

# **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 23 May 2006

Session 2

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## LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

14<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2006, Session 2

### CONVENER

\*Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab)

### DEPUTY CONVENER

\*Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\*Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab)

\*Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)

\*David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)

\*Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)

\*Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP)

\*Ms Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP)

### COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Colin Fox (Lothians) (SSP)

Mr Bruce McFee (West of Scotland) (SNP)

John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab)

Murray Tosh (West of Scotland) (Con)

\*attended

### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Alastair Macfie

### ASSISTANT CLERK

Rebecca Lamb

### LOCATION

Committee Room 6



## Scottish Parliament

### Local Government and Transport Committee

*Tuesday 23 May 2006*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 14:03*]

#### Interests

**The Convener (Bristow Muldoon):** I call today's meeting of the Local Government and Transport Committee to order.

Item 1 is a declaration of interest. I welcome Mike Rumbles MSP to the committee. I look forward to his contribution over the forthcoming months. I also put on record my thanks to Andrew Arbuckle for his service on the committee. I invite Mike Rumbles to declare any relevant interests.

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** Thank you very much, convener. I am delighted to be a new member of the committee and I look forward to working with you. I have no relevant interests to declare.

## Item in Private

14:04

**The Convener:** Item 2 is consideration of whether to take item 4 in private, as it relates to the content of our draft report on our freight transport inquiry. Our normal practice is to keep reports private until we publish them. Is it agreed that we consider item 4 in private?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** Sorry, but at the start of the meeting I should have intimated Tommy Sheridan's apologies.

## Maritime Passenger Rights (European Consultation)

14:05

**The Convener:** Item 3 is consideration of a European Commission consultation document on the rights of passengers travelling by sea or inland waterway within the European Union.

When we first sought written evidence on the consultation from all ferry companies that operate Scottish services and from groups that represent ferry passengers we received three responses and a letter from the Minister for Transport and Telecommunications that outlined the Executive's position. At our meeting on 9 May, we decided to seek further views on the consultation by asking for representations in addition to the initial responses that we received, so we wrote again to the ferry companies and port authorities and to the former Caledonian MacBrayne users committee. As a result, we got three additional responses, from Stena Line, Orkney Islands Council and Lerwick Port Authority.

I invite members to consider how we should respond to the Commission's consultation. Do members have any comments that they wish to add to the submissions that we received?

Are members content to forward a report to the Commission to draw its attention to the six submissions that we received and to ask it to take them on board in its deliberations on the issue?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**Ms Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP):** The submissions from the bodies concerned with disability rights and mobility are important and should be highlighted but, on balance, I think that just forwarding the comments is probably the best idea.

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP):** I presume that we did not get a reply from the Rail Passengers Committee Scotland because it is now defunct. I mention the issue because, when I was carrying out my presidential duties—very pleasant they were too—as honorary president of the Friends of the West Highland Line in Banavie on Saturday, it was highlighted to me that we do not have a consumer watchdog because the RPC is no longer and the Executive's planned new multimodal committee has yet to be set up. Obviously, the new committee would be the body to respond to the consultation, given that the interests of ferry passengers are our main concern. Perhaps members will agree, therefore, that this is an appropriate occasion to invite the Executive to provide us with an update on its progress in

forming a consumer watchdog body for all modes of public transport in Scotland.

**Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab):** I understand the position to be that we have received from the minister an update and written submission on the multimodal committee.

**The Convener:** Basically, the Executive has laid some Scottish statutory instruments on the matter, including the Public Transport Users' Committee for Scotland Order 2006, so the action that Fergus Ewing seeks is already under way.

**Fergus Ewing:** I wait in hope, as always.

**The Convener:** We are scheduled to consider the SSI on 13 June.

**Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab):** However, it would do no harm to ask for an overview of the situation and how the instruments fit in.

**David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con):** It might also be appropriate to write to the minister to point out that it would have been appropriate for the multimodal committee to respond to the consultation. Fergus Ewing's point is apt in that respect. We should draw the minister's attention to the fact that we want the new committee to be established as soon as possible. Once the new committee has been formulated, perhaps the consultation could be referred to it as an early item of business for it to consider.

**The Convener:** We could do that, but I think that the European Commission's consultation might be formally closed by then.

**David McLetchie:** Anyway, it would do no harm to point out that an opportunity has been missed.

**The Convener:** We will conclude on the basis that we will forward the responses from the six organisations to the Commission for its consideration. I will also raise with the minister the issue of the timeframe for the formulation of the new committee.

That brings us to agenda item 4, which will be considered in private.

14:10

*Meeting continued in private until 16:09.*

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