



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 23 February 2010

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TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE
5th Meeting 2010, Session 3

CONVENER

*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

*Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)

*Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)

*Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)

*Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)

*Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP)

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Eric Baster (Scottish Government Climate Change and Water Industry Directorate)

Jonathan Dennis (Scottish Government Rural and Environment Research and Analysis Directorate)

Stuart Foubister (Scottish Government Legal Directorate)

Robert Galbraith (Jacobs UK Ltd)

Dr Pete Gilchrist (Jacobs UK Ltd)

Tom Hart (Scottish Association for Public Transport)

John Holmes (Scottish Government Climate Change and Water Industry Directorate)

Caroline Lyon (Scottish Government Legal Directorate)

George Mair (Confederation of Passenger Transport UK)

Lawrence Marshall (ForthRight Alliance)

Stewart Stevenson (Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change)

Rosie Telford (Scottish Government Climate Change and Water Industry Directorate)

Jim Vance (Transport Scotland)

Steve Walker (Stagecoach)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

Tuesday 23 February 2010

[The Convener opened the meeting at 13:59]

Subordinate Legislation

CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme Order 2010 (Draft)

The Convener (Patrick Harvie): Good afternoon, everyone. I welcome you all to the fifth meeting this year of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee. I remind everybody present that all mobile devices should be switched off. We have 10 items on the agenda today, which might be a record.

The first item is evidence on an affirmative instrument: the draft CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme Order 2010. The order establishes in the United Kingdom an emission trading scheme in respect of greenhouse gases under the Climate Change Act 2008. It applies to direct and indirect emissions from supplies of electricity, gas and fuel by public bodies and undertakings. I refer members to the documents that have been provided.

I welcome Stewart Stevenson, Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change, to the meeting. He is joined by Scottish Government officials John Holmes, branch head for climate change emissions trading, Eric Baster, policy manager for climate change emissions trading, and Jonathan Dennis, economic adviser in the economics (climate change) branch.

The order was laid under the affirmative procedure, which means that the Parliament must approve it before its provisions can come into force. The committee will be asked under item 2 to consider a motion to approve the order. First, though, we have an opportunity to take evidence from and put questions to the minister. I thank the minister and his team for making an additional briefing available to the committee, which is helpful with regard to what is a complex order. Do you have any opening remarks before we move to questions?

Stewart Stevenson (Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change): I have some brief remarks. The draft statutory instrument establishes the carbon reduction commitment energy efficiency scheme, which is a UK-wide emission trading scheme covering large

businesses and public sector organisations. Those organisations are responsible for about 10 per cent of the UK's carbon emissions, which total some 54 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually. The aim of the CRC is to reduce emissions by encouraging the installation of cost-effective energy efficiency measures. Though those measures save organisations money, the current rate of uptake is low, so the scheme is designed to tackle the barriers to their adoption. It will combine the financial incentive of having to purchase allowances to cover emissions with the reputational incentive of a performance league table showing publicly how well each organisation is doing at reducing emissions. It will be largely revenue neutral for the Exchequer.

The CRC will place a cap on total emissions from the sector in 2013 that will be tightened over time, guaranteeing that reductions are achieved. It will make a valuable contribution to achieving our ambitious 2020 emissions target that we set through the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Importantly, the scheme is expected to result in a net financial benefit to the sector, as the cost of participation and the installation of efficiency measures will be more than paid back by savings on energy bills. I am happy to take questions, convener.

The Convener: Thank you. Have any particularly Scottish aspects been taken into account in the development of the scheme?

Stewart Stevenson: The scheme has seen all four jurisdictions—Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and the UK—sit together. John Holmes was part of the project team that developed the scheme. It is of course a UK draft instrument that is being considered by all the jurisdictions. I cannot identify a uniquely Scottish aspect, so at this early stage I ask John Holmes whether he can think of one.

John Holmes (Scottish Government Climate Change and Water Industry Directorate): It will be a short answer, minister: I cannot think of a Scottish aspect offhand. Eric Baster worked closely on the technical development of the scheme, whereas I was on the project board. Have you heard anything from Scottish regulators such as the Scottish Environment Protection Agency on a Scottish aspect, Eric?

Eric Baster (Scottish Government Climate Change and Water Industry Directorate): No.

Stewart Stevenson: In a sense, that reflects the fact that we have been in the project from the outset; it was not a question of our coming along later and seeking to modify it to reflect Scottish conditions. The project has been a good example of the different UK jurisdictions working to a common purpose and thereby coming up with

something that is acceptable to all, subject to the agreement of Parliament and the various other jurisdictions' elected politicians.

The Convener: You would not say that there is a difference of political opinion between the two Governments about, for example, the role that trading schemes play in addressing climate change.

Stewart Stevenson: We share the view that schemes that reduce over time the available carbon for businesses, such as the European emission trading scheme, have a powerful role to play in the real world in reducing the amount of carbon that is emitted by creating a strong price penalty if appropriate behaviours are not modified. That is the kind of trading scheme that strongly promotes the agenda that the committee, other members of the Parliament and I broadly share. There is a sense of common purpose on such schemes.

The Convener: So the two levels of Government take the same approach.

Stewart Stevenson: I am not aware of and cannot identify any differences.

The Convener: Before members ask questions about the detail, are you able to update the committee on the debate on the order that took place last night in the House of Lords? Have you anything to add arising from that debate?

Stewart Stevenson: The House of Lords approved the order last night. The House of Commons considered it this morning but, at this stage, we do not have an update on that debate. We have had an opportunity to examine the *Hansard* or *Official Report* of last night's debate. Nothing emerged from the debate that we need to bring to the committee's attention.

Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP): It is estimated that the CRC scheme will deliver at least 4 megatonnes of carbon dioxide reduction in UK emissions by 2020. Can you provide an estimate of the likely savings in Scotland? How does that fit in with the wider work that is being done in relation to the climate change delivery plan and the climate change targets?

Stewart Stevenson: For clarity, I point out that the scheme will reduce emissions by 4 megatonnes per annum by 2020, which is a very significant figure. At this stage, we do not have a disaggregated figure that enables us to say what that will mean in Scotland. We know that Scotland accounts for in the order of 8.5 per cent of the UK's gross domestic product, but reductions are attributed to the locations of enterprises' head offices. There are enterprises based in Scotland that operate in England and enterprises based in England, Wales and Northern Ireland that operate

in Scotland, so at this stage we do not have a clear-cut answer to your question. A good first approximation is that the figure will be in the order of 8.5 per cent of the total, which is in the order of 340,000 tonnes per annum. However, I do not want to give false certainty about that.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Is work still to be done on how the CRC scheme will be tied into the climate change targets for Scotland that will be published soon, so that we can get an idea of the impact that the scheme will have on the wider targets?

Stewart Stevenson: I refer you to my opening remarks, in which I indicated that the organisations that the scheme covers account for about 10 per cent of the UK's emissions. We can reasonably say that the reductions that we are discussing are of that order. For scientific advice and understanding of the detail of emissions, we rely on the UK Committee on Climate Change. As members know, that committee will be in Edinburgh tomorrow to publish its report to us; all of us will be interested in that. At this stage, we know that everything is not yet known, and that more work is needed before we can understand the issue. The Committee on Climate Change has been doing a great deal of useful work, but we do not yet have the type of information that would enable me to give exact answers to what are perfectly reasonable questions.

Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): Why is the use of electricity considered the most appropriate measure for assessing inclusion in the scheme? Why is 6,000MWh considered to be the most appropriate value?

Stewart Stevenson: I concede that it is, to some extent, arbitrary. The early part of the scheme essentially involves a dummy run up to 2013 before it starts to bite. One of the key elements of the scheme is the opportunity to review its operation. We need to find out, for example, whether the figure of 6,000MWh strikes the right balance, so that the scheme includes enough businesses to make a difference by capturing a significant proportion of carbon emissions, while not including so many relatively small emitters that the administrative and cost overheads are unreasonable.

The figure of 6,000MWh is a first estimate. I imagine that when a review takes place—as it will do at some point—it will consider whether the line has been drawn at the appropriate level. I concede that there is no magic formula that tells us the answer; a judgment call has to be made to balance the two aspects.

Charlie Gordon: What about the first part of my question, on why the use of electricity is the most appropriate measure?

Stewart Stevenson: Electricity will increasingly be the main energy source. It is, in its production, a very large emitter of CO₂, and there is a UK market for it. I am not quite sure that I can answer the question why the use of coal or gas is omitted, because those would be two clear things on which we could focus. John Holmes may want to say something on that.

John Holmes: The simple answer is simplicity. As the minister said, electricity is the main energy source. In advising ministers, we officials attempted to keep the scheme as simple as possible. Some commentators have suggested that we did not make a very good job of that, but it is a lot simpler than it might have been. The scheme includes energy use in the round, but electricity use is the measure.

Eric Baster may want to comment on that.

Eric Baster: That has covered it.

Charlie Gordon: Why is transport excluded from the CRC? Are emissions from transport to be considered under other policy measures?

Stewart Stevenson: We expect that transport will feature significantly when the UK Committee on Climate Change reports to us tomorrow, so it is far from being off the radar. A large proportion of transport emissions are down to private individuals making choices about transport. It is difficult to imagine that we could sensibly bring each individual private car driver inside a scheme of this type.

Again, it is a question of striking a balance and deciding whether we will make a real difference by including certain things in the scheme. We directly control the railway system—not the infrastructure but the operation of the railways—which is one of the reasons why we are making the biggest investment for many generations in converting railways to run on electricity. We have a target—or rather, an aspiration; I will be clear on that—for the whole of Scotland's railway network to be electric by 2030.

Similarly, we fund the bus industry—more than 50 per cent of its turnover now comes from Government sources, which is a substantial increase over a period of time, so we have direct influence in that area. You will see that today we have announced changes to the way in which we are funding the bus industry by substantially increasing the bus service operators grant and the environmental components of that. We already have a range of policy instruments in our own jurisdiction that will enable us to deal with many of the issues in transport.

The order is a UK instrument so, although we could put those issues in, in responding to specific Scottish needs, it is better for us to have policy

instruments that specifically address the matters that are the responsibility of Scottish ministers and not directly shared with ministers of other jurisdictions.

14:15

Charlie Gordon: The early action metric will recognise good energy management undertaken prior to the start of the scheme. How was that model arrived at?

Stewart Stevenson: I will make a general comment on that. On pricing, there is built into the scheme an economic advantage to coming in early, when it will be cheaper to operate the scheme, rather than later. I will ask John Holmes to talk about the early action metric.

John Holmes: Yes. I can kick that off and then pass it on to one of my colleagues.

Stewart Stevenson: It will be about economics.

Charlie Gordon: You do not seem that keen to deal with the question, minister.

John Holmes: All three metrics are proxies for other action. I hope that I will not sound repetitive if I am asked to say anything else but, again, simplicity was a key, and the early action metric that we are using was considered to be the simplest.

Over the years and in the consultations that we have had on the scheme, we have considered whether it needed to be expanded. I am not sure whether what I am going to say is in the public domain—as a civil servant, I should not announce something that is not—but I believe that it is. We are looking to expand the scheme beyond the Carbon Trust standard. Ministers did that in response to consultation responses and stakeholders' input. The scheme will therefore go beyond the current metric. You will have to look to Jonathan Dennis for an explanation of how it will work in clinical detail.

Jonathan Dennis (Scottish Government Rural and Environment Research and Analysis Directorate): I do not think that there is a huge amount to add to that. The key thing is that we are getting hold of a proxy that identifies whether people have already taken action to address their energy use and efficiency. In putting the scheme together, we were looking for something that linked to that sort of action. By looking at Carbon Trust certification and metering, we get an idea of whether people are taking the issues seriously. In setting up the scheme, we wanted those who have looked at the question beforehand to be recognised, and the early action metric has been set up to do that.

Stewart Stevenson: It is worth saying that, as we observe the scheme in operation, I am sure that we will want to consider whether, by excluding certain things, we are causing behaviours that divert attention to issues outside the scheme. That is the risk of not including everything in the scheme. We have to judge whether that will happen, but if we see any substantial evidence of it, that will form part of the review. I am sure that the other Administrations in the UK will take exactly the same stance on that and will seek to extend and include provision to ensure that how the scheme is constructed does not drive such distortions. Let us make a start with something comparatively simple; if it needs to be made more complex, it will be.

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): The CRC will capture many organisations in Scotland, as you have said, but it will include some that will, in the end, have no need to purchase allowances. How will the Scottish Government ensure that organisations in Scotland have the skills and resources required to meet the requirements of the legislation?

Stewart Stevenson: There have been three rounds of consultation since 2006 that have provided organisations with the opportunity to be party to the scheme. I do not think that there are widespread concerns about skills and resources among the organisations that fall within the scheme. They are organisations of reasonable capability; we are not talking about small organisations. No one has expressed any concerns to me. If you know otherwise, I would wish to hear about it and to take the opportunity to respond. We want to ensure that, if people have concerns in this area, we provide appropriate support. However, concerns have yet to be expressed to us in those terms.

Alison McInnes: No reservations have been expressed to me; I am just concerned that we should not take anyone by surprise. Given the amount of consultation that there has been, however, that is unlikely. Are any arrangements in place to provide a forum of best practice and an exchange of information among the organisations involved? Would SEPA perhaps facilitate that, as the monitoring body?

Stewart Stevenson: The member will recall that quite a substantial number of the bodies that will be affected by the scheme are public sector bodies. There is a wide range of fora through which public sector bodies exchange best-practice information and I am sure that, especially in the early stages, when the scheme is, in essence, running without financial penalty, they will wish to ensure that we and they understand what works and does not work, and exchange best practice. If there appears to be a lack of opportunity to do

that, I will be happy to ensure that the Government facilitates such an opportunity. I will not make a commitment on behalf of SEPA at this stage. If SEPA were considered to be the appropriate body, and if people required assistance with the scheme, I would be happy to take that forward. At this stage, however, there are many opportunities for the public sector in particular to share best practice. There are also a significant number of organisations in the private sector that are taking a keen interest in that agenda.

Alison McInnes: The minister answered my second question, so I shall ask a supplementary question if I may. You mentioned the early part of the scheme a couple of times—you called it dummy running, I think, or running without penalty. Is there a perverse incentive in the first year or two for people not to take any action and to keep their emissions quite high, while you are measuring what the emissions are?

Stewart Stevenson: Were that to happen, there would be an early review. The scheme is just the bottom line—it is one of a series of policy interventions from the various Administrations in the UK to signal how important this agenda is. I make it clear when I speak to organisations—I know that the same applies in other UK Administrations—that we are all serious about the issue. If we do not see a response, the screw will simply be tightened. I hope that those who are listening to and watching the committee's deliberations today, and are perhaps thinking that there is a free run ahead, take note of that comment.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): The minister will be aware that, in some circumstances, the CRC will bring together organisations that are not legally related for the purposes of participation. Will you explain more about the process that will result in that? Shall I expand on my question?

Stewart Stevenson: I think that I know what you mean, but that would be helpful.

Cathy Peattie: We have heard evidence from Forth Ports and the Scottish Property Federation, which act as landlords for small tenants on long leases. They are concerned that they may be unable to recoup the CRC costs for which they will be liable, and that they will be unable to rewrite long-term leases to reflect those additional costs. There is concern that the scheme does not take into consideration the role of such landlords, and that it is difficult for them to participate because they have no role in the way in which their tenants operate.

Stewart Stevenson: I make the obvious comment that there is, of course, a legal relationship between the parties, which have a

shared interest but perhaps also have different interests.

This is an issue that we have talked about. The Scottish Property Federation and Forth Ports have expressed some concerns in the early stages, and I am aware of what they have said. To an extent, those concerns are based on a misunderstanding. For example Forth Ports is a supplier—but not a monopoly supplier—of electricity to many of its tenants, and it is for Forth Ports and others in a similar position to make commercial judgments; it is not for me to second-guess them. Equally, it is open to tenants to source electricity in the most effective way.

The British Property Federation has come up with a guide on CRC for landlords and tenants, and there are opportunities for everyone to ensure that they can recoup their costs and gain the benefits. The scheme is sufficiently simple and straightforward, and the running-in period gives us the opportunity to monitor the practical effects, so, at this stage, I am not concerned that there will be unresolvable issues. It is not something that people in those circumstances can ignore—it will not go away—but there is every prospect that the scheme will work perfectly satisfactorily.

Cathy Peattie: If it does not work perfectly satisfactorily and causes concerns and difficulties—you have given some examples, but other organisations will face the same problems—will there be an opportunity for us to come back and look at the scheme?

Stewart Stevenson: That is the point of the review. It would be a joint review—we are not talking about Scotland undertaking a review alone, as the issues that have been raised in Scotland have been discussed elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Once we get the scheme under way and see the effects of it, if there is a serious problem there will be an opportunity to review it. There is no timetable for a review; the review will be driven by the way in which the scheme works or does not work as well as it needs to.

Alison McInnes: I understand the concerns that have been raised by Cathy Peattie. My colleague Simon Hughes raised the matter this morning at Westminster and the minister there undertook to keep a watching brief on the issue and the amendments. I am grateful that you have given a similar commitment. Given that the scheme is new and we are finding our way, would there be a benefit in the Parliament having an annual debate about the scheme so that we can talk about the issues in the early years?

Stewart Stevenson: I make the obvious comment that it is not for me to tell Parliament what it should or should not debate. I say gently that it is a complex scheme and that I suspect—it

is entirely a matter for the committees and Parliament—that it is the kind of thing on which a committee's detailed engagement might be more effective than the wide-ranging kind of debate that we would normally have in Parliament. Nevertheless, I would be happy to support Parliament's efforts in committee, in the chamber or wherever it decides is appropriate.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): After 2013, when you begin to implement the decreasing cap, will the scheme have a central role in the setting of the emissions targets under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009?

Stewart Stevenson: I do not want to be picky, but I am not clear about the word “central”. Let us discard that word for a moment. The scheme will certainly be part of determining what our targets should be, but it is one of a range of interventions.

On the climate change agenda, there is, alas, no single thing that we can do along the lines of, “With one bound, he was free.” That simply is not the case. The scheme engages a wider range of players than the European emission trading scheme, which is for the biggest players, and will press down on the biggest emitters by engaging the next level of emitters, so it will play an important part. There are, however, great areas of emissions in Scotland that do not fall directly within the scheme. Agriculture, transport and our buildings are big emitters and will need their own policy interventions. I am, therefore, reluctant to use the word “central” and give the scheme that status, but it is certainly something without which we cannot do.

14:30

Alex Johnstone: Given the range of tools that are available to you, are you confident that we will not find that the rate at which the cap is reduced produces a price that is unsustainable in the market that you hope that the draft order will create?

Stewart Stevenson: If the price were unsustainable, it would not be sustained. Part of the debate about the draft order has covered pricing—some later decisions related to that and were led by the UK Government, with our support. The period to 2013 will give us a sense of how the scheme operates. We are talking in theory at the moment. As we move forward, we will start to have practical feedback about how the scheme operates. At that point, we will have to consider whether we need to fine tune any aspects of the scheme, of which price might be one.

Alex Johnstone: Does the draft order take in the broad range of potential distortions that might occur in the market—Alison McInnes gave one example—and particularly the concept that some

companies might move part of their operation abroad? Will you genuinely be able to take that into account?

Stewart Stevenson: One advantage of working with partners in other Administrations throughout the UK is that we at least eliminate boundaries in the UK that one might wish to cross.

In the passage of the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill, we recognised the principle that you address when we accepted that we should report to the Parliament not simply on our greenhouse gas emissions but on the greenhouse gases that are associated with our consumption—in other words, emissions that jurisdictions outwith the UK and the European Union make on our behalf. That will give us an early view of whether carbon-intensive activity—whatever its nature—is leaking to jurisdictions in which carbon penalties are less severe.

That brings us back to the fundamental point that, although a clear reason exists for us to exercise leadership worldwide and to show people what can be done in a developed and mature economy, we cannot disconnect from what the whole world must do. That is why it is disappointing that the Copenhagen conference did not achieve a legally enforceable agreement that would mean that we were moving together with objectives that are appropriate to each jurisdiction. Until we are there, a risk of leakage always remains. However, the committee should be absolutely sure that we understand that risk. We reflected that in the debate on the bill in June last year and we will, of course, continue to monitor the situation.

It is worth saying that the EU emission trading scheme's price for a tonne of CO₂ is a bit over €12, so it is coming up to the price that we are talking about in the CRC scheme. The prices are therefore aligned at the next level of jurisdiction. Such a price is not yet set internationally, as the price of the allocated accounting units that accompanied the Kyoto protocol has vanished because the United States withdrew from that protocol. We must keep an eye on the position, because the risk exists.

Alex Johnstone: I have a brief point that arises from what Cathy Peattie said about Forth Ports. Is the antithesis of that the danger that some operations that are liable to the scheme will be deliberately fragmented so that they are under the limit?

Stewart Stevenson: I simply return to the point that we need to watch such second-level effects—I am not an economist, but I think that they are second level; they might even be third level—and ensure that they do not happen. Of course, to demonstrate that a larger operation had been

disaggregated to smaller operations for the purpose of the scheme—as for many other purposes—it would need to be shown that the operations were truly independent of each other in their decision making, financial arrangements and perhaps even ownership structures. I suspect that the costs of such disaggregation would far exceed any benefits that might accrue through avoiding the operation of the CRC energy efficiency scheme.

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): It is estimated that the scheme will have a net present value to participants of more than £1 billion. Will the minister outline what savings are expected to be made in Scotland?

Stewart Stevenson: Do you mean qualitatively or quantitatively? Sorry for asking the member a question, convener. Do you mean both?

Marlyn Glen: Yes, if you can outline both.

Jonathan Dennis: That goes back to the question that was asked earlier. Where the organisations are and the effects of that are yet to play out in the system, as are how the companies react within the mechanisms and how the incentives drive them to make changes in their investments and reduce their energy demand. We will probably have to wait and see what happens with the quantity of savings. When you get into the first stage—the first part of 2013—you will get an idea. Until you start to tighten the cap, it is difficult to say precisely how all that will fall within the UK.

Marlyn Glen: There are still a lot of unknowns. Perhaps I will get the same answer to my next question. Given that the Scottish Government must participate in the scheme, can the minister give us an assessment of the likely financial costs for the Government over the first years of the scheme's operation?

Stewart Stevenson: I cannot do that at this stage. Right at the beginning, Shirley-Anne Somerville asked me what proportion of the activity was in Scotland. At the moment, we do not have a full understanding of that. Remember that the scheme is intended to be financially neutral. Generally, as participants respond by making investments in improving their energy efficiency and reducing the amount of energy that they use, we expect that the scheme will be self financing. Therefore, it is not a given that there will be a cost to companies and public sector bodies that respond to the dynamics of the scheme; there will be benefits to them.

We know that the long-term trend is for the cost of energy to continue to rise. Therefore, there is a good return for reducing your energy consumption and for using the energy that you consume more efficiently. That way, you will make the savings,

which will pay for the investments that we hope that the scheme will drive.

Marlyn Glen: I can see what is behind the scheme and I understand what it ought to be, but are you confident that it will be financially neutral and self financing?

Stewart Stevenson: I am as confident as one reasonably can be at this stage. Is that an absolute confidence? Of course not. It will depend on what a wide range of organisations, including public sector bodies, do in practice. It is pretty generally understood that, in the way that we go about our business—that is a very inclusive term—there are plenty of opportunities to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, energy costs and energy consumption.

I think that my second ministerial engagement in May 2007 was to speak to the Confederation of British Industry in Edinburgh. In my naivety, I had not expected to go into a room with 60 or 70 businesspeople who were all enthusiastically doing precisely this sort of work for the straightforward reason that they all had substantial inefficiencies in the way that they used energy and the amount of energy that they used, which meant that, for the expenditure to address that, they were getting their money back in an incredibly short time. There is still plenty of scope, right across Scotland, in public sector organisations and private organisations, for that to be so.

In the long run, when you get further down the track, it will get more difficult. Equally, however, the economics will be different, because the cost of carbon will rise. It was not €12 a tonne in the past, but it is today. It is also likely that the cost of carbon will rise, especially as the CRC scheme—and the EU emission trading scheme—will throttle back the consumption of carbon. It should do so in a way that means that there is still an economic incentive for people to respond. People will not respond to this agenda just because they are nice people—they will do so because there is an economic imperative behind it. It is clear to us that the CRC scheme provides that.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): SEPA is the regulator for the CRC energy efficiency scheme in Scotland. Given that SEPA's income has dropped as a result of the recession, is the Scottish Government confident that the organisation has the resources to carry out its CRC functions and can work adequately with the regulators in the rest of the UK?

Stewart Stevenson: I am absolutely sure that the leadership of SEPA is up for this extension to its duties, which relates clearly to many other things that SEPA does. As parts of its workload have reduced, it has the resources to take on this work. It is up to the Government to ensure that the

funding is in place to enable SEPA to discharge its responsibilities and to balance its books. We will ensure that that happens.

Cathy Peattie: I hear what the minister says but, given the responsibilities that SEPA has, it seems strange to me that the size of the organisation has been reduced. Will the Government look at how SEPA performs and monitor whether it is sufficiently well resourced to do the work that is expected of it?

Stewart Stevenson: Ministers monitor the performance of all public bodies for which they are responsible. SEPA has made step changes in relation to a number of agendas. I am confident that SEPA's present leadership will be able to respond on this agenda, as it has on others.

The Convener: As members have no further questions on the SI, I thank the minister and his colleagues for answering questions.

We move to formal consideration of motion S3M-5738.

Motion moved,

That the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee recommends that the draft CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme Order 2010 be approved.—[*Stewart Stevenson.*]

Motion agreed to.

The Convener: We will report that outcome to the Parliament. I thank the witnesses and suspend the meeting briefly to allow for a changeover of witnesses before we move to the next item.

14:43

Meeting suspended.

14:45

On resuming—

**A96 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route)
Trunk Road Order 2010 (Draft)**

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Route) Special Road Scheme 2010 (Draft)**

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**A90 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route)
Trunk Road Order 2010 (Draft)**

The Convener: I welcome a new panel of witnesses for the next agenda item, which is an evidence session on a series of Scottish statutory instruments relating to the Aberdeen western peripheral route. Members will have the relevant documents in front of them. We will take evidence on the package of instruments as a whole before moving on to consider them individually. I welcome, again, Stewart Stevenson, who this time is joined by Caroline Lyon, head of solicitors in the transport, culture and procurement division at Transport Scotland; Jim Vance, head of design and development at Transport Scotland; Robert Galbraith, director of operations at Jacobs UK; and Dr Pete Gilchrist, divisional director at Jacobs UK.

The instruments are subject to affirmative procedure, which means that the Parliament has to approve them before the provisions can come into force. I thank the minister's officials for making available to the committee additional background information on the instruments. I ask the minister to make any introductory remarks before members ask questions.

Stewart Stevenson: The committee will be aware that on 21 December, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth announced the decision to authorise the construction of the AWPR. It is a road that will take us another step closer to our aim of bringing the country's strategic road network to an appropriate standard. Once the AWPR and the other major projects that we have in hand are complete, we will be in a position in which we will be mainly upgrading and improving existing roads rather than building new ones. It is an approach that will

fit well with our wider transport policy and environmental objectives.

All statutory orders and a comprehensive environmental statement have been published for the scheme. A public local inquiry was held, and the reporters recommended that the orders be made. An affirmative order procedure in the Transport and Works (Scotland) Act 2007 has been assumed to apply to the AWPR, and a direction to that effect has been issued, requiring the Parliament to consider and approve the instruments. In relation to the AWPR, six schemes and trunk road orders are subject to the procedure. They are before the Parliament for approval. They are associated with a number of instruments that are not subject to parliamentary procedure. The remaining instruments will be made if the Parliament approves these affirmative instruments. I ask the committee to note that the six schemes and trunk road orders come as a package, and that if any one were to fall, the whole scheme would fall.

This is not simply about building a road. The project emerged from a major study into the provision of a modern transport system for Aberdeen, which was carried out by the former Grampian Regional Council and the north east of Scotland transport partnership. It is supported by the current regional transport strategy. That includes investment in park and ride, rail, bus priority measures and commuter plans. The Aberdeen western peripheral route will benefit the whole of the north-east of Scotland and, of course, wider Scotland. I regard it as a significant addition to our strategic road network, particularly for the north-east—one that has been anticipated for a very long time. I am happy to take questions.

Alex Johnstone: I am sure that I am not the first to welcome the proposal. Before I turn to the instruments, I have a matter that it would be inappropriate not to raise. About 25 years ago, a previous Conservative Government spent a lot of time and effort in developing the A90 from Dundee to Aberdeen into a high-quality road. At that time, there were many concerns about the quality of the junctions on the road; the minister is still dealing with the legacy of some of those issues.

Some junctions on the plans before us seem to be perfectly appropriate for their responsibility to carry traffic, but others raise questions. The minister is aware of my concerns about the junction at Stonehaven. There is also the junction between the two legs of the road—the southern legs of the road—at Maryculter. The fact that it is simply a roundabout raises some questions. Can the minister assure me that we are not making the same mistake that we made in the past of designing a road project that will deliver excellent roads but inadequate junctions? If so, we will

struggle for years to make them adequate for their purpose in their time.

Stewart Stevenson: The member may not be surprised to hear me say that I would not have been comfortable in bringing forward the proposals that are before the committee today if there were remaining discomforts about the design. The road has not appeared suddenly; it has been subject to extensive research and design work over quite a long period—indeed, since before this Administration came into power in 2007.

The member referred to two junctions. Issues were raised on the Stonehaven junction and we looked at the proposals that were made. We are of the view that the alternative design would not save money, and that it might do the opposite. Given that we were challenged on the design, we looked at it carefully and we are satisfied that it is fit for purpose in terms of traffic needs. The original idea was, of course, for the link road simply to come off the AWPR and go down the A90 past Portlethen and so forth. It was precisely as part of that review that it was established that that part of the A90 would struggle. It would be particularly difficult to extend it to three lanes, let us say, which might have been part of the answer. A direct link road from the AWPR to Stonehaven was added to the design. The initial thought was that it would be a single carriageway, but it is now of greater capability. That part of the design has been thoroughly looked at.

I turn to the Maryculter junction. The design that we have come up with is precisely an indication of how detailed the consideration has been. On each and every junction, we have ensured that we neither under nor overprovide. It is important that we continue to deliver value for the public purse. I am satisfied that we have the appropriate designs in place.

The member asked whether things might happen in future that would mean that we would have to revisit the scheme. Yes, they might. Housing and industrial developments may come along. We are certainly cognisant of the potential for that to happen. That said, we would, of course, expect any developer that increases demand on the trunk road network to pick up a very substantial part of the costs. Developer contributions could continue to be part of the ongoing development of the AWPR, as is the case on trunk roads across Scotland.

Alex Johnstone: Is the minister confident that the traffic modelling system that was used to design the junctions is robust enough to stand up to the test that it was set?

Stewart Stevenson: Modelling systems do not guarantee outcomes—they are modelling.

However, we are not using the modelling systems for the very first time. They go down to a microscopic level, they have been used successfully elsewhere in Scotland and beyond, and I am confident that we have the best available answers in advance of actually getting traffic on the road.

The models look not simply at the road itself but at the consequential effects on other parts of the network, so we have a good understanding of that. Every evidence is that the modelling that we use on our road networks is substantially better than the modelling that has been used in recent years on our rail networks, in which we have substantially underestimated patronage. The evidence from our road networks is that the outcome from modelling has been pretty much on the money.

Alex Johnstone: Finally on this subject, if we are assuming that some presumption for growth has been built in—that the road is not designed to deal simply with the traffic that is currently in the area or is expected on the day the road opens—how many years of tolerance are built into the construction of the road before we have to consider alterations if traffic grows?

Stewart Stevenson: I will make a couple of observations. We use the design manual, which has appropriate figures for the design that lead us to where we need to be. It is also part of our wider agenda to ensure that we do not see unconstrained traffic growth.

At present, we have a 15-year window for the design that we have in front of us. We will see the cost of private transport continue to rise as the cost of fuel rises, we will see a continued investment in the public transport system, and we will continue to see people making choices about their transport that are different from what they are at the moment. However, the basic answer to your question is 15 years.

Alex Johnstone: Thank you very much.

Alison McInnes: Just before we move away from the topic of junctions, minister, you may recall that I made representations to you on behalf of a constituent, who suggested that the Blackdog junction and, in particular, the arrangements for the village were overly complex for the traffic movements there. You advised that, as you were in the inquiry stage, you could not answer me at that time but that you would consider the issue at the end of the inquiry. Have you been able to consider it?

Stewart Stevenson: We have certainly reviewed the design of the network. At the Blackdog end, developments will be subject to planning. The dualling of Balmedie to Tippetty—or perhaps the other way round; it does not really

matter—will have an impact on that. We have taken account of that, and we are satisfied that the design is fit for purpose.

Complexity is not something that we introduce because we like to play with the toys and design box. There are a lot of different kinds of traffic coming from different directions to the north of Aberdeen, and the design is appropriate for the need.

If we were to change the design and, in particular, the land take, we would almost certainly have to have another public local inquiry, which would substantially delay the scheme before us. We are as satisfied as we reasonably can be that we have a design that is fit for purpose.

Alison McInnes: You said in your opening remarks that the AWPR is part of a modern transport system. I am delighted to see the statutory instruments in front of us, having spent 15 years of my life speaking to five different transport ministers about the road. It is very nice to have reached this point. However, part of that was that we would have a ring of park-and-ride schemes around the city, feeding in and out of the road. In particular, I want to talk about the Craibstone junction, where there is a proposal for a park and ride that will bring significant improvements to the road access to the airport. Nestrans has suggested that it is prepared to contribute around 70 per cent of the costs of that scheme, which leaves only a little bit of money to be contributed by the Scottish Executive. If we were able to combine that park-and-ride scheme with the design and construction of the road, there would be significant savings in delivering it. Have you discussed that with Nestrans? Are you open to negotiations on it?

15:00

Stewart Stevenson: We have certainly had discussions with Nestrans. I will have one of my periodic meetings with Nestrans in a matter of weeks—I cannot give you the exact date, but it will happen very shortly. We are considering the possibility of including within the non-profit-distributing model provision for building additional park and rides and other transport interventions.

The Craibstone park and ride would improve access to the airport. It is of course quite close to the AWPR, so it is the one that fits most naturally. However, we are also looking at other opportunities a bit further afield. The AWPR is part of trying to make the transport infrastructure in the north-east work better. We are looking to ensure that we draw together as much as is possible. Let me qualify that by saying that, of course, I cannot make assumptions about planning in relation to park and rides such as Craibstone. I do not wish to

suggest to the committee that that issue is yet dealt with. However, there is a very good chance that we will be able to bring together the park and ride within the scheme. We will certainly try to do so.

Alison McInnes: I am very heartened to hear that. There is a real opportunity to bring forward the schemes, particularly at Bucksburn and Portlethen, to make a saving and to deliver a national transport priority as well as a regional scheme.

You touched on the funding. I do not know whether it is appropriate for me to ask you about that. Last time I asked you, you said rather flippantly that you would pay for the scheme with money; I am glad to hear that you have developed that thinking a bit further. Can you give us an update on the funding scheme and any recent discussions that you have had with the joint proposers of the scheme—Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council?

Stewart Stevenson: We have said for the best part of two years that it will be an NPD scheme; I keep being asked about it, but it remains an NPD scheme. We know, through the memorandum of understanding that was signed some considerable time ago, that Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council will each contribute 9.5 per cent of the cost of the AWPR. That does not include the fastlink to Stonehaven, which is to be funded 100 per cent by the Government.

The memorandum of understanding is in place. It is up to the councils to decide whether to participate in the NPD scheme—they are not required to do so—in providing their 9.5 per cent. There has been discussion, although not recently, of their paying it up front as a capital subvention to the scheme. That option is available if the councils feel that it is the right way to go. They can decide that individually—they do not have to make the same decision. In the current climate, it is probably more likely that they will find that participating in the NPD scheme and paying up over 30 years will be the most attractive option.

The question that I was asked was about the funding more generally, not simply the position of the councils. We have considered a range of options, and NPD is the one that appears to be the most cost effective. It is a model with which we are familiar. We have had some preliminary talks with one particular funder, and there is interest in participation in the scheme. In times of financial stringency, lenders especially look to put money into projects that have a guaranteed and long-term return. There is little better in the way of projects of that character than those that are underpinned by Governments. There is substantial interest in a number of the schemes that the Government is

progressing, and I expect this scheme to attract a great deal of interest at the funding level.

The Convener: Other members have told you that you will not be surprised to learn of their support for the project. I can reassure you that I will not surprise you, either. You are well aware that I have serious concerns about the project, not just because its cost has been consistently underestimated—even now, its cost is uncertain. A parliamentary committee is being asked to approve the project without knowing what it will cost and without knowing even what final cost will be borne by local authorities, in an area in which there have already been pressures on public services as a result of the financial situation to which you have referred.

However, I also have concerns about the project on the grounds that the environmental impact has not been properly considered in the selection of the route. You will be well aware that a complaint has been made to the Aarhus convention compliance committee. The complaint has been deemed admissible and is under investigation. The European Commission is also investigating a complaint about a breach of the European habitats directive. Sufficient concerns have been expressed by some organisations that you can well anticipate the possibility of a judicial review. Leaving aside fundamental questions about whether the AWPR will do anything beneficial to reduce congestion in Aberdeen and whether it will harm the environment in the wider area, my question is about the timing. Why is Parliament being asked to approve the project when two investigations are under way into complaints—one under the European habitats directive and one under the Aarhus convention—and there is the possibility of court action to come? Is that not premature?

Stewart Stevenson: You will be aware that the Parliament's standing orders prevent my commenting on any live legal action so I will not do so, save to say that we are confident that an environmental assessment of the project, the processes that we have adopted in our engagement with the community over a long period, and a public local inquiry that is being conducted meet every requirement that exists legally.

The Convener: It has been estimated that in global terms, the increase in carbon dioxide emissions by 2026 will be 9 per cent. Is that consistent with the Government's intention to make the ambitious cuts that Parliament has agreed to in legislation?

Stewart Stevenson: I do not recognise the figure that the convener has quoted. We have estimated some 10 kilotonnes net addition as the effect of the AWPR. I compare and contrast that

with the 340 kilotonnes per annum benefit that was discussed in the earlier agenda items. It has always been said, by me and by other members of the Government, that the totality of our programme will lower our greenhouse gas emissions. We do not expect that every single project will reduce emissions. However, when we take actions that will result in an increase in emissions—in this case, 10 kilotonnes—it is necessary that we have balancing actions to ensure that there are reductions. The CRC energy efficiency of the order of 340 kilotonnes per annum is precisely such an entry in the carbon balance sheet.

The Convener: Are you not at all concerned about the opportunity cost of such a commitment, when public transport schemes that could be funded with the same resources could have a benefit in carbon dioxide terms as well as benefiting people's transport needs?

Stewart Stevenson: I gently disagree with you. You posit a false choice. We are of course making substantial investments in public transport. I referred to the increase in bus service operators grant that we have agreed with the Confederation of Passenger Transport, which we announced today and which we guarantee for the next three years. That is one example of continued investment in public transport.

We have £2 billion a year of Government spending that can contribute directly to the climate change agenda. We are undertaking the biggest electrification programme on our railways for generations. We are doing a great deal. In my answers to Alison McInnes, I highlighted the work that we are doing with Nestrans and others on park and rides. We are doing such work throughout Scotland. I do not want to be absolute, but my recollection is that 11 new park and rides will open before the end of the financial year in Strathclyde partnership for transport's area. Throughout Scotland, a range of interventions will help.

As part of the transport strategy, the AWPR will be a catalyst that enables us to deliver—for example, through the 20 per cent reduction in traffic between the A90 and the A96—a greatly improved environment for buses, public transport and cycling in Aberdeen. That will improve the environment and reduce carbon emissions.

The Convener: You have not surprised me, either. We are unlikely to agree on the issues.

Do members have final questions on the package of instruments?

Alison McInnes: The minister mentioned the detrunking instruments, which are not part of the package. Has agreement been reached about improving the roads that are involved before they

are detrunked? I am thinking of the Haudagain roundabout in particular.

Stewart Stevenson: I will not answer that question in the terms in which it was posed, but I will repeat the point of substance. The financial responsibility will remain with the Government until it is discharged. That is independent of whether the roads are detrunked.

I am not trying to be obtuse; I just do not want to create a procedural difficulty when what matters is that the Government steps up to financial responsibilities. We will not detrunk without negotiation and discussion with Aberdeen City Council, which will take over responsibility for what will become a local road.

The Convener: I thank the minister for his evidence on the instruments.

Agenda item 4 is formal consideration of motion S3M-5729, which calls on the committee to recommend approval of an affirmative instrument—the A96 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Trunk Road Order 2010. I ask the minister to speak to and move the motion.

Stewart Stevenson: I am happy to do that, but may I crave an indulgence by asking how you intend to deal procedurally with the six motions in my name? Given that I said that the instruments must stand or fall together, can they be dealt with in a single vote, with the permission of you and the committee? It is for your clerk to advise you on that. A single vote would provide certainty, which might be a useful outcome.

The Convener: The suggestion is helpful. Unfortunately, I am advised that our procedures require us to consider each instrument separately.

15:15

Stewart Stevenson: If that is the advice, I can hardly disagree with it. In that case, I will make no further remarks.

I move,

That the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee recommends that the A96 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Trunk Road Order 2010 be approved.

The Convener: Thank you, minister. I suspect that we will not agree on this and the other orders, so let us rattle through them.

The question is, that motion S3M-5729, in the name of Stewart Stevenson, on the A96 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Trunk Road Order 2010, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Convener: There will be a division.

For

Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)

Against

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

The Convener: The result of the division is: For 6, Against 1, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to.

The Convener: The next motion for consideration is S3M-5730.

Motion moved,

That the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee recommends that the A956 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Special Road Scheme 2010 be approved.—[*Stewart Stevenson.*]

The Convener: The question is, that motion S3M-5730, in the name of Stewart Stevenson, on the A956 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Special Road Scheme 2010, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Convener: There will be a division.

For

Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)

Against

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

The Convener: The result of the division is: For 6, Against 1, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to.

The Convener: The next motion for consideration is S3M-5731.

Motion moved,

That the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee recommends that the A956 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Trunk Road Order 2010 be approved.—[*Stewart Stevenson.*]

The Convener: The question is, that motion S3M-5731, in the name of Stewart Stevenson, on the A956 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Trunk Road Order 2010, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Convener: There will be a division.

For

Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)

Against

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

The Convener: The result of the division is: For 6, Against 1, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to.

The Convener: The next motion for consideration is S3M-5732.

Motion moved,

That the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee recommends that the A90 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) (Craibstone Junction) Special Road Scheme 2010 be approved.—[*Stewart Stevenson.*]

The Convener: The question is, that motion S3M-5732, in the name of Stewart Stevenson, on the A90 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) (Craibstone Junction) Special Road Scheme 2010 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Convener: There will be a division.

For

Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)

Against

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

The Convener: The result of the division is: For 6, Against 1, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to.

The Convener: The next motion for consideration is S3M-5733.

Motion moved,

That the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee recommends that the A90 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Special Road Scheme 2010 be approved.—[*Stewart Stevenson.*]

The Convener: The question is, that motion S3M-5733, in the name of Stewart Stevenson, on the A90 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Special Road Scheme 2010, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Convener: There will be a division.

For

Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)

Against

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

The Convener: The result of the division is: For 6, Against 1, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to.

The Convener: The next motion for consideration is S3M-5734.

Motion moved,

That the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee recommends that the A90 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Trunk Road Order 2010 be approved.—[*Stewart Stevenson.*]

The Convener: The question is, that motion S3M-5734, in the name of Stewart Stevenson, on the A90 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Trunk Road Order 2010, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Convener: There will be a division.

For

Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)

Against

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

The Convener: The result of the division is: For 6, Against 1, Abstentions 0. Another shock result.

Motion agreed to.

The Convener: That concludes our consideration of the orders. I thank the minister and his officials.

15:18

Meeting suspended.

15:23

On resuming—

Forth Crossing Bill: Stage 1

The Convener: We come to the final item on our agenda today, which is the third evidence session in the committee's scrutiny of the Forth Crossing Bill. During this meeting and the next one, we will examine the specific proposals in the bill to create a public transport corridor. Members and witnesses will be aware that the bill is being formally scrutinised by the Forth Crossing Bill Committee, which will be considering the wider issues and general principles of the bill. This committee, on the other hand, will be specifically considering the public transport aspects of the bill, and we will report to the Forth Crossing Bill Committee as it continues its consideration.

I welcome the witnesses who are joining us for this session: Tom Hart, vice-president of the Scottish Association for Public Transport; Lawrence Marshall, the chair of the ForthRight Alliance; George Mair, the director in Scotland of the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK; and Steve Walker, operations director for Stagecoach. I thank you all for joining us today, and for submitting written evidence. Do any of you want to make some brief opening remarks before members begin the questions?

Tom Hart (Scottish Association for Public Transport): Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence. I was involved in the debates about the Forth crossing in the 1990s, so I am familiar with the history of the various proposals. I emphasise, however, that the critical issues will be raised with the Forth Crossing Bill Committee and the Finance Committee, and the association is submitting separate evidence on those issues.

Since we sent written evidence to the committee, we have received additional information from Fife Council on rail and bus patronage across the Forth at peak periods. I can make that information available to the committee or I can answer questions on it.

I listened to the minister talking earlier about transport models. He said that he thought that the road modelling is reasonable, but rail usage had been underforecasted in rail models. Just yesterday, the Department for Transport received a quite critical report on the appraisal of the models that are used in England. That report concluded that many models are not fit for purpose and that they are often bad at taking into account measures that would encourage more public transport use and the impacts of pricing changes. The committee should note that that report has just been produced. It ties in with our

argument that, for the past decade, road traffic growth in Scotland has been considerably below previous estimates, whereas growth in rail traffic has been higher. Buses have also done well in the Forth corridor.

The main initial point that I want to make is that, although the committee is considering the public transport aspects of the Forth Crossing Bill, no new bridge will be available until 2017 at the earliest. A programme for public transport and car-sharing development is needed now, but that seems to be missing from the bill, as is mention of the Forth railway bridge, which is the main means of providing passenger transport across the Forth at the moment. Such an approach to an important issue seems rather unreasonable.

Lawrence Marshall (ForthRight Alliance): I welcome the opportunity to speak to the committee.

The ForthRight Alliance is a coalition of various groups such as WWF and the RSPB—details of all the groups involved can be found on our website. Our objection to the Forth Crossing Bill is on the Forth Crossing Bill Committee's website.

The main reason for my coming to the meeting is, of course, to discuss the public transport use of what will be the denuded old bridge when—I should say if—the new bridge opens. It is a fact that buses account for less than 0.75 per cent of the current bridge's traffic. It has been projected that, when it opens in 2016-17, there will be 92,000 vehicles a day—representing a 40 per cent increase in traffic—on the new bridge, which will just be a dual carriageway bridge, and only 300 buses a day on the old bridge. The old bridge will therefore be hugely denuded. Basically, it will take less than 0.5 per cent of current traffic and less than a third of 1 per cent of projected traffic on the new bridge. There will, of course, be maintenance costs for the old bridge—the bearings in the main expansion joints have to be renewed, for example. Therefore, there will be huge expenditure to create what will be, in effect, the most expensive bus lane in the world, and our view is that that is not credible or sustainable. People will queue up on the new bridge, look across and see the old bridge effectively empty. There will be enormous pressure to release back the dormant capacity on the existing bridge to general traffic, or at least to general traffic except for heavy goods vehicles, and we will end up with the ability to carry 150,000 vehicles a day across the Forth compared with the 65,000 or 66,000 vehicles that are currently carried on the existing bridge. That is our fear. There can be no possible public transport increase on the existing bridge that will mitigate the loss of 99.5 or 99.6 per cent of its traffic.

15:30

George Mair (Confederation of Passenger Transport UK): I thank the committee for the invitation to give evidence. We will do our best to put across the views of public transport operators on the proposals relating to the transport corridor. We are not technically competent to comment on the need for a new crossing. Given the considerable costs that are involved, we trust that the committees and the Government will take all relevant matters into consideration in reaching final conclusions. However, on the basis that the new bridge will proceed, the industry welcomes the emphasis that is being placed on public transport policies, although we have reservations that perhaps not enough is being done early enough to maximise modal shift and help reduce emissions further. We will attempt to elaborate on those points as we go through the proceedings.

The Convener: I ask for general comments on the Scottish Government's proposal that the current Forth road bridge should be simply a public transport corridor. The written evidence from the Scottish Association for Passenger Transport states:

"Even a doubling of bus traffic ... will still amount to less than 2% of ... vehicle movements. The existing Forth Road Bridge will, therefore, be effectively empty".

Lawrence Marshall described that situation. The submission goes on to describe the political pressure that could arise to open the existing bridge at least to car users. I ask the operators whether the statistics about the likely use of the existing bridge are accurate. Also, is the proposal to use the existing bridge as a public transport corridor for the long term credible, or can we consider it as only today's commitment and not tomorrow's?

Steve Walker (Stagecoach): The figure is probably nearer to 400 buses a day using the bridge. However, whatever happens with the public transport corridor—for example, if buses have to use the new crossing—we need to consider the wider problems. Those are not about crossing the estuary, but about getting to the bridge on either side of the estuary. As an operator, that is what we are concerned about. Currently, we have links from Admiralty junction down to Ferrytoll and then greenways up to the mouth of the bridge and on the other side of the bridge. We have concerns about the proposed road layout on either side of the bridge.

George Mair: The industry supports the proposal to retain the current Forth road bridge for public transport. Currently, there are about 425 bus movements per day over the bridge. We are pleased with the proposal, but a range of other issues need to be considered. Like dropping a stone into a pool, the effects will ripple beyond the

bridge. It is great that buses will get over the bridge quickly, but we need to think about how to address the issues at either end. We reckon that, in 2005, about 10 per cent of the peak-period cross-Forth trips were made by bus. Transport Scotland's projections suggest that that will drop to 5 per cent by 2022, which is clearly unacceptable. That is why we think that a range of initiatives need to be considered as part of the public transport corridor package.

Tom Hart: The present approach is topsy-turvy. The main recent developments have been improved use of public transport, but there has not been much action on car sharing. Government policy is to make the best use of existing assets. That should include the Forth railway bridge, which has a great deal of spare capacity—extra rolling stock is needed, but we do not need an extra bridge. Therefore, given the overall Government objectives, including the climate change and energy agendas, the immediate emphasis should be on making the best use of the existing crossings.

It is rather unrealistic to consider the detailed public transport proposals in the Forth Crossing Bill. We need to assess what we can do in the next six years, when there will not be a new bridge anyway, and beyond to continue the evident momentum, which is that people are no longer using cars more often. People are always surprised when that is said, but it is taken straight from the official Scottish transport statistics that are published every year. People are already choosing to use public transport more often, despite fares often being quite high, in preference to using their cars. The number of cars has been going up much faster than car usage. That is a very relevant factor that is missing from all the bill's background papers. In addition, I find it totally surprising that there is virtually no mention of the Forth railway bridge, given that we are supposed to be doing a multimodal study.

Lawrence Marshall: We have to start from first principles. Where do we want to be in 10 years or so? Do we want a 40 per cent increase in general traffic across the estuary at Queensferry? Do we want a declining share of public transport in terms of the modal split? Do we want increasing congestion on the road networks, which will largely remain similar to today's, apart from the extra capacity on the new bridge and the wee bit of surrounding road? The answer to all that is surely no. We do not want a 40 per cent increase in traffic and we do not want the extra carbon emissions that will come with that. We must therefore consider first principles. We must also consider Government policies. At one time, we were talking about traffic reduction, or traffic stabilisation at least, but the Government is now planning for a 40 per cent increase in traffic.

Once we get our first principles right, then we should decide on our transport policy. The policies on the road crossing at Queensferry have largely been driven by panic and short-term populism; they have not been driven by policy per se. The Scottish Parliament has been all over the shop on the issue. I bear the scars of that to an extent from when I was convener of the Forth Estuary Transport Authority. We really need to say, "This is where we want to go. How do we get there?" Frankly, creating an extra bridge with a 40 per cent increase in traffic on it and denuding the current bridge of virtually all its traffic does not make sense. For sure, buses will get a free run across it, but where are they going to go once they get across the bridge? The City of Edinburgh Council will not welcome all those buses coming into Edinburgh, or into the city centre at least.

We therefore must ask whether what is proposed is the best use of public resources, because we are not talking about a cheap scheme here; we are talking about more than £2 billion of public expenditure. I would ask MSPs across Scotland whether they would prefer some of that money to be spent on schemes in their constituencies, rather than on an unnecessary bridge that will only exacerbate the problem rather than help.

Rob Gibson: There is a contradiction between what Lawrence Marshall says and what Tom Hart says. Mr Hart said that statistics suggest that there is less car use, but Mr Marshall asserts that there is going to be more car use. We have to resolve that contradiction before we take any more comments about whether car use will increase. Can we resolve that just now?

The Convener: I ask Tom Hart to comment first, and then Lawrence Marshall. After that, we will go back to the specific public transfer measures.

Tom Hart: I think that Lawrence Marshall was referring to the estimate in the bill's background papers, which was based on the modelling, of traffic growth of 44 per cent between 2005 and 2017. However, I suggested that there are now serious doubts about the validity of that modelling: there is a problem when we compare it with what actually happened between 2005 and 2009, because there was nothing like the growth that would take us to the figure of 42 or 44 per cent. Incidentally, the figures refer to vehicle movements and not to estimates of passenger movements. Interestingly, in the background papers Transport Scotland forecasts only 6 per cent further growth in the decade from 2017 to 2027. Why is there therefore such an emphasis on massive spending on a project that will not be ready for six years, while other areas of spending are going to be cut sharply?

I had a letter from John Swinney just over a year ago, in which he said that the minimum cuts from capital budgets would be £350 million, but could go up to £460 million per year from other projects. Given the worsening of the public finances since then, the figures are likely to be higher if you insist on continuing with the bridge.

Lawrence Marshall: The figures that I quoted were from Transport Scotland's Forth replacement crossing team and the exhibitions that went round.

Rob Gibson: We understand that.

Lawrence Marshall: I did not make them up; they are the Forth replacement crossing team's figures.

If we project forward to 2017, the annual average daily traffic level without the scheme would be 83,000 vehicles on the existing bridge—so an increase from about 66,000 is projected anyway on the existing bridge—and, with the new bridge, the team predicts an annual average daily traffic level of 92,000 vehicles. That is where the figures come from.

The Convener: You, and others, will have opportunities to go into some of the wider issues on traffic modelling, the costs of the bridge and the correctness or otherwise of the decision when you speak to the hybrid bill committee; MSPs will have that opportunity when the bill is debated in the Parliament. The remit of this inquiry is the public transport elements of the bill, so I will move back to that and ask a question about the bus priority measures that are proposed at either end of the public transport corridor, which Steve Walker mentioned. Has sufficient detail been forthcoming from the Government or Transport Scotland on those proposals? Have they been worked up in association or co-operation with public transport operators? Is there satisfaction with the proposals as they stand?

Steve Walker: Our input has been with Fife Council. We have not had a great deal of input into the overall design of the project.

The problem that we foresee from some of the modelling that Fife Council has shown us is that there will be a lot of congestion on some of the local Fife roads that lead on to the bridge. From what we have seen and heard, the focus seems to be on keeping the bridge traffic moving, come what may. The ramp metering and traffic management systems to stop other traffic getting on to the bridge at peak times will keep the bridge traffic moving, but will traffic at Admiralty and further up at Halbeath on the local roads keep moving? We are concerned about that, not only for our buses that come across the bridge, but for the local buses that run from one side of Fife to the other. From the modelling that it has seen, Fife Council shares our concerns.

The Convener: Did you not have the opportunity to discuss those concerns with Transport Scotland before the development of the proposals?

Steve Walker: We have written to Transport Scotland and have had a couple of meetings with John Howison and his team. Although they have now put in the link from Admiralty back to Ferrytoll, the junctions around Ferrytoll still show delays and congestion in the area for cars and buses. It is important that we get not only the buses but the cars to the park-and-ride facility so that car drivers regard it as a viable option.

George Mair: We have had an input into the range of bus improvement measures that the south east of Scotland transport partnership has proposed. We support fully the range of options that it included in its response to the committee in a previous evidence-taking session.

Steve Walker: The other concern that we have for bus travel from the south to the north is that we have not seen any evidence on whether it will be quicker for buses to come off at Dalmeny and access the old bridge or to stay on the A90 and head across the new bridge. We have seen no modelling or information on the considered journey times for either route.

The Convener: Is there an argument for having dedicated bus lanes on the new bridge, either as well as or instead of what is being proposed?

15:45

George Mair: I think that for some routes there will be no alternative but to use the new bridge. Whether we should go as far as to say that the new bridge should have single bus lanes is an issue that we would need to think through. For example, people who are heading to West Lothian or the airport will probably need to use the new bridge to complete their journey.

As Tom Hart said earlier, we should not wait till the new bridge comes on stream before trying to change people's attitudes. We could argue till we were blue in the face about whether the statistics are right or wrong, but I firmly believe that the alternatives need to be put in place in advance of the construction of the new bridge. Arguably, if we are to go ahead with the new bridge, those alternatives should be in place before the work starts so that we can begin to convince people of the need to change and of how they can do that. For example, if we went ahead with the park-and-ride sites at Rosyth and Halbeath and if those achieved an 80 per cent pick-up rate, it is estimated that we could reduce the number of cross-Forth single trips by something like 1 million journeys. That would make a huge impact. If we

could replicate the success of Ferrytoll, we would give people real options.

Cathy Peattie: What is your view on buses using the hard shoulders on the new Forth crossing when the existing Forth road bridge is closed? Are you concerned about the impact that broken-down vehicles on a hard shoulder would have on the smooth operation of bus services?

Steve Walker: No, not really. If the odd car breaks down at the side of the road, buses will just pull into the flow of traffic and then move back on to the hard shoulder. We just want the bus to keep moving for as much of the route as possible.

Cathy Peattie: So you have no concerns.

Steve Walker: No.

George Mair: From our involvement in the proposal for buses to run along the hard shoulder of the M77, we know that there are structural issues. However, in building something new, it would be possible to build in the appropriate structure to deal with those. Such proposals have been shown to work in other parts of the UK and in Europe. Yes, difficulties will come up, but we can get on and deal with them.

Tom Hart: It is suggested that the hard shoulder might be used when high winds prevent buses from crossing the existing Forth road bridge. I have not seen information on how many days that happens, but I think that it is a relatively rare event. There are opportunities to provide better wind controls around the towers on the existing bridge. Again, the rail service is virtually unaffected by high winds.

Cathy Peattie: The policy memorandum states that the new Forth crossing

"will not provide a step change increase in the capacity of the route: increased travel demand for movement across the Forth will need to be met by improved public transport."

Do you consider that scenario likely? Do bus operators have the capacity to carry such a large number of new passengers?

Steve Walker: On capacity, we can look at the commitment from the bus operators and councils that are involved in Ferrytoll. As usage of Ferrytoll has grown over the past 10 years, capacity has grown with it. The frequency of day-time services into Edinburgh is now every five minutes during the peak and every seven or eight minutes off peak. If the demand exists, bus operators will match that demand.

In addition, Ferrytoll now serves not only Edinburgh but other destinations, with opportunities opening up for journeys to places such as Edinburgh airport and Livingston. As George Mair pointed out, places such as Edinburgh airport and Livingston will not be

accessed easily by using the old bridge; people will probably need to use the new crossing to access those places because the old bridge will provide no direct route to them.

George Mair: Having to look at the challenges of meeting increased demand is a far more exciting prospect than continually having to look at how to deliver a registered service that is continually stuck in traffic. If we could get the bus priority lanes and other things right, people could then turn their minds to the commercial opportunities that will arise from the new crossing.

Cathy Peattie: You refer to commercial opportunities. Steve Walker said that there had been no direct conversations with Transport Scotland. My colleagues and I are concerned about the lack of planning between operators and Transport Scotland. Is that a barrier to long-term planning for services?

George Mair: It would be unfair to say that we do not have direct communication with Transport Scotland—we do in relation to a number of projects. For this project, as for others, we have done a lot of work with the regional transport partnership to come up with a package of measures that we think are correct and need to be introduced early to encourage modal shift, before work on the bridge is started or complete. The bottom line is that communication can always be improved. If we can improve our communication with Transport Scotland, we will.

Tom Hart: There is potential to increase bus usage across the bridge, which is still rising. That takes us back to the question of the invisible bridge that is never mentioned—the rail bridge—which carries significantly more passengers than are carried by buses. That number has been increasing. Why is no representative of ScotRail here? Part of the solution could be to improve rail services. There is room to step up the frequency of services or length of trains. It is significant that another Government priority is the Gogar tram-rail interchange and multimodal ticketing, which offers important new opportunities for people to use rail to access west Edinburgh and to go from west Edinburgh to Fife and the north. That is not mentioned in the background papers, but it is another major Government initiative. We seem to have fragmented thinking and are not looking at the Forth crossing in a true multimodal manner or in relation to the climate change and energy agendas.

Irrespective of climate change arguments, we will run out of oil, which will become much more expensive. A fortnight ago, Richard Branson said that he is planning for a 50 per cent rise in aircraft fuel prices in the next five years. That is bound to have an influence on what we do. There is a strong case for buses to retain a better share of

the market for traditional supplies. The Scottish Government's rail electrification plan initially emphasises the links between Edinburgh and Glasgow, but the strategic projects review made it clear that the plan includes extending electrification to Fife and up to Aberdeen and, eventually, Inverness. Should we spend money on that more quickly, instead of spending £2 billion on the new Forth crossing, for a route that has near-stable road traffic?

Cathy Peattie: The committee's role is to look at transport planning and infrastructure, so I cannot answer that question. However, I have another question for the panel. In written evidence, the City of Edinburgh Council states that the Forth crossing will result in increased traffic levels. What impact might that have on cross-Forth bus traffic?

George Mair: We have suggested that measures be built in before the new bridge is completed, so that people have the option to convert journeys to public transport. We understand that something like 80 per cent of traffic on the current bridge consists of single-occupant cars. We need to put in place facilities at Halbeath and Rosyth and the other public transport measures that SEStran outlined in its submission, to address the issues of links to different areas and so on that Tom Hart raised. Unless we put such measures in place beforehand and encourage some of the 80 per cent of users who are in single-occupant cars to convert to rail or other forms of public transport at new park-and-ride facilities, traffic levels will increase. We must convince people that there is another option. That option must be available and slick, must work and must give people a swift journey. If we deliver that, we will get modal shift.

Steve Walker: At the moment, Ferrytoll is running at about 700 cars a day, with space for 1,024. There are a lot of issues with car parking in the roads surrounding Inverkeithing railway station. There is limited capacity there for people to park their cars and go across on public transport. Rail and bus will be available at Rosyth park and choose. The initial proposal for Halbeath is for buses, but there will be an opportunity in the future to use rail from there as well. If we continue to encourage cars to go across the bridge into Edinburgh, we will put even more pressure on the Edinburgh network.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: SEStran's evidence last week indicated that the proportion of cross-Forth bus journeys will fall substantially following the opening of the new Forth crossing and that it could take several years to return to current levels. Do you agree with that view and, if so, what do you think can be done to prevent it from happening?

Tom Hart: My quick answer is that I do not agree. That highlights the issue that I hope the committee will comment on. We need an action programme for the next six years to make sure that that does not happen, and we have to continue to act on such a programme in future. People are quite happy to use improved public transport, if the ticketing system is right and if it is faster than using their cars. It is possible to achieve that.

Steve Walker: I agree with Tom Hart. The issue is not just about getting across the bridge but about the corridor into Edinburgh. Even when people get across the bridge, they are faced with the greenways, which convince a lot of people to switch to public transport. The trains are free flowing anyway. I disagree with SEStran's figures. From a financial point of view, and as a bus operator, I hope that it is not true anyway.

The quality of public transport vehicles has improved. People can now work as they travel across, as there is wi-fi on the buses. Hopefully, that will encourage people to continue to have a stress-free journey once they have parked their car or made their way by bus down to the interchanges.

George Mair: I am not sure about the context in which SEStran made that statement, and whether it was based on the existing proposals or on its scenario and whether the initiatives that it has suggested have been picked up.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: It was based on the existing proposals.

George Mair: Well, I am not sure how SEStran has calculated its figures. Steve Walker has already said that that would be an extremely disappointing scenario, but it could be addressed by tackling the issues early on and converting people with the best that the industry can offer through bringing new ideas and suggestions on how we operate services, and encouraging greater use of rail. I hope that that would have a positive impact.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: So that is not a scenario that you are planning for and you do not foresee that happening. I would have assumed that, as a private company, you would have thought about that and planned for it.

Steve Walker: No. Even in light of the problems that have been foreseen with job losses in the banks and so on, we are continuing to see the Edinburgh corridor grow, and long may that continue.

Lawrence Marshall: The issue is not that there might not be an absolute increase in the number of buses carrying people across the Forth at Queensferry. The issue is that the number of cars

coming across will be even greater. As George Mair pointed out earlier, according to Transport Scotland, the modal share for buses is going to go from 10 per cent in 2005 down to 5 per cent in 2022. The SEStran figures that Shirley-Anne Somerville just quoted are perfectly understandable in that context.

We have to ask how we encourage people. The buses are much better. The Stagecoach buses coming across from Fife are lovely—leather seats, wi-fi, five-minute frequency, and so on—but how can we encourage people to use them when the idea of jumping into the car and listening to the radio is really quite appealing?

16:00

Shirley-Anne Somerville: That is my next question—how do you encourage modal shift? Mr Marshall can have the first go at that one.

Lawrence Marshall: There is no silver bullet. However, I note that the Scottish Parliament rejected variable road user charging, which involves charging people more at the peak period, particularly if they come across—as 80 per cent do, according to George Mair's figures—in single-occupant vehicles. High-occupancy vehicle lanes are well known in the world of transport, and the idea of charging people more at peak times and if they travel by themselves is well known to public transport operators.

If you use the railway bridge from Fife, for instance, you will probably pay 80 to 90 per cent more during the peak period to come in from Dunfermline, Inverkeithing or Kirkcaldy than you would pay at off-peak times. Variable charging is widely used, and people experience it every day when they travel across the Forth.

It is not a silver bullet but, as we have seen, the provision of better-quality trains and buses does not by itself encourage people to use public transport. It helps, but we need a pricing mechanism to provide an extra boost.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: You are talking about the reintroduction of tolls in some form.

Lawrence Marshall: Tolls would help to pay for a lot of measures. FETA was considering the provision of a bus lane across the existing bridge on the pedestrian walkways, but that was not possible because of crash-worthiness standards and so on. We helped to provide the extra capacity at Ferrytoll.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I appreciate that, but I am asking specifically whether your solution to my question on modal shift would involve the reintroduction of some sort of toll.

Lawrence Marshall: That option has to be considered. We need to be rational about the use of public resources and where we spend our money. At present, we are heading in the wrong direction, as we are providing more blacktop for cars. The buses might get passage across the estuary itself, but the surrounding road network will be clogged up with the increase in traffic. Hardware alone will not do the job; the software issues have to be considered.

George Mair: For clarification, my figures on the drop in bus usage were based on the initial proposals by Transport Scotland, which did not include significant additional bus priority measures or additional park-and-choose facilities.

We have a fairly robust industry, and when we work hard with partners—whether in local or national Government—on this type of project, we probably get the package right. If we get the quality of the bus service, the park-and-ride and park-and-choose facilities and the bus priority measures right, and if we ensure that the journey is quick, we can demonstrate a growth in patronage. Ferrytoll is a great example of that on our doorstep. Lothian Buses invested heavily in its fleet prior to the problems and difficulties that it encountered due to the tram works, and it too experienced growth in patronage.

We have to work within the road space environs that the local authority or national Government give us. We need to supply the right product at the right price, along with swifter journey times and the type of initiatives that Tom Hart mentioned. In general, where those things are happening in Scotland and further afield in the UK, more people are using public transport.

Steve Walker: I do not have anything to add to what George Mair has said.

Tom Hart: To reinforce my earlier point, the data from the past 10 years make it clear that people are already deciding to use public transport rather than cars. That has been the case despite the fact that there are still several inducements for people to use the car rather than public transport. The incentives are running the wrong way, but if they are changed, there is big potential for further growth in public transport. That is what people will prefer, as it offers other benefits at the same time.

I have a word of caution about park and ride. There is certainly a case for expanding it, but a number of households do not have a car, or have only one car available, which may be used elsewhere. The issue has arisen during SAPT discussions; park and ride should not come at the expense of considering how we develop feeders to the park-and-ride hubs or to rail stations. In many cases, people could walk to those facilities, if we had enough of them. That issue tends to get

forgotten. You think that park and ride is the big solution, but it has some difficulties. It is not totally cost free; you need to get the land and spend on it. If the facility is multistorey, it gets worse.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: You mentioned other incentives to encourage people towards modal shift. I presume that you were talking about other tax measures and about where you think that the incentives are wrong. Are those measures reserved? Could the Scottish Government introduce them? We are interested in encouraging modal shift in general, but it would be helpful if you could point out any specific measures that are within the powers of this Parliament.

Tom Hart: Fuel tax and licences are reserved at present, although the case has been made for looking at that. Many things are not reserved, such as pricing on the road system—apart from fuel tax. Parking policies are certainly not reserved. Developing effective smart-card ticketing makes it easier to change between modes. Some of the newer ticketing has the problem that it involves a delay when passengers board the bus, which is unfortunate. We want minimum delays from ticketing for bus operations. It is no good having a bus priority route when there is a hold-up at the bus stop to handle ticketing.

Steve Walker: Tom Hart talked about park and rides. Ferrytoll is a case in point. It started off as a park and ride, but many people now use it as a hub or interchange to make connections from intercity coaches. On the point about one-car families, a number of people get dropped off at Ferrytoll and a lot of car sharing goes on there, too. It is more than just a bespoke park and ride.

Rob Gibson: There has been a lot of emphasis on commuting and the bridges. I represent the Highlands and Islands. People use public transport, but they often have to use cars because of the lack of public transport. Has any of that been factored into your thinking about the public transport impact of the new bridge?

Steve Walker: A lot has been made of commuting, but there are still a huge number of people who, between 10 o'clock and 12 o'clock, are looking to use Ferrytoll to get buses across to Edinburgh—they do not want to drive into Edinburgh, because they find that getting the bus is a lot less stressful. The peak at Ferrytoll tends to be between 10 and 12.

Rob Gibson: Yes, but who are those people? I am talking about folk from Inverness or Aberdeen. Are they the people who are leaving their cars at Ferrytoll?

Steve Walker: Megabus and Citylink vehicles call in at Ferrytoll. A number of people from further up north are now using them as a way to get across to the airport. People from Fife who want to

go north use Ferrytoll as a hub to connect on to the intercity coaches.

Rob Gibson: I understand that, but the number must be small compared with the number of commuters. How small is the number and is it growing in any significant way that will affect the overall picture? I want to get into perspective the number of people from further north who are using Ferrytoll.

Tom Hart: When I got the extra data from Fife Council, which were really about travel within Fife and across the Forth, I asked whether the council could tell how many trips were coming from beyond Fife—from further north. Its answer, which is more or less what I expected, was that about 5 per cent come from further north, but they are taking longer trips. The package for the Forth crossing for which the Scottish Association for Public Transport argues assumes that there is already an hourly train service to Perth and a half-hourly service to Dundee. There are plans in the strategic transport projects review to speed up services to Aberdeen and Inverness. Increasingly, I see people using rail for longer trips, particularly if attractive fares are available for families rather than just for people who travel on their own. In the future, the journey times will be better than those by car and the fares should be lower than the petrol costs.

Lawrence Marshall: SEStran conducted various corridor studies in the early 2000s. One of the SITCo—SEStran integrated transport corridor—studies was done at Queensferry. All the figures that Robert Gibson is after are in a diagram in that study that shows the figures for people going north and south—32 per cent of people were going to north Edinburgh, 16 per cent to south Edinburgh, 16 per cent to the city centre and 30 per cent to West Lothian and wherever. All the figures were in that study, including those on people from the north, although it may be six or seven years since it was undertaken. I guess that most of the figures are available for people who come from furth of Fife.

Rob Gibson: That sounds very out of date to me.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I have a final question about an issue that has already been discussed, but I just want to ensure, for completeness, that we address the cross-Forth public transport strategy, a draft of which SEStran presented to the committee in its submission for our most recent meeting. Will you talk the committee through what involvement you have had in the development of that strategy and your thoughts on where it is at the moment?

George Mair: We are supportive of the package of bus and rail measures that SEStran proposed in

its response. The CPT is on the bus forum. Being a new kid on the block, I have forgotten the name of the other body whose meetings we attend with SEStran. We have had involvement in the development of those projects, which include the new bus and rail-based park-and-choose sites at Halbeath and Rosyth; the provision of high-quality, high-speed access to and from the existing bridge for buses, including extensive priority measures from the north and the south, on the M90, the A90, the M8, the M9 and the M9 spur to the A8000; the use of active intelligence systems to assist with bus prioritisation; the provision of high-quality bus interchanges for Queensferry and Echline, which have good access for pedestrians and cyclists as well as cars; and general improvements to bus and rail services. Through our involvement in SEStran, we have been involved in discussions on that package of initiatives.

Steve Walker: From an operator's point of view, our involvement has been more with Fife Council, which feeds into SEStran. We echo the support for those projects and would like to see them come to fruition sooner rather than later.

Tom Hart: As an association, we have not had a great deal of involvement with SEStran. We have been to some meetings that it called, but our involvement with the partnership has not been intensive.

We have been more involved in various studies in west Edinburgh relating to Gogar, the airport and the new business gateway at Ingliston, which could give rise to quite a number of additional trips. The consultants were asked to prepare their plans on the basis that 50 per cent of trips in that area—and between that area and points to the north and west or along the Edinburgh bypass—would be by public transport and active travel. They have done so, which of course has reduced the traffic growth projections, which are considerably below what they would have been if it had been assumed that public transport use would decline. From memory, active travel accounts for up to about 15 per cent of trips if we are talking about very short trips, but it depends on the length of trip. The rate obviously falls if we are talking about longer trips.

Marlyn Glen: I take it that all of you want to see the infrastructure schemes that Mr Mair just listed taken forward sooner rather than later. Is there anything that you want to add in relation to that list?

16:15

George Mair: It is hugely important that those things are brought forward. If we do not do that, we will be in great danger of not encouraging modal shift. People will see the new bridge as the

driving force for them to remain in their cars, listening to their radios, as Lawrence Marshall has suggested. We need to start working on that now, by saying to people, "We need to change, guys."

The industry has been working on a greener journeys programme that is sponsored by the four big operating companies in the UK. There is a real feeling among the general population that things will have to change, and there might be a greater acceptance now of decisions that were seen as impossible at one point. Now, people are starting to think that they have to change and are asking how they can contribute by reducing their carbon footprint. The kind of things that we are talking about will help, but they need to be done before the comfort of a new bridge comes along. If we fail in that, we will fail overall.

Steve Walker: Work on the Halbeath and Rosyth park-and-ride facilities was already being undertaken by ourselves, Fife Council and other partners prior to the new crossing even being talked about. A lot of work has been done, and the biggest problem is funding—who funds the work and how.

Marlyn Glen: SEStran, Fife Council and the City of Edinburgh Council also argued strongly for those measures. I am hearing that there is a sense of urgency about this part of the programme. Does anybody else want to add anything on that?

Tom Hart: I will sound like a stuck gramophone record, but if there is a single message to give to the committee, it is that there should be a strong emphasis on the need for a public transport and car sharing programme for the next six years. Hopefully, beyond that, the share of public transport will continue to increase because the overall climate—prices and so on—is changing.

Lawrence Marshall: I may sound like a slightly different stuck gramophone record. I am keen to see modal splits in favour of public transport because we are really about transporting people, not pieces of tin or metal, across the estuary. Buses are far more efficient than cars at carrying people. The poster at bus stops shows 20 or 30 cars taking up the whole street when the same number of people could be carried by just one bus. We should be encouraging public transport.

However, no increase in the use of the existing crossing by public transport could ever justify the expenditure of more than £2 billion and the denuding of the existing bridge of more than 90 per cent of its traffic. It is not a viable or even justifiable use of public expenditure to achieve a new but clogged-up bridge and an old bridge that is so severely unclogged that it looks empty but, when people get off the bridge at either side, the road is clogged up again. That would be like

someone having an arterial bypass without any of the other problems with their body being sorted out.

Marlyn Glen: Thank you for that comparison. My other question is a bit different. What involvement have your organisations had in project 25 in the strategic transport projects review—the light rapid transit between Edinburgh and Fife?

George Mair: The CPT has had no involvement in that initiative.

Steve Walker: None.

Tom Hart: We have been involved in discussions with Transport Scotland about what is meant by strategic rapid transit. A lot more use could be made of the rail bridge by increasing frequencies on it. Also, at some point, bus corridors of a much higher quality may be wanted going into Fife and elsewhere. The last time we discussed the matter, Transport Scotland had not completed its assessment of whether the existing Forth road bridge could handle light rail without much adjustment or whether it would need significant extra spend compared with a busway. I think that Transport Scotland has now reported on that, but I have not yet been able to trace its report. That was seen as a longer-term issue, not something for the next decade.

George Mair: I must be careful here. I need to look at my job description, because I am sure that somewhere or another it covers trams and light rail. It is worth bearing in mind, given the hard financial times that we find ourselves in, that very quickly and for a lot less cost the bus, in different formats, can achieve a great deal.

Lawrence Marshall: I see trams as a kind of Trojan horse; they are an add-on in the same way as the public transport use of the existing bridge is an add-on to the Forth crossing project. I do not see the proposal as being terribly credible. If we cannot get trams even to the airport, never mind Newbridge—we are getting trams to the airport, but it will take a while—I do not see trams going across to Fife in the lifetime of most people here, to be honest. I am also not sure that they are very attractive to people. People would be much better to get heavy rail to Gogar and interchange there on to a tram system, which would transport them more locally within Edinburgh, than to trundle, slide or glide, if you want, across the existing road bridge using a tram, because the stops would be more frequent. I think that people would rather interchange. In respect of their overall journey time, it would be much better to interchange than to extend trams into Fife and feed into Ferrytoll with buses and so on. I do not envisage that trams to Fife will be realised.

The Convener: Perhaps some of that is a can of worms for another day.

Alison McInnes: I have a couple of questions for Stagecoach. First, what plans do you have to ensure the continued smooth operation of the Ferrytoll park-and-ride site during the construction of the new Forth crossing?

Steve Walker: We have been involved in discussions about that with the planners in Fife Council. It was initially proposed that the Ferrytoll gyratory and the upgrade of Ferrytoll would be done before any work started. That might have changed since, but I am not sure. Certainly, too many buses are running through Ferrytoll in the morning peak; it needs to have a bigger bus turning circle and the new plans take that into account. We are happy with the phased work for that. The sooner that that gets put into place, the better.

Alison McInnes: So there are two things. Would you like to see some of the work outwith Ferrytoll but nearby carried out before the main works?

Steve Walker: We would like to see the work that we are talking about for Ferrytoll done as soon as possible.

Alison McInnes: And you are content with the proposals for the gyratory system within the park and ride.

Steve Walker: Yes, although we have concerns about getting to it.

Alison McInnes: And you still have concerns about the phasing of the work other than the gyratory and about getting into Ferrytoll.

Steve Walker: Yes, we have concerns about getting turned from Ferrytoll even when the work is completed.

Alison McInnes: Have you consulted existing and potential bus passengers on how services could be improved once you have a free run, as it were, at the bridge?

Steve Walker: Yes. Survey work was done back in November. The survey is a joint piece of work between ourselves and Fife Council, which, from memory, is undertaken every three years. It gives people the opportunity to comment on the overall package at Ferrytoll and the range of services. We use that document. Services to Livingston and to the airport have all come on board as a result of feedback from customers.

Alison McInnes: You are starting to see a request for services feeding into Ferrytoll as a hub.

Steve Walker: Yes. The number of local services and the fact that Megabus and Citylink all call in there mean that it is now more of a bus

station than a park and ride. Over and above that, there is also the car sharing and everything else that goes on.

Alex Johnstone: We have heard a lot about the benefit for passengers of park and ride. Is park and ride a good business opportunity for an operator such as Stagecoach? Is the Ferrytoll park and ride a good thing to be involved in, from Stagecoach's point of view?

Steve Walker: Yes, because services converge at Ferrytoll from various places in Fife and head across to Edinburgh. The park and ride was built up from all of those services feeding in to Ferrytoll and filling up any spare capacity there, rather than from bespoke park-and-ride services. A number of places in the UK have subsidised park-and-ride services because they are not as good a commercial opportunity. However, the Ferrytoll model has allowed us to provide more frequent services to places such as Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline and Glenrothes than we would have had if Ferrytoll did not exist. Buses that are going to Edinburgh come in to Ferrytoll with 20 or 30 people on them, fill up an extra 20 or 30 seats and form part of a seven or eight-minute corridor across to Edinburgh. We are also able to use those buses to allow people to interchange on to services to the airport, which run only as far as Inverkeithing. Those services do not head into Fife and split up; with the express network, it works extremely well.

Alex Johnstone: Is there the potential for achieving similar or parallel synergies with developments at Rosyth or Halbeath?

Steve Walker: Yes. Rosyth is probably more of a rail park and choose, with local services feeding in to get people to the rail station. The bus stop is right next to the rail area, but Fife Council sees Rosyth more as a rail interchange than a bus interchange. However, the option will still be there.

Halbeath really moves the Ferrytoll model further upstream. There are a number of opportunities with local services feeding past that point on to the express network. It allows many more connections to become available to the residents of Fife, not only from the park-and-ride point of view.

Alex Johnstone: You said that you had discussed issues surrounding those potential developments with local authorities and transport authorities. Is there an option for your company to become commercially involved in the development of those sites?

Steve Walker: We are working with Fife Council on that sort of basis.

Alex Johnstone: Are you investing your own money in those developments?

Steve Walker: The Halbeath project could become a depot as well as a park-and-ride area. That is being considered at the moment. From the Ferrytoll point of view, we did not put the infrastructure there, but we manage and operate it—we provide our staff there, at no cost to the council. The council maintains the premises, but we ensure that it is staffed and that it operates as it does.

Alex Johnstone: Stagecoach sponsored the hovercraft trial across the Forth. Is there potential for the hovercraft service to operate almost as a park and ride? Could it displace buses from the Forth crossing?

Steve Walker: We hope that it will not displace buses.

Alex Johnstone: Or displace passengers who would otherwise have been on a bus.

Steve Walker: We hope that it will enhance options for people to make the change from the car. We are going through planning on both sides of the water—Portobello and Fife—for the terminal and the parking area in Fife. Once we have been through planning, we hope to get the green light and the crafts will be commissioned. Eighteen months down the line, we hope to have a hovercraft service as well as the range of other public transport options across the Forth.

Alex Johnstone: My final question is for George Mair, although other witnesses may wish to comment. What talks are taking place about the nature of cross-Forth services after the new bridge is open? Are you talking about how bus services across the Forth will be structured when the bridge is open?

George Mair: It is not the role of CPT to get involved in commercial discussions on bus services. I am sorry that that does not answer your question, but we tend to leave the commercial discussions to the individual operator members, unless there is a request by an individual operator or a local authority.

Alex Johnstone: Have any of your member companies been involved in such discussions?

16:30

George Mair: I know that Steve Walker has been involved in some discussions and that First Scotland East has had a number of discussions about the proposed interchange for Queensferry. That said, although I know that discussions are on-going with operators in different parts of the country, the fact is that we tend to step back from any commercial discussions.

Alex Johnstone: How is it going then, Steve?

Steve Walker: As I have said, we try to keep the market under constant review and put on new links wherever necessary. The airport link, which was taken forward in partnership with Fife Council, was a bus route development grant-funded scheme that for the first three years was underpinned by the Scottish Government. The link has been more than successful and will, I hope, carry on into the future. We work very closely with Fife Council to ensure that every opportunity is taken for Fife and, indeed, even further upstream with our Megabus and Scottish Citylink services.

Alex Johnstone: Do you have a clear understanding of how services will look once the new bridge is opened and the current bridge starts to be used as a bus corridor?

Steve Walker: Not at the moment, because we are still trying to come to a clear understanding of how the road network will perform. As I said at the start, we have serious concerns about how buses and those in cars who want to access public transport will get to the bridge, never mind get across it. The same holds for the other side of the water. If the package of options is made attractive, people will make the modal shift. As Lawrence Marshall pointed out, those in cars will have to sit in the congestion on the new bridge, watching a single bus going across the old bridge every few minutes or so. If people see free-flowing bus and train services, they will think, "Maybe I should take the bus or train instead of sitting in this traffic. I'll be able to read my newspaper, look at my e-mails or whatever." We need to get the package right and make it attractive for people to switch.

Charlie Gordon: I want to press Mr Hart on an issue that he has touched on already. In your written evidence, you question Transport Scotland's estimates of the number of vehicles crossing the Forth by 2017. Why do you consider those estimates to be incorrect? What impact might those possible errors have had on plans for cross-Forth public transport provision?

Tom Hart: As I said, there was a big debate over the matter, which led to the Department for Transport commissioning a report on whether these strategic transport models were fit for purpose. All of this dates back to the central Scotland transport corridor studies, which were started in the late 1990s and completed early this century. At that time, the forecasts for road traffic were falling from previous levels, but were still fairly high; the forecast for rail was that things might stay stable; but the forecast for bus was a continuing decline. I have questioned whether such forecasts can be validated against the actual information about what has been happening over the past five years; the trouble is, however, that such validation is very difficult, given how much trends have been changing.

I suspect that one of the reasons why questions have been raised is that in the model an assumption, say, of 2 per cent growth in gross national product results in an almost 2 per cent growth in car use. However, that is not what has happened. I have to say that Transport Scotland has told me that it is aware of some of the defects in the modelling. The other difficulty is that the model is based on predictions of employment and residential growth in various locations; however, what has been predicted does not happen or happens in a slightly different way, and that affects the forecast. The background papers that were produced prior to this meeting noted the expectation that employment growth in Fife will be weaker than was predicted previously, whereas employment growth will remain strong in Edinburgh, particularly to the south-east of the city and also towards Bathgate. More development is anticipated in that zone after 2017. That might explain why the forecast for vehicle crossings becomes much lower after 2017. I am not satisfied with the modelling outcomes. There will not have been 42 per cent growth between 2005 and 2017, on the basis of the evidence, and given that we are already nearly halfway there.

Models often influence decisions on investment at times when public finance is tight. We know that the situation has got worse, and I am not sure that that has been taken into account sufficiently. The additional Forth crossing is viewed as a good thing, but if people are asked whether they prefer it to other things being done elsewhere in Scotland, they might change their minds.

Charlie Gordon: I am aware that an independent audit of about 30 models from different parts of the UK—but not Scotland—resulted in a number of defects being found in some of them. I became aware of that only today, while reading a transport magazine on the train on the way through to Edinburgh. Presumably, you were aware of such issues earlier. Was that foremost in your mind when you sent the committee your written evidence, as the reason for casting doubt on Transport Scotland's projections?

Tom Hart: I have been making this argument for about 15 years. It applied in the case of the rural M74, too. Previous Administrations said that it was the thing that we needed to get the Scottish economy going, and they forecast very high traffic growth in that corridor, with a need for a three-lane motorway. Since that motorway opened, the level of traffic has been virtually stable and therefore way off what the modelling forecast. Furthermore, the Scottish economy has done better than it did in the previous decade. There are very big issues there, which we must consider.

I have asked Transport Scotland for more information in that regard, but it has not provided

it. We have been discussing the holding of a seminar to consider the issues, which are particularly important when it comes to finding the finance and with regard to the climate change delivery programme. On the face of it, it seems surprising to predict 42 to 44 per cent growth from 2005 to 2017—that is in vehicle movements, not passengers. The figure changes to only 6 per cent in the next decade.

Charlie Gordon: The assumptions that you have used to calculate cross-Forth passenger volumes by 2017 require a number of projects to be in place that are arguably unlikely to be in place by then, for example the introduction of a high-priority vehicle lane on the current Forth road bridge within 12 months and an early extension of the Edinburgh tramline to Newbridge. Have you done any calculations according to a scenario in which none of those projects is in place?

Tom Hart: That was a listing of possible measures, some of which I would view as being more important than others. We have touched on the tram extension, which I think is most unlikely. Bus improvements and conventional rail improvements would be better.

One of the issues regarding rail is securing orders for the appropriate rolling stock. At present the DFT policy is not to order any diesels but to expand electrification, thus releasing diesels to operate on lines that can only be diesel operated. If that process is fairly slow, there will be problems with getting the necessary rolling stock to expand services over the Forth bridge.

There is a case for a priority lane on the existing bridge. There are problems with doing that—mainly political problems—but it offers the best promise of reducing congestion and achieving a greater shift. The more that traffic flow can be reduced, the easier it is to handle quite large numbers on the one lane that is available for any type of traffic.

Charlie Gordon: So let us be clear: you are talking about a scenario in which there would be, for example, a dedicated bus lane on the current Forth bridge but no additional crossing.

Tom Hart: I will argue, in evidence that is nearly ready to go to the Forth Crossing Bill Committee, that that needs to be evaluated. We will say more about that in that evidence.

There is a range of things that can be done. Improved pricing is one thing—consideration of fares and integrated ticketing—and another is avoiding the problems that arise if the park and ride is too close to the bridge. We could take the pressure further back by, for example, having something at Halbeath and adding a rail facility at Rosyth.

Charlie Gordon: You highlight a number of public transport infrastructure projects, principally from the strategic transport projects review, that may impact on cross-Forth traffic after 2017. Given current and future financial constraints, do you consider it likely that any of the projects will be completed in the medium or longer term?

Tom Hart: Some of them are relatively cheap, such as the reopening of the railway to Leven, where there is an expanding area of housing. That would cost nothing like the order of a new Forth crossing. Getting on the train to come through here, I noticed that either Fife Council or the south east of Scotland transport partnership—SEStran—was looking at the concept of adding a passenger service to the freight line that runs through Longannet from Dunfermline up to Stirling, possibly including a short new chord so that the service could run directly, without going to Dunfermline, over the Forth crossing.

Some of the projects are cheap. The project that could have a big impact on trip times, reduce rail congestion and get a smooth flow is the new rail link from the Ferrytoll area to Halbeath. That is costed in the strategic transport projects review at £100 million to £250 million, which is a big range but nothing like the £2 billion for the Forth crossing. That project would help to keep more local Fife traffic separate from trains that go further and faster to Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth and Inverness, so it would be worth looking at in a revision of the strategic transport projects review.

It has already been admitted that, because of the changing financial situation and because doubt has been cast on whether the projects would all be financed—they were talked about and put quite far into the future—it is time to take a more realistic look. I would advance some other elements, particularly project 24, which affects Glasgow and the west of Scotland. There is a case for advancing that into the period up to 2017, which could be done incrementally, tailoring the projects beyond it.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: This is a question probably to Mr Walker in the first instance. We have heard Mr Hart's suggestion about a high-occupancy vehicle lane on the current bridge. Would that have any impact on the flow of traffic, be that bus or car, into Ferrytoll? You discussed earlier how important it is to have a free flow. Would there be an impact on your services? How would the two work together?

Tom Hart: I misunderstood the first part of the question.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I will let you come in, Mr Hart, but Mr Walker spoke about the importance of free-flowing traffic to Ferrytoll. If we had a high-occupancy vehicle lane on the current

bridge at peak times, when there is already congestion, would that have an impact on the free running into the park and ride?

Steve Walker: The measures that we have in place at the moment, while not perfect, ease people's use of Ferrytoll and public transport. We currently have the bus and car lane into Ferrytoll, and we have access right to the start of the bridge. The bridge backs up because of the traffic coming on at Inverkeithing, Admiralty and so on—that sends shockwaves up the network. What is there at the moment is probably better, because if one lane is used for high-occupancy vehicles and another is used for single-occupant vehicles, congestion will simply build up further back up the route. The gyratory down at Ferrytoll tends to clog up once there is a problem on the bridge. I am cautious about the suggestion that we split traffic on the current bridge into one high-occupancy lane and one single-occupant lane.

16:45

Tom Hart: I agree that there are technical issues that need to be considered. On the other hand, the proposal could offer significant benefits without high capital cost. It is unclear from the Transport Scotland documentation how many of the cars that cross at the peak are single occupancy. I suspect that at least half of them—perhaps more—fall into that category. The bus operators may have more information on the issue. Shifting even 5 per cent of the people concerned into multi-occupant vehicles or public transport would ease the problem. The high-occupancy lane to which I referred was for buses, selected HGVs and multi-occupant vehicles, including multi-occupant cars. There would be an extended approach lane, so that people could get on to the lane, and a significant penalty if they entered when they were not entitled to do so. The other lane would remain open for any vehicle.

Steve Walker: There is a problem with the proposal. If there are road works, everyone will leave it to the last minute to feed into the lane in which they should be. In my view, the proposal would just increase congestion.

Tom Hart: I agree that there would be problems for at least a fortnight. However, with good publicity beforehand, good marking and extra officials to ensure that people who did not obey the rules faced penalties quickly, the arrangement would give smoother operation.

Rob Gibson: I have a question for Mr Marshall and ForthRight Alliance. We have already heard a number of suggestions for public transport improvements. Your written evidence shows clearly that you are opposed to the Forth crossing. However, assuming that it is built, what public

transport improvements would you like to see introduced, in addition to those that we have heard about?

Lawrence Marshall: If the bridge is built, the existing bridge will be a bus lane and will give buses a fantastic, congestion-free trip across the Forth. In that case, there will need to be as much bus priority, park and ride and park and choose as possible, both north and south of the estuary. I would also like some investment to be made in the railway network, as the railway has the capacity to carry more people. It already has good capture for central Edinburgh journeys, but there are ways of extending the scope of rail both within the city and in Fife, into Clackmannanshire and so on. I would expect to see some expansion of railway services, as well as the Halbeath to Ferrytoll new fast railway, which is a strategic transport projects review project and would benefit Rob Gibson's constituents by giving a fast journey time beyond Fife, up to Perth, Inverness, Dundee and Aberdeen.

I return to the point that, if the new bridge is built, the bus lane on the existing bridge will have been bought at huge cost, not just to the taxpayers of Scotland but to other areas of Scotland where people want transport projects such as bypasses and park-and-ride schemes. Those projects will not happen, or will not happen for some time, because we will have spent the money on the new bridge. That money cannot be spent on some of the rail and bus improvement measures that I have just outlined.

The Convener: Presumably you agree with Tom Hart, who argued that some of those public transport improvements should happen in the short term, regardless of any decision about an additional bridge.

Lawrence Marshall: That is true. For me, the question has always been, how can we increase the number of bus journeys and so on when the bridge is already full up at peak periods? The capacity of a dual carriageway is 3,000 vehicles an hour. The only way of increasing the number of bus journeys is to create a disincentive for people who travel by car at the moment, to free up a bit of the road space. That is difficult, because we do not have the means to have variable charging, which would give people more incentive to switch to multi-occupant vehicles—buses or trains—from cars, which are low-occupancy vehicles. Because cars take up so much road space, it is difficult to see how, in the interim, people can get across the estuary more easily by bus. We can have bus lines on either side, but we cannot put a bus lane on the existing bridge.

Steve Walker: The bridge is not congested—traffic flows freely on it. The problems are caused by traffic heading north, feeding in from the M9

and the A90 as they merge, and from Inverkeithing and the Admiralty junction. The main focus of the new crossing is to keep traffic flowing. The only way in which it is proposed to do that is by stopping traffic merging in, by using ramp metering. In Glasgow, where traffic was prevented from feeding into the M8, the local roads clogged up. The problem is not congestion on the bridge but congestion before it.

The Convener: You have made your point clearly. As members have no final questions for the witnesses, I thank them for taking the time to answer our questions. The committee will continue its inquiry for a short period before reporting. Its report will be available on the Parliament's website.

I remind members that tomorrow at 1.30 we will receive an informal briefing in committee room 5 from the UK Committee on Climate Change. I apologise to those members who cannot make it.

Meeting closed at 16:51.

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