

# **TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 19 June 2007

Session 3

£5.00

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2007.

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to the Licensing Division,  
Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ  
Fax 01603 723000, which is administering the copyright on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate  
Body.

Produced and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by RR  
Donnelley.

---

# CONTENTS

Tuesday 19 June 2007

	Col.
INTERESTS .....	1
CONVENER .....	3
DEPUTY CONVENER .....	4
WORK PROGRAMME .....	5

---

## TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

### 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting 2007, Session 3

#### OLDEST COMMITTEE MEMBER

\*Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)  
\*Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)  
\*Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)  
\*Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
\*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
\*David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
\*Stefan Tymkewycz (Lothians) (SNP)

#### COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP)

\*attended

#### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

#### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Alastair Macfie

#### LOCATION

Committee Room 6



# Scottish Parliament

## Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

*Tuesday 19 June 2007*

[THE OLDEST COMMITTEE MEMBER *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

### Interests

**Rob Gibson (Oldest Committee Member):** Good afternoon and welcome to the first meeting of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee in the third session of the Scottish Parliament. I remind members to turn off their mobile phones and pagers because they interfere with the system. I have received an apology from Cathy Peattie, who is running late because of a plane's late arrival at the airport. We have no control over that, but we hope that she will arrive during the meeting.

Agenda item 1 is a declaration of interests by members. In accordance with section 3 of the code of conduct, I invite members to declare any interests that are relevant to the committee's remit. An interest that I will have to add to my entry in the register of members' interests is that I am a member of the Dornoch rail link action group. I invite members to declare any interests.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I do not think that I have any interests that I am required to register in relation to the committee's work, although I am a member, in a voluntary capacity, of several organisations that might wish to give evidence to the committee, including Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and Oxfam.

**David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** Similarly, I have no interests to declare in addition to those in my entry in the register of members' interests. I am a former member of the rural community transport initiative.

**Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** My interests are registered in the register of members' interests. I draw attention to the fact that I recently retired as a councillor on Aberdeenshire Council, as part of which I was chair of NESTRANS—the north-east Scotland transport partnership. I was also a non-executive director of Scottish Enterprise Grampian until May 2007. Those are my interests that are relevant to the committee's work.

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am an owner of agricultural land in Scotland. That

might be relevant to our discussions on climate change, in particular. Also, I am a member of NFU Scotland and of the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association, both of which regularly give evidence to parliamentary committees.

**Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab):** I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests. I do not think that it contains anything in either the statutory or the voluntary sections that gives rise to a conflict of interest with the duties of a member of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee.

**Stefan Tymkewycz (Lothians) (SNP):** I do not believe that there is any conflict of interest between my membership of the committee and my registered interests. I am a member of City of Edinburgh Council, but I have no executive or convenership role on it.

**Rob Gibson:** Thank you. We will allow Cathy Peattie to make her declaration at the first opportunity.

## Convener

14:03

**Rob Gibson:** Item 2 is to choose a convener. The Parliament has agreed that only members of the Scottish Green Party are eligible to be convener of the committee. That being the case, I seek nominations for the position of convener.

**David Stewart:** I nominate Patrick Harvie.

*Patrick Harvie was chosen as convener.*

**Rob Gibson:** I welcome Patrick Harvie to the job of convener, which I am sure will be rewarding. We look forward to lively sessions to follow.

**The Convener (Patrick Harvie):** Thanks very much. Given that the Parliament agreed that a member of the Green party should be nominated as convener, members have not had a wide field to choose from, but I am happy to be serving on what I think will be an important and interesting committee. Although several newspapers have already referred to it as the transport committee, we will be dealing with a much broader range of issues than that suggests. I look forward to working with all of you.

## Deputy Convener

14:04

**The Convener:** Our next item of business is to appoint a deputy convener. Members have in front of them a note from the clerk setting out the procedure for selecting a deputy convener, which is similar to that used to select a convener. Parliament has agreed that only members of the Labour Party are eligible to be deputy convener. That being the case, I invite nominations for the position of deputy convener.

**David Stewart:** I nominate Cathy Peattie in her absence, if that is competent.

**The Convener:** I am advised that it is entirely acceptable to nominate Cathy Peattie in her absence.

*Cathy Peattie was chosen as deputy convener.*

## Work Programme

14:05

**The Convener:** The final item is our approach to developing a work plan. Members will have had a chance to look at the various papers that the clerks have circulated. It is early days and it is not the intention for this discussion to lead to a detailed work plan at the end of the meeting. We have an opportunity to develop a work plan in the coming months and at an away day, if we choose to have one, towards the end of the summer recess. I open the discussion to the floor immediately and ask whether members want to flag up particular issues.

**Des McNulty:** I will flag up two issues. The first is the recommendation in the previous Finance Committee's legacy paper that all subject committees should appoint a budget adviser. Members will be aware that a spending review is coming up and that transport, climate change and infrastructure all have significant budgetary implications. It takes time to identify an appropriate adviser and to take all the necessary steps to put somebody in place, but it would be remiss of the committee not to decide in principle now to appoint a suitable budget adviser and to authorise the clerks to look at how that might be done effectively.

Deciding to go down that route will have budgetary implications for the committee's budget, which must be bid for within the Parliament's structures. I recommend strongly that the committee appoints a budget adviser. Many of the committees in the previous session did so and almost all of them found it to be useful. Having somebody with the appropriate level of expertise and understanding of the figures to advise us would certainly sharpen our focus on the budgetary choices that lie ahead.

The second matter that I would like the committee to look at as part of its early work is the review of major capital transport projects that John Swinney announced in his role as minister for nearly everything. It would be entirely appropriate for the committee to look at the criteria against which the review might be carried out, the process that will be undertaken and ministers' conclusions and recommendations.

We need to authorise research on that over the summer so that we will be in a good position in September to begin looking at the review. I think that John Swinney's timescale is to report in September or October. We need to pick up the matter quickly and begin to identify what we should do to scrutinise the Executive appropriately.

**The Convener:** I am open to looking at both matters. I do not anticipate that many members will oppose the idea of having a budget adviser. I do not recall speaking to members of any committee who found it a waste of time to have a budget adviser. We can ask the clerks to put in process the various hoops through which we might have to jump to get things rolling. Are there any other views, or can we agree in principle to appoint a budget adviser and ask the clerks to do some work on that?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** As soon as the capital projects review was announced, it was clear that it would have to come before the committee in some shape or form. Are there any other views on how we should take it forward, or can we leave it to the clerks to present some options?

**Rob Gibson:** Are we not going to receive a report from Audit Scotland on the projects very soon?

**The Convener:** The report is expected to cover two specific projects, but the Executive has indicated that the same level of financial information will also be provided about other projects. We might therefore have to have a slightly longer-term engagement with the Executive's thinking.

**Des McNulty:** The Executive has identified two transport projects over which it wishes to place question marks. The Audit Scotland considerations, which will be published tomorrow, will be followed by a ministerial statement next week presenting a linked set of recommendations. I am not sure what role the committee can have in that process. I suspect that the timescale does not permit us to become involved in that and that the issues will probably be resolved in the chamber rather than in committee.

I was looking at all the other projects and the fact that John Swinney has announced that he is going to hold a strategic transport projects review with certain criteria attached to the analysis. The committee therefore needs to familiarise itself with the projects and the STPR process, so that we can ask appropriate questions about how the review is being conducted, identify where different projects fit into it and analyse the review's conclusions. We will need to take evidence on that from relevant specialists as part of our scrutiny. We need to plan to do that in September; otherwise our scrutiny will take place after decisions have been made, and I do not want that to happen. It is important that the scrutiny is done at the same time as the review is being done. I therefore suggest that we ask the clerks to bring a set of proposals to our next meeting, which I understand could be next week.

**The Convener:** We will decide later whether we need to hold an additional meeting next week.

**Stefan Tymkewycz:** I do not disagree in principle with anything that Des McNulty said, but we might be jumping ahead of ourselves here. The Auditor General for Scotland will issue his report this week and the ministerial statement will be made next week. Should we not be discussing our away day so that we can talk about the committee's remit?

**Des McNulty:** You have misunderstood what I am saying, Stefan. I am not talking about what is happening with two projects this week and next week. I am talking about the fact that John Swinney has announced a general review of all the other projects, which will take place in September or October. What I suggest has nothing to do with this week or next week. We cannot wait until the away day to make a decision to look at the process in detail because we will miss the boat if we do.

**The Convener:** We will park for a moment the issue of the two highly contentious projects that are being looked at, the information coming back to Parliament before recess, and the debate next week. The review that the Executive has sought is less relevant to transport policy than it is to financial management. Decisions on transport policy will arise from the review that Des McNulty has spoken about, and we need some idea of the level of on-going engagement that we will have with it.

Let us leave that point flagged up for the moment. I would like to get a sense of the various issues that members might want to bring up at an away day, if we have one, so that the clerks know what preparation needs to be done. After we have scoped out issues for an away day, we can agree to go ahead with that, before returning to the question whether we have a meeting next week.

14:15

**Des McNulty:** I do not want to challenge you in your first meeting, convener, but I have made a proposal on work that is clearly required in the context of the major review of strategic transport projects, which the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth has announced will take place in September. It may be purely a financial review, but it may be that some projects are put in or put out as a consequence. There have also been announcements in the past three or four weeks that have not been costed or evaluated.

I would have thought it basic for the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee to identify what is going on, what announcements are being made and what review is being undertaken. That is an entirely separate question from whether

we need an away day. My proposition is that we ask the clerks, with the Scottish Parliament information centre, to examine the strategic review and work out what we need to do in that context. If we have to have another meeting to decide to take that forward, we have to have one. However, if, as I think they will, members agree in principle to consider the strategic review of projects, it may not be necessary to have a formal meeting. We could have an informal arrangement instead. I do not want to lose the idea of examining the strategic projects review, as it is a fundamental early task for the committee. However, it is entirely separate from the question of whether to have an away day, which you introduced into the process.

**The Convener:** My original question was to ask members to indicate what issues the clerks should work on to prepare for an away day. My sense is that the work that Des McNulty is asking for—to scope out what needs to be addressed in terms of the strategic projects review—would take longer than a week and that it would not be possible to explore that fully at a meeting next week.

I would be surprised if we did not get agreement in principle that the committee needs to take an interest in the strategic projects review as it continues. Des, will you be happy if we have agreement in principle that the review is one of the issues that we will work on, but we then leave it to the clerks to return with proposals about how that will happen once we know more about what is happening on the Executive's agenda and when?

**Des McNulty:** Provided that we do not lose the timescale. If, as the cabinet secretary announced, the review is to take place in September, I would be extremely annoyed if we were not in a position at the beginning of September to take evidence that linked into our scrutiny of the process. Provided that there is agreement in principle that we will carry out that scrutiny and that we will do it in September if the timescale is confirmed, I will be happy with that. I do not want us to leave things vague and to put off everything until an away day in August, as we might miss the boat if we do that.

**The Convener:** Are we content that the committee will seek to make the earliest realistic progress on the strategic projects review in September but that we do not need a meeting next week to get the ball rolling on it?

**Alison McInnes:** I support what Mr McNulty has said. I think that the committee should resolve that the review is a matter of importance and proceed in that way. Rather than noting just that we want to consider the review, we should agree that it is an item of importance that we want to make progress on as quickly as we can. I would be happier with that strength of feeling behind us.

**The Convener:** Is that agreed?



**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** Background information on the projects under review can be provided in advance of any discussion in September.

**Rob Gibson:** Alison McInnes was in charge of NESTRANS recently. The reports by the regional transport partnerships on the forward planning of transport for the next 10 years are linked to the capital projects that already exist. How we articulate between the capital projects review and what happens next is quite important, because some of the things that are proposed by the regional transport partnerships might be overambitious or underambitious. We have to find a way to get into that material fairly early on, so that the committee can take a view on it in a way that will allow us to articulate the debate that is on-going. I would have thought that the Executive would have to approve the planning for the next 10 years fairly soon.

**The Convener:** Are there any other views on that?

**Des McNulty:** I have seen only one or two of the regional transport partnerships' plans, but many of the proposals are long term and speculative. As I understand it, the strategic projects review is about projects that have been in the programme for three or four years—the priority projects that have been identified in the past. There might be some reshaping from the strategic projects review, but it would be quite a big undertaking for the committee to take evidence on each area's strategic projects. Perhaps we can discuss at the away day the time constraints and the balance. I am glad that there is support for the idea that we need to look at the big ticket numbers and what the Executive is considering doing when it gets round to the strategic projects review. As Patrick Harvie knows, I am particularly interested in the methodology. As part of the exercise, the committee should consider strenuously the way that projects are evaluated against one another.

**Stefan Tymkewycz:** I am willing to take advice on this, given that I am new to the committee procedures. The committees are for scrutinising Government legislation, or any legislation. Would it be correct to send the clerks off on weeks or months of work on something that might or might not happen? I take the point that there are two ways that things can go with the major projects that we are talking about. What remit would we give the clerks?

**The Convener:** Sorry. Are you talking about the strategic projects review?

**Stefan Tymkewycz:** Yes.

**The Convener:** Rather than simply scrutinising legislation, we are here to scrutinise all Executive

decisions. If we are to do that effectively, we need to have clear and comprehensive background information, which the clerks are able to provide. Whether that leads to one outcome or the other, we will want to take an early opportunity to discuss it with ministers, perhaps informally at the away day and certainly formally, on the record, in September.

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** I apologise for being late. I have been waiting for an aeroplane for three hours—I have come late to the transport committee because of an aeroplane.

**The Convener:** As Rob Gibson said, we have no control over that, although we do have scrutiny powers.

**Cathy Peattie:** It is important that we have those scrutiny powers.

We need to have as much information as possible. I do not think that any work that the clerks do to provide information on particular issues would be a waste of time as it helps us to make our decisions.

**The Convener:** There is general agreement about the task that we are asking the clerks to perform for us.

Are there other issues that we want the clerks to do preparatory work on in advance?

**Alex Johnstone:** I will raise a couple of issues. The first relates to the prospect of a climate change bill. I have discussed the matter with one or two committee members and with the minister who is likely to be responsible for steering the bill through Parliament, so I want to discuss how the committee wants to engage in the very early stages of the process. We could choose to wait for a draft bill to be published then react to it, but it might be more appropriate to pre-empt that by running a parallel consultation, which would allow us to form opinions that may—or may not—differ from those of the Executive. I am interested to hear other committee members' views on whether we should wait for the starting gun to be fired, or move before it.

**The Convener:** The starting gun will be fired this week: there will be a statement from the Executive on climate change and an opportunity to question ministers on their initial priorities. I believe that the relevant ministers have been meeting their counterparts at United Kingdom level, so we can find out then a little about how that has gone. We also have the Environment and Rural Development Committee's report from—was it 2004?

**Rob Gibson:** It was about then. That report is relevant.

**The Convener:** That report could inform our view. I suggest that we have an informal discussion with the ministers at the away day and perhaps ask the clerks to put together some information on developments since the 2004 report. Obviously climate science is an area in which the state of knowledge is changing rapidly.

Steve Farrell has reminded me that we also have a briefing on Thursday with Mark Lazarowicz, who is involved with the relevant UK parliamentary committee. There are some complexities around the relationship between the two climate change bills. We can ask the clerks to come back with more information to enable us to have at the away day a discussion that will bring us up to speed. Whether we decide to go for a consultation, a short inquiry, an update inquiry on the previous session's Environment and Rural Development Committee's report or find some other way of taking the matter forward, we should take the lead rather than wait for the legislation to drop into our in-trays.

Are there any other views on climate change as a theme, not only on the legislation?

**Rob Gibson:** All committee members should get a copy of the previous session's Environment and Rural Development Committee's report. I do not know whether Alex Johnstone was on the committee at that time, but I was.

**Alex Johnstone:** I was on the committee during the inquiry, but I was gone before it was published.

**Rob Gibson:** Both of us were on the committee during the inquiry. Members will find that the report is a very good starting point. As the convener says, if we were going to update it, a subject for discussion at the away day might be to establish whether there are particular areas that we feel strongly ought to be probed so that we can get ourselves up to speed.

**The Convener:** Yes—the update should be on the state of knowledge about climate change, what we expect to happen as a result of it and how that is likely to impact on Scotland and the rest of the world, but it should also focus on what has happened since then, the easy wins in carbon-emission reductions that may already have been started in policy terms and the priorities that have yet to be addressed. Some work has been done in the past couple of years: we should certainly take account of it.

The other issues in relation to climate change that I hope to touch on during the away day include the Executive's intention to introduce a carbon offsetting scheme—which was debated last week—and some of the international development issues. I am aware that several international development non-governmental organisations are keen that political debate on

climate change in Scotland does not miss out the international development aspects.

If there is nothing else on climate change, I will raise one or two other issues.

Do members think that we should, if we have time, pencil in some work on buses, for example on whether the arguments have been made for some regulation, whether the current market is delivering for bus passengers and whether there are single answers to those questions for all parts of Scotland?

14:30

**Cathy Peattie:** That is an important issue for many people. There are a number of issues in terms of quality and the fact that people generally cannot access buses. Lack of services in particular areas and in rural areas outwith the cities is a matter that we should examine.

**Des McNulty:** Buses should be flagged up for consideration at the away day—we might want to consider conducting an inquiry.

Also, this new committee has, as part of its remit, the opportunity to consider maritime transport issues as well as maritime conservation issues. We might, in conjunction with the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee, take evidence on coastal management and management of the seas. It is an area in which we have a legitimate remit.

The other boundary that I am not 100 per cent clear about—I do not know whether you have sought clarification on it yet, convener—involves planning. A considerable amount of subordinate legislation is likely to come before Parliament as a result of recent planning acts and the implementation of various aspects of that legislation. I imagine that planning legislation will come to this committee, but we probably need to seek clarification on that.

**The Convener:** That is an issue on which I have been trying to cause trouble, to be honest. Our remit does not explicitly include the planning system, but it includes issues that are within John Swinney's remit that relate to transport infrastructure and development. To me, that would have to include, for example, the national planning framework, which is about major infrastructure projects. If it includes the national planning framework, it would be strange not to include other aspects of the planning system.

The remit of the Local Government and Communities Committee includes the word "planning" in a way that, to me, indicates the planning of local government services—effectively, community planning. However, I understand that that is not the interpretation that is being placed on

it elsewhere. The previous session's Communities Committee dealt with the planning system, and the expectation is that the Local Government and Communities Committee will continue to deal with the matter. Nevertheless, I find it difficult to accept any interpretation of our remit that would prohibit our dealing with planning issues if necessary.

Perhaps the clerks can advise us, but I do not think that the word "planning" needs to be in our remit for us to be allowed to consider it. Perhaps we can communicate with the Local Government and Communities Committee to find out whether there is some way in which we can co-operate with it when necessary.

**Rob Gibson:** I was going to suggest that there may be room for a joint inquiry into, or scrutiny of, the issue. Articulation of the local and national planning frameworks is something that has to come together. If we decide that we have responsibilities in relation to the national planning framework, that will be vital.

**The Convener:** For me, part of the issue is the fact that Parliament as a whole has a responsibility in relation to the national planning framework. There were lengthy debates in the previous session's Communities Committee about how that responsibility should be exercised. That was partly in relation to the concept that the Executive represented a democratic majority, which is not the case in the present session. I argue that this committee and any other subject committee—including the Local Government and Communities Committee—that has an interest in the issues that are dealt with through the national planning framework should be involved, to the greatest possible extent within the limits of the legislation, in scrutinising the NPF.

**Alison McInnes:** Could we get clarity on that in time for the next meeting? I know that it is open to us to consider anything that we choose to consider, but we might not be the lead committee on planning, and we need to be clear about that. We need to know whether or not we will lead on some aspects of the planning system, if we are to plan our workload properly.

**The Convener:** The Parliamentary Bureau's, and other committees', interpretation of the committee remits is that the Local Government and Communities Committee is the lead committee on the planning system. Some infrastructure issues that relate to our priorities will be dealt with under the national planning framework. There is nothing to prohibit us from working alongside, or in parallel with, other committees when necessary.

**David Stewart:** Perhaps you could give me some guidance, convener. Does Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd fall under our remit?

**The Convener:** I am advised that it does.

**David Stewart:** I had assumed so. I understand that civil aviation is reserved to Westminster and that responsibility for the structure of Highlands and Islands Airports lies there, but airports throughout Scotland are relevant to us. Regional services are vital, so I would appreciate the committee's having some discussion, even just a short inquiry, on aviation's vital role, particularly regarding public service obligations in the Highlands and Islands and beyond.

**The Convener:** We can put that on the list of issues that we might consider at our away day. The clerks advise me that we are not barred from taking a view on reserved issues.

**Cathy Peattie:** Returning to the point about infrastructure, I find it difficult to know how we can separate planning and the national planning framework from infrastructure. That will be difficult for us in our role of considering issues relating to infrastructure.

This might be a silly question, and it might be for someone else to answer, but will we consider ship-to-ship oil transfer, or will that be a matter for the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee?

**The Convener:** My expectation is that that will be a matter for the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee.

**Cathy Peattie:** Is that the case even though it involves maritime law and so on?

**The Convener:** We can seek clarification on that.

**Rob Gibson:** I would be interested to consider integrated transport and ticketing at an early stage. That is one of the most frustrating elements of the system that we have inherited, and we would be paying attention to the concerns of people outside Parliament if we did—and were seen to be doing—that sort of work. It would be good for the committee to exercise its ability to go and meet people in different areas to hear what they have to say—some very strong views are held on the topic, so our doing that might be useful.

**Des McNulty:** The first bill to come before us will be the bill to abolish bridge tolls, in September. Clearly, there will need to be a stage 1 process, followed by stage 2. I am strongly of the view that, when we consider the bridge tolls bill, we should not just examine the mechanics of the removal of the tolls in an exclusive or narrow sense, but should consider some of the broader issues associated with congestion impacts and traffic management.

Perhaps more controversially, we should also consider the future financing of a replacement

Forth crossing—I wish to put down a marker on that. The proposed legislation will potentially have consequences for congestion, transport and funding of the replacement crossing. I suggest that we consider all those issues as part of what will, I presume, need to be an early inquiry leading to stage 1 of the Forth road crossing bill—or whatever title the Executive chooses for it.

**The Convener:** The only other issue that I have on my list is railway rolling stock. For a while now, several MSPs—who are not on this committee—have been trying to highlight the fact that rail infrastructure projects have not always included the cost of rolling stock. That might begin to cause a problem if it is not addressed in the near future. It is perhaps more of a middle-term issue, rather than an immediate or short-term issue.

**Alison McInnes:** First, it will be important to keep an eye on European legislation and to feed into it as early as possible. A green paper on urban transport is expected in the autumn—I would be interested in our having a look at it.

Secondly, we had a brief discussion about buses earlier. I have no problem with the committee considering buses—buses are the most flexible form of transport and they affect everyone—but I would like our work to be in the context of last year's significant work on developing a national transport strategy and on drawing up bus action plans. All our work should be in that context, because a lot of work has already been done.

**Alex Johnstone:** I want to raise a subject that I raised informally with you last week, convener, but I do not know whether it comes under this committee's remit or not. Figures were published last week on serious injuries and deaths on Scotland's roads. The figures show a general improvement in some areas, but there is a particular concern in the north and north-east of Scotland, where road deaths appear to be rising, especially among young people. Since I spoke to you, convener, two further serious accidents have been reported—one on Deeside and one in the Inverness area. I understand from this morning's news that another 16-year-old has died as a result of the Inverness accident.

There is an obvious problem of young people being involved in road accidents. That may relate to road infrastructure, it may relate to emergency health care provision or it may relate to the way in which we test and assess drivers—which is, of course, entirely outside the remit of the Scottish Parliament. The issue is particularly poignant for the people who suffer as a direct result of such accidents, so I am keen to ensure that the matter does not fall through the net. I therefore ask to be advised—at some future date—on what the Scottish Parliament can do to try to find a solution

to the problem, which is apparently increasing. That advice would allow us to decide whether there was a job for this committee, or whether we should advise that another committee should look into the problem.

**The Convener:** The problem is certainly worth looking into. We can ask the clerks to provide a briefing on the statistical trend that Alex refers to and on what can be done.

**Des McNulty:** I have two points, the first of which will add to what Alison McInnes said about buses. I was on the Transport and the Environment Committee in the first session of the Parliament, and one way of considering an inquiry into buses would be to place it in a post-legislative context—following up on what happened with the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 and considering the advantages and disadvantages of the process. That point may link to the point that Alison made about work that has been done. It would be useful to consider whether Parliament got it right or whether there are other approaches that we could take.

Secondly, I was not quite sure what the convener was saying after I made my points about the Forth crossing. Legislation will come forward in September. My points would, if we are to deal with the matter as I suggested, have to be picked up now, or over the summer, so that we can undertake our work. As with the other issue that I raised at the start of the meeting, we will need to take some decisions in principle. The legislation will come and we expect to consider it within a broader context. The clerks will have to pick up on those issues early if we are going to make progress in the way that I suggest.

**The Convener:** The clerks will produce an approach paper on the legislation. We can certainly ask them to bear in mind your comments and the broader context.

14:45

**David Stewart:** I strongly support Alex Johnstone's comments about the accident rate on some of our trunk roads: indeed, because of my concerns about them, I lodged a series of parliamentary questions on, in particular, the potential dualling of the A9, which is dear to my heart. I am sure that those who have better statistical minds than I have—that might well be most members—will agree that the presentation of the statistics in the response to my PQs was not particularly helpful. I am awaiting further responses to my questions, and seek in particular a breakdown of fatal and serious accidents on the road and how those figures compare with other major trunk roads in Scotland. I hope to receive some of those answers next week.

I agree with Alex Johnstone's comments, particularly in relation to deaths and injuries among young people which, as far as some of our rural roads are concerned, are nothing short of a national scandal and are extremely worrying to many people.

**The Convener:** Are you asking the clerks to provide further information on that matter?

**David Stewart:** It would certainly be helpful to have a comparison of the accident rates on major trunk roads in Scotland, with the figures broken down into fatal and serious accidents. Because of how the statistics are presented, I found it hard to discriminate between those categories.

**Rob Gibson:** With regard to rural roads, an issue that might not be as major but that nevertheless has a fatal impact is the damage that deer can do to people, cars and infrastructure. I have been asking questions about the matter for some time, but none of the approaches that have been taken to it has been satisfactory. Many trunk roads are affected by the problem. In 1991, I nearly wrote off my car when I hit a deer at that terrible crossing at Ballinluig—not the kind of place where one would expect such a thing to happen. In Aberdeenshire recently, a person travelling on a minor road early in the morning was killed when a deer hit their car. It is a concern in many rural areas and should be added to our list.

**The Convener:** Are there any other issues that members want the clerks to bear in mind for the future or in the slightly longer term? At this rate, we are going to have a very full away day. Do members agree to ask the clerks to suggest options for venues and dates for the away day, which we expect will take place towards the end of August? The clerk has informed me that members will be e-mailed later this week about preferences for dates.

If members have no other comments about the away day, I want to return to an earlier item and to ask Cathy Peattie whether she has any relevant interests to declare.

**Cathy Peattie:** I have no relevant interests to declare, apart from those that are set out in the register of members' interests.

**The Convener:** We do not have a time and date scheduled for our next meeting. Later this week, the Conveners Group will discuss a schedule of committee meetings, and we will endeavour as soon as possible to make members aware of any information that emerges.

**Alison McInnes:** It is really important that we meet next week so that we can invite the relevant minister to attend and give us a brief outline of his plans before we break for recess. The Government has made many announcements in

various areas, but it has not yet made a full statement of its legislative or policy priorities. This matter is urgent. I know that other committees are considering the same suggestion and are keen to bring ministers before them before the recess.

**The Convener:** There might be a danger that scheduling such a discussion for next week would not give us sufficient time to define what we want to talk about, or would stray into areas that Parliament will consider at next week's ministerial statement and debate on transport. It strikes me as being a little odd to have such an item a day before we vote on the issues in the chamber.

**Cathy Peattie:** I agree. Instead of simply running at an issue, we should take some time during our away day to look at what is coming up, what we need to deal with and any other issues that need to be considered. I realise that we will need to ask questions about forthcoming issues, but there is a time for bringing ministers before the committee to do so. We need to give ourselves a little space to consider what is on the agenda, to find out how things are being organised and what the timetable might be, and then to prioritise matters. It would be a pity to bring in the minister before we have had a real discussion about the issues.

**The Convener:** We will be able to invite the minister to an informal discussion at the away day—ministers now expect to take part in such discussions.

If members have no other views, are we content not to have a meeting next week and to wait instead until a schedule of meetings for after the summer recess has been produced?

**Des McNulty:** I am content not to have a meeting if, as I said at the start, we are all agreed that we will examine the strategic policy review in September. After all, it has been the subject of a clear announcement, and is a major financial issue for us. If we are not all agreed that that is what is going to happen in September, we might have to meet next week to reach agreement on the matter.

**The Convener:** The committee understands and shares your sense of urgency.

Before I close the first meeting of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee, I remind members that they should e-mail either me or the clerks if they have any last-minute thoughts on the content of the away day or on particular presentations that they want to see.

*Meeting closed at 14:51.*



Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

No proofs of the *Official Report* can be supplied. Members who want to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the daily edition, and send it to the Official Report, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP. Suggested corrections in any other form cannot be accepted.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

**Wednesday 27 June 2007**

#### PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

##### OFFICIAL REPORT daily editions

*Single copies: £5.00*

*Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00*

The archive edition of the *Official Report* of meetings of the Parliament, written answers and public meetings of committees will be published on CD-ROM.

##### WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

*Single copies: £3.75*

*Annual subscriptions: £150.00*

Standing orders will be accepted at Document Supply.

Published in Edinburgh by RR Donnelley and available from:

#### **Blackwell's Bookshop**

**53 South Bridge  
Edinburgh EH1 1YS  
0131 622 8222**

**Blackwell's Bookshops:**  
243-244 High Holborn  
London WC1 7DZ  
Tel 020 7831 9501

All trade orders for Scottish Parliament documents should be placed through Blackwell's Edinburgh.

**Blackwell's Scottish Parliament Documentation**  
Helpline may be able to assist with additional information on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament, their availability and cost:

**Telephone orders and inquiries**  
**0131 622 8283 or**  
**0131 622 8258**

**Fax orders**  
**0131 557 8149**

**E-mail orders**  
**business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk**

**Subscriptions & Standing Orders**  
**business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk**

#### **Scottish Parliament**

**RNID TYPETALK calls welcome on**  
**18001 0131 348 5000**  
**Textphone 0845 270 0152**

sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

All documents are available on the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

**Accredited Agents**  
(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers