent more than the pre-GARL annual total. However, it also states that bus operators' revenue from air passengers and airport employees will be reduced by an annual average

of £188,000 over the 60-year appraisal period. Can you provide us with a bit more explanation of how you arrived at those figures?

Simon Temple: We have taken our two forecasting years, 2009 and 2030, and calculated the market share of bus with and without GARL. We applied that to the number of air passengers and employees that are forecast to exist in those two years and interpolated between the two. That shows us that the growth of the airport means that all modes will experience an increase in use. Clearly, bus and taxi will gain less than they would have gained without GARL, assuming conservatively—as we have done—that the airport would grow at the same pace with or without GARL.

Michael Matheson: Thank you. Your written evidence states that

“the taxi trade is expected to experience large increases in revenue over the current position”

but that there is

“an estimated £1.64m annual average disbenefit to the taxi industry as a whole.”

Can you explain that?

Simon Temple: It is a similar process. Taxis will gain from the growth of the airport but they would have gained slightly more without GARL. The effect of GARL is to put the taxi trade back to where it would have been about three years earlier; it will then grow at the same rate that it would have done without GARL.

Michael Matheson: In percentage terms, what are the £188,000 and the £1.64 million?

Simon Temple: They are a low percentage. I do not have the exact figure with me, but I can provide it.

Michael Matheson: It would be helpful if we could get that in percentage terms—it gives some context in understanding the issue.

The written evidence also states that bus operators' revenue has been included in the economic appraisal of the project but that the economic disbenefit to taxis has not. Why is that?

Simon Temple: We felt that there were opportunities for taxi operators to seek alternative sources of business elsewhere, which would help to counteract any loss of business as a result of GARL. Also, we felt that it would be counterintuitive in policy terms to include the economic disbenefit to taxis. The policy seeks to achieve a more sustainable mix of surface access modes to airports. If anything, taxis are even less sustainable than private cars. A taxi generally makes one loaded journey to the airport and an empty journey in the other direction, whereas somebody who goes to the airport by car and

parks there makes one loaded journey to and from the airport.

Michael Matheson: You do not think that the bus operators will go elsewhere.

Simon Temple: No. We included the disbenefits to them in the economic appraisal.

Michael Matheson: Yes, but the possibility of going elsewhere was a reason for not including the disbenefits to taxi drivers.

12:15

Simon Temple: The bus operators could go elsewhere and, in that respect, we may have been conservative in including in the appraisal the disbenefits to them.

To pick up on a point that was made earlier, there are good opportunities for developing Glasgow airport as a ground transport hub. If more bus services come in, that will benefit not only airport users, but people who want to use the airport as an interchange point for changing on to the rail network. We have been conservative in not including that possibility in our assessment of the scheme's benefits.

Michael Matheson: Do the taxi drivers agree with your analysis?

Simon Temple: I do not have the results of a survey of the taxi trade, although as a user of taxis between Glasgow airport and the city centre, I have anecdotal evidence that, in general, they are not strongly opposed to the scheme. Taxi drivers have a reputation for not being backward in coming forward with their views.

Michael Matheson: Has the promoter discussed the situation with the taxi operators?

John Halliday: The straight answer is that we have tried to but, frankly, we have not had a great response from the taxi trade.

Michael Matheson: Is that because of a lack of a single person to go to?

John Halliday: No, I do not think so. We simply have not had a good response from taxi operators.

Michael Matheson: But you have approached them.

John Halliday: We have tried to.

Michael Matheson: To discuss the matter.

John Halliday: Indeed.

Michael Matheson: That is great.

On the idea of a modal interchange, the promoter states:

"GARL would provide opportunities for bus-rail interchange"

at the airport, which would offer benefits to passengers. That is fair enough, but can you give us a practical illustration of what you mean by that? You also claim that such an interchange would lead to greater use being made of GARL. What evidence do you have for that?

Simon Temple: Manchester airport represents a good example of such a set-up working successfully. A ground transport interchange has been developed at Manchester and, as has been said, more bus services have been encouraged into the airport, which are used both by air passengers and by people who use the airport as a hub or an interchange point between bus and rail. That development has been successful both for the airport, by helping to underwrite the cost of better bus services, and for public transport generally, by providing better journey opportunities for people.

Douglas Ferguson: I can provide some local context for such a development at Glasgow airport. The surrounding areas that would be most likely to benefit would be the Erskine area, the Gryfe valley, Bridge of Weir, Kilmacoll and—perhaps to a slightly lesser extent—towns north of the river and across the Erskine bridge, such as Dumbarton and Clydebank. We feel that there are opportunities to improve the bus network from those areas to the airport. Over the years, we have worked to provide some subsidised services to the airport, especially from areas north of the river, as part of a social inclusion policy of improving access. We think that real as well as theoretical opportunities exist.

Michael Matheson: Simon Temple mentioned Manchester. Most members of the committee visited the interchange at Manchester airport, which is impressive. Where will the interchange be at Glasgow airport?

John Halliday: The plan is that the station will be located to the south of the multistorey car park. We are keen to work with BAA to develop an interchange underneath the station, which will be about 7m in the air, as a result of the line crossing the M8. We feel that the development of the master plan offers an opportunity to revise the layout of the airport's road system such that a good interchange with bus, car and taxi travel could be created at the one location.

Michael Matheson: Is the lead-in time for the creation of the interchange the same as that for the railway line?

John Halliday: Not really. The rail link as proposed in the bill is a bespoke system. However, in any development, we must link into BAA's plans for the airport.

Michael Matheson: So the benefits will be derived only when that interchange has been created.

Simon Temple: To clarify, we have said that there are potential benefits, but they are not included in our quantified analysis.

Marlyn Glen: The committee has received written evidence from the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland, which makes several recommendations to the promoter on ensuring maximum accessibility for disabled passengers, including one on the need to speak to an access consultant. How will the promoter deliver on the recommendations in that submission?

John Halliday: For the next stage of development of the project, we will require specific expertise in disability analysis. We expect to pull in that expertise through the appointment of a consultant. We will continue to liaise with mobility and access groups, as we have done during the promotion of the project. Through the two aspects of commissioning specific expertise and liaison, we can cover the accessibility issues adequately.

Marlyn Glen: MACS also recommends that an access audit of Glasgow Central and Paisley Gilmour Street stations be undertaken as a matter of urgency. Has that been done? If not, are there plans to do so?

John Halliday: I cannot say whether an audit has been undertaken of Glasgow Central station, as it is operated by Network Rail. However, I am aware that Network Rail has undertaken several studies on access at stations. On Paisley Gilmour Street station, we have commissioned consultants to consider the accessibility issues there.

Douglas Ferguson: At present, Paisley Gilmour Street has full access for mobility-impaired people, with lifts to all three platforms. Equally, Glasgow Central has such access to all platforms. Obviously, the new station at the airport will have to be designed to provide that level of accessibility. Although we can always bring about further improvements through an audit, the three stations on the line will have the basic level of accessibility.

The Convener: You have talked about access for mobility-impaired people. How will the needs of individuals with other disabilities, such as hearing or sight impairment, be assessed?

Douglas Ferguson: The audit will pick out the specific issues that need to be addressed in that regard.

John Halliday: For the development of East Kilbride bus station, which was one of our leading projects and which is now open and operating, we considered specifically the needs of all disabled people. The development is interesting in that it takes into account the needs of sight-impaired as well as hearing-impaired people, quite apart from the needs of mobility-impaired people. We have a

good record of understanding those needs, but the issues will be site specific and the solutions will depend on how the project is developed.

Marlyn Glen: I am interested in the subject. We talked earlier about the need for staffing as well as for information and signage—staff are needed to give information and help people. Passengers who go from Glasgow Central to the airport will enjoy a seamless journey. What measures will be put in place to ease the transfer of passengers who arrive at Paisley Gilmour Street station from the south and west to the airport? Those people will have luggage and may be disabled or just elderly.

Douglas Ferguson: As I said, the basic provision exists in that there are lifts to the three platforms. We acknowledge that, outwith the GARL project, it is worth considering the design of and services at Paisley Gilmour Street, and we have just commissioned preliminary designs to get our ideas together on that. That has not been included directly as part of this project, but we are working to develop a separate project to improve Paisley Gilmour Street, which can be done to the same timescale as the Glasgow airport rail link. We recognise that Paisley Gilmour Street will be a more significant interchange with the rail link in future.

Marlyn Glen: I am concerned that you have not mentioned staff such as porters.

Douglas Ferguson: Paisley Gilmour Street is staffed throughout the day, as Glasgow Central is and as the airport station will be, so there will be staff there. We will need to consider having additional staff on the platforms in more detail, along with Transport Scotland and First ScotRail.

Marlyn Glen: Do your patronage figures show the number of passengers you expect to travel to the airport from Glasgow and the number who will travel from Ayrshire and Inverclyde? Do you have that breakdown?

Simon Temple: We can certainly provide it to you.

Marlyn Glen: That would be helpful. Thank you.

Mr Monteith: Will the witnesses clarify whether one of the promoter's policy objectives, namely developing rail capacity in the Ayrshire corridors, is a core part of the GARL proposals? *[Interruption.]*

John Halliday: The key thing about the project is the corridor between Paisley Gilmour Street and Glasgow. We have recognised that there are benefits that need to be developed incrementally. The project is a building block, and has two strands—one is the capacity that is required between Paisley Gilmour Street and Glasgow, and the other one is the link to the airport. The Ayrshire development is really about allowing for growth for

the future. Within the airport project, there is room to develop additional services. We have not claimed that, but the ability is there nonetheless. Undoubtedly, other things will be required in Ayrshire, and there are sections of line that need upgrading. We are working on those projects and trying to promote them, and we are also in discussion with Transport Scotland about enhancing the vehicle fleet that serves the Ayrshire market.

Mr Monteith: So is that a no or a yes?

John Halliday: It is a no in the sense that we have not done anything specifically for the Ayrshire market. However, if we are to be able to accommodate future growth, more services—or the infrastructure for more services—will have to be available through the Paisley to Glasgow corridor.

Douglas Ferguson: I would like to expand on that, because I think that there was some confusion on that issue a fortnight ago. Improving services to Ayrshire was not a core objective, although there is an opportunity to use some of the capacity to do that in future. However, distinct benefits to Ayrshire come out of the core scheme, with improved reliability and increased capacity between Paisley and Glasgow, and the work that we have done estimates that those improvements will result in passenger benefits amounting to around £41 million for Ayrshire and Inverclyde and will lead to the creation of around 100 jobs, over a 20-year period—five per annum. The improvements and benefits for Ayrshire are almost a by-product—but a direct by-product—of the scheme.

The Convener: Could we get a point of clarification on the record? Can you confirm that when you talk about Ayrshire you are talking about North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire?

Douglas Ferguson: That is correct.

Mr Monteith: I, too, would like to clarify something. The promoter's written evidence states that additional track created through GARL could lead to additional trains serving either the Ayrshire or the Inverclyde line, but it goes on to state that the economic case was improved by assessing on the basis of two extra trains per hour to Ayrshire. How can the assessment improve the economic case if the new trains could be either for Ayrshire or for Inverclyde? Surely some of those trains might be going to Inverclyde.

12:30

Simon Temple: Our base assessment, and the basis of the economic case for the scheme, just adds the GARL services on top of the existing services. We then did a sensitivity test, which

added two extra services to Ayrshire, as a general test of whether adding additional non-airport services would be a good thing or not, and it had the effect of strengthening the economic case and of suggesting that further service development would be a good idea. As it is not part of the core scheme, we did not examine prioritisation to see whether all the additional services should go to Ayrshire, they should all go to Inverclyde or they should be split between the two. It was solely a sensitivity test.

I apologise for my mobile phone going off earlier, convener. I was convinced that I had switched it off.

The Convener: You are excused.

Mr Monteith: I would like to clarify one final point. The written evidence states that, for such new services to be provided, the timetable would need to be restructured, as would destinations and stopping patterns, and that there would be all sorts of ramifications. Given that, do not the benefits, not just for Ayrshire but for Prestwick airport, come with quite a large caveat?

Simon Temple: I guess that they come with two caveats. One is that the timetable that is being prepared has been written around the existing services plus the airport, and that is based on trains running every half hour to Ayr and on the other two quarters of the hour to Ardrossan and Largs. If we went for four trains to Ayr, we would probably want to make them every 15 minutes and to slot in the Largs and Ardrossan trains at some other point in the clock face. In order to do that, we would probably need to rewrite the whole timetable. It is not surprising that one would need to do that to accommodate a more frequent service to Ayrshire.

The second caveat, which is perhaps a bit more significant, is that, although the new infrastructure between Shields junction and Paisley will accommodate the two extra services, we cannot guarantee that there will be enough capacity in Glasgow Central, or beyond Paisley out into Ayrshire, to accommodate them. In the places where we are making changes to the infrastructure, it can certainly accommodate six trains, but we cannot guarantee that the infrastructure elsewhere will be able to do that.

The Convener: I thank the witnesses for their evidence. We will meet for the fifth time next week when we will take evidence, and I look forward to seeing our regulars then.

Meeting closed at 12:32.

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