

GLASGOW AIRPORT RAIL LINK BILL COMMITTEE

Monday 22 May 2006

Session 2

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GLASGOW AIRPORT RAIL LINK BILL COMMITTEE 6th 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:

Archie Anderson (Paisley North Community Council)

Dave Batty (Scottish Natural Heritage)

Archie Berry

Christopher Connor (Scottish Environment Protection Agency)

Gordon Craig (Strathclyders Against Detrimental Development)

Brian Cuthbert (Faber Maunsell)

June Dawson (Scottish Environment Protection Agency)

Douglas Ferguson (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport)

Mary Gildea

John Halliday (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport)

Alan Hopkirk

Charles Hoskins (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport)

Paul Irving (John Kennedy & Co)

Don Marshall (Strathclyders Against Detrimental Development)

Mae Marshall (Paisley North Community Council)

Ashley Parry Jones (Land Aspects)

Bill Reeve (Transport Scotland)

Tavish Scott (Minister for Transport and Telecommunications)

Damian Sharp (Transport Scotland)

Simon Temple (Faber Maunsell)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Terry Shevlin

LOCATION

Renfrewshire Council Civic Suite, Paisley

Scottish Parliament

Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee

Monday 22 May 2006

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:31*]

Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill: Preliminary Stage

The Convener (Margaret Jamieson): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the sixth meeting of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee. I remind everyone in the room to switch off mobile phones and pagers because they interfere with the sound system. On behalf of the committee, I thank Renfrewshire Council for all its help in ensuring that we could meet here today.

This is the final committee meeting at which we will take oral evidence at preliminary stage. The committee will take evidence on the general principles of the bill, its accompanying documents and certain objections that raise whole-bill issues. I will explain what that means in due course.

We will take evidence from five panels of witnesses, including Tavish Scott, the Minister for Transport and Telecommunications, who will appear before the committee with officials from Transport Scotland at 2 o'clock. As usual, the witnesses from the promoter will be on the final panel.

I welcome the witnesses on panel 1: Rodney Fairley, manager of Strathclyde and Ayrshire area, and Dave Batty, casework support officer of west areas, from Scottish Natural Heritage; and Christopher Connor, local air-quality specialist, and June Dawson, senior planning officer, from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

The committee's questions will focus on the witnesses' views of the consultation undertaken by the promoter and their opinion of the environmental statement, which is one of the accompanying documents.

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): Good morning. In their submissions, the witnesses state that GARL has the potential to reduce road traffic emissions. However, is it not the case that, even with GARL, road traffic emissions will continue to rise as ever more passengers arrive at Glasgow airport from the M8?

Christopher Connor (Scottish Environment Protection Agency): SEPA believes that the way in which passengers get to Glasgow airport is a

matter of choice. Obviously, airports are part of Government strategies. Rail is a sustainable method of transport, and SEPA supports it.

Marlyn Glen: As no one else wishes to respond, I will move on.

Do the witnesses believe that the promoter's environmental statement conforms with what is required under schedule 4 to the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999?

June Dawson (Scottish Environment Protection Agency): We are happy that the environmental statement covers matters that concern us. The promoter assessed options and alternatives and tried to come up with the best situation possible at this stage, although it recognises that more work needs to be done. It is engaging actively with us at present to ensure that any additional work is done as the project progresses. In that way, the environmental issues live with the life of the programme. We regard that as good practice.

Marlyn Glen: Do you think that the environmental impact of the scheme is relatively slight compared with other major construction projects?

June Dawson: We have not compared the scheme with other projects; we have looked at it on its own merits.

Marlyn Glen: Do you intend to carry out such a comparison?

June Dawson: No. We look at the project that is presented to us. The decision on land use is left to other people. [*Interruption.*]

The Convener: I will stop you, because someone obviously still has their mobile phone switched on. I ask them to switch it off.

June Dawson: Would you like me to repeat my comments?

Marlyn Glen: Are you essentially saying that you consider projects individually and do not do comparisons?

June Dawson: Yes. That is because the land-use decision is made by another party. We examine the environmental impacts of a project and whether the promoter has taken reasonable steps to mitigate the effects of what it intends to do.

Marlyn Glen: Do you have any outstanding concerns about the Glasgow airport fuel farm being relocated immediately adjacent to Paisley Moss local nature reserve?

June Dawson: We identified potential problems, some of which will need to be addressed on the ground prior to work commencing. The promoter

has agreed that that will be done and that it will keep us involved. We like to work with a project as it happens, rather than the work being done in advance and perhaps placed on a shelf.

Marlyn Glen: Would one of the witnesses from SNH like to comment?

Dave Batty (Scottish Natural Heritage): In an ideal situation, we would have preferred the fuel farm to have been located elsewhere rather than immediately adjacent to Paisley Moss local nature reserve. However, when we considered the impacts of the development on the local nature reserve and the mitigation that was proposed, we felt that the impacts did not justify our objection and that the mitigation should be able to deal with our concerns.

Marlyn Glen: Do you have any outstanding concerns about the M8 site of importance for nature conservation and the Boghead pool site of special scientific interest?

Dave Batty: No.

June Dawson: We accept the SNH lead.

Marlyn Glen: Your organisations are both mandatory consultees, which means that you have a right to comment to the committee on the consultation undertaken by the promoter. Do you have any concerns about the consultation that was undertaken?

June Dawson: No.

Dave Batty: We are very content with it.

Marlyn Glen: Thank you.

Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): My questions are mainly for the SNH witnesses, as they are based on SNH's submission.

Can you expand on your concerns about the longer-term adverse impact of the new route, especially between Paisley St James station and the airport?

Dave Batty: Our concerns include disturbance of people's usage of the nature reserve and the long-term impacts on access to the nature reserve. There could be long-term impacts on water levels in the nature reserve, although we feel that that issue should be addressed by the proposed mitigation.

From Paisley to the local nature reserve, there are impacts on landscape and visual amenity, particularly in the St James park area. The rail link is a large-scale infrastructure development, which will have an impact on the area for many years.

Mr Arbuckle: You expressed concern about the water level. How would the project affect the water level?

Dave Batty: Through the construction of the fuel depot. The excavations might cause lowering of the level, but we feel that the issue is being addressed by the promoter through the proposed mitigation.

Mr Arbuckle: Your submission notes that

"it was not possible to carry out a full survey of the route between Glasgow Central station and Paisley St James station."

Did you hope that the promoter would carry out such an assessment?

Dave Batty: The survey work should be carried out before construction work commences. The promoter has intimated that it will be carried out before construction starts.

Mr Arbuckle: As a follow-up to that, why should the whole route be surveyed—most of it already exists, right up to Paisley—rather than just the new section?

Dave Batty: On the section from Glasgow to Paisley, we understand that the new track will be placed between two existing tracks, so the construction impact should be minimal because the area has already been developed. There might be an impact from the access that is necessary to carry out the work. However, it is not the same as putting in a new line parallel to an existing line, so the amount of disruption should be much less, and there will be less need to survey the Glasgow to Paisley corridor for any impact. However, from Paisley to the airport will be new construction.

Mr Arbuckle: There will be less need to survey the route between Glasgow and Paisley, but you feel that a survey will still be required.

Dave Batty: We have asked for a survey of protected species, particularly otters, water voles, bats and badgers. We are not requesting a full survey of all ecological interests on the line between Glasgow and Paisley. We suggest a survey only of those interests that could be affected by the construction works on the new line.

Mr Arbuckle: You made a specific point about protected mammals. Can you give us an idea of how long a survey of those would take? In addition, if a survey uncovered badger setts or places where bats roosted, how would that affect the rail project's timescale?

Dave Batty: It is rather difficult for me to say how long a survey would take or what effect it would have on the project's timescale. Following such a survey, the promoter would have to consider what had been found and what its impact might be. For example, the development would not necessarily impact on a badger sett. There would need to be an assessment of whether there would

be impacts on the badgers and of the mitigation that would be necessary to reduce any impacts.

Mr Arbuckle: What is your estimate of how long the initial survey would take?

Dave Batty: I would have thought that it could be done in a few days or a week. It would not be a very technical survey, so it would not require much technical input.

Mr Arbuckle: I may be accused of playing to the gallery with this question, as the promoter's witnesses are present, but how can the promoter ensure that the designs for the bridge, viaduct and station at Glasgow airport are of as high a quality as possible, from an environmental point of view?

Dave Batty: I would suggest that the promoter could do that by employing, as it will do, high-quality architects to produce a good design that takes into account all aspects of the development and tries to unify them in the design.

The Convener: I have questions for SEPA. Your submission states that the bill "requires to be reviewed" in light of the new Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2005 (SSI 2005/348). Have you discussed that issue with the promoter?

June Dawson: The new regulations came into force only on 1 April and are still developing. The promoter is aware of them and we will make progress with it. Some aspects of the regulations are new to Scotland, so they will be dealt with over a transition period.

The Convener: Are you confident that you will be able to work with the promoter to ensure its compliance with the regulations?

June Dawson: Yes.

The Convener: You welcome the promoter's commitment to produce an environmental management system for the construction phase of the proposal. What are the essential ingredients of such a system, and will you definitely be consulted on it?

June Dawson: From our point of view, one of the biggest risks arises during the construction phase. SEPA has already received a draft construction method statement for comment. The promoter must consider, for example, run-off from the site and the use of concrete. We have pollution prevention guidelines on our website that the promoter can use. The promoter must also consider what it actually does on the ground. These issues are being dealt with at the moment, and we are working with the promoter. It is a big project of which the general public are aware, and they will alert us to any problems.

10:45

The Convener: Will you also monitor the construction phase throughout in order to ensure compliance?

June Dawson: It will not be close monitoring, but there will be some ad hoc monitoring. The general public will quickly alert us to any problems.

The Convener: As there are no further questions for panel 1, I thank the witnesses for their evidence.

I welcome the witnesses on panels 2 and 3 to the table: Don Marshall, who is the chair of Strathclyders Against Detrimental Development, or SADD; Archie Anderson, who is the chairperson of Paisley North community council; Mae Marshall, who is the community council's secretary; Alan Hopkirk; Mary Gildea; and Archie Berry. I welcome you all to the meeting.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife (Ind): I wish to put some questions to Strathclyders Against Detrimental Development. Your objection primarily comments on a study that was carried out on the promoter's behalf by the consultant Faber Maunsell. Now that the bill and the accompanying documents have been submitted to the Parliament, do you still have such strong misgivings about the economic case for the project?

Don Marshall (Strathclyders Against Detrimental Development): Yes.

Mr Monteith: Will you explain why?

Don Marshall: In my opinion, nothing has really changed. There is the damage that could occur to a grade A listed building—Glasgow Central station—due to lack of preparation, lack of survey work, lack of engineering drawings and lack of knowledge, and there is a lack of identification of costs that might result. There is the economic disruption that could arise, should Central station have to close, and the cost of any subsidence that may be caused nearby. There is the economic disruption and the lack of identification of costs resulting from putting a bridge across the M8. It took many months of repeated questioning before I got a method statement via the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport. The construction method that it intends to use indicates that its estimate of 12 hours to achieve the bridge crossing is patent nonsense. The construction method would lead to the M8 being closed for days. Again, the damage has not been costed nor the impact assessed.

The cost of the station would be £12.5 million. It took about 14 and a half years to determine the location of the station and, on current information, after 15 years, ownership of the station has not yet been determined.

In relation to the timetable, the passenger numbers do not add up. The proposal is for a twin termini shuttle between the airport station and Central station with no onwards connections to the rest of Scotland through Central station, and with the service from the airport starting too late to serve international flights, such as flights from Copenhagen, Brussels and London.

The scheme has not been well researched. As the stage 3 Faber Maunsell report says, in arriving at the figure for the additional costs that have been identified, "professional judgment" had to be used on one or two occasions. The promoter should have used that same professional judgment to come up with some form of estimate. Everything that the promoter knows about can only add to the costs, which can be determined only after planning approval has been given. As such, the projected costs are nowhere near sufficient. They will be far in excess of the costs that the promoter has proposed.

Mr Monteith: You state that

"there will always be a requirement of a massive annual subsidy"

for GARL. Are you concerned about the size of the subsidy? In other words, would you be happy if the subsidy was a less than massive amount, or is your concern simply that there will be a subsidy when bus services are not subsidised?

Don Marshall: There will always be subsidy for public transport. However, on this occasion, given that the proposal is for 2km of line, the amount proposed seems excessive and will not give the Scottish taxpayer value for money.

Mr Monteith: You also state that

"there is no economically favourable argument that can justify this rail link, especially when the projected paucity of passenger numbers is taken into account".

Are you challenging the patronage forecasts that the promoter's consultants made and, if so, why?

Don Marshall: The reason for the airport rail link is primarily to take passengers to the airport. Any documentation that SPT has produced for public usage states merely that 1.4 million passengers will use the line between Glasgow, Paisley and the airport. To my knowledge, it has never stated specifically the number of passengers who would use the link between Paisley and the airport, and yet that is the reason for the link being built.

Mr Monteith: My next question is for the representatives of Paisley North community council. You state that the project is

"full of contradictions and cost omissions which give a misleading total cost."

Will you explain in more detail what some of those omissions are and how they will affect the total cost that the promoter has given?

Mae Marshall (Paisley North Community Council): I refer the member to SADD's objection and to what Don Marshall has just said. We are thinking of things such as the undercroft in Central station. Most of the examples that Don Marshall gave are also in our objection.

Archie Anderson (Paisley North Community Council): Having spoken to BAA and gone through its master plan for the airport, I understand that the new rail line will mean that a new road bridge will need to be built across the Cart. That will be another great cost of God knows how many millions.

Mr Monteith: My next question is for Alan Hopkirk. You stated that the bill

"would be a strategic folly at great expense to the taxpayer with significant detrimental ... economic ... consequences".

Just three difficulties, then. Will you explain why you believe that?

Alan Hopkirk: Speaking as a member of the public, I do not think that SPT inspires confidence. It seems to be incapable of joined-up thinking, which is a pity, given that it is supposed to be responsible for joined-up journeys. For example—and I do not blame SPT alone for this—it justifies some of what it proposes by saying that it is constrained by what it has been told to do.

SPT is trying to justify GARL as a stand-alone project, but it is also saying that crossrail will have an impact on the future success of GARL. If the crossrail project was integrated with GARL, that would change the way in which GARL worked. Crossrail opens up the possibility of trains going from Glasgow airport into Queen Street station or to points east, such as Stirling or Edinburgh. However, there is only a certain amount of capacity on the line and GARL will use a high proportion of that. It has been rammed home to us time and time again by SPT that the journey time of 16 minutes is critical to the success of GARL and that frequency is also important. According to SPT, GARL cannot succeed with three trains per hour. Strategically, it seems folly to use the capacity in a way that precludes linking the airport to Queen Street station using the crossrail option.

Another issue is the project that was announced partly by SPT—I am not 100 per cent sure whether SPT or Glasgow City Council is responsible for it—under which new superbuses will run to the airport and to Braehead and so on, using the new squinty bridge. That project will surely detract from patronage of GARL. The projects should have been taken as a whole and

considered strategically because they impact on each other.

GARL is an expensive project but I do not see any benefits for people who live in Paisley or Renfrewshire. The promoter's memorandum states:

"82% supported the concept of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link."

I do not believe that that is correct. In fact, 82 per cent of people who responded to the consultation support the concept of an airport rail link, but not necessarily the current proposal. That leads us to the problem with the GARL project. We do not have a problem with the concept of an airport rail link; it is the fact that the policy is not joined up and has not been considered strategically that causes me great concern.

Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP):

What are your concerns about how the promoter conducted the consultation?

Mae Marshall: The consultation was questionable from the beginning, as far as we are concerned. At the first public meeting we were promised a copy of the verbatim minutes. SPT recorded the meeting, but we were then told that there was something wrong with the recording and that it was poor, so nothing came of that. We were not happy about that and we considered the explanation just an excuse.

We had meetings with SPT at our home, 160 Greenock Road, where SADD meets. We have also had meetings at SPT's choice of venue. At the meetings it said, "We'll get back to you later." We bombarded it with letters and e-mails asking it to answer our questions. We had to keep fighting. SPT responds eventually, but only after a lot of prompting and it is selective about which questions it answers.

SPT issued leaflets and, as Alan Hopkirk said, it came up with the wonderful idea that 81 to 82 per cent of respondents to the consultation supported GARL. In fact, the only consultation was to ask, "Would you like a viaduct or an embankment?" That is a big decision, but it does not bother anyone who lives in Glasgow. The only people it affects are those who live around St James park and the people who play football there. SPT said that Paisley North community council sent 500 postcards in favour of a rail link. Not true. We did not send any postcards. The postcard that SPT is referring to stated that the sender was in favour of a rail link but would

"strongly object to the proposed route crossing the park".

SPT totally ignored the second part of those cards; it manipulated the figures.

11:00

The first community liaison group meeting for the SADD group and Paisley North community council was held on 13 March in Beechwood community centre. The minutes of that meeting arrived last Thursday—nine weeks and four days after the meeting. I think it is significant that they arrived too close to this meeting for us to do much about them.

At that meeting, I asked the chair if a member of Paisley North community council could attend the other liaison group meetings, including the business one. I was told no, that that would not be appropriate. I was concerned, so I wrote to SPT. I got no answer. After two and a half weeks, I sent another letter, this time by recorded delivery. I received a written response from the chair and again I was denied the right even to go as an observer. That was all that I had asked—to go as an observer. I did not ask to be a participant.

I was rather annoyed by that response because I like to know what is going on. We all felt that there was a divide and conquer policy—that SPT did not want us to know what was being said at other meetings. I know that SPT said that it would send out minutes, but they were not on the website when I checked recently. I do not know if they have appeared yet. We have not been sent any minutes from other meetings. We are still waiting.

I managed to attend the business liaison group meeting; I found out it was on and I openly admit that I gatecrashed it. I was surprised that the business people did not even know how to put in an objection. They were not aware of the £20 charge.

This project has been on the go for a long time—approximately 15 years. It was first brought to my attention round about 1990 or 1991 when a student of mine was using it as a business management project. At that time, there were 22 possible routes. By 1994, I discovered that the number of possible routes had been narrowed down to three. If there were 22 routes at the start, how is it consultation to ask now whether we want an embankment or a viaduct?

SPT has used the excuse of cost for discarding the other routes. It has no idea what the cost will be when it starts drilling in St James park and gets into the mine-workings underneath and the bog land.

Michael Matheson: When was your community council first informed of the promoter's specific project?

Mae Marshall: Our community council was formed in December 2004 and the issue was brought up then.

Michael Matheson: Would any other witnesses like to raise concerns about the consultation?

Alan Hopkirk: I want to back up what Mae Marshall said and to make some particular points. I objected to the bill and I received a letter from SPT on 13 April. It was two paragraphs long—not very detailed. On page 3 of paper GARL/S2/06/6/1, SPT says:

“The Promoter has now responded in writing to all the Objectors”—

I received a two-paragraph response from it—

“and the Promoter has subsequently had follow up discussions or correspondence with all.”

I have certainly received no correspondence from or had any discussion with SPT on any points in my objection. As an individual and a member of the community council, I have been treated with contempt. That evidence to the committee is simply incorrect.

SPT then summarises its progress with 10 objectors. However, there were 47 objectors, one of whom has since withdrawn, which means that a total of 36 objectors, including me, have received no response or correspondence or had any discussions. At the first meeting of Glasgow airport rail link St James residents community liaison group, of which I am a member, I raised a variety of points, some of which I have also set out in my objection; however, the minutes of that meeting, which I received last week, say:

“An additional meeting note will be circulated shortly, responding to the questions and issues raised at the meeting.”

Those “questions and issues” related to the bridge over the A726 and McFarlane Street.

This is not rocket science. With the amount of time that it has spent on the bill, SPT should at least be able to provide an artist’s drawing of the bridge. After all, that bridge will need to be built quite high over McFarlane Street if it is to allow passage of the adjacent A726, which runs at a higher level.

Michael Matheson: I want to stick to the general process, instead of going into any detail on the line itself.

Has the promoter sufficiently considered the other possible options for the rail link? Your earlier evidence suggests that you object not to the principle of the rail link but to this particular route.

Don Marshall: The promoter’s initial publicity contained various statements and comments about alternative routes. However, those options were dismissed early on with fairly asinine comments such as that the soil conditions were not good or the crossing of the river Cart was technically questionable. However, the promoter

provided no back-up evidence as to why certain options had been dismissed or why they could not have been developed, even at a given cost. After all, as I said at the time, if the Dutch are able to tunnel through reclaimed land, why should the bog in St James park prove such a problem for SPT?

All the internal studies remained internal, and there was no public consultation on other options for establishing the link between Paisley and the airport. The promoter has offered no realistic alternative to taking the line directly across the park, which in its view is the cheapest and most direct solution and the least damaging to local communities. However, there are social and environmental deterrents to that route.

Michael Matheson: Are there any alternative routes that would avoid St James park?

Don Marshall: Yes, and they would not cause as much damage. Indeed, the preferred route itself has hidden costs, because, as Mae Marshall pointed out, there are mine workings under the park, as a map dated 1914 makes clear. If any subsidence came about through piling, the viaduct would be rendered totally useless or would cost a prohibitive amount of money to repair. That problem could be avoided by using an alternative route or a different mode of transport, not heavy rail.

Michael Matheson: What is your preferred alternative route?

Don Marshall: We could take the existing solum and simply run the route into Renfrew. I realise that that would involve the compulsory purchase of several houses in the town; however, it would mean that the train would be used not only by people from the airport but by people in Renfrew and still allow access to Glasgow. As the passenger figures show, with the preferred route, a limited number of people will be able to access the train; after all, anyone from the south side of Paisley will have no alternative but to take a taxi, a bus or their own car to the airport.

Michael Matheson: The evidence from both Paisley North community council and Alan Hopkirk suggests that a route that accessed Braehead shopping centre or Renfrew would be of greater benefit to the west of Scotland in general. What evidence is there for believing that?

Alan Hopkirk: At the first pre-consultation meeting, Councillor Watson stated that the Braehead shopping development was the main cause of congestion on the M8. If we do not address that, we can have as many GARLs as we like but they will have no impact on M8 congestion. It is disingenuous that SPT uses pictures of the M8 being clogged up when GARL would not address that congestion. Its impact, if it has any impact of significance, would be slight.

As well as mentioning the importance of Braehead, Councillor Watson highlighted the importance of having the rail link that was in the initial plans for Braehead. It seems coincidental that we never got the sound recording of that meeting; it disappeared. Perhaps SPT had not got its script together at that point. We were told that the recording was not of good enough quality. We would have been able to hear it. That is a bit like saying, "There is no point in giving you the report, committee members, because it uses big words and we don't think you will be able to understand it." That is to treat us with contempt. The recording would also have contained important information about what important people in the promoter's team thought at that time.

We are not in a position to say that a particular alternative route would be the best one, but we believe that there has not been enough open consultation on alternative routes. Simon Wallwork's light rail or monorail proposal used a different concept, but it was not taken far enough. He is not in a position to tell the committee one way or the other and the committee is not in a position to decide on it. Even a light rail scheme that used the current route would change the construction costs. Whether such a scheme terminated at Gilmour Street or continued to Central station, it would have an impact. However, SPT has had in mind "heavy rail, heavy rail, heavy rail" and it has not been prepared to deviate from that. We do not believe that SPT has ever had an open mind about the issue.

Michael Matheson: Do other members of the panel want to comment?

Mary Gildea: I attended four consultation meetings but none of them discussed where the link would be. The route was always to be through Paisley. As my colleague has said, the only discussion was on whether the link should have a viaduct or an embankment. I was very disappointed.

The west end of Paisley is not as nice as the east end. The west end has the gas tank, all the work units and the railway. The good things that we have are the racecourse and the football park, but part of that area is now to be taken away. Just as the motorway took part of it away, the rail link will now take part of it away. In addition, the promoter wants to put a monstrous viaduct through the west end of Paisley. That is wrong.

The consultation did not offer any alternatives. The promoter said that alternatives had been considered and dismissed because of dampness and for various other reasons. I was very disappointed with the consultation.

Gordon Craig (Strathclyders Against Detrimental Development): To wrap up on the

question of consultation, I suggest that it is worth while looking at the equivalent brochure that was produced for the Edinburgh airport rail link. That is an ideal example of how a consultation should use open and full questioning and provide respondents with the chance to comment. Obviously, such a document would mean that it would be much more difficult to analyse the responses—I do not know what the responses were or how they were analysed—but I suggest that, if SPT had carried out the consultation properly in that way, it would have had a much more substantial document to hand over to the committee. It would have been able to say that it had carried out a proper consultation.

Don Marshall: Further to Alan Hopkirk's comments on the consultation, on 3 April I received an acknowledgement from SPT that it had received my objection and would respond shortly. As of this morning, I am still waiting.

Michael Matheson: That is helpful. Thank you.

The Convener: Do members have any other questions?

11:15

Mr Arbuckle: I have a follow-up question for Mary Gildea. She mentioned the play area but, with the viaduct, it appears to us to be a trade-off between the loss of two pitches and the improvement of the changing area. Does that not count as satisfactory?

Mary Gildea: If the rail link is built, it will take a number of years and half of the pitches will be closed off at a significant time, when Scotland is bidding for the commonwealth games. That is an awful long time. I am cynical about two pitches being lost. I see many young men walking past my door to the football park; if the pitches are put elsewhere, how will they get to them?

Archie Anderson: Paisley North community council has had the important experience of going through such a process when the slip road was put in. All sorts of promises were made to us about landscaping. The day before the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Committee came to see where the bridge would be, the stays that had been there for 12 years were taken off the trees—they had been strangling the trees—so we do not have great faith in landscaping. We were shown lovely brochures of shrubs, but committee members will have seen no evidence of shrubs because they all died and were not replaced. We were also promised that the park would be drained adequately. I think that £100,000 was spent on the park but, if you go down there on a wet day, you will see that the drainage does not work.

We are being given the same promises again. About 10 years ago, we were promised a nice lake and lovely shrubs, but that has all been reduced and now we will get 20 trees, I think, along the railway to mask it. If the 20 trees last as long as the shrubs lasted, they will not be there long. I am afraid that the promises that promoters make do not continue in future. It is all very well for people who have never gone through the process to listen to the nice promises about what will happen, but we have been through it before. We have had the promises and, when you visit the site, you can see the evidence that they have not been kept. The money was spent, but the park was not drained.

The Convener: Mr Berry, I am conscious that you have not had an opportunity to say anything. Is there anything that you want to add?

Archie Berry: Yes. On the loss of two football pitches, those who know the area know full well that SPT's proposed layout will not mean that we will have usable football pitches. All the pitches that will be laid around the boundary of St James park will be unplayable for the majority of the playing season. They will be useable during the summer, when no one plays football but, during the rest of the year, it is so wet that it is just a marsh around there. That is why there are no pitches there currently.

Furthermore, to move the pitches round to the side would deny other people use of the park. Currently, dog walkers and kite flyers are a big percentage of those who use the park and, for obvious reasons, they use parts that are not for playing football. That will be lost. Moreover, if the park is split in two, walkers and joggers will lose their enjoyment of it because they will not get the full use of its circumference. Therefore, the opportunity for healthy living in the west of Paisley will be reduced.

Over and above that, there was discussion about people walking to the park to play. Many people have families of more than one child and, when they are growing up, it can be difficult to get them to play football at the same time. St James park gives people that option, because all the children play in the same place. That advantage will be lost for at least the four years of the project and the relaying of turf but, even after that, because we will lose two pitches, there will still be an impact on people getting to and from sports facilities within the west of Paisley.

Alan Hopkirk: On the consultation process, most of us on the panel attended the pre-consultation meeting that I mentioned. SPT has made a great deal of extending the consultation process. Sometimes we feel that we are paranoid, but other organisations that objected have told the committee in evidence that they do not feel that they have been consulted, although SPT thinks

that they have been. A letter does not represent consultation; it is not dialogue.

The problem for many members of the public and for our community council is that information is drip-fed and we always receive it at the last minute. Despite that, responses that members of the public gave at the beginning of the consultation were taken as informed responses, which they were not. The cost of the project has escalated and patronage figures have changed—sometimes favourably for the concept and sometimes not. That information should have been prepared at the beginning of the consultation process and the fact that SPT could not do that smacks of its incompetence. If SPT was not ready at the beginning with the information that the public needed, it should not have begun, but it did. SPT said that it mitigated that—"mitigated" is a good word for SPT—by extending the consultation period, but that devalued the process. Information is still dripping out from liaison meetings, but information that might alleviate our concerns is not forthcoming.

I repeat that we are not against a rail link. When I attended the pre-consultation meeting, I did not have a closed mind. I did not think, "Shock, horror—this will be a terrible thing." I went to be convinced by SPT that the rail link was for the good of the west of Scotland and Renfrewshire and that, although it might have personal impacts, it would be a worthwhile project overall. SPT totally failed to convince us. The M8 was an obvious red herring. SPT showed pictures of the University of Paisley and said that the rail link would somehow put Paisley up there with Yale University, which was preposterous. That is why we have no faith in SPT. Unfortunately, throughout the process, nothing has happened to change our view and certainly not my view.

The Convener: I thank the witnesses of panels 2 and 3 for their evidence. We will have a short suspension to consider whether to take some evidence from the promoter this morning rather than in the afternoon. I ask the promoter to be prepared for that arrangement, which we will discuss in the short suspension.

11:22

Meeting suspended.

11:43

On resuming—

The Convener: I welcome the fifth panel of witnesses. We hope to ask most of the questions for this panel before lunch. If we manage to do that, we will do some tidying up after the minister has given evidence. If not, we will continue with questions after we hear from the minister.

The witnesses from Strathclyde Partnership for Transport are: Douglas Ferguson, who is director of operations; John Halliday, who is head of transport planning and integration; and Charles Hoskins, who is manager of projects. They are joined by witnesses from Faber Maunsell: Simon Temple is a director and Brian Cuthbert is a principal consultant. I also welcome Paul Irving from John Kennedy & Co, and Ashley Parry Jones, who is business development manager at Land Aspects Consultancy.

Does the environmental statement conform with the requirements of schedule 4 to the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999 (SSI 1999/1)?

Brian Cuthbert (Faber Maunsell): It certainly does. We had those regulations in mind when we carried out the environmental impact assessment.

The Convener: With whom will you work on that?

Brian Cuthbert: I take it that you mean in the next stages of the project. We have had much consultation of the statutory consultees—as witnesses from SNH and SEPA confirmed earlier in the meeting—who provided considerable input. We have taken on board as much as possible of the mitigation that those organisations suggested. In the next phase, through the detailed design and the development of a code of construction practice, we will continue to consult the statutory consultees. SNH and SEPA told the committee that they were satisfied with the consultation so far; we hope to continue in the same vein.

11:45

The Convener: We have mentioned the statutory obligations. How will SPT disseminate information among the public? As we heard this morning, there are significant concerns about consultation. When agreement on mitigation is reached, will there be a process whereby people can understand what the mitigation will mean?

John Halliday (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport): Yes. We have tried to set up a series of community and business liaison groups, which were mentioned earlier in the meeting. The groups are the principal means whereby we can communicate directly with affected parties and we intend that that process should continue throughout the construction stage and for a period after the works are completed.

The Convener: Why was no health impact assessment included in the environmental statement?

Brian Cuthbert: A health impact assessment is not a requirement of the EIA regulations.

The Convener: Did you not think that a health impact assessment would be helpful?

Brian Cuthbert: I suppose that it could have been helpful. Obviously I cannot speak about a health impact assessment, because we did not carry out such an assessment. However, I think that the main health issue relates to the cholera graves in St James park in Paisley. It is difficult to think of other health impacts.

The Convener: We have today heard from representatives of community organisations, who made significant comments on the impact of the construction on football pitches and children's safety. There are questions about how people would access St James park and what would happen if children were playing on various pitches. Such matters have health impacts. Can the promoter undertake a health impact assessment at this stage?

Douglas Ferguson (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport): We are certainly willing to consider doing so. A health impact assessment could be worth while because it could identify the health benefits of public transport, which encourages people to walk more, and it could identify environmental benefits to do with air quality. I do not know exactly what would be involved in such work, but I will be happy to come back to the committee on the matter and perhaps to provide an appropriate timescale.

The Convener: Does the ES give an accurate account of the working hours that are likely to be required for the construction of GARL?

Brian Cuthbert: Information on construction hours is included in the code of construction practice, which is based on discussions with Renfrewshire Council and Glasgow City Council.

The Convener: The Arches theatre objected to the conclusions in the ES on noise and vibration. Do the witnesses stand by those conclusions?

Brian Cuthbert: I think that The Arches objects to GARL's impact on the theatre. As part of work to deal with objections, which was not part of the ES, we carried out additional noise and vibration monitoring at the theatre and found that the level of noise and vibration there is already high—it is probably unacceptably high. There is a busy railway station directly above the theatre. GARL will add slightly, but not significantly, to the problem. However, there are proposals for mitigation through some kind of track isolation, so that at least GARL trains at Glasgow Central station will not contribute significantly to the environmental issues at The Arches.

The Convener: Does The Arches theatre suffer from excessive noise and vibration from other railway lines?

Brian Cuthbert: Yes.

John Halliday: We accept that The Arches theatre is a sensitive receptor—that is the terminology that is used. We have met the company. It might not like the report that we gave it, but that report is factually based: our consultant prepared it as part of its noise monitoring work. We are committed to developing the noise mitigation that we have identified, both through the construction phase—which is anchored in the construction code of practice—and the design. We have scheduled another meeting with The Arches, which will take place shortly. We will discuss all matters of detail with the company at that time.

The Convener: Okay. Broadly speaking, the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill provided that the promoter would uphold the standards of mitigation that were set out in the environmental statement, code of construction practice and noise and vibration policy. In brief, do you envisage that you may take a similar approach? We have discussed the impact on The Arches, but other organisations and businesses will be similarly affected.

John Halliday: Yes. First, we are applying the principles of the relevant noise insulation regulations, even though the statutory requirement to do so does not apply in Scotland. We are in discussion with Transport Scotland and Network Rail because the scheme will have implications for both organisations. The construction code of practice embodies our approach to the scheme; certainly, that is the case for the construction phase. We are comfortable with the potential to incorporate that and the noise and vibration policy into the scheme that is set out in the bill.

The Convener: The written evidence that we have received from Mr George Baillie highlights a number of factors that he claims are missing from the accompanying documents; for example, the location of taxi and bus ranks at Glasgow airport. Will you confirm that, in general, some of the matters that he raises will be dealt with at a later design stage or are not part of the GARL scheme?

Douglas Ferguson: That is correct. John Halliday may want to give a more detailed response.

John Halliday: Our strategy is for the bill to deal with the principle of the project. We are working closely with BAA, which is developing proposals for its entire surface access. There is huge potential for us to work with BAA to develop an interchange hub at the airport station. Clearly, BAA will have to manage the safety and circulation of vehicles. We want to work with it on its proposals.

Marlyn Glen: My first question is on European convention on human rights issues. The bill will amend the general body of law on compulsory

purchase to enable the promoter to take possession of land before compensation has been assessed and paid. How is that compatible with article 1 of protocol 1 and article 6 of the ECHR?

Paul Irving (John Kennedy & Co): Under section 48 of the Land Compensation (Scotland) Act 1973, the landowner can get advance payment of compensation. He can serve a notice on the promoter to require advance payment to be made. The bill also provides for interest to be payable until compensation is paid. For those reasons, we believe that the bill is not inconsistent with the ECHR.

Marlyn Glen: Okay. So, it is compatible.

I have another question on compulsory purchase. The promoter has stated that when a plot of land that is mentioned in the bill is no longer required, adjustments will be made and agreed with the landowner. Once agreement has been reached with the landowner, will an amendment to the bill be drafted to make it clear that such land is no longer subject to compulsory purchase?

Paul Irving: That might be possible, although it will depend on the nature of the plot. However, it is not necessary to do that; we can, with the landowner, draw up a legally binding agreement that the powers would not be exercised over the plot. If one wanted to amend the bill, it may be possible to do so, although the process may involve more than a simple amendment.

It may also be necessary to revise the plans because not all the plots are mentioned in the bill. If a plot was within the limits of deviation, the plans would have to be revised to remove it. There may be circumstances in which not the whole plot, but simply part of the area, would be removed. Alternatively, a particular stratum of land may be identified that is not being acquired. That would be difficult to include as an amendment to the bill.

In theory, there may be circumstances in which what Marlyn Glen suggests could be done, but that would have to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Marlyn Glen: Thank you for that. The Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill was amended so that, if the authorised undertaker compulsorily acquires land that is subsequently found to be surplus to requirements, the authorised undertaker shall apply the Crichton Down rules. What is the promoter's view on such an amendment?

Paul Irving: We have no objection in principle to an amendment of that sort.

Marlyn Glen: So it is something that you would consider.

Paul Irving: Yes.

Marlyn Glen: Should the promoter have the authority to acquire land compulsorily not for the railway, but to allow the relocation of businesses that will be affected by the railway?

Paul Irving: There are difficulties in that. On the face of it, that would interfere with the rights of another landowner in order to benefit the first landowner. The question then arises about the human rights of the landowner whose land is being acquired. In order to justify that, there would have to be a compelling public interest in the acquisition of such land. There is one case in which we have provided for that, in relation to the fuel farm. In recognition of the fact that the airport cannot function without the fuel farm, we have provided for the acquisition of land to relocate the fuel farm. An individual landowner will receive compensation for the acquisition of their land, which they could use to acquire premises elsewhere. The same justification would not, therefore, be present.

Mr Monteith: I want to ask about time limits. When will the rail link project be completed, bearing in mind the possible blight on landowners?

John Halliday: We intend to complete the project by late 2009 or early 2010. We are doing everything within our powers to achieve that, not only through all the various agreements that we require, but through the design and the lead-up to that. Clearly, however, things can happen to trouble that smooth path. We believe that the provisions in the bill are required to enable us to deliver the project as it is set out in the bill.

Mr Monteith: In a speech that the Minister for Transport and Telecommunications gave on 16 March 2006, he stated:

"We expect Glasgow's airport rail link to be delivered by the end of 2010 ... but the promoters are working to deliver ... up to a year earlier. I welcome and support that drive, but we need to be realistic."—[*Official Report*, 16 March 2006; c 24053.]

Why do you think the minister may believe that there is a lack of realism about achieving an earlier time?

Douglas Ferguson: We have said from the outset that late 2009 is an achievable opening date, and we have a project plan that takes us to that date. Nevertheless, we accept that it requires that everything go well. The minister was simply saying that there is always the possibility that something along the way will delay the process. His comment is consistent with our statement that 2009 is an achievable target.

Mr Monteith: Can we look at some specifics? Apart from possible difficulties in resiting the fuel depot, what factors could contribute to a delay in project completion?

John Halliday: We are talking about one of the busiest lines on the Scottish rail network; therefore, managing the transfer and inserting a complex piece of new railway infrastructure into the main line will, no doubt, prove to be a challenge. Network Rail's ability to work with all the train, freight and passenger operators to deliver the infrastructure must be considered, and all such factors must be timed into the process.

12:00

We have an outline programme, but we also acknowledge that a lot of work must be done to ensure that we can capture all the programme milestones that are necessary to deliver the project. There are clearly risks in all projects, but we think that the statements that we have given are accurate.

I have not mentioned issues relating to construction of the viaduct, the bridge over the M8 and the station complex, which are major pieces of infrastructure, although they are straightforward in the sense that their problems are known and well understood. However, there may be adverse weather during the project, for example, which could affect it.

Charles Hoskins (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport): It is worth highlighting that there may be seasonal issues to do with the playing fields. It is clear that we will need to work with Renfrewshire Council. I think that it made it clear last week that replacement pitches need to be in place before we take over the construction compound at St James park. Issues could potentially arise in that respect, depending on the season in which the work falls. That is another issue to do with the branch line that will need to be considered.

Douglas Ferguson: Our saying now that the project's finish date could be 2010 is the surest way of having a 2010 finish date. If we are not driven to have a finish date of 2009, all those factors will start to be built into the process. We accept the possibility that there will be a later finish date, but we still aim to deliver the project by the end of 2009.

Mr Monteith: Okay. Earlier, SADD talked about closing the M8 for 12 hours, which seems to be a relatively short time. What is your view on the need to close the M8 for finishing off the bridge section? To what extent would any delay impact on completion of the overall project?

John Halliday: The major crossing on the M8 is clearly an issue. We have employed and been given advice by one of the best civil engineering consultants—Faber Maunsell—which is internationally renowned, and we believe that the project is feasible. However, there are matters of

detail. The detailed planning of bridge launches is complex, but the proposals are feasible. Bridge launches are not new.

When I refer to bridge launches, members may want to have in their minds a picture of the bridge being constructed away from the motorway. The bridge will then be pushed across it. The location of the crossing is fairly level, which is an advantage. With local construction changes to the motorway, it should be feasible to launch the bridge across it in a given period. I am not talking about launching a finished bridge, but about putting its bare bones—the bridge at its lightest—across the motorway. Obviously, all the risk issues and the diversions that would have to occur if things did not go to plan will be built into the process. Members might recall that lane closures have been required for previous works on the M8. In order to manage risks, it is obvious that contingencies must be built into the process, but we are confident that we can build the bridge, as we have stated.

Mr Monteith: Speaking of closures of sections of the M8, it should be remembered that significant work was done on the Kingston bridge in previous years, but the bridge was mainly kept open. Will there be a spin-off from the experience that was gained in that project, perhaps with the same people being involved? Are there any lessons to be learned from that?

John Halliday: As I said, we have pulled in a major consultant who has experience of bridge design. As we move on to consider the detailed design and construction methodology, we will consider construction method statements, which are a standard way to assess how the project will be delivered locally. We would expect all the available experience to be brought to bear on the busy M8 corridor.

Charles Hoskins: There has been quite a lot of discussion with the chief bridge engineer from the trunk roads team that maintains the motorway. That team now resides in Transport Scotland. Faber Maunsell has spoken to it in some detail about the technique that will be applied.

Mr Monteith: The compulsory purchase powers in the bill will expire after 10 years if a notice to treat is not served or a general vesting declaration is not made within that period. If a notice to treat is served, we understand that the promoter has three more years in which to exercise the powers to take possession of the land. Does that mean that the promoter could have 13 years to exercise its compulsory purchase powers?

Paul Irving: Service of a notice to treat is the first step in exercising the compulsory purchase powers. At that stage, the promoter makes a commitment to purchase the property. It can

withdraw the notice to treat only in specific circumstances and it has to pay compensation if it does so. One would not normally seek to serve notices to treat until one was certain that one was in a position to proceed. One would not serve notices to treat three years in advance just because it was thought that the project would start in three years' time.

Another point to bear in mind is that there might well be a preference to use the general vesting declaration process rather than serving notices to treat. If the compulsory purchase period was cut down to, say, seven years, that would preclude the promoter from having that option after seven years.

Mr Monteith: So it is possible for the promoter to have 13 years.

Paul Irving: It is.

Mr Monteith: It is unlikely, but it is possible.

Paul Irving: It might not be desirable, but it is possible.

Mr Monteith: The promoter intends that the time limits for compulsory purchase powers and deemed planning permission should both be 10 years. However, is not it the case that the promoter will be able to commence development only after it has acquired the necessary land? Therefore, would it be helpful for the period for deemed planning permission to be slightly longer than the period for compulsory purchase?

Paul Irving: I do not think so. The point about planning permission is that the development has to be commenced within 10 years. Once any part of the route is commenced, planning permission is kept alive. It may well be that preliminary work will start at a particular place on the route before all the land has been acquired for the whole route. Therefore, there might well be circumstances in which one would want to exercise the compulsory purchase powers after development had started at a particular point on the route.

Mr Monteith: What effect would a reduction of the time limits have on the project?

John Halliday: We have debated that long and hard. We believe that it would constrain us unnecessarily. The 10-year period is necessary if we are to complete the project. It gives us the ability to start and deliver the project.

Mr Monteith: Why is the period 10 years? Earlier, we were talking about 2009 and 2010.

John Halliday: It is an assessed prudence, if you like. We understand and are experienced in such projects. It is not desirable to have that length of time, but there are practical issues that we have to bring to bear on the project.

Douglas Ferguson: To give an example, we promoted the Larkhall railway line in the 1990s. The legislative process was different, but provision was made for a 10-year limit for that project too. We never for a moment thought that we would need 10 years for that project but, between getting the powers and building the line, rail privatisation took place, with all the issues around that, and it did indeed turn out to be 10 years before the project was started. There could be unknowns, and a 10-year limit was chosen simply to provide for such contingencies.

Mr Arbuckle: We have been talking about compulsory purchase, but I would like to move on, as we examine the legal entrails, to the voluntary purchase scheme. How would that work? What would the cost implications of such a scheme be?

John Halliday: There are two aspects to this. There are the advance and voluntary purchase schemes, on which we have provided written evidence. They relate to circumstances in which we were going to acquire land anyway. We have been actively considering an advance purchase scheme, and the Scottish Executive is considering it now. Any such scheme would be based on market value for properties. The bill is not yet approved, so it might be a bit premature to discuss that today, but provision for the purchase of land has been made in the estimate of expense.

The details of the voluntary purchase scheme are not yet known. Transport Scotland is conducting a general review of such schemes. We understand that it might conclude its consideration by the end of May—I say that just to give the committee some information. The key issue with voluntary purchase schemes is the criteria that will apply to them. Those will determine applicability and eligibility with respect to any voluntarily purchased properties. The funding for such schemes is not factored in. I do not know whether there are any other issues there.

Mr Arbuckle: You indicated that you are considering having an advance purchase scheme, even though the bill is still being scrutinised. What is the scale of the properties that you are considering for advance purchase?

Charles Hoskins: As John Halliday has outlined, the advance purchase scheme relates to the properties that are affected anyway. The properties that we would have to acquire—in fact, in most cases, it is parts of properties—are generally the ones in the Murray Street industrial area for which we would not be able to reach an agreement otherwise and for which we would have to rely on a compulsory purchase order. We are actively considering whether there are some areas to which that applies. We are in discussions with some landowners about the affected properties.

Let us consider the proposals as a whole. We are in detailed discussions with BAA as regards the airport and we are in discussions with Renfrewshire Council on the impact of the scheme on the playing fields. That leaves the private interests in the Murray Street industrial area, and that will be the focus, should people agree that it would be of mutual benefit for there to be an advance purchase.

Mr Arbuckle: But you will require Scottish Executive approval before proceeding in that way.

Charles Hoskins: In effect, it is a matter of bringing forward funding. The implementation of the policy would require the approval of the Executive, as one of our key funders.

Mr Arbuckle: I will move on to the subject of compensation. Can you assure us that your funding estimate takes full account of any compensation that will require to be paid?

12:15

Charles Hoskins: I will outline the two basic headings covering such compensation. First, there is compensation to train operators operating on the line between Glasgow and Paisley. There is a regulatory framework according to which that compensation is calculated. That has been included within the costs. For example, if we require the track at the weekend, those operators will be compensated.

The second heading covers the land and properties that are affected. Faber Maunsell employed a professional land and property surveyor to undertake the estimate, which included the land and compensation cost. There are a couple of unique situations there. For example, the fuel farm cost is effectively going to be the cost of the replacement of the fuel farm facility, so that is included. St James park is another unique situation and the compensation elements for that are included—both the works at St James and the mitigation measure of the temporary off-site pitches that we will provide during construction. Finally, the market value of the properties in the Murray Street industrial area was assessed and elements such as disturbance have all been included in the compensation.

The broad estimate of expense comes to £22.6 million. Our land and property surveyor's advice is that that is generally what one would expect for a project of this scale at this stage in the assessment.

We talk about risk quite a lot and the committee heard something about that this morning. For the risk assessment, we considered that unforeseen situations might arise with regard to land and property, so there has been some level of

assessment for that and what we have termed the risk pot allows for unforeseen circumstances that might arise. We have also included an element for that within the risk coverage.

Mr Arbuckle: Would that include underground mining works in the viaduct area?

Charles Hoskins: That is quite different. There has been a very detailed desktop examination of the mine workings in the viaduct area and it was supplemented with boreholes from previous investigations and some that we undertook. That examination has concluded that the mining will have very little effect because it is somewhere between 100m and 150m below ground, which is approximately 50m to 100m below where our foundations will be. We have done a specialist geotechnical and mining investigation of that so we expect minimal impact.

There is also an allowance for the costs of unforeseen ground conditions. That is a classic allowance that civil engineering projects have to have because, until we dig the hole, we can never be sure what is there. As is right for a project of this scale, we have made sure that the proper assessment has been undertaken at this stage.

Mr Arbuckle: When the bill was introduced, the promoter was the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive. What was the basis of its power to promote a private bill? Was it a body corporate or an unincorporated body of persons? That is a bit of a legal question and they all seem to be passing it over to you, Paul.

Paul Irving: It was a body corporate that was set up under section 9 of the Transport Act 1968. As for its power to promote a private bill, the company relied on its general power under section 10(1)(xxxii)

“to do all other things which in their opinion are necessary to facilitate the proper carrying on of their business”.

Michael Matheson: When you were undertaking the consultation, did you consult on other possible routes for the railway line?

John Halliday: We took the ministerial decision on the airport rail link as the basis for our decision. The route that has been selected is the one on which we have consulted. There are undoubtedly elements within the route that were the subject of consultation. We made it clear when we went to the public that we were talking about the route as shown, although there were some options at the Paisley St James end. Four alternative routes were considered and we talked about whether the route that we have chosen was the correct one; we confirmed that it was. We said all along that we were consulting on whether the route was the right one or not.

Michael Matheson: You said that the ministerial decision was the basis on which you started to move ahead. Can we clarify to which ministerial statement or decision you are referring?

Charles Hoskins: Perhaps I can come in on that point. John Halliday is referring to the fact that at the conclusion of the Sinclair Knight Merz study, the minister made a decision on the routes that were to be promoted for the rail links to both Glasgow and Edinburgh airports. My recollection is that the decision was made in early 2003. At that point, SPT was awarded funding to promote that route through this process. The clear message that we gave during the consultation—we recognise that it has not gone down favourably—was that it would be misleading for us to consult on other routes that in effect had not been taken forward. Therefore, the consultation was based on the route that emerged from the SKM study.

Michael Matheson: Can you clarify which minister it was? Are you stating that the route as it stands in the bill was supported by the minister?

Charles Hoskins: It was the Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning in early 2003. The route that was chosen was the route from Glasgow Central to Glasgow airport via Paisley St James. We have progressed that route in the bill.

Michael Matheson: Did the route include the St James park viaduct?

Charles Hoskins: It included the crossing of St James park.

Michael Matheson: That is helpful.

Objection 47, from Forbes Developments Ltd, claims that you have deliberately failed to consult it. What is your response to that?

Charles Hoskins: We believe that that is not the case. In fact, Mr Forbes has sent in many pieces of correspondence to which we have responded. In general, he sent those in as an individual and we have responded to him. Forbes Developments Ltd has been invited to various meetings. Our evidence outlines the various advertisements that we placed and the letters that were sent out to all those affected. We do not agree with that statement.

Michael Matheson: Great North Eastern Railway states in its evidence that

“there has been a manifest failure by the Promoter to adequately consult stakeholders, including GNER”.

Given that GNER is a major train operator from Glasgow Central station, it clearly has an interest in the matter. How do you respond to its statement that there has been a “manifest failure” on your part to consult stakeholders such as GNER?

Charles Hoskins: We would not support that view. A specific focus group was convened for the transport operators, to which I understand—I will double-check this—both Virgin and GNER were invited. We also had an exhibition stand in Glasgow Central station. We followed those efforts up through correspondence, as required, with the train operators.

The general approach at this stage is that such work is done through Network Rail and through First ScotRail, as it is the prime operator. However, we have held various conferences, including conferences at engineering level, which GNER has attended. For example, an engineering conference was held about the possessions that we would require on the line. My understanding is that, whether or not GNER attended that conference, it was certainly invited.

Michael Matheson: Was the focus group that involves the different stakeholders established prior to the publication of your proposed route or afterwards?

Charles Hoskins: The focus groups were established as part of the public consultation; the public consultation leaflet that was issued had the route on it. We followed that up with the focus groups, to which the stakeholders were invited. The route was known at that point.

Michael Matheson: At last week's committee meeting, it became apparent that there had been a serious failure to consult in detail the emergency services on some of the implications of the proposal. Can you update the committee on what progress has been made to remedy that mistake?

John Halliday: I have personally telephoned and written to all those services. I am in the process of setting up meetings to address the point—well, address is perhaps not the right word. We appreciate what the committee has heard in evidence but, in essence, from our perspective, this is an acceleration of the consultation process. The transport security and contingencies directorate—TRANSEC—is the statutory body for safety on transport and it is fair to say that we dealt with the specific services on matters of detail and not on strategy. In writing to them, I have opened up that dialogue. I have got a number of potential dates in my diary, and we will meet them.

Michael Matheson: That is helpful. In the evidence that we received from Paisley North community council, it was alleged that there was some double-counting and that some of those who submitted views were counted as being in support of the route when what they really supported was the idea of a railway line. How would you address that allegation?

Charles Hoskins: We made it clear in the consultation leaflet that we were consulting on

only one route and that we were asking whether people supported the Glasgow airport rail link as per that route. The earlier witnesses alluded to the fact that we consulted on a specific detail on that route—the crossing of St James park either by a viaduct or by an embankment. We also asked for any other views that people had on mitigation measures for St James park and the playing fields. That was the consultation that was undertaken, and the percentages were based on an analysis of the responses to the questions that were asked.

Michael Matheson: Let us clarify how you gathered the information together. If someone asked me, "Do you support a Glasgow airport railway line?" I might say yes without knowing the detail of it. When you consulted people, did they have the option of agreeing in principle with the railway line but not with this particular route?

John Halliday: No. We believe that we have been very clear about this. The consultation was not about the principle of having a rail link between Glasgow airport and Glasgow; we were specific in putting the route and the question together. We do not believe that there is any ambiguity in the consultation. The questionnaire that was sent out was accompanied by a plan of the route, so we do not believe that there was ambiguity in the question that we asked on whether people supported the Glasgow airport rail link.

Douglas Ferguson: People had the option to say that they did not support it. It was not just about whether they wanted a viaduct or an embankment; people had a clear option to say that they did not think that a rail link to Glasgow airport should be provided. We felt that that was the honest option to put in front of people, given the ministerial decision to which Charlie Hoskins referred earlier. There were clear options either to have a rail link along the lines outlined in the consultation or not to have a connection to Glasgow airport at all. People had the chance to vote on those options, and only a small percentage of people chose the latter option.

Charles Hoskins: The earlier witnesses mentioned some postcard responses. We did not ignore those, but we could not feature them in the percentages because we were not asking about a different route. There were about 500 postcard responses, and our consultation report clearly states that we received those. Those who sent the postcards stated that they supported the idea of a rail link to Glasgow airport but not one that went across St James park.

Michael Matheson: Sorry, can you clarify that last point? What was on the postcards?

Charles Hoskins: As I recollect—one of my colleagues can perhaps assist me—the postcards stated that those people supported a Glasgow

airport rail link but not one that went across St James park.

Michael Matheson: But those responses are not included in the overall figures.

Charles Hoskins: They are not included in the percentage calculations; they are logged separately because we were asking whether people supported the route across St James park.

John Halliday: Our consultation report makes it clear that the question asked whether people supported the project—not a general project, but this one. The figure of 82 per cent was the response to that question. We replicated the postcard in our consultation report and stated how many responses we received in that way.

12:30

Michael Matheson: Surely it concerns you that although you might think there has been no ambiguity in consulting people on whether they support the project, it appears that some of the groups that represent local communities believe that there has been. Some people did not realise that when they responded that they supported the line in principle, it was interpreted that they supported this particular project.

Douglas Ferguson: We are concerned about that. SPT in its current form reports to an elected accountable body, as did the former Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive. We were clearly instructed that the consultation was to be carried out in an inclusive, open, appropriate and honest way. We feel that we did that throughout the process.

However, consultation is always difficult because some people genuinely feel that we have got it wrong and that we might be less than honest in how we handle their responses. Their natural inclination is to think that all we want to do is to promote our position. In fact, we can demonstrate through evidence that we have tried hard to have inclusive meetings and to be very open with the public. Charlie Hoskins can give you a list of the meetings that we had. However, I accept that it is a concern that a group of people has not been convinced of that.

The Convener: It is clear from this morning's evidence that the community groups with which you engaged were still promoting an alternative route. If it was as clear as you made out that the only route that was being considered went across the football pitches and that no other route, particularly the Renfrew one that was alluded to this morning, was being considered, how did all those people get it so wrong and you got it so right?

Douglas Ferguson: Although we did not consult on those alternative routes, we provided information about them as part of the consultation. We tried to explain why those routes were rejected during the work carried out by SKM that led to the minister's decision. It is clear that we did not convince everyone of that.

Many of the groups did not say that they thought option X was better than the one that we presented. Many simply said, "There is a better option out there," but it could have been one of many. We tried hard to be as honest as we could and explain what the other options were. We felt that it would not be honest to consult on those other options because they were not on the table following the minister's decision.

The Convener: Given the comments made by some of the community groups this morning, is it appropriate that you review your consultation? In trying to be honest, could you have given people the wrong impression that the community could influence where the rail link went?

Douglas Ferguson: I am happy to look back over our consultation to see whether the impression was given to people that other options were to be considered.

The Convener: I have one other question before handing back to Michael Matheson. We were told this morning that community groups asked for the minutes of the meetings. It was alleged that some of the recordings could not be transcribed. What process is in place to ensure that the minutes are available timeously rather than after nine weeks?

John Halliday: It was very disappointing that it took nine weeks for the minutes to appear. We checked the matter this morning, and they are very late. We apologise for that. We will ensure that the position is corrected. It has been our intention throughout that, whenever the minutes of meetings are completed, they should be produced and made available. The only explanation for the delay—it is not an excuse—is that the meeting in question occurred at the busiest time for us. It has been our intention to maintain the community liaison groups throughout the bill process. A great deal is going on at the same time. As the promoter, we try to set up meetings in such a way as to be able to provide input to them from the bill process. We also try to put the minutes of meetings on to our website, so that they are available. We take the criticism that has been made on the chin, as this time we did not get it right. We will rectify that.

Michael Matheson: I want to ask about another issue that was raised by panels 2 and 3 this morning. In your supplementary submission to the committee, you state:

"The Promoter has now responded in writing to all the Objectors, and the Promoter has subsequently had follow up discussions or correspondence with all."

From the evidence that we received this morning, it is patently obvious that that is not the case. What are you doing to rectify the problem?

Douglas Ferguson: The note that was provided referred specifically to the statutory undertakers. That is made clear in the heading. We have responded to all the statutory undertakers. We are in the process of responding to the other objectors. Charlie Hoskins will say more about that.

Charles Hoskins: There is a lot of detail in the objections, but we believe that we have answered some of the questions in responding to them. Mr Hopkirk was correct when he said that we provided an initial response. When I double-checked, I found that we had provided a detailed response to a couple of members of this morning's panels. The issue is one of timing. Mr Hopkirk, SADD and Paisley North community council will receive detailed responses in a matter of days.

Michael Matheson: That is helpful.

There are two options for the route through St James park—the viaduct and the embankment. At the time of the consultation, did you have costings for both options?

John Halliday: Yes. A question was asked about that during the consultation process, and I indicated that the cost of the two proposals was broadly similar. We were therefore genuinely concerned to ask in the consultation which was the preferred option. There was a clear preference for the viaduct.

Michael Matheson: If costings were available at consultation stage, how robust and accurate could those costings be? To be confident that the costs for the viaduct option that you are considering are accurate, you would need to work up detailed plans for both options.

John Halliday: The committee may wish to note the process that we have undertaken since the consultation period. We have conducted a review and, through our consultants, we have double-checked the matter. We have also obtained Network Rail's view on the costs of the project. The projections are robust. They are slightly in excess of £160 million, but they are within the margin of error that we have built in. We believe that the costs are all robust. At this stage, that gives us a large degree of comfort. As we look at the project in greater detail, we find that its costs are hardly changing.

Michael Matheson: So SPT is confident that the figures are as accurate as they can be.

John Halliday: Yes, we are. The fact is that, as one goes forward in any project and the detail emerges, one expects more and more information to come in. I have been gladdened by the depth of work that has been done. It is notable that the project's costs are fairly stable across the board and have been that way for a considerable time. I put that down to a robust approach to addressing all the issues and questions that are being raised about the project, such as whether our foundation design is right. The answer is coming back that the project's costs are robust.

Michael Matheson: Will you confirm whether the replacement pitches at St James park are provided for within the bill?

Charles Hoskins: The reconfiguration of St James park is in the bill and the plans that accompany the bill show the limits of the land that will be temporarily used to reconfigure the pitches. As you heard last week from Renfrewshire Council, we are in the final stages of a legal agreement with the council to replace the two pitches that we cannot accommodate at St James park at nearby Ferguslie. The pitches at Ferguslie are not in the plans with the bill, but the costs are in the cost estimate.

John Halliday: The committee will understand that, during the construction phase of the project, we will occupy all the pitches to the east of the viaduct as a construction compound. We realise that we need to be able to provide the pitches for the whole time that the project is under way, so we have been in dialogue with Renfrewshire Council on the temporary location of those pitches. We have identified specific locations and will, within the plan, replace those to league standard. They are also all subject to the agreement to which Charlie Hoskins referred.

Michael Matheson: This morning, the playability of some of those pitches at certain times of the year was mentioned. Will you confirm that, when the reconfigured pitches are put in place, they will be playable throughout the year without the drainage problems that they have just now?

John Halliday: We have been in dialogue not only with Renfrewshire Council, but with the National Playing Field Association. It is very clear that, when we put the pitches back, the current ground will be poor because it will have been a construction compound with heavy materials, so an ideal opportunity will present itself to reconfigure all the ground and the associated drainage when we put it back. Therefore, the answer is yes.

Mr Monteith: You explained how the pitches to the east of the viaduct would be used during the construction phase. Would it be possible to

improve the drainage on the pitches on the west prior to that so that all of them are available during the time that you occupy those on the east side?

Charles Hoskins: We have discussed that specific point with Renfrewshire Council. Earlier witnesses mentioned that there are areas around the periphery of the park that are not well drained so, to ensure that the pitches on the west side are playable, there will undoubtedly have to be local improvements to the drainage. We have allowed for that in the discussions with the council.

12:45

Mr Monteith: I will take you back to questions on the viaduct. We have received some evidence from Network Rail to supplement the response to previous questioning about the availability of the station and route outside the times that we expect the GARL to operate.

Michael Matheson asked witnesses from Network Rail about 24-hour operation and I asked whether operation could be extended so that trains could run from 4 am or 5 am until later in the evening. I was thinking about not just airline passengers but the people who work at the airport and need to arrive for their shifts so that people can fly. I am sure that we can make available to you Network Rail's supplementary written evidence. At point 4, in the context of the company's ability to carry out engineering works, Network Rail says:

"The new airport branch line"—

that means the spur and not just the main track—

"would require to be redesigned to allow improved physical separation of the two tracks, such that maintenance works can be carried out safely on one line whilst the other is live to rail traffic. A ten foot separation would be required in this instance."

It was news to me that such a large separation would be required, which I am sure will have significant cost implications.

Charles Hoskins: Network Rail was addressing the question about 24-hour operation and making the point that there must be a safe place for men who are maintaining the track that is not being used, which is why a 10ft gap is needed. There would probably also be a fence between the tracks if there was to be maintenance work on one track while trains were running on the other.

Network Rail's supplementary evidence did not capture the point that was made about starting the timetable earlier and finishing later, which would still allow a period when both tracks were closed. That is still an option. However, widening the track area for 24-hour operation would generate additional costs.

We have not had an opportunity to have more detailed discussions with Network Rail on the matter. There are other ways of ensuring that maintenance can go ahead, but they might involve closing the tracks. For example, both tracks on the viaduct would have to be closed for maintenance, which would not be desirable on a new link.

Mr Monteith: We are trying to get a handle on the costs and benefits of extending the operation of GARL.

Can the witnesses guarantee that there have been no notification problems in respect of affected parties and that there will be no late, unexpected objections to the bill?

Ashley Parry Jones (Land Aspects): We can give the committee assurances about notification. The GARL project has benefited from lessons that have been learned from problems with previous schemes and from the guidance, which has been tightened up and is clearer to everyone.

The project is also fortunate in that it has been able to use the land registers, which have been in existence in this part of Scotland for some time—in other parts of Scotland they are relatively new. In addition, we modified the project's methodology for and approach to the identification of affected parties and liaised closely with Registers of Scotland, who advised on methodology and were party to the search process. Registers of Scotland provided two sets of data, one of which was a complete set of addresses of all properties that are within or adjacent to the widest limits of the project. Registers of Scotland was also able to use a spatial boundary on a map that provides a footprint that is slightly wider than the project limits, which has been used to its full extent.

As a result, all inquiries have been concluded for any parties that were thrown up not only by the land register searches but from other areas that are mentioned in the guidance. In addition, further sources of information, such as the electoral roll and door-to-door inquiries, have been used. Every interest that those inquiries have identified has been pursued to a conclusion and either the interested party should receive a notice or it has been concluded that they have no interest and are not notifiable. Just over 3,000 notices were served on about 2,600 individual parties. Just over 400 of those notices were returned for a variety of reasons, for example because they went out as recorded delivery, were not signed for by the recipient and were returned to us by the post office. We re-served all those notices and there are no notices outstanding from that process.

The Convener: Is there any possibility of late objections? I am still concerned that the project could be scuppered on the basis of environmental considerations in respect of the cholera graves

near or on St James park. Have you undertaken any further investigation into whether the graves are in the park, and if so where?

Brian Cuthbert: Part of the aim of the archaeological search at St James park was to identify where those graves are. In figure 8.1 in the environmental statement, which I will pass round, you can see various features marked out in orange. Those are items of cultural heritage interest. The alignment is a dotted red line and A6 is a field—field 14 on the Ordnance Survey maps. Paisley had a cholera epidemic in 1832 and more than 400 souls are laid in that field. Council records clearly state that the bodies were laid at the extreme western end of field 14. That area is shaded on the plan. As you can see, the area of the graves is not within the alignment at all; in fact, it is under the M8.

The Convener: Your answer on the precise location is very interesting. When the committee asked Renfrewshire Council about that it was unable to clarify the position.

Brian Cuthbert: The field was in the original information from the council, which was in the form of geographical information systems data. Our cultural heritage experts did further, detailed research of written records and found that the graves were described as being at the extreme western end of the field.

The Convener: Thank you.

I suspend the committee until 2 o'clock, when we will hear from the Minister for Transport and Telecommunications.

12:54

Meeting suspended.

13:59

On resuming—

The Convener: I thank everyone for returning to the meeting. I welcome Tavish Scott MSP, the Minister for Transport and Telecommunications. We have a number of questions for you, minister. Before we move to our questioning, I understand that you have an opening statement to make.

The Minister for Transport and Telecommunications (Tavish Scott): Yes. Thank you for the invitation to attend your meeting this afternoon, convener. I will do my best to answer members' questions.

It will be useful to put on record a number of aspects to the scheme as we see it. The Executive supports the general principles of the bill; indeed, the establishment of a rail link from Glasgow city centre to the airport is a key commitment of the

partnership agreement. The Glasgow airport rail link will contribute to a top aim of the Government, which is that of growing the economy. The airport is a gateway for commerce and tourism that already provides 5,000 jobs on site. The frequent and reliable service that the airport rail link will provide will be important for people who work at the airport, for tourists and for people more generally.

We know that businesses view transport infrastructure as being a key factor in the decisions that they make on location. The committee has heard from Glasgow City Council that it believes that the rail link will be a boost to the city's competitiveness—I accord with that view. Indeed, it is becoming the norm for multinational companies to consider locating only in cities that have good connections between the city centre and an airport. With four trains per hour, the Glasgow airport rail link will provide a frequent service that will also have only one intermediate stop at Paisley Gilmour Street. The new infrastructure, including the extra track, will also bring reliability.

As the promoter has indicated in the bill documents, the project will have other direct economic benefits. The rail link could bring 675 jobs over three to four years, support up to 135,000ft² of office accommodation in Paisley town centre; and a further 650 jobs in Glasgow and Renfrewshire over the next 10 years. Scotland could see in excess of 50,000 more United Kingdom and overseas visitors; their expenditure would contribute substantially to the Glasgow and wider Scottish economies.

In addition to the benefits to the economy, the airport rail link will open up further opportunities for affordable travel to work for people who can access the rail link. It is important to reflect on the fact that car ownership in Strathclyde is low compared to the rest of Scotland: 40 per cent of households in Strathclyde do not have access to a car, while the figure for the rest of Scotland is 33 per cent. Although not all those people will use the train service, the link will improve accessibility and allow people more work and leisure travel options.

As I said on 16 March in my statement to Parliament on the capital projects review, the airport rail link will cost between £170 million and £210 million and the Executive will be the major funder of the link. The promoter is, quite rightly, looking to other sources of funding and Transport Scotland is in discussion with BAA on the contributions that it will make to GARL and the Edinburgh airport rail link. The discussions with BAA are on-going, so I hope that the committee will forgive me for not saying how much the Executive's contribution will be. Given the importance of the issue, I hope that BAA's

contribution to and involvement in the project will be tied down quickly. Our commitment to the airport rail link is clear. We will work hand in hand with the promoter to maximise the contributions from other sources—we expect to achieve the best outcome for public funds.

In common with all capital transport projects, the airport rail link is dependent on the development of a robust and positive business case. The project has been subject to the review process under which Transport Scotland can monitor projects while ensuring value for money. That includes quarterly reviewing of all projects against cost and time targets, a regular Scottish Executive gateway review, which examines projects at key stages, and examination of the business case each time a commitment of significant expenditure is needed. The gateway review for the project is scheduled for the autumn, when the procurement and contracting route will be agreed.

We strongly support the principles of the bill. The Glasgow airport rail link is needed to ensure the successful transport infrastructure of the Glasgow, west of Scotland and Scottish economies. The Executive will be the major funder of the scheme and we are, with the promoter, attempting to secure additional sources of funding. The release of our funds is dependent on the continuing development of a robust and positive business case.

The Convener: Thank you very much. I forgot to welcome from Transport Scotland Bill Reeve, who is the director of rail delivery, and Damian Sharp, who is the head of major projects in rail delivery. If either of you wants to follow up the minister's comments, just let us know.

We have heard expressed today and at other meetings great concern about the promoter's consultation. Did the Executive detail its expectations of the public consultation process? Are you satisfied with the processes that SPT put in place?

Tavish Scott: Damian Sharp will deal with the detail of the consultation process, as he is my official in charge of capital projects overall, and of the rail link in particular.

It is important to set out to ensure that the process is as robust, transparent and full as it can be. A series of operating principles should apply to all capital transport projects; I hope that the committee agrees that it is not necessary to vary them according to the project. It is important to have an agreed set of criteria on how consultation should be undertaken. We expect the promoter to comply with those criteria, given that our Parliament is based on fundamental principles of openness and transparency.

Damian Sharp (Transport Scotland): The development of the project has had two phases. Sinclair Knight Merz produced the original study, in which a large number of options were considered, after which SPT progressed one option, on which it consulted widely. We have been clear about what we expected from SPT during the consultation on that option and its variants and we are satisfied that SPT met those expectations.

People have asked why fuller consultation did not take place on the earlier options. Some 15 options were considered for Glasgow airport. One major concern was that if 15 options were put into the public arena, many people would be concerned about potential blight, although several options were not viable. That was why the earlier consultation was more limited; the aim was to ensure that the options that were consulted on could be delivered. Ultimately, the number of technically feasible options on which SPT could consult was not large.

The Convener: That raises the question of how that information is imparted appropriately to members of the public during the final consultation. We have heard today and at other times from individuals who believe that their comments were restricted because only one option existed and that insufficient detail was given on why the other options had been discounted.

Damian Sharp: We are clear that consultation must be effective and we expect people's questions to be addressed. That is the promoter's responsibility.

Tavish Scott: The other side to the question is that, as with several other projects of which I can think, members of the Parliament have not been slow to batter down my door when they have deep concerns that reflect those of their constituents and communities. I can think of several ministerial correspondence cases in which representatives from the west of Scotland have done that in the past few years.

The political scene in Scotland is very alive and I do not know of one capital transport project on which we have not had some criticism about aspects of the consultation. If the consultation was flawed and concerns have been expressed, I am happy to consider that and how we can improve consultation. If the committee makes recommendations on that, I will examine them closely.

The Convener: I will move on to some overview issues relating to the bill. Do you support the view that Glasgow airport and Prestwick airport are net contributors to the Scottish economy in terms of the comparative spend by incoming and outgoing

passengers? What impact will GARL have on increasing that contribution?

Tavish Scott: I certainly support the contention that those two airports contribute in net terms to Scottish economic output. I have no doubt about that. I hope that you will forgive me for not knowing all the complete numbers off the top of my head, but we can no doubt produce studies to demonstrate that across the network, and I am pretty sure that BAA and the owners of Prestwick airport—if the committee called for it or if it was appropriate—would certainly say in evidence that they are important drivers in our economy. I think that it is fair to say that all the evidence worldwide suggests that when a rail link is added to an airport, particularly a main airport—if I can describe it in that slightly pejorative way—there is no doubt that it assists the airport and encourages other transport advantages that would be gained, such as the modal shift from the car to rail, which is one of the drivers of the project. International and UK experience is that airports are assisted by rail links; they grow because of such improved connections and I am sure that, although there are one or two issues to be resolved, Prestwick will reflect the importance of the rail link.

The Convener: Do you accept that, even with GARL, road traffic and vehicle emissions will continue to rise, given the large predicted increases in passenger numbers at Glasgow and Prestwick airports?

Tavish Scott: That is why the rail link is so important. You are right to suggest that, unless we do something to tackle problems attending people who are trying to get to airports for business or leisure or to collect people, and unless we improve that provision and ensure that there is a useful alternative to the car, emissions levels will get considerably worse. There is no question that for both Edinburgh and Glasgow airports, the provision of rail links is essential in the context of the wider transport perspective of decreasing car use and therefore emissions.

The Convener: I turn to a subject that has been raised on a number of occasions: the Glasgow crossrail system. Do you think that the promotion of GARL is premature without the existence of the Glasgow crossrail system?

Tavish Scott: No, because there is nothing in the GARL proposals that would preclude Glasgow crossrail being developed. Irrespective of the Commonwealth games and other such major events—Glasgow regularly hosts major sporting and other events—there is a strong argument on paper for the Glasgow crossrail. Indeed, members of the cross-party group on Glasgow crossrail presented the case for that improvement extremely well when I met them recently. That has to stack up with a robust business case, just as

every capital transport project must, but I assure the committee that there is nothing in the proposals for the airport rail link—indeed, the bill contains a number of complementary proposals—that would inhibit the Glasgow crossrail project if a future Government were to decide to take it forward.

Marlyn Glen: Do you agree that all of the promoter's policy objectives can be delivered in full through the bill as drafted?

Tavish Scott: You might have to remind me what all the promoter's policy objectives are, but if you give me and my officials a few moments we should be able to answer your question. I can talk about our objectives, but perhaps the promoter should talk about its own objectives.

Marlyn Glen: I was going to ask about the Executive's objectives as well, but I had expected that the minister would be familiar with the promoter's objectives. I see that he is being presented with them now.

Damian Sharp: As if by magic.

14:15

Tavish Scott: I will have a look at the information that has just been given to me.

The important reflection to make on the promoter's objectives is that the qualification in full is genuinely difficult to quantify. The objectives are not set down in precise measurable outcomes; if I may say so, they are quite understandably general objectives about stimulating economic growth and contributing to a sustainable basis for the future growth of Glasgow and Prestwick airports and so on. I have no doubt that we can meet the policy objectives through the bill. Five years after passing the bill and once the rail link is in place, you and I might have a discussion about whether the objectives have been met in full, but the matter is a bit of a judgment call at this time.

Marlyn Glen: If the minister wants to add anything later, I am sure that the committee will be glad to receive it.

Does the minister accept that there is limited empirical evidence to substantiate the possible wider economic benefits of a rail link and that some of the proposed economic benefits of the bill might arise anyway, without GARL?

Tavish Scott: I would be happy to share details of such evidence with the committee if that would help, but we should reflect on the number of airports in the UK and Europe, never mind further afield, that have, or are investing in, airport rail links to ensure that they achieve the necessary better connections that form a strong part of the driving objectives of the GARL scheme.

Independent companies, businesses and Governments would not make those investments and argue strongly for the retention and improvement of timetables and connections and so on if the business cases for such investments did not stack up.

Marlyn Glen: When the chief executive of Infratil Airports Europe Ltd was asked whether GARL will

"contribute to a sustainable basis for the future growth of Prestwick Airport in terms of government and regional objectives for airport surface access",

he told the committee that he was

"not aware of the basis on which the promoter makes that claim."—[*Official Report, Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee*, 8 May 2006; c 66.]

Does the minister understand why Mr Fitzgerald should have said that?

Tavish Scott: I am not familiar with those comments, so you must forgive me. I will be happy to read the comments in full, but it is difficult for me to respond off the top of my head to comments from someone in that position when I have not seen them. I would probably get myself into a little difficulty.

Marlyn Glen: We were concerned about that because the rail link is supposed to have benefits for Prestwick airport as well as for Glasgow airport.

Damian Sharp: I should clarify that the Glasgow airport rail link will provide benefits to services to Ayrshire generally through improved reliability. Improved reliability of service to Prestwick must be good for Prestwick airport.

The Convener: Can we get some clarification about those improvements to services to Ayrshire? Will those be only on the coastal line, which serves only North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire?

Tavish Scott: I understand what the convener is saying on that point.

Marlyn Glen: What are the Government objectives that support that objective?

Tavish Scott: As with every other capital transport project that Parliament has recently considered in detail under the capital transport programme, the GARL project must not only meet the top-line objectives but come through a financial process that, as I described in my opening remarks, requires a robust business case that demonstrates the point of investing large amounts of public money and taxpayers' money in the scheme. The top lines are about contributing to the economy, strongly improving connections and enabling modal shift so that we work extremely hard to ensure that people have a choice and can be encouraged to leave their

motor cars and instead to use the train and other public transport services.

Marlyn Glen: Does the minister accept that socially excluded people can already use public transport to access Glasgow airport? Will it be possible to provide further subsidies for socially excluded people who travel on GARL? If the projected GARL fare changes, what impact will that have on socially excluded people?

Tavish Scott: I will ask Bill Reeve to deal with the practical fares and services issues, which I think are probably the driver of the question. I certainly accept the premise that people can use the bus. However, one of the strong arguments for the project has focused on reliability of service and the journey time from the city centre to the airport. I suspect that such drivers are important to anyone. I take the point that Marlyn Glen makes in relation to fares, and I ask Bill Reeve to pick up that point.

Bill Reeve (Transport Scotland): I make the general observation that the fare will form part of the suite of fares that are available on rail services in Scotland. Any fare policy that we have for Scotland generally will apply to the airport service. You may know that Transport Scotland is currently studying options for its fare structure going forward. In Scotland, we benefit from rail fares that are typically some 20 to 30 per cent cheaper than are fares for comparable journeys elsewhere in Great Britain; however, that does not leave us satisfied that we have got the entire mix right. We want the fare to be reviewed in the context of all other fares as part of a Scotland-wide fares policy.

Marlyn Glen: One of the objectives of the project is to include people who are generally socially excluded. I wondered whether there is any specific pull for them from GARL.

Bill Reeve: I cannot see why we would have something specifically for GARL that we would not want the rest of the network to benefit from. I would put it the other way round. We should have a fares structure that takes account of inclusion throughout Scotland, including the fare for this extension to the rail network.

Marlyn Glen: Thank you for that. How can the committee support the policy objective of a high-quality service with competitive journey times when the decisions on timetabling and fares have not been finalised?

Tavish Scott: I guess that it takes a leap of faith. The promoters have said what they have said—it is firmly on the record, just as what I or any other minister for transport might say would be firmly on the record—regarding what is expected from the service in terms of journey times, reliability and so on. We will be measured against that. I suspect that if we fail to hit those objectives

and targets, there will be an awful lot of noise about it.

Marlyn Glen: Is it accurate of the promoter to state that GARL will provide public transport services in the Ayrshire corridors, or is it the case that there will be spare capacity created by GARL that could benefit Ayrshire or Inverclyde?

Tavish Scott: Bill Reeve will deal with that question. I think that we have done some modelling in the area to provide some back-up and authoritative study on that question.

Bill Reeve: SPT has commissioned some performance and timetable analysis of how the railway will perform and what the capability of the railway will be once the infrastructure has been altered and upgraded to take account of the Glasgow airport rail link. We will create significant additional capacity between Paisley and Glasgow Central station, which will contribute to the development of capacity further west beyond Paisley, although it may not of itself be sufficient to do more. Transport Scotland has tested that proposal to ensure that it in no way frustrates further service development, and we are content that it will be a sensible increment in the capability of the network.

Marlyn Glen: Thank you very much.

Michael Matheson: Good afternoon. At our first evidence session, connectivity was highlighted as an important factor in getting people to make the modal shift from the car to the train. When the committee visited Manchester airport and looked at its transport infrastructure—bus and rail—it was evident that connectivity had been addressed through the provision of more direct train routes through Manchester airport's station. Do you accept the need to ensure that any line that goes to Glasgow airport should be more than just a shuttle service from Glasgow Central station to the airport?

Tavish Scott: I believe that we need to aim for greater connectivity than that, which is why I gave the answer that I did to the convener on the Glasgow crossrail project. I accept that we need to move in that direction. However, the trains will stop at Paisley Gilmour Street, which already provides an alternative place for passengers to get off and to connect with other services. It could not be said that the service will operate just between the airport and Glasgow Central station. If the Glasgow crossrail project is to happen in the future, it will assist in ensuring that an airport link into Glasgow will also be part of a strategic rail link across the country.

Michael Matheson: One of the problems that was encountered in Manchester and has been experienced at other airports that have rail links where people are expected to change trains is that

passenger numbers often drop off because of the inconvenience that is created. Notwithstanding the introduction of crossrail in Glasgow, someone who is travelling by train to the airport from the north and east of Glasgow—for example, from around Falkirk or Stirling—will have to come into Queen Street, change trains on to a crossrail train and then change trains at Glasgow Central on to another train to take them out to the airport. They will have to make three different train journeys. We were told that in Manchester numbers dropped off rapidly when people were expected to make such changes. Clearly, that would affect the patronage level of the service. That is why it is important for us to explore further the issue of connectivity. Is it desirable to have more direct routes running to the airport from other stations in Scotland?

Tavish Scott: Of course it is desirable, but we do not have that option because of the physical infrastructure that exists at present. There are many things that are desirable in transport planning terms, and if we had a blank map and the ability to skew the entire transport budget towards rail, we could meet some objectives more quickly than might otherwise be possible. I understand the premise of the question. Clearly, it is desirable over time to ensure that there are excellent point-to-point connections between Glasgow airport and the rest of Scotland. However, we are not yet at that point. In my view, that in no way diminishes the importance of getting on with the first stage.

Many of us would argue strongly that whatever we do on rail is positive, whether it is major capital infrastructure investment such as this or enhancement of existing rail lines—I can think of one project in the convener's constituency that is particularly important to her—as it improves the network. We can do only what is possible at this time. We can and will continue to plan for the future. To some extent, that is what the national transport strategy is about and it is certainly what the strategic projects review is about, because we need to ensure that, in planning the next series of rail investments, which must compete with other aspects of the transport budget, we consider wider issues of connectivity.

Michael Matheson: Earlier you mentioned the possibility that someone could go to Paisley Gilmour Street, rather than Glasgow Central, to catch a train to the airport. The limited capacity and poor conditions at Paisley Gilmour Street have been raised with the committee. It is also difficult to find parking in the area. To make GARL more successful, is there a need to improve the present standing of Paisley Gilmour Street?

Tavish Scott: Yes. You make a fair point. I want every station in Scotland to aspire to be the best possible transport interchange hub that it can be. We can do only so much each year with the

current budget for the First ScotRail franchise. However, as part of the project, I want to see some demonstrable improvements to the arrangements at Paisley Gilmour Street. I know that SPT, as the promoter of the bill, is committed to that and will consider closely any specific recommendations that the committee makes. *[Interruption.]* That is not my mobile phone, convener.

Michael Matheson: I am not sure who is causing the problem.

I turn to the service, which you mentioned earlier. It is important that there is a punctual, reliable service running from Glasgow Central station to the airport to encourage patronage. Concern has been expressed about whether there is sufficient capacity in the station to cope with a punctual 15-minute service on a regular basis. Are you confident that, even with the new platform, Glasgow Central station will be able to accommodate such a regular service, without that having a knock-on effect on other services? I am thinking about the Glasgow to Edinburgh line and the route between Falkirk High station and Edinburgh Waverley. The Glasgow line is given priority over the lower line from Falkirk Grahamston station, so if the Glasgow train is running late, the Falkirk train has to wait in the sidings.

14:30

Tavish Scott: An advantage of my job is that I occasionally get to travel in the front of a train. Relatively recently, at the convener's invitation, I took a train from Glasgow Central station to Ayrshire, to consider infrastructure in that part of Scotland. The purpose of my visit was not just to visit Margaret Jamieson's constituency but to consider the physical layout of Glasgow Central station, including track and signalling, and to consider the point that you quite fairly raise.

The design and the assessments that have been made by First ScotRail, SPT and—more important—Network Rail of the management of the layout at the station give me the assurance that the committee seeks on the reliability of the proposed service and that there will be no knock-on effect on other services. During my visit, I asked why it is not proposed to bring the GARL train into the centre of Glasgow Central station—I thought that was a logical approach, but I was wrong—and I was told that the train should come in on the west side of the station, because that is closest to the airport. In other words, the GARL train will have the least impact on other services if it comes in at that side of the station, because it will not have to cross the path of other incoming and outgoing trains. When I thought about that I realised that it was logical. I can give Michael

Matheson the assurance that he seeks on the matter.

Michael Matheson: The committee has heard that if an airport rail link is to be successful, there must be, first, sufficient baggage space on trains, and secondly, trains that run when passengers need them to run. Can you give the committee a guarantee that GARL will deliver a service that has sufficient baggage space and—given that Paisley Gilmour Street station is Scotland's fourth busiest station—sufficient capacity at peak times?

Tavish Scott: Those are fair questions and I am conscious of the need for luggage space. Bill Reeve will talk about that and about capacity, particularly at peak times.

Bill Reeve: We are very aware of both issues. Transport Scotland is reviewing options for rolling stock provision throughout Scotland, including anticipated demand for a large fleet of new electric units, partly for growth and partly for projects such as GARL. It is clear to us that the units for GARL will need adequate provision for luggage and capacity for passenger numbers. The railway has been designed to accommodate trains that are long enough to cope with anticipated passenger volumes even at peak times, given the frequency of service that is proposed. The rolling stock that will be allocated to GARL will be able to accommodate luggage—that is a key feature of its specification.

Michael Matheson: Will you also speak about capacity?

Bill Reeve: Sorry, I thought that I had mentioned that. Capacity at peak times can be accommodated by the length of the trains that we propose to run and the frequency of the service. We do not anticipate overcrowding.

Michael Matheson: In an earlier evidence-taking session, the committee was told that SPT wants to develop a Glasgow Ibrox station on the GARL line. Therefore, in future the GARL train might make an additional stop at Ibrox. What is the Executive's position on the proposal? Is the Executive of the fixed view that the train should run from Glasgow Central station to Paisley Gilmour Street and Glasgow airport and nowhere else?

Tavish Scott: That is our policy position. We would take some convincing that we should change that plan, particularly at an advanced stage of design and engineering studies. In addition, I suspect that any station there would have quite significant implications for capacity at certain points in a week. That is certainly our settled position at this time.

Mr Arbuckle: In your opening remarks, you said that the Executive would be the major funder but

that you were talking to BAA. Are those the only two financial partners on the scene?

Tavish Scott: SPT is also a funder of the scheme.

Mr Arbuckle: What about Scottish Enterprise or any of the local enterprise companies?

Tavish Scott: No.

Mr Arbuckle: Or, indeed, the local authorities.

Tavish Scott: I am certainly not aware of any local authority funding or any other funding of that nature. However, if there is any specific information, we could bring it back to the committee. There is an application for trans-European networks funding and it would be helpful if the promoter was able to obtain that.

Mr Arbuckle: You are quite rightly reluctant to provide details of the negotiations with BAA, but what happens if they come to nought? Will the Scottish Executive be the sole funder?

Tavish Scott: Those are questions that we would have to deal with at the time, but I hope that the situation will not arise. I strongly believe that it is in BAA's interests to invest in the rail link. There are significant rail links at BAA's other main airports, particularly in the London area, and those are highly advantageous to the business. We expect the same principles to apply to the Glasgow rail link. It is our strong view that BAA's involvement in the project is essential to its safe delivery. From his time on the Finance Committee, Andrew Arbuckle will be familiar with assessing business cases and going through financial assessments. Those are important stages and BAA's involvement in them is essential.

Mr Arbuckle: Under the circumstances, is the Scottish Executive's support for the project without financial limit?

Tavish Scott: No. That is a tough one, but the figures that I have identified today are the Executive's contribution to the project. It is very important that we hit the numbers and timescale on this project, just as I want to do with all our capital transport projects.

Mr Arbuckle: We are told that the benefits of the project outweigh the costs and yet there is a need for a subsidy.

Tavish Scott: If you mean a revenue subsidy, we invest—is it £275 million?

Bill Reeve: It is rather more.

Tavish Scott: There we go. We invest in excess of £300 million in the First ScotRail franchise per annum, which is a considerable part of the transport budget year in, year out. Parliament scrutinises the investment and it has every right to

do so. It will continue and this project will be part of that franchise arrangement.

Mr Arbuckle: What then is the answer to the taxpayer who says that there are other public transport services running on that route without subsidy?

Tavish Scott: The answer is that that is, of course, the case. Bus services were deregulated in 1985, if my memory serves me correctly. We could have another debate in another place about whether that was a good thing or a bad thing, but that is the fact of the matter. Transport Scotland—through the national concessionary travel scheme—and many local authorities fund a variety of socially important bus routes, so it is not the case that no bus services receive financial support, because they do. Of course, the basic answer to the question is that Government makes policy choices and is accountable to Parliament for so doing.

Mr Arbuckle: The Edinburgh tram scheme has been temporarily scaled back because of financial constraints. Can you give me any guarantees on the GARL project?

Tavish Scott: I cannot say any more than I said earlier, which is that at every stage, including every quarter, we ensure that this project, like all the others, goes through further and continuing assessment of its financial robustness and the positive nature of its business case.

Mr Arbuckle: We have received written evidence that suggests that the promoter's contingency estimates do not accord with Treasury guidelines. Is that correct?

Tavish Scott: Damian Sharp will deal happily with Treasury guidelines.

Damian Sharp: I can confirm that, as this is a standard civil engineering project, the promoter started with Treasury guidelines of a 44 per cent optimism bias. Through a variety of risk-reduction measures, an optimism bias can fall as one becomes clearer what the risk is and accounts for it. I can confirm that the promoter has applied the guidelines and has reduced the optimism bias to 28 per cent.

Mr Arbuckle: The original study was extremely critical of the economic benefits of the project. Other factors were brought in that changed the equation. Why was the wider picture not considered from the start?

Tavish Scott: Damian, can you deal with that? It slightly predates me, so I will pass the buck.

Damian Sharp: There are two reasons. The main cause of the change in the benefit cost ratio of the Glasgow airport rail link is a change to Treasury guidance about the length of time over

which one appraises projects, from a maximum of 30 years to the whole life of the project. The other reason relates to the specific remit that was set for the consultants, Sinclair Knight Merz, that conducted the original work. It seldom delivers value to change our minds about a project's remit once it has started.

Mr Monteith: Minister, I will start with a couple of points on your opening statement and your answers to questions. You have talked about how you remain to be convinced of the need for a further station at Ibrox. You have also talked about your support for the route as it stands, which goes from Glasgow Central to the airport, with a stop at Paisley. Would you still be supportive of the bill if the route was more of an express service and went directly from Glasgow Central to Glasgow airport with no stops? Other airports have such a service.

Tavish Scott: I would not be more supportive, in the sense that this is the project that is before the committee and me. I believe that in design, engineering and operating terms, the service meets our objectives on reliability and, perhaps more important, the time that it will take to get to the city centre. You are right that some airport rail services are direct; some also have stops. I can think of a number of European capitals where the service to the city centre is not direct but stops at one or two stations. The Executive and the promoter have come to a judgment about the advantages that flow from having that one stop.

Mr Monteith: Is the judgment based on the benefits of expanding capacity on the route to Paisley rather than the benefits of having the spur to the airport?

Tavish Scott: I will get Damian Sharp to comment on the methodological findings behind that. The crucial aspect is delivering a link to the airport which, after all, is the aim of the bill. The important element in that context, particularly for engineering design, is the link between Paisley and the airport. Damian will keep me right here but I assume that when the project was first considered, for a number of reasons Paisley was seen as the logical place for the service to the city centre to connect to the mainline railway system.

14:45

Damian Sharp: The inclusion of a stop on the Glasgow airport rail link at Paisley delivers three benefits. First, it directly connects Paisley to the airport by rail. Secondly, it provides an interchange between the rail link and other rail services, notably from Inverclyde and Ayrshire, so that, instead of having to go all the way into Glasgow Central to come back out again, people will have the opportunity to change at Paisley Gilmour

Street. Thirdly, as Mr Monteith said, it delivers additional capacity for train services between Paisley and Glasgow city centre. It delivers on all those benefit streams. That is why the scheme includes a stop at Paisley Gilmour Street and not just at Glasgow airport.

Mr Monteith: Are you aware that the tables for growth in passenger numbers that the promoter has provided to the committee show that the percentage of passengers using GARL would fall in areas such as Renfrewshire, Ayrshire and Inverclyde?

Tavish Scott: I am not familiar with the tables and am not sure what point you are trying to make. Are you talking about where the people who live in the areas to which you refer go at the moment, because there is no rail link, or about the alternative means that they could use to get to the airport?

Mr Monteith: I am trying to tease out whether we can be certain that the benefits that have been described will be achieved, because the projections in the tables that we have been given—which extend to around 2030—are not easy to pin down. They suggest that in some cases the proportion of people using the rail link from the areas that we might expect to use it more will not increase but decrease.

Tavish Scott: We will see whether we can provide the committee with more evidence on the issue. I do not know whether that will be possible today. I appreciate that I am jumping to another rail line, but since we opened the Larkhall to Milngavie line, the numbers using it have considerably exceeded expectations, which is genuinely positive both for the rail industry and for those of us who believe strongly in it. We will try to clarify for the committee the figures to which Mr Monteith refers.

Mr Monteith: In your opening statement, you talked about the importance of GARL for those who work at the airport and those who use it for travel. The first flights start just before 6 am, before the line will be operative. Given that international flights now require people to check in two hours before departure, those wishing to travel and those who need to be at the airport to check in travellers, to handle luggage and so on will not be able to use the line. What message does the Executive have for those who are trying to get to the airport for earlier flights?

Tavish Scott: Damian Sharp can deal with the issue of patronage assessments and the length of the day during which the service will operate. Andrew Arbuckle asked about the on-going revenue costs of the service to the whole franchise. If we had a blank piece of paper and no budgetary worries, it would be desirable to run the

service 24/7, but we are not there. Damian Sharp may be able to say what assessment has been made of the possibility of lengthening the period of operation of the service, depending on the day or on known patronage. There is some difference between summer and winter, as there are more charters during the summer that might leave at unearthly hours.

Damian Sharp: The patronage assessments aim to ensure that there are trains at the busiest times of the airport day. It is always necessary to strike a balance between patronage and the practicalities of maintaining the railway, which is traditionally done during the night, when the line is closed down. It is true that the Glasgow airport rail link will not serve the needs of all air passengers. It cannot do so in the environment of a modern airport. The Heathrow express does not serve the needs of all passengers at Heathrow airport.

Mr Monteith: In answer to Margaret Jamieson's question on crossrail, the minister said that nothing precludes crossrail from happening. Although that is true, is it not the case that, for the business case to be delivered effectively, the projects would need to be introduced more or less concurrently?

Tavish Scott: No. If that were the case, we would not have proceeded with the GARL project at this time. That is the straight answer. You are right in the sense that there would be a benefit to a concurrent phasing in beginning those plans, but we would not be here today if we had concerns.

Mr Monteith: From the perspective of cost and timing, is it wise to include provision in the bill for a fuel farm to be relocated before the final findings of the Buncefield inquiry have been completed?

Tavish Scott: My recollection of that detailed point of negotiation with airport operators is that the relocation is desirable in relation to a number of other aspects as well. Can one of the gentlemen next to me shed light on the issue without getting into complicated areas of BAA management policy on airport operations?

Damian Sharp: The bill contains powers for the relocation of the fuel farm, but it does not provide details of what the fuel farm must be like. There may well be relevant recommendations on that from the Buncefield inquiry. The intention is that, whatever those recommendations are, the bill will contain sufficient provision to allow a new fuel farm to go ahead.

Tavish Scott: I would also assume that, following the recommendations, any subsequent planning application would need to be subject to the requirements of the Health and Safety Executive, SEPA and everyone else. In that sense, the relocation will not happen immediately. I would assume that there will be time to consider

the recommendations along with the other evidence from all the other statutory bodies that would be involved in such a decision.

Mr Monteith: Further to what you have just said, in a speech that you gave on 16 March 2006—we have all the information before us—you stated:

“We expect Glasgow's airport rail link to be delivered by the end of 2010 ... but the promoters are working to deliver ... up to a year earlier. I welcome and support that drive, but we need to be realistic.”—[*Official Report*, 16 March 2006; c 24053.]

Why do you believe that the promoter is being unrealistic? Are you concerned about issues such as Buncefield? Are there other issues that you are concerned about?

Tavish Scott: No, I believe that the promoter is being realistic and entirely robust about the progress that is being made. The detailed negotiations with BAA on, for example, the tank farm are, I believe, programmed into the decision-making process as fully as is possible. The project will be subject to the quarterly review that we take on every capital transport project, so I have no doubts about the matter at all. I believe that it is well within the promoter's capacity to hit the timescale and, crucially, the budget for the project.

Mr Monteith: Given that the final design of the project will not be complete until much later, can you be certain about all the capital elements? Are all the capital costs required? For example, is there a need to deliver platform 11a or could the same result be achieved and better connectivity provided by a more efficient use of current services?

Tavish Scott: I may ask the guys to deal with any technical aspects of that question, but the direct answer is that we produce a band of figures precisely because there is a degree of flexibility in the detailed design. Indeed, one of your colleagues—I forget which—made some fair points about Paisley Gilmour Street and so on. That issue will need to be factored into what I agree is a necessary investment. However, the banding gives us assurance on those aspects of the scheme. I can assure you that, whether we are dealing with Network Rail or any other partner, we will drive out cost wherever we can.

Mr Monteith: I have just two more questions. Why is it, according to the promoter, that the Scottish Executive

“insisted upon a minimum of 10 years for the enforcement of compulsory purchase powers”?

Tavish Scott: That is a jolly good question.

Mr Monteith: The rail link is intended to be delivered by 2009.

Tavish Scott: I take the point.

Damian Sharp: We insisted on that because of sad and bitter experience, unfortunately. Some members may recall the Larkhall to Milngavie project, on which we were within six weeks of those 10 years being up. The reality is that we do not wish to spend anywhere near that length of time, but introducing an ability for people to frustrate and delay the scheme in the knowledge that it would fall over after five years would not be good governance and would not provide us with the certainty that we need in making the investment. That is why we went for the 10-year period. Other schemes have imposed periods of five years plus another five years, but we went for 10 years because it was clearer. The bill states that that is the maximum period and that no request for extension will be allowed.

Mr Monteith: The running costs are estimated to be £4.3 million a year over 30 years, amounting to a total of £129 million. It is clear that that will be funded through the fare box and the franchise agreement. To what extent can the Executive commit to that franchise agreement in order to make up any shortfall in funding?

Tavish Scott: The franchise agreement is for seven years with an option to extend by three. By definition, such an extension has to be to the mutual benefit of both the franchise company and the Government, which pays for the franchise. That would provide an opportunity for any necessary negotiations about funding.

The Convener: We know that you are pressed for time, but we have some final questions that need to be asked. Can you demonstrate to the committee that you have fully considered the interaction between GARL and the proposed Edinburgh airport rail link and that there will be sufficient patronage of both?

Tavish Scott: They are linked by headline, but they are separate projects in terms of the details of design, engineering and procurement. The linkage is at that top level where we wish to demonstrate that airports benefit in general from rail links, which are economic drivers in local and national economies. It is important to make such investments and to work with airport operators to make the best of them.

In both the Edinburgh and Glasgow cases, particular benefits are to be had from developing links with the strategic network—the whole Scottish rail system. That is why I take seriously the questions that the committee asked about linkages with the Edinburgh project. I assure the committee that we are considering those matters very carefully.

The Convener: We asked you earlier about emissions. The promoter has stated that GARL would increase the use of rail and decrease the

use of cars and taxis. It also stated that by 2030, taxi use will be 65 per cent higher than immediately before the opening of GARL. How do we square that circle?

Tavish Scott: I suspect that we have no option. Generally speaking, crude oil is \$70 a barrel—I was about to say \$100 a barrel because that is what it sometimes feels like where I live. There is no doubt that there are serious concerns for the national economy and the Parliament about future emissions and our responsibility to the next generation. We have to be serious about modal shift and about encouraging people to use forms of transport that are easier on our environment. No transport minister or Government of any persuasion will be able to back away from that challenge.

In such circumstances, I and this Government believe strongly that investment in the rail system, in collaboration with investment in public transport generally, hits important buttons about quality, reliability and service. We need to ensure that we achieve those important objectives for the future.

15:00

The Convener: Concern about certain studies that have been carried out was expressed to the committee. We note that an SKM study was extremely critical of the economic benefits of GARL. Other factors were included in subsequent assessments, which boosted the case for GARL. Why were those factors not included in the first place? Will they generate the economic benefits that the promoter claims they will generate?

Tavish Scott: It strikes me as reasonable practice to have a pretty critical analysis of a project at the first stage. Business cases for projects must be robust. We do not want studies that say, “Yes, promoter, you’ve got it right on every button”; we want them critically to challenge the assumptions of promoters and Government—after all, we are talking about £170 million of taxpayers’ money. After the critical analysis has been done, it is important to consider how to address the concerns. Damian Sharp might comment on the detail of the process in relation to the studies.

Damian Sharp: The main difference between the SKM study and subsequent assessments arose from the extension of the appraisal period from 30 years to the full life of the asset, in line with changes in Treasury guidance, and not from the inclusion of other factors. The consultants delivered against the remit that was originally set, and in doing so they acknowledged that there were areas of benefit that they had not quantified. Therefore the promoter sought to quantify those benefits.

The Convener: Minister, you talked about the need for the economic aspects of projects to be subject to critical challenge. However, at last week's meeting, Simon Wallwork told the committee that his proposals for an alternative to SPT's scheme were never fully assessed. Do you have information on that?

Tavish Scott: I suspect that there might be a difference of view about what constitutes a full assessment. I do not in any way belittle alternative proposals that have been made, but it is fair to say that the promoter had a responsibility to make the best assessment and Transport Scotland—and the transport group that preceded it—had to make a full assessment of alternative proposals against the criteria that we set. There are technical and engineering issues in that regard. I am strongly of the view that any realistic alternative to the proposal that is firmly on the table has been properly considered. Other people might have different views.

Michael Matheson: You stressed the importance of modal shift and getting people out of their cars and on to public transport, in particular trains. Are you aware that the promoter estimates that by 2030 GARL will probably have reduced car journeys on the M8 by about 0.5 per cent? Does that represent a significant modal shift over 21 years?

Tavish Scott: First, that is a conservative assessment. Successive committees of the Scottish Parliament have been critical of grandiose aspirations for modal shift. It is also obvious that the M8 does more than just deliver traffic to Glasgow airport.

Michael Matheson: Yes, the figure is 0.5 per cent of all traffic on the M8, which is obviously not just headed for the airport. On what basis do you think that the figure is conservative?

Tavish Scott: We should be careful about the figure. If we were talking about 0.5 per cent of the traffic that went just to the airport—

Michael Matheson: No, I am talking about a reduction in all traffic on the M8.

Tavish Scott: That is exactly why it is important to put the figure in context—it is 0.5 per cent of all the traffic that currently uses the M8. It might be better to ascertain how many motor vehicles go to Glasgow airport—I presume that there are figures for that—and how many of those vehicles would come off the road because GARL was being used.

I use the word “conservative” because every assessment of every capital transport project that I have seen—I have asked that some assessments be made that way—has been conservative because of concerns expressed by people, from committees such as this to leading economists,

who have said that the one inappropriate thing in the driving forward of such a project is to put in place a series of figures that exaggerate what might happen. Experience of transport planning gained over many years—from even before our Parliament existed—tells us that transport planners can occasionally exaggerate what might happen when human nature and longstanding human behavioural traits in the use of the motor car come together. I do not think that we should make grandiose assessments of what might or might not happen. That is why I am going to use the word “conservative” with a small c.

Michael Matheson: Okay. I might pursue the conservative nature of the figures with the promoter later.

Given that 15 different options for a rail link to Glasgow airport were considered, are you convinced that this is the best model for creating that modal shift?

Tavish Scott: Yes.

Michael Matheson: What assessment have you made of that?

Tavish Scott: All the evidence has been presented to you. There is all the project casework, the robust business arguments that are made and the business case assessment that is done day-in and day-out, quarter-in and quarter-out. I assure you that there is no light-touch assessment of the project. It happens every quarter and it will continue to happen, with this project and every other one.

Michael Matheson: Thank you.

Mr Monteith: The promoter of GARL has a job to do in putting forward the case for the rail link and defending it robustly. One can expect you to give your support as long as the business case stacks up. The promoter for the Edinburgh airport rail link has the same task: to make a business case that will allow you, as the minister, to support it. You are in the unique position of having to support both projects as long as the business cases stack up. You have an interest in seeing both projects through because they are part of your policy.

Going back to critical analysis, however, to what extent are you or your department confident that the introduction of one rail link project will not affect the business case of the other? Have you considered that? For example, what about the impact of passengers who we want to use GARL but who, because of changes in passenger access through EARL, might seek to use Edinburgh airport instead? Can we be confident about the figures for GARL if people in, say, Perth, Fife and Dundee would rather travel through Edinburgh?

Tavish Scott: The best answer to that is to look at the projections in the aviation white paper; I am sure that it has been shared with the committee and it is certainly in the public domain. Those are Department for Transport assessments of the growth of air travel across the UK and in a wider international context. That trend is still upwards. Again, forgive me for not having the white paper with me but the figures for growth are very strong. That is, after all, why the DFT has concluded that planning should be done for second runways at Glasgow and Edinburgh. Those are strong, driving arguments, facts and figures. Admittedly, they are based on assessments and modelling of the likely growth in air travel during the next 30 years, but it is still important to invest in the surface infrastructure to make sure that people can move around Scotland and to and from the airports.

The Convener: I thank you for your evidence and apologise for keeping you a bit late. I am sure that you will make up the time.

Tavish Scott: There is a speed limit.

The Convener: I thank the minister and welcome back to the table members of panel 5, who I will not introduce. I notice that Mr Parry Jones has left us. I do not think that we have questions for him so we will continue now.

Mr Monteith: I refer the witnesses to the useful tables in the SPT submission that show passenger travel to and from Glasgow airport and projected passenger use of GARL in 2009 and 2030. I seek clarification of those figures. Has the completion of crossrail been factored into the 2009 or 2030 figures or were they drawn up without knowing whether crossrail will happen?

Douglas Ferguson: Those figures do not take account of crossrail.

Mr Monteith: So if crossrail were to happen, it would have an impact on the figures.

Charles Hoskins: I clarify that neither the patronage estimates nor anything else in the bill assumes the existence of crossrail.

Mr Monteith: I just wanted to check because crossrail might change the picture.

We are interested in getting a picture of the areas from and to which people make their journeys. You include nine different areas in the tables. Into which area would Perthshire, Fife, Falkirk and Stirling fall? Would it be "North Scotland" or "Southeast Scotland"?

My family and I have travelled from Glasgow airport several times on holiday or business. Do Edinburgh and points east of Edinburgh fall into the south-east Scotland area? We want to understand what those rather general areas mean

because the others—Ayrshire, Inverclyde and Dumfries and Galloway—are specific.

Simon Temple (Faber Maunsell): Given that the question we were asked related to Ayrshire and Inverclyde, rather than burdening the committee with an enormously long table that would not be easy to understand, we decided to provide a relatively disaggregated table to reflect those areas in relation to Glasgow airport and to aggregate areas that are further away.

In answer to your specific question, the Glasgow to Edinburgh corridor and points east of Edinburgh fall into the south-east Scotland area. Heading north to Stirling and beyond, however, would be categorised in the table as north Scotland.

Mr Monteith: That is helpful. It is clear that Falkirk, which is in the Glasgow to Edinburgh corridor, would be in the south-east Scotland area, but one has to leave that corridor to get to Stirling.

Simon Temple: I confirm that Falkirk is somewhat on the margin. We will come back to you on that one.

Mr Monteith: I would like to continue to break down the table, which has rather whetted my appetite. Does it take account of the proposed Edinburgh airport rail link? I presume that it does not, but for the avoidance of doubt, is that link beyond consideration in the same way that crossrail is?

Simon Temple: You are absolutely right—it is not included.

Mr Monteith: Okay. Would it be possible, even at this stage, to show the split between origin and destination in tables 1 and 2? In taking evidence we have been considering the different travel requirements of people who arrive at the airport and people who depart from the airport, some of whom are leaving Scotland. The tables show passenger numbers, but not whether people are coming or going.

15:15

Simon Temple: It should be possible to provide that split and we will be happy to do that.

Mr Monteith: I can anticipate your answer to this, given your comments about Ayrshire. The tables treat passengers from south-east Scotland and England and Wales together, which must be rather a large number of travellers. Could we have separate figures for the different regions? You will have noticed that the committee is concerned about connectivity and we want to get a handle on the numbers in that regard.

Simon Temple: It will be possible to provide separate figures. For information, in practice nearly all the users of Glasgow airport who come

from England and Wales are from the Carlisle area—not many people come from Devon, for example.

Mr Monteith: That helps us in our attempts to pin down the figures in the tables.

I am interested that the tables show nine areas from which journeys are made to and from the airport. Table 2 shows the total projected air passenger journeys to and from the airport and table 1 shows projected air passenger journeys to and from the airport via GARL. I am surprised to find that projected usage trends between 2009 and 2030 are different in seven areas. For example, the proportion of air passengers from Glasgow city and East Renfrewshire is projected to fall from 12.8 per cent to 12.3 per cent and the proportion of passengers from those areas who will use GARL to reach the airport is also projected to fall. However, the proportion of passengers from south-east Scotland, England and Wales is projected to rise from 30.8 per cent to 31.7 per cent while the proportion of them who use GARL is projected to fall. Should we expect trends to be the same or are factors at play of which the committee is not aware?

Simon Temple: Table 2 shows projections for total use of the airport and demonstrates that trends will change relatively little over 21 years, which is quite a long time in the context of trends in air travel. There will be a little expansion of the airport's catchment area and a higher proportion of air passengers will come from the two zones that are furthest from the airport. However, the expansion will not be spectacular.

Table 1, which shows the proportion of air passengers who will use GARL, demonstrates that there will be an increasing rail market share from places that are closer to the airport, which is interesting. For example, the table shows a reduction of about 6.25 per cent in the proportion of air passengers who come from Glasgow city and East Renfrewshire, but a less than 1 per cent decline in the proportion of GARL users who come from those areas. That tells us that GARL's role will increase for shorter trips. The mathematics mean that there will be a decline in passenger percentages from other zones—they have to add up to 100 per cent at the bottom of the table. It is really about the increasing competitiveness of GARL for journeys from Glasgow city, Ayrshire and Inverclyde, for example.

Mr Monteith: Okay, but looking at GARL users between 2009 and 2030, the number of people travelling from Glasgow falls, although I know that it is a marginal drop of 0.1 per cent. The figure for Inverclyde also falls. It strikes me as odd that those percentages might fall.

Similarly, it strikes me as odd that in table 2, on the total number of air passengers using Glasgow airport, the only areas that show growth in the percentage of passengers are the south-east and the north of Scotland. However, one might consider that EARL would have an impact on that. Would you care to comment on that?

Simon Temple: I can only reiterate what I said earlier: the table shows that there is strong growth in the number of air passengers from every zone in table 2.

Mr Monteith: Indeed.

Simon Temple: There is slightly higher growth in the number of passengers coming from the areas furthest away from Glasgow, which shows that the airport is expanding its catchment. As I said earlier, EARL is not factored into the figures.

The market share of GARL increases over time to some extent, but it increases more for those areas that are served more directly. Although the percentage of air passengers coming from Glasgow city and East Renfrewshire drops from 12.8 per cent to 12.3 per cent, which is 0.5 percentage points or 6.25 per cent—I calculated it quickly when I heard your question to the minister—the proportion of GARL users drops from 17.2 per cent to 17.1 per cent, which is about 0.5 per cent. So, in proportional terms, GARL's market share of passengers from Glasgow increases.

Mr Monteith: Okay. I follow the arithmetic.

Can you confirm that the concessionary train fares scheme in the west of Scotland will apply to relevant GARL passengers?

Douglas Ferguson: That is the intention. At the moment, the concessionary scheme for rail travellers applies to all services in the SPT area and I cannot see why Glasgow airport station would be excluded from that. To take the example of the Glasgow to Paisley route, that would obviously be in the scheme because it already exists. There is no reason to expect Glasgow airport station to be treated any differently.

Mr Monteith: Why did GARL's economic case not take account of bus concessions?

Simon Temple: They were not seen as a significant factor. Having gone back and done the calculations, as we said in written evidence, we see that bus concessions would reduce the benefits by 0.5 per cent at most.

Mr Monteith: Which benefits would those be?

Simon Temple: Where there is free travel on buses and discounted fares on rail, you would expect slightly fewer concessionary passengers to use GARL than if the concessionary fares did not exist or if both modes were free. Those

passengers would therefore not get the time-saving benefits that they would enjoy if they used GARL.

Mr Monteith: On the implications of concessions, you quote data showing that only 12.9 per cent of air passengers are aged 60 or over. Given demographic change, is that not likely to become a significant group of people over time?

Simon Temple: It is likely to grow, although it will not grow hugely. It is interesting that while the proportion of the population over 60 has grown substantially in the past 20 years, the group among which there has been most growth is people over 80. They tend not to be heavy users of any mode of transport, because at that age they tend to suffer from limited mobility and even with concessionary fares they are not in a position to make much use of public transport.

John Halliday: We have done quite a lot of work on the matter because of our regional transport strategy. For the west of Scotland, the growth in the number of people over 65 will be about 5 per cent up to 2021. That outstrips the growth of the general population, which is growing at a much slower rate.

Mr Monteith: That is helpful.

Your evidence states that GARL will allow cyclists who are travelling to the airport from other stations to interchange on to GARL to reach the airport. Do you anticipate that many cyclists will want to access the airport at the times when GARL is running?

Simon Temple: There will be two groups. A small group of air passengers, who are perhaps going on cycling holidays, will find it convenient to be able to ride their bike to their local station and to put it on the train to get it to the airport and loaded on to the plane. Another group might be airport employees who live too far away from the airport to cycle the whole way, but who would like to take advantage of the ability to cycle and then ride on the train, as some people who commute into Glasgow do now. The number of cyclists will be affected to some extent by the times of operation. That comes back to the more general question that you asked about the operating times of the service.

Mr Monteith: Yes, it does.

Charles Hoskins: We are focusing on the policy objective. We are clear that GARL will not solve all the problems and encourage a huge number of people to get on their bikes, but we are allowing for the development of that opportunity. The existence of a train service to the airport will mean that passengers can take their bicycles on it. Simon Temple gave two examples of situations in which people might do so. Without such a train

service it is difficult to take a bike to the airport on public transport. Obviously, people who live within a short distance of the airport can currently cycle to it.

Simon Temple: One more category of people that I should have added is people who cycle to a station, leave their bike there and get the train. That is another example of improved interchange between cycle and rail. People can cycle as well as walk to the station.

Mr Monteith: The environmental statement refers at various points to temporary cycle path diversions. Does the promoter believe that GARL will provide enhanced interchange opportunities for walkers and cyclists?

Charles Hoskins: I hope that I partly answered that question in my previous response. The focus in delivering that objective is that the rail service in itself will allow the opportunity for interchange. We have spoken previously about our on-going work with BAA on the transport interchange. Members will have seen the example of Manchester, where cyclists are encouraged to use such a facility. We fully recognise that although the bill does not deliver an interchange, it provides the opportunity for one in future, because there will not be an interchange without a railway station at Glasgow airport.

As far as the environmental statement is concerned, my recollection—Brian Cuthbert can probably confirm this—is that we temporarily will have to divert a cycle path that currently goes into the airport, but that is not too significant.

Brian Cuthbert: That is right. A cycle path crosses Paisley Moss local nature reserve. The route goes across what will be the access to the new fuel farm, so during construction the path will have to be diverted temporarily, but during operation the cycle path, which goes to Inchinnan, can be reinstated.

15:30

Douglas Ferguson: I should also point out that, at the moment, cycles are carried free on all services in the SPT area.

Mr Monteith: Do any of your policies reflect the recent ruling that space for bikes should be given up to make room for disabled people's wheelchairs?

Douglas Ferguson: The issue has certainly had to be borne in mind in the design of train interiors. However, I do not imagine that it will be a practical problem for the airport rail link, which will, after all, be an electrified service with ample room for cycles and wheelchair passengers. That said, we have not yet had to take account of the ruling in our policies.

Mr Monteith: But will the ruling affect the current rolling stock that will be used to take cyclists from Glasgow airport to Paisley Gilmour Street and, in turn, make it more difficult for such passengers to use the train?

Douglas Ferguson: I imagine that Transport Scotland will take account of the issue when it considers the next generation of rolling stock.

The Convener: My next question follows on from our earlier questions on the impact of EARL on GARL's patronage figures. It would be an understatement to say that, after taking evidence from you last week, members left the committee room feeling gobsmacked. An article in last week's *Evening Times* claimed that SPT supported the introduction of a direct bus service from Glasgow city centre to the airport and that private operators would run another bus service between the airport and the city's major hotels. What impact will those bus schemes—which have been approved and will be funded—have on GARL's patronage figures?

Douglas Ferguson: Both options will be entirely complementary to GARL and will not detract from its level of patronage. I point out that the fastlink proposal still needs to receive planning approval before work can start on it.

Each of the bus schemes will serve different markets from GARL. For example, the fastlink proposal primarily will improve services on the north and south banks of the river Clyde, with the initial phase running from Glasgow city centre to the Glasgow harbour development west of Partick. We have agreed to consider opportunities for extending the network both north and south of the river. One such proposal is to extend the service south to Govan, the Southern general hospital, Braehead, Renfrew and possibly the airport. However, the intention behind fastlink is to serve that whole area and allow places such as Govan, Braehead and Renfrew, rather than the city centre, to access the airport. Because it will take far longer for people in the city centre to get to the airport using the so-called fastlink bus, we believe that all those people will opt to use the rail link.

As for the hotel hopper bus service, we have always assumed that the existing bus service will remain and that—as the figures show—the number of bus passengers will increase even with the rail link in place. The hotel hopper service will simply accommodate that increase by providing an alternative bus service. Again, we believe that people who use rail will still use the rail link.

Simon Temple: I return to the example of Manchester, which I know has been of interest to the committee. As you are aware, there is a fast rail link from the airport into Manchester city centre, and there is a proposal for a metrolink-like rail link that will also go to the city centre. In a way,

that is Manchester's equivalent of the fastlink bus service, in that it will serve a number of communities along a different corridor on the way into the city centre. It will not be competitive in terms of journey time into the city, but it will fulfil a complementary role by serving other places.

The hopper bus will inevitably be subject to all the problems of congestion on the M8 that affect the existing bus service. It is really intended for those people who have lots of heavy luggage—people who might now use a taxi. It will offer an alternative to taxis or hire cars rather than an alternative to the rail link.

The Convener: Your information about the possibility of doing something at Ibrox is interesting in relation to meeting the objectives of Glasgow City Council. Why are you saying that you could do something at Ibrox with GARL if that area, greater Govan, will be better served by the new bus service?

Charles Hoskins: I will start with a point of clarification. The proposal for a station at Ibrox was made by Glasgow City Council; it is not necessarily SPT's proposal. The city council was keen that, when we were developing GARL, we ensured that we did not prejudice its proposal. We clarified with the city council that that would be the case, and that the increased track in that locality would not prejudice the future construction of a station at Ibrox.

The proposal is part of the regional transport strategy. It is one element among a number of other proposals from the various councils, which will be brought together in the strategy. We did not make the proposal, however. In fact, we made it clear to Glasgow City Council that although we believe that for obvious transport reasons there could well be benefits in having a railway station at Ibrox, that is not part of the GARL proposals. At this point, we do not foresee GARL trains stopping at that station, should it be built. The proposed station would be similar to Hillington and Cardonald stations, which serve some local purpose. People could still interchange at Glasgow Central or Paisley to connect to the station at Ibrox if it were built.

Douglas Ferguson: You make a reasonable point, convener. If the fastlink service proceeds, that will affect some of the arguments for also having a station at Ibrox.

The Convener: Do you think that the announcement last week with regard to the new bus service has aided your case?

Douglas Ferguson: I do not think that it has done any harm. We genuinely believe that the two schemes are complementary. The announcement came out when it did because the entire focus of the proposal is not about travel to the airport—it

simply identified the airport as one possible far-end terminus for the service. The whole focus of the fastlink proposal is the regeneration of both banks of Clydeside and the serving of the housing developments in the area and the commercial development, which includes the BBC, Channel 4 and others moving to Pacific Quay. The driver for the new bus service is Clydeside regeneration rather than serving the airport. Had the driver been to serve the airport, the announcement might have been made when you did not want it to be made.

The Convener: I am concerned that SPT did not think it appropriate to advise the committee of that pending announcement—it did not tell us, and we have had to raise the matter today. If that is the way that the bill committee is treated by SPT, we can see why individuals who you say were consulted believe that they were not consulted. Your organisation needs to think about that. It is important to state that we should have been given that information. It should not have had to take your being brought here today for us to get the answers that you have now provided.

On another issue, can you confirm that, if the promoter wanted to increase the length of the GARL trains, there would be sufficient space to accommodate them at Glasgow airport?

Charles Hoskins: Yes. The proposed rolling stock in the project is what is called three-car length. The experience elsewhere is that, as demand increases, lengthening the trains is an option. The length of Glasgow airport station's platform allows for an eight-car train. That has also been allowed for in the new platform at Glasgow Central station.

The Convener: In the absence of any provision for planning agreements or other third-party agreements within the bill, can you bind Glasgow airport to anything other than voluntary contributions?

Charles Hoskins: Could you clarify what area you have concerns about?

The Convener: Glasgow airport's contribution to the link is strictly voluntary. If BAA turns around and says, "This is a brilliant idea, but we ain't paying a penny towards it," what can you do?

John Halliday: You raise a valid point. In developing the project, we have recognised that we would much prefer to have BAA as a voluntary contributor—that would add value to the project. It has seen some benefit in investing in the project. The picture is reasonably good. However, as we have said before, there needs to be a little bit of coercion, otherwise BAA could walk away with its millions of pounds. That is why the bill includes provisions to deal with that.

There is a distinction between permitted development rights and non-permitted development rights. BAA has the right to develop the operation of the airport but there are other areas that it would like to develop—for example, car parking—for which it requires planning permission. A constraint could be placed on BAA through that mechanism.

The Convener: Do you believe that Glasgow airport would have had to move the fuel depot anyway? We heard that it has plans to expand the airport to the west, which is where the fuel depot is. If it carried out those plans without the involvement of anyone else, it would have to bear the full financial burden of the cost that it is now looking to get from the public purse.

Charles Hoskins: BAA has said, most recently in the evidence that it provided a couple of weeks ago, that it recognises that the fuel farm will have to either be relocated or be designed around. Both of those options would have some impact in terms of finance, which is why that issue is part of our on-going negotiations. We are firmly of the belief that, in any case, BAA would have had to meet the cost of dealing with the location of the fuel farm and that the only difference in cost that might result from the project that we are engaged in is the need to deal with that a little earlier than otherwise. That is as far as I can go in relation to the negotiations.

15:45

The Convener: I appreciate that.

Charles Hoskins: We fully recognise that that is an issue and that the public purse should not be funding the entire redevelopment of the fuel farm, which is part of the master plan.

The Convener: Can you confirm that a future transport interchange at Glasgow airport would provide sufficient signage and publicity for all methods of transport, not just GARL?

John Halliday: A degree of co-operation would be required of BAA in that respect. BAA is part of the transport forum, and there is a group of bodies that meets to discuss transport. I am absolutely certain that signage will be part of the strategy for the development of the interchange at the airport and I expect that to be a central plank in the success of any interchange. BAA is aware of the range of things that has to be done to encourage people to cycle, to walk or to take the bus or the train, and I have always been encouraged by BAA's interaction with the transport forum, which hosts those meetings and encourages those developments.

Michael Matheson: I would like to ask a couple of questions to clarify some previous evidence.

Last week, there was some discussion about the possibility of additional trains being provided on some of the other routes, off the back of the new infrastructure. Mr Halliday made the point that two extra trains an hour could be provided for on the Ayrshire line, which would represent a 50 per cent increase over current capacity. What would the overall increase be between the Inverclyde, Ayrshire and Prestwick lines? Network Rail made it quite clear that, in its view, the additional provision would have a marginal effect on increasing overall capacity, but are the two extra trains an hour that were mentioned all that could be afforded with all the additional infrastructure that is planned?

John Halliday: I can explain the stage that we have reached in the analysis, and Simon Temple can give a little more technical detail. The development—and the necessary rejigging—of the timetable must be analysed to see what the impact on performance would be and it must be built around a global timetable that works. The infrastructure that is required for the project will provide an extra two paths, which could be used on the Ayrshire line. What Network Rail said could be interpreted as meaning that, if we take the total amount of rail travel, including freight traffic from the coalfields of Ayrshire, the increase of two extra trains an hour may appear marginal. However, as we said in evidence last week, we are talking about services that could increase from half-hourly to every 15 minutes, so there are potentials around that. However, specific timetabling issues would have to be addressed when we reached that stage.

Michael Matheson: Would that potential increase be on a single line, or would it be on the Inverclyde line, the Ayrshire line and the Prestwick line?

Simon Temple: At present, the standard hourly timetable has four trains from Ayrshire—two from Ayr, one from Ardrossan and one from Largs—and four from Inverclyde. With the Glasgow airport rail link and the additional mainline infrastructure, there will be four trains from Ayrshire, four from Inverclyde and four from the airport—a total of 12—so there would be a 50 per cent increase between Paisley and Glasgow. In addition, there will be capacity between Paisley and Glasgow for a further two trains with the GARL infrastructure, which takes the total between Paisley and Glasgow from 12 to 14, which is what one would describe as a marginal increase.

The figures then depend on where those trains go to west of Paisley. If they go to the airport, which they could do, that would increase the number of trains from the airport by 50 per cent from four to six. If they went to Inverclyde, the number of trains per hour on that route would

increase from four to six. If they went to Ayrshire, again there would be an increase from four to six. However, assuming that the trains went to Ayr itself, the increase would be from two trains an hour to four trains an hour.

No decision has been made on whether those additional trains will operate or where they will go to and no account has been taken of their benefits in the economic case. However, depending on where they go, the additional trains could have a significant effect on certain stations.

Michael Matheson: That is helpful.

Douglas Ferguson: To clarify, the trains that serve Prestwick airport are the trains that go to Ayr. There is not a separate service to Prestwick.

John Halliday: One of the reasons why we think about the line to Ayr is that we know it is the busiest corridor. Often there is standing room only, especially on the approaches to Paisley. The Ayr corridor has the greatest potential for growth. That belief is held not only by us, but by First ScotRail, which has been in discussions with us and Transport Scotland. The corridor is the likely place for the additional services to be apportioned.

Michael Matheson: That clarification is helpful.

When Mr Ferguson gave evidence to the committee last week, he said that it is important that we learn lessons from the experience at Manchester. One of those lessons is that greater connectivity is needed if patronage is to increase. We have raised that point a number of times with you and other witnesses, including the minister. Will the infrastructure provide for greater point-to-point linkage between the airport and other stations?

Douglas Ferguson: Yes. Obviously, the initial scheme serves only Glasgow Central station and Paisley. With one change of train, people will be able to travel to a large number of stations from Paisley and to an even larger number from Glasgow Central. However, the scheme will provide additional opportunities beyond that—I think that that is the core of your question. The first opportunity is the one that has already been mentioned. It will be possible for some of the airport trains to reverse and head back out to another destination, which will save people changing trains. Having the extra platform at Glasgow Central will obviously help with that.

Because we will have the capacity for two extra trains on the Paisley to Glasgow line, those trains could ultimately use the crossrail line to cross Glasgow and travel either to Queen Street station or further west to Stirling or Edinburgh. We believe that we have provided the opportunity within the scheme—especially when it is combined with crossrail—to provide a much higher level of

connectivity than in the initial scheme. Having said that, we believe that a good level of connectivity is provided in the initial scheme.

Michael Matheson: Your point about connecting with crossrail is new to me; I may have missed it previously. Are you suggesting that it will be possible for trains that leave Glasgow airport on the Paisley line to go on to the crossrail line, when it is in place, to Queen Street station? Will the infrastructure in the current plan allow the required adaptations to be made in the future?

Douglas Ferguson: Indeed. One of the main objectives of crossrail is to enable exactly that connectivity so that airport trains or trains from Ayrshire can travel to Queen Street station.

John Halliday: May I clarify something about crossrail? A new piece of line is required for the services that you are talking about to get to Queen Street station. It would be possible to use the track and reverse at Bellgrove, but that is not a manoeuvre that one would do naturally. The crossrail project will involve new infrastructure, new lines, new stations and new junctions. GARL will link into that and make new connections. Crossrail will take trains either round the High Street and into Queen Street or to the east via other lines—Springburn or Airdrie to Bathgate, for example.

Michael Matheson: If we increase the possibility of there being more direct services to the airport, we will have to address the issue of capacity to accommodate trains at the airport end. We have heard that we can get trains of up to eight passenger carriages. Would the design for the station at the airport allow for a second platform, should that become necessary in the future?

John Halliday: The branch line is a twin line—there are two lines. As it approaches the station at the airport, there is a crossover. Two lines go into the airport station, which has a central platform. In essence, there is the capacity to deal with more than four trains per hour. The trains will be able to be switched as they enter and leave, so that they get on to the right line.

Douglas Ferguson: There will be a single-island platform, with two platform faces. In effect, there will be two platforms at the station, so two trains can be at the station at the same time.

Simon Temple: The track layout is almost exactly the same as that at Manchester airport station. The platforms are about the same length and eight trains per hour are run from Manchester airport at present.

Michael Matheson: It is helpful to know that.

My final question, which I suspect is for Simon Temple, relates to the question that I asked the

minister about the 0.5 per cent of traffic that will be taken off the M8 between the introduction of GARL and 2030. I said to the minister that the figure related to that section of the M8 overall, but I might be incorrect. Are we talking only about traffic to the airport or traffic beyond that?

Simon Temple: The percentage figure relates to all the traffic on the M8, not just traffic to and from the airport. I think that I misled you slightly when I said two weeks ago that the figure was 0.5 per cent. I have checked the figures and can tell you that the percentage is 0.8 per cent. Admittedly, the figure is still less than 1 per cent, but it is slightly higher than I said it was two weeks ago.

Although the reduction is relatively small, it is important to remember that, with congested roads, every additional car has a bigger impact on congestion. The reverse of that is that the first car that is taken off has a greater impact on reducing congestion than the second and the third. There is a curve, which is well liked by transport planners, which puts traffic volume on one axis and journey time on the other. When there is virtually no traffic, the line is steady. As traffic increases, the line starts rising until it gets to the point at which it rises very steeply indeed. The traffic volume on the M8 is at that point, so taking off 0.8 per cent of the traffic would have more than a 0.8 per cent effect on the congestion.

Michael Matheson: Given that the 0.8 per cent is the figure for traffic volume on the M8 in general, what is the specific figure for car journeys to the airport?

Simon Temple: I will have to get back to you with that.

Michael Matheson: That would be helpful, because it would put the other figure in context.

The Convener: Where was the measurement on the M8 taken? The M8 goes from Edinburgh to Greenock.

Simon Temple: It was taken between the airport and Glasgow city centre. I cannot remember which junctions it was taken between.

16:00

The Convener: When do you anticipate publishing SPT's proposals for crossrail, which will be the next stage if GARL goes ahead?

John Halliday: The rail powers in Scotland changed recently, and the agency that is responsible is now Transport Scotland. It is no secret that SPT had been pursuing crossrail for many years before that change was made.

In the past two years, we have proved that crossrail could be built—it is technically feasible.

The unanswered question, or the last piece of the jigsaw, was exactly which services would be provided. However, the legislation changed and we are now engaged with what could be called three parts of the same story. First, there is the Scottish planning assessment for rail, which is being finished off by Transport Scotland; that will determine what the problems are and where the issues are on the rail network. Secondly, there is a piece of work by Network Rail—the rail utilisation strategy—which is drawing to a conclusion. That is about extracting as much capacity as possible from the existing infrastructure, but also about identifying the key pinchpoints on the Scottish rail network. Those two pieces of work will come together in the rail strategy for Scotland, which is due to be completed by Transport Scotland round about late summer.

Thirdly, as the new regional transport body, SPT is making the case for crossrail. We are saying that it should be in the forward strategy. We believe that we have a very strong case, but we have to make that case. Crossrail will not go anywhere unless it is included in the strategy and then in an investment plan. In the light of comments that have been made by almost everyone with whom we have had discussions, we believe that crossrail is such an obvious project in terms of developing rail services in the west of Scotland and linking the west of Scotland to the rest of the rail network that it will be part of the rail strategy.

Mr Monteith: John Halliday made a point about crossrail and the extra piece of line. Would that extra piece of line allow trains from Glasgow airport to go to Queen Street station without having to go to Glasgow Central and come out again?

John Halliday: That is entirely possible. It could be done using a line that connects in roughly around Shields junction and takes off across what is called the city union line. The line is currently used for transporting empty rolling stock, so we understand that it would need to be upgraded to passenger standards. On the other side of the Clyde, the line would loop round by the High Street and on to the Airdrie to Helensburgh line.

Mr Monteith: We are aware of the capacity problems at Glasgow Central, and you described the single platform with track on either side at Glasgow airport. While keeping its four trains per hour, would the airport station be able to accommodate additional trains that might go to Motherwell or Queen Street without having to go to Glasgow Central, where they might meet a logjam?

John Halliday: Yes, potentially. We in SPT have that vision. Infrastructure would have to be put in place to develop it, but I am sure that you

understand that. That is part of our vision of connecting into the rest of the country.

Charles Hoskins: I can clarify that, at Glasgow airport station, two platforms and two tracks on the branch line would allow additional services on top of four trains per hour. We examined the matter in considerable detail during our work on the branch line and determined that we needed a twin-track branch line.

The Convener: There are no further questions. Any supplementary evidence from the promoter must be received by the clerk not later than Wednesday of this week. The timetable is getting ever shorter. I thank the panel members for their evidence.

Assessor

16:06

The Convener: Agenda item 2 concerns the appointment of an assessor at consideration stage of the bill. I should inform members of the public who might not be aware of the Parliament's processes that we are discussing the matter today because we have several procedural hurdles to get over before Parliament can take any decision on the bill. For a start, we need to appoint an assessor to take the bill, if its general principles are agreed to, through to consideration stage. The assessor will then report back to the committee.

Are members content to ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body to appoint an assessor to consider and report to the committee at consideration stage? Moreover, do members agree that we will ask the assessor to report in the way that is identified in paragraph 2 of paper GARL/S2/06/6/11 and that a report on any evidence that is given to the assessor and recommendations as appropriate be given to the committee?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: I make it abundantly clear that that decision does not pre-empt our preliminary stage report or the Parliament's verdict on our recommendation on whether the bill should proceed. We are simply keeping up with the Parliament's processes.

I point out to the promoter and the objectors that the timetable for providing future evidence at consideration stage would be extremely tight. For example, it is likely that further written evidence would be sought from objectors in very early July and early August, and from the promoter in mid-July. The committee clerks have already alerted parties to those possible dates. Any oral evidence at consideration stage is likely to be taken at the very end of August and the beginning of September. I hope that that makes it clear that our earlier decision to appoint an assessor does not pre-empt any decision on the bill made either by us or by the Parliament. These matters simply need to be clarified and set in train—if you will excuse the pun—to ensure that we make progress.

Item in Private

16:09

The Convener: Under agenda item 3, I ask the committee to agree that it will consider its draft preliminary stage report in private at future meetings. Are members agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

Meeting closed at 16:09.

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