



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 28 September 2010

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TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE
21st Meeting 2010, Session 3

CONVENER

*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

DEPUTY CONVENER

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con)
*Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
*Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)
*Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
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:

David Climie (Transport Scotland)
Mike Glover (Transport Scotland)
Frazer Henderson (Transport Scotland)
Lawrence Shackman (Transport Scotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

Tuesday 28 September 2010

[The Convener opened the meeting at 14:00]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Patrick Harvie): Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the 21st meeting this year of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee. I remind everybody that all mobile devices should be switched off.

I record apologies from Alasdair Allan, Alison McInnes, Cathy Peattie and Jackson Carlaw, who is the convener of the Forth Crossing Bill Committee and is not attending this meeting in order to avoid a conflict of interest. I welcome Jim Tolson, who is attending as a committee substitute for Alison McInnes.

There are three items on the agenda, the first of which is to decide whether to take item 3 in private. Under that item, the committee will consider its approach to the scrutiny of the Scottish Government's draft budget for 2011-12. Do members agree to take item 3 in private?

Members indicated agreement.

Forth Crossing Project

14:01

The Convener: Item 2 is our main business for the day. We will hear an update from the Forth replacement crossing team on the progress and current status of the Forth crossing project.

I welcome our panel of witnesses. Frazer Henderson is the bill manager for Transport Scotland's Forth replacement crossing team—I will just refer to "the team" from now on—and Mike Glover is the team's commission project manager. Lawrence Shackman is the team's project manager and David Climie is the team's project director.

Would the panel like to make some brief opening remarks before we ask questions?

David Climie (Transport Scotland): Good afternoon. I would like to make a brief statement, if I may.

As I am sure that we will have a close relationship with the committee as we proceed, I thought that it might be helpful to put that relationship in context and give some background information on what I have done in the past.

I am now a member of the senior civil service. I was specifically recruited from the private sector to provide direction in the realisation of the Forth replacement crossing. I have extensive experience of major bridge projects around the world. I have worked on the Tsing Ma bridge in Hong Kong, the Storebælt bridge in Denmark, the Jiangyin bridge in China and, more recently, the second Tacoma Narrows bridge in the USA. I also have local experience through working on the existing Forth road bridge, where I was the site manager for some of the tower strengthening work in 1988-89. I am therefore familiar with the local area.

I replaced John Howison, who was charged with introducing the bill and ensuring that its principles were accepted at stage 1. The change of director was planned as part of the overall strategy and is wholly consistent with the need to align individual skill sets with the work activities in view. Obviously, my focus is on initiating the contract and ensuring its appropriate execution. I am very familiar with that function through my previous role. This is the first time that I have worked in a Government role. Previously, I have been involved in the contracting side, both in design-and-build and construction-only projects. I am therefore familiar with all the challenges that we will face as we proceed.

The Convener: I begin by asking for a general update. What progress has been made since the committee was last given an update, which was in

February? What have been the key events? What problems have been encountered? That would be helpful.

David Climie: I will cover the headlines first, which are the main developments in the past six months.

We last reported to the committee in February 2010. Since then, we have achieved the successful conclusion of stage 1 of the bill. More recently, the assessor hearings took place from 30 August until 13 September. The assessor is now preparing his report, which will be submitted to the committee.

We have made good progress on refining the various contracts that will be put in place for the bridge. We have the principal contract for the main crossing, the contract for junction 1A on the M9 and the Fife intelligent transport system contract, all of which are integral to delivering the overall project. We are considering an owner-controlled insurance programme that will support risk management in the overall project and, in the next couple of days, we will have the ninth in a series of dialogue meetings with the two principal contract participants. Those meetings have been going extremely well. We have covered a lot of ground, and it is obvious that the participants are developing their schemes and the planning of the construction to the level of detail that we would expect at this stage.

I ask Frazer Henderson whether he has anything to add on the bill process.

Frazer Henderson (Transport Scotland): Unless the convener has specific questions on the bill, the overview that Mr Climie has given has probably set out where we are. I am happy to take any more detailed questions that you may have.

The Convener: Perhaps you could talk about the months to come and how the progress of the bill relates to the progress of the project.

Frazer Henderson: As Mr Climie said, the assessor's report is expected some time in October. The expectation therefore is that stage 2 of the bill—the legislative function of stage 2, rather than the judicial function—will occur some time in November. That being so, the expectation is that stage 3 of the bill will be in December. Clearly, the date will be set by Parliament. I am not privy to the actual date, but I am aware that it will be some time in December. We should have royal assent to the bill, if it is passed, in January. That will enable us to initiate the contracts and sign them in April or May next year.

The Convener: Are there any events or possible events that could delay the timescale that you are currently working to?

Frazer Henderson: The key consideration is whether the bill passes through Parliament. If it does not, that will be a major impediment to our proceeding. However, on the presumption that the bill will get support from Parliament, I cannot foresee any significant impediments.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): The committee's report on the Forth Crossing Bill sought movement on a number of issues. Has there been any progress on developing the public transport interventions that were outlined in the public transport strategy for the Forth replacement crossing that was proposed by the south east of Scotland transport partnership, the City of Edinburgh Council and Fife Council?

Frazer Henderson: I will set that in context. Forgive me—I perhaps should have mentioned the issue in response to the convener's question.

One key aspect that we must address is the public spending review. We cannot make significant decisions on public transport until we know what the outcome of that review will be. As I understand it, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth will make a statement to Parliament on that on 17 or 18 November. Thereafter, Transport Scotland intends to convene a workshop with the local authorities and SEStran to determine how we can drive forward the public transport strategy that all the parties have agreed is the way we should go. I believe that the strategy document has been shared with the committee. We will need to consider the strategy in the light of the public spending review and determine what we can do in the short and medium term with what is likely to be limited cash availability.

That is the context. We have apprised the local authorities and SEStran of our intention and we have a commitment from them to attend the workshop. That is appreciated by all parties. When we came to the committee in February, we said that there was a clear distinction between the bill, which is very much about infrastructure, and the wider public transport strategy, although there are elements in the bill that support public transport, most notably the public transport corridor over the existing bridge.

I think that the committee will welcome the work and attention that we have been directing to the use of the hard shoulder on the M90 for buses, particularly during the construction phase. Mr Shackman can give more information on that, if you would like it.

Rob Gibson: Certainly.

Lawrence Shackman (Transport Scotland): Under the Fife ITS contract, we intend to implement bus hard shoulder running southbound from the northern extremes of the scheme. That would link in with any public transport using the

M90 or A92, and it has the potential to link in with any development of park and ride at Halbeath at an early stage, should that proceed. During congested periods, buses will be able to use the hard shoulder and run all the way down to Ferrytoll, and then onwards across the bridge to destinations southwards and in the central belt. That will be part of the Fife ITS contract, and it will, hopefully, relieve concerns about congestion in the Ferrytoll area in particular during the difficult construction works there. That will definitely be taken forward.

Rob Gibson: In general, do you have a desire to see public transport interventions in place before, or in parallel with, the opening of the new crossing?

Frazer Henderson: Very much so. That was brought out during the assessor hearings. It is in everybody's interests, particularly ours when the bridge is being constructed, to get public transport measures in place. They will provide relief from high volumes of traffic and will help in Fife in particular, where there will be some detailed and tricky traffic management work when we connect the new bridge into the existing motorway. Getting more people on to public transport will assist us.

We gave some figures at our previous meeting with you in February. I think that we said that if we can get 60 people—or at least 50 people—on to a bus, and we get X number of buses during the morning period, we can reduce the peak travel volumes by about 10 per cent, which would certainly aid our management of the works. In short, it is clearly our desire to seek to maximise the public transport element, particularly during the construction phase.

Once we have held the workshop and we have a clear, funded strategy—that is one of the most important elements—we can seek to maximise the benefits that the scheme will undoubtedly provide.

Rob Gibson: How do you involve transport users? We have spoken about the involvement of SEStran, councils and so on, but what about the transport users themselves? Will the workshop be so large that it can involve all those people?

Frazer Henderson: You raise a very good point. We first need to get our investment strategy in place, which we will deliver from the workshop. Thereafter, a great deal of work has to be done by all parties, including Transport Scotland, the local authorities and SEStran, to encourage modal shift and to engage with transport users. Work is continuing to be done by other elements within Transport Scotland and by the local authorities to create the necessary climate. I take your point whole-heartedly—this is something in which Transport Scotland and local authorities must invest time and energy.

Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): I seek some clarification from Mr Shackman. You mentioned the hard shoulder being used as a bus lane on the A90/M90 corridor. Can you confirm that you seek to go all the way up to the Halbeath roundabout off the M90? Given the points that you and Mr Henderson have made about relieving as much pressure from the new crossing as possible, would it not be advantageous, as many of us have argued with the minister, to have the new park-and-choose facilities at Halbeath and Rosyth in place before the new crossing is completed?

Lawrence Shackman: I will answer the last part of your question first. I do not disagree with what you are suggesting about Halbeath and Rosyth, but that should stay as a topic for the workshop in November, once the spending review has been determined. We cannot develop that as part of the project—that is to be done separately, and the timing of it is down to budgetary resources.

On the northern extent of bus hard shoulder running, we envisage the works starting just south of the merge point of the A92 and the M90, so that bus traffic from both directions would filter into the hard shoulder at a convenient and safe location. That is where the hard shoulder running would commence. Any queueing—should that occur—stretching back from the Ferrytoll area would be bypassed by buses on the hard shoulder.

14:15

Rob Gibson: Knowing how the modal shift is working before the bridge is built is of advantage to users and to the general plans. We have talked about some of the technicalities, but it is important for us to understand the timetable and the measures that you will have to show what modal shift across the Forth is likely or is beginning to take place.

Frazer Henderson: At this stage, it is quite hard to answer that question in any detail. There are intentions, and, as I have mentioned before, the intentions will suit our ends and purposes if they can be delivered on. First, we need to get a comprehensive, funded strategy in place. Once we have the funded strategy in place, we will be in a position to have the ways and means to encourage modal shift on to public transport in supporting the delivery of that strategy.

The new bridge will be operational in 2017. As I have mentioned, there are things that we can do in the short term to get people on to buses during the construction phase. Thereafter, we will have to undertake major activity for both bus and train. Much of that work is being taken forward elsewhere within Transport Scotland. I am not saying that to deflect the question; it is simply recognition of the fact that complementary modal

shift activities are being undertaken throughout Transport Scotland that focus not just on the bridge but on encouraging many more people to take up public transport in the country as a whole.

Rob Gibson: You will understand why we want to keep this in perspective. As we speak to you regularly, we will want to see the strategy moving along. At this early stage, you are saying that Transport Scotland has a wider interest in public transport, but it must be given more skin on top of the bones than your remarks imply is the case at the moment.

Frazer Henderson: I think that a body will manifest itself once we have had an opportunity, in November, to come forward with a concerted strategy with the other key players. Once the local authorities, SEStran and we are signed up to a funded strategy, we will be able to bring on board all the other players such as the bus operators and the user groups that you mention. It is just the reality of the situation that we are having to adopt this staged approach.

Rob Gibson: Okay. We need to minimise the effects of construction on cross-Forth and local bus services. That is something that, I am sure, Jim Tolson knows quite a lot about from where he lives, and it is of interest to the committee. We want some idea of how you intend to do that. Is that also waiting until after November, or do you have detailed plans at the moment?

Lawrence Shackman: Do you mean plans for minimising impacts during construction?

Rob Gibson: Yes.

Lawrence Shackman: No. The need to minimise the impacts not only on bus movements at, for example, Ferrytoll park and ride while that facility is being modified and upgraded but on all road users is very much built into the construction contracts. There are mechanisms in the contracts that incentivise the contractors to minimise disruption to road users. Typically, on the main route, that means maintaining two lanes in each direction during the peak hours. Access to and from Ferrytoll park and ride, not just for the buses but for the people who want to get on them, is paramount to the success of the project in that respect.

Rob Gibson: Thinking slightly ahead, have you built into the new bridge plans to allow cyclists and pedestrians to cross the Forth when the Forth road bridge is closed to them?

Lawrence Shackman: There is no permanent facility envisaged as part of the plans for cyclists and pedestrians, because the new bridge will be classified as a motorway. As you are probably aware, the existing facilities on the Forth road bridge will be maintained for cyclists. We are

working with the Forth Estuary Transport Authority to come up with an operational arrangement that will still allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross when adverse weather affects the Forth road bridge such that it is closed. We have to work with FETA to see whether there will be a facility to pick people up and bus them across the bridge or take them across in a van, for example. We have been discussing that with FETA.

Rob Gibson: Will you be able to report back on that in more detail some time soon?

Lawrence Shackman: Yes.

Rob Gibson: Has any decision been taken on how the Forth crossing will be managed when it is running?

Frazer Henderson: There is no further update on what we said in the policy memorandum.

The Convener: I have a couple of quick follow-up questions on modal share and the various interventions that might be necessary to try to encourage modal shift towards more sustainable options.

Frazer Henderson seemed to say that there was a degree of ambiguity at the moment and that we cannot be definitive yet about what interventions will be necessary, what interventions will be funded or how effective they will be. How does that square with the clear commitment that we have heard ministers make repeatedly that there will be no increase in the number of private car journeys and that any increase in cross-Forth traffic will be from a growth in bus journeys or journeys taken by other sustainable modes?

Frazer Henderson: I do not think that there is any ambiguity there. Clearly, ministers have made that statement and we will adhere to that aspect. What I was referring to were the specific infrastructure interventions such as park-and-choose sites, bus hard shoulder running and bus lanes coming down from the M9 spur. Those are the infrastructure elements that form part of our public transport strategy, which we published in January. Those are the elements on which determinations have to come forward.

The Convener: Before those decisions have been made, how can we or ministers—or anybody—be sure that the commitment that there will be no increase in the number of private car journeys will hold true?

Frazer Henderson: Only two lanes will be available for car journeys on the new bridge. During the construction phase, we will have two lanes that will be available at all times for car journeys. There is a limit on the capacity for car journeys across the new bridge.

The Convener: Are you suggesting that we would be expecting to run at full capacity then?

Frazer Henderson: I will hand over to the engineers.

Lawrence Shackman: What we are saying is that the replacement crossing fundamentally has two lanes in each direction, which is in keeping with the existing Forth road bridge, but it will operate better, with extra capacity, because it will have a hard shoulder, wind shielding and all the other aspects of which you are aware. It will also have the ITS to make better and more efficient use of the road infrastructure that is being provided. From day one, although there are only two lanes in each direction, the bridge will operate more effectively and more smoothly. However, as development proceeds north and south of the Forth, there will come a point where that extra capacity, if you like, will be used up and people will have to use other modes. That is where using buses and enhancing public transport through the public transport strategy will come into play. People will have to adjust their travel patterns to suit improvements to both the rail network and bus services in the area.

The Convener: However, we do not yet know what those will look like.

Lawrence Shackman: No, as the public transport strategy has not been brought to a conclusion. We also do not know which developments in the area will proceed before others. Although many developments are planned in the Edinburgh and Dunfermline areas, we do not know which will come to fruition first and over what period, bearing in mind the current state of the economy.

The Convener: It sounds as if a degree of hope is built into the minister's commitment.

Lawrence Shackman: No, it is just that we cannot foresee the future. You need a crystal ball to see clearly what will happen. It is not easy.

Jim Tolson: Rob Gibson's final point concerned the management and maintenance of the crossings. What advice has Transport Scotland offered ministers on the best and most efficient way of managing and operating both bridges? What advice has Transport Scotland received to ensure that the new crossing is totally accessible for maintenance purposes?

Lawrence Shackman: Decisions on maintenance and, in particular, the future of FETA, will not be made until 2013. However, the bridges are very close to each other and, in my opinion, it would seem appropriate to combine their maintenance. However, it is for others to determine whether that happens.

We are providing some infrastructure to maintain the bridges as part of the project. A series of rooms is available within the bridges and their abutments that will provide facilities to maintain them. There will be electrical supplies in close proximity to the bridges. I will not go into detail on the host of maintenance activities that will be undertaken, but a great deal of maintenance will be built into the bridges, to make it easy for one or more bodies to maintain the replacement crossing and the Forth road bridge. The arrangements that have been made do not preclude the decisions that will be made in future.

Jim Tolson: Have you given advice to ministers in that regard? If so, can you share it with us?

Lawrence Shackman: It is not for me to say at the moment.

The Convener: The issue of community engagement has been raised with the committee in the past. We discussed it in February, reflecting some of the concerns that community groups had expressed. Since our previous meeting with you in February, what changes have been made to the arrangements for community engagement?

Frazer Henderson: A substantial number of changes have been made both in the light of representations that communities have made and as a consequence of further reflection by the project. As I said to Ms Somerville in February, we needed to reflect on things that we have done previously and to identify how we can do them better. As a consequence, we have made a number of significant changes to the code of construction practice, especially in chapter 2, on liaison and public information. Those changes will continue in a further revision that we intend to publish tomorrow.

I will highlight a number of the changes to you. Following our discussion at the February meeting, we are taking the key step of setting up regular community engagement fora with community councils. At this stage, at least six community councils have been identified with which there will be full engagement prior to the contract being signed. During the life of the contract, those councils will have full engagement with the contractor and Transport Scotland. Those meetings will cover a range of aspects such as planning works, notification of works, receiving feedback on works, and information on mitigation activities within the local community. That is a rounded package of community engagement through the community councils.

14:30

In addition to that, the contractor has to undertake a number of plans for a whole range of matters from noise and vibration to dust

management and how the contractor will manage the construction compound—I think that there are 14 or 15 such matters. The constructor will be obliged to liaise on the preparation of those plans with local authorities, community councils and established community groups as well as relevant business interests. There is a range of parties with which the contractor has to liaise, and that is beefing up that element of the process.

The complaints procedure is another issue that has been raised. We have sought to make improvements to that based on what community councils and local authorities have said to us. Clearly, we do not want to get complaints, so we have beefed up the notification process so that, now, local residents and community councils will be notified. When works are occurring, owners of nearby properties will now be notified well in advance.

The Convener: What does “nearby” mean in that context?

Frazer Henderson: It means properties that are in the vicinity of the works. They will be notified when the works are likely to impact on them. For example, if works are taking place in South Queensferry on the approach to the bridge, residents of the Echline, Springfield, Clufflat and Linn Mill areas will be notified of what is occurring.

The Convener: Will notification go to each household directly?

Frazer Henderson: Yes.

For the inquiries and complaints procedures, we will have a 24-hour manned service. We will also base facilities in the centre of South Queensferry. They will be available during normal working hours and on Saturday. Mr Shackman might be able to give you more details on that. Everything to do with the complaints process will be published. That came through very strongly from community groups and—dare I say it—a number of members of the Scottish Parliament. Full information in summary and in detail will be available on the number of inquiries and complaints, the geographic area from which they have arisen, the topics, the measures that have been taken to investigate them, and the timescale that we have applied to responding to or addressing them.

We are making a whole range of improvements. To sum it up, we will engage with community councils through planning and information. If things should go wrong, we will seek to address them as quickly as we can and to inform people of the steps that we have taken to address them.

The Convener: Following the efforts that have been made to improve community engagement, can you give me some examples of changes that

have been made to the project as a result of communities’ views being fed in?

Frazer Henderson: Yes. I have quite a long list here, although it is probably not as long a list as we envisaged when we embarked on the project.

Aside from the improvements to section 2 of the code of construction practice, a number of changes have been made. We have reflected on the local community in the Kirklands Park Grove area of Kirkliston’s request and will be installing a barrier on the east side of a section of the M9.

Communities in Kirkliston and South Queensferry raised the issue of the speed limit on the B800, which was previously the A8000. We have negotiated with the City of Edinburgh Council and we propose to reduce the speed limit on that road to 30mph so that it becomes more a road on which people can cycle and walk on the pavement. That 30mph limit will be in place from Dundas Park golf club right into South Queensferry.

Another example concerns the location of the gantries for the ITS. We have taken on board representations from residents in the Dundas home farm area, which is just to the south of South Queensferry, and from the airport authorities, and have placed gantries in situations that are more appropriate to their needs, without compromising the safety of the system.

We have retained the Ferrymuir roundabout; the original intention was to replace it with a junction, but after receiving substantial representation from Queensferry and district community council, we have managed to negotiate with the City of Edinburgh Council for the roundabout’s retention.

On the A904, which is the road that goes from South Queensferry towards Newton, we are to reduce the speed limit to 30mph from the Echline junction. We will also undertake additional mitigation at Echline. We have listened to the communities there by adopting measures such as planting and the provision of walls.

A key change is that we are to move the visitor centre to Forth Estuary Transport Authority’s offices so that it is much more convenient for the local community in South Queensferry and more broadly.

In addition, there will be footpath and cycle path provision at the Echline fields, which will provide an additional route for people who wish to access the countryside without having to take the most direct route, which would be across the proposed new South Queensferry junction.

It was brought to our attention that the east windshield or east barrier on the bridge did not extend as far as the west barrier, so for aesthetic purposes we have aligned the two.

In Newton, which sits just outside the project scheme area, but on which there will be an impact because of the increase in traffic along the A904, we have been working with the community council and West Lothian Council to develop plans to mitigate the impact of the traffic through that community. Our role is to provide West Lothian Council with funding to assist with that mitigation.

I could continue with the list, but the essence of it is that in the past four or five months, we have reflected hard on what the community has said to us and, where improvements could be made to the project, we have sought to make them.

The Convener: It would be helpful if the longer list, if there is one, could be provided to us in writing, although what you have said so far gives us a flavour of the changes that have been made.

Frazer Henderson: Certainly.

The Convener: At a recent meeting with some of the community groups, I was told that there is a concern about information that had long been promised, but which is still not available. In particular, I was told that geological survey information relating to the project, which community groups had been led to understand would be put into the public domain, was still not available, and that despite repeated requests neither was the promised scale model of the bridge and associated road infrastructure, which would have given local people a much better understanding of the impact that they would be expected to live with. Are there plans to make those forms of information available? If so, when?

Frazer Henderson: If memory serves me right, the geological report, which related to groundwater issues, has been or will be shared this week. Because it has taken a long time to produce it, one of the team will go out to meet the individuals concerned to give an explanation and to put what is a technical report in layman's language. I think that the relevant community body is the Echline corner consultative alliance. There are plans to take that forward.

The Convener: Will that report be in the public domain?

Frazer Henderson: Yes.

Mike Glover (Transport Scotland): That will be reported on afterwards.

The Convener: And on the model?

Frazer Henderson: You might know that we have developed a virtual reality model, which we believe gives individuals a better interpretation of the impact and, in fact, of the whole nature of the scheme. The beauty of that model is that it is portable, whereas a scale model would not have been portable. We have been able to take the

model to Kirkliston, to the north of the Forth and to South Queensferry. Because we can put it on a laptop, we can take it with us when we go to meet communities. We think that that has been a better use of limited funds than producing a scale model would have been.

We understand that there is a scale model at the visitor centre—at the FETA office, I think—that shows the existing Forth road bridge. That is something that we might consider in the future, but we think that better value has been derived from the virtual reality model.

The Convener: Are you saying that there was never an offer to produce a scale model in physical form?

Mike Glover: Sir, we have never made a commitment to produce a model. We put a lot of investment into the virtual reality model because we felt that it would address a wider audience. Indeed, we have taken the VRM, as we call it, to our public consultation events, and when people have had a particular interest or a particular view, we have been able to use the VRM in an effective way by putting them in the location that interests them so that they can see the bridge or the landscape. We thought that that was a better way forward. We have never made a commitment to produce a model, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

The Convener: I am certainly not against the idea of having a virtual model. Such models can be useful, but they are useful in a different way from a physical model. With a physical model, people can choose to focus in on the detail or see an overview. People can relate to it in their own way. Both types of model have value.

Mike Glover: Physical models are extremely tactile. I would never fight against having a physical model. It is a question of horses for courses and the appropriateness of different types of model, given the timing. It is inevitable that there will be a model in the contact and education centre—the visitor centre. That will be part of the arrangement.

The Convener: It would be helpful if you could let us know when that will be available so that we can answer any queries that come up.

Mike Glover: Yes.

The Convener: Is the virtual model provided in such a way that people can have a copy of it and use it on their own machines, or are people simply looking at a preset animation?

Mike Glover: The model is interactive, but because of its sheer scale and power, people need extremely specialised machines to run it on. However, we have never limited it.

Lawrence Shackman: We have a video fly-through version on our website. People can access that whenever they want to, but we are happy to show the virtual reality model to anyone who wants to inspect it. As Mr Glover mentioned, when we gave the series of community briefings in June, July and August, we took the virtual reality model and had it alongside a slide-show update on the project so that people could focus on particular areas or issues that they wanted to look at.

The Convener: Okay. It strikes me that, because it relies on technology that most people do not have even if they own several computers, as most households do these days, it is a bit restrictive, because people cannot access the information in their own time or contemplate it in their own way.

Frazer Henderson: You will have noted the examples that I mentioned of the changes that we have been making. We have needed to refresh the virtual reality model to reflect some of those changes. When the contract is signed, we will have a fixed view of where particular things will be. At that point, we might look to refresh the virtual reality model and, as Mr Glover said, there would be greater value from having a fixed model at that time.

14:45

The Convener: Perhaps at that point it could be considered whether a version can be made available for platforms that people have at home, which would seem to be more useful.

My final point about the concerns of some local residents that I met recently is on the compound to the south side, at Echline fields. There was an initial proposal to site the compound very close to housing, but it was moved away from housing following residents' concerns being raised. However, there now seems to be a desire to use the original proposed compound site for plant storage, which gives rise to the same concerns that people had about the prospect of a compound there. Why is more space now required than was required originally, when the compound was going to be right next to people's houses?

Lawrence Shackman: The South Queensferry compound is part of the bill, but I re-emphasise that the preferred location is on the west side of the south approach road. In the area to the east of the south approach road—the Echline fields area, which is owned by Scottish ministers—we have recently committed to an exclusion zone of at least 50m wide wherever we possibly can, adjacent to the housing. There will be no contractors' materials or plant whatever in that zone. Beyond that zone, from the fence or whatever boundary feature is put there up to the line of the works, the

contractor will be permitted to store some plant and materials, which will be accessed during the day so as not to disturb residents. It will be for low-frequency-use materials and plant only. That seemed to be a sensible use of land that is already owned by Scottish ministers, and we have built in an exclusion zone that is a minimum of 50m wide.

The Convener: It is still a little unclear to me why that is now needed. Under the previous proposal, the site was going to be used as the compound proper, and that seemed to be enough.

Lawrence Shackman: It is simply to provide additional flexibility to the contractor without implying that there will be any further nuisance—for want of a better phrase—to the local people. It will be used for storing topsoil material, which will potentially be there for two or three years and could act as a temporary bund to provide additional screening mitigation, and various pieces of construction—

The Convener: Was the community there consulted before the decision was made to use the land in that way?

Lawrence Shackman: We spoke with the local community about it recently, during the assessor hearings.

Mike Glover: There is no additionality in what is being proposed. Because the compound stretched along that flank of the construction, it also embodied the natural things that would be part of the lay-down areas of the construction activity. For example, when we build the abutment towards Society Road, we will need materials, plant, people and all the other facilities around it, and they have always been there. This is not a change of plan. A lay-down area where a contractor puts materials that are required for immediate construction is very different from a compound, which is a coming together of activities. We have moved the compound and all those activities away from people, but the activities that would normally have been associated with the construction must, by definition, stay with the construction. I hope that that makes sense.

The Convener: Without wanting to spend too much time on the detail, perhaps I can convey to you my impression. I do not know whether it is to do with your communication or engagement, but there is a strong perception that it is a change of plan and an unwelcome one.

Mike Glover: I assure you that, from our point of view, it was never intended to be a change and is not a change. If we have failed to communicate that, we will have to go back and try a bit harder.

The Convener: Thank you. Let us move on.

Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): On 24 August, Transport Scotland issued a revised code of construction practice for the project in response to formal objections to the bill as well as to issues that were raised in the consultation of statutory bodies and others. How does the revised code of construction practice better meet the needs of local residents?

Frazer Henderson: As well as the version of 24 August, another one will be released tomorrow, which is 29 September. The two key areas where we have sought to make improvements that will assist local residents are in section 2, which I mentioned previously and which is on liaison and public information, and section 5, on noise and vibration. As you might imagine, both those subject areas exercised the assessor hearings substantially during the 11 days of the hearings. On 13 September, a complete day was devoted to addressing noise and vibration issues. We believe that the revised code of construction practice is a marked improvement and will better satisfy the needs of local residents and the project on public liaison. On noise and vibration, we have a really good way forward. I stress that we have been working closely with the local authorities on improvements to that section in the code of construction practice. Those are the two significant elements in the COCP on which improvements are being made.

Charlie Gordon: Will you say a bit more about improvements to arrangements for noise monitoring?

Frazer Henderson: At the basic level, we have given undertakings to communities to place noise monitoring equipment at locations where there is likely to be heavy construction activity. That is near the M9 and M9 spur junction; at the corner of Echline fields; between the Clufflats and Inchgarvie lodge; and at Linn Mill. It is likely that we will put in noise monitoring equipment on the north side of the Forth, although fewer communities are directly affected on that side. That monitoring equipment will be there throughout the construction period and for one year post construction.

The information from the monitoring will be publicly available. It will also be reported to the noise liaison group, which we have established with the local authorities and which will be responsible for monitoring and assisting us with planning the noise management regime that we will put in place throughout the life of the project.

Jim Tolson: My colleague Margaret Smith MSP and many of her constituents have raised concerns with you and others about traffic management during construction of the Forth crossing. What changes to access arrangements for contractors have been made to minimise

impacts on local traffic and residents on streets that are to be used by construction traffic, such as Society Road?

Mike Glover: We have been consistent on the issue of Society Road, to take that as an example. We have said in evidence previously that Society Road in its fullest extent will be used only at the beginning and end of the contract to create the section of Society Road that will be used for construction activities. Other than during those periods at the beginning and end, only that section of Society Road will be used. That is from Clufflat Brae, where we will break through the field, down to the barracks. Other than that, there will be no construction traffic on Society Road.

On a wider issue, the heavy vehicle movements will be out of peak hours, which is part of the green policy that we have with the contractors. The contractors will also operate a green transportation policy that will minimise the number of individual trips by operatives. This might not sound too logical, but one reason why we seek earlier starting hours and later finishing hours for construction is so that people who are going to the work site avoid the peak period and therefore do not add to traffic at the rush hour. There are lots of little devices that we will use.

Last but not least, parking is always an issue—operatives using the local roads, for instance. That will not be acceptable under the contract. One of the complaints procedures is to report vagrant parking so that it can be dealt with. That raises a local issue, however, in that many people in the local community will be working on the site. There is therefore an issue as to how to identify that sort of road parking as distinct from others. There is a series of small tactical issues that we will deal with, and they all add up to a plan to avoid impact from transportation on the local community.

Jim Tolson: How, in addition to that, have the traffic management arrangements that are planned for the construction phase been changed to better accommodate cyclists and pedestrians?

Mike Glover: One of the major changes that we have introduced, which has come out of direct consultation, concerns the two wide cycleways/pedestrianways at the South Queensferry junction. People have to cross traffic to get to them. We have evolved a pathway that goes from Clufflat Brae area in the south, through the Echline fields, around the south of the north end of the south abutment and then up towards Newton. That is a cycleway and pedestrianway. That is an example of how we have responded directly to issues that have been brought to our attention. We are still maintaining what I would call the strategic routes across the South Queensferry junction, which involves the 3m-wide cycleway/pedestrianway, as there is a strategic

need there, but we have also introduced that route for what I would call more domestic use and walking. That has been widely accepted as a positive move.

Jim Tolson: I am grateful for that.

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): Have contractors now provided estimates of greenhouse gas emissions for the construction of the Forth crossing?

David Climie: No, they have not provided them yet, but that forms part of the overall tender assessment that we carry out through the final invitation-to-tender documents, which we will be sending out just before Christmas. There is a section in those documents where contractors must complete their carbon footprint calculation, which will be part of the evaluation process that will be included in the awarding of the contract.

Marlyn Glen: The invitations will be sent out just before Christmas. When do you expect to get the estimates?

David Climie: The tender return date is 28 January. We will then have a two-month evaluation period prior to the award of the contract.

Marlyn Glen: What role will those estimated greenhouse gas emissions play in deciding the award of the tender to build the Forth crossing?

Lawrence Shackman: The contract is split 92.5 per cent on cost and 7.5 per cent on quality. The greenhouse gas or carbon element of the submission is part of that 7.5 per cent assessment, which also includes commitments to community engagement, taking on unemployed people, giving apprenticeships, taking on graduates and running training schemes, as well as careful programming of the project. It makes up about a quarter of that 7.5 per cent. If you look at the project as being £1 billion, that is worth quite a lot of money.

Marlyn Glen: You are talking something less than 2 per cent.

Lawrence Shackman: Yes—but that is worth quite a few million pounds.

Marlyn Glen: Absolutely.

The Convener: Was any consideration given to alternative approaches as part of the assessment of the climate change impact of the project, for example using a carbon price?

15:00

Lawrence Shackman: That is effectively what is happening. Without going into too much detail, the way that the assessment is done for the main crossing element is that it considers where the

materials come from and how they are manufactured. The materials are split down into, for example, steel and concrete, and if they come from the other side of the world there will be a much bigger penalty than if they come from somewhere local. The assessment uses current guidance on the cost of such things and the impact that they make in respect of carbon. I cannot give you the figures off the top of my head, but we could supply them to you if you want them.

The Convener: That would be helpful.

Charlie Gordon: I do not know whether I heard Mr Climie correctly, but I think he said that the main contract invitation to tender would go out just before Christmas, with a closing date of 28 January 2011. Is that a standard period at that time of year? Do some contractors not take Christmas off?

David Climie: I am sure that some of them do, but we have to bear in mind that we have been through a 12-month dialogue period in advance of the invitation to final tender on 17 December, so we do not expect considerable new information suddenly to be released. This is just the formal closing out of the procedure. If the firms have to work through Christmas, so be it, but we do not anticipate that they will have to, because the bulk of the work will already have been done. In advance of the invitation to final tender, they will submit to us an outline proposal at the beginning of November, which we have an opportunity to review and comment on to ensure that we have no significant areas of concern and that there are no clarifications that we think we will need in advance of the final tender.

Charlie Gordon: Could the timescale for the invitation to final tender be influenced by any glitches that you identify in the intermediate process that you mentioned, which will take place around November?

David Climie: It could be, but we do not anticipate that that will happen. As I said, because of the 12 month-dialogue period that we have had—we are having the ninth in a series of dialogue meetings tomorrow and on Thursday—we do not anticipate that anything will come up, and there is sufficient time between them giving us the outline procedures at the beginning of November and the invitation to submit the final tender on 17 December. We do not anticipate there being any changes to those dates.

The Convener: Several major transport projects have been delayed as a result of people feeling that they needed to make a legal challenge based on, for example, Aarhus convention rights not having been met. Without wanting to get into a debate about whether we all support the project, if it is going to go ahead according to the timescale

that you are requiring, you will need to be crystal clear that there is no possibility of a challenge on those grounds. Have you closely examined that issue?

Frazer Henderson: Yes: we have done so in particular because we have followed a hybrid bill process, and people could, in terms of the Aarhus convention, judicially review the process with a determination, which would, in effect, be judicially reviewing the Parliament. Clearly, Parliament has taken legal advice on that matter.

The Aarhus convention and the European convention on human rights were raised at stage 1; the matter was given quite an airing by the Forth Crossing Bill Committee. We believe—because the subject was not up for debate at stage 2—that the processes that have been followed by us and by the Scottish Parliament give us comfort that we are in a position robustly to defend a challenge. That is not to say that somebody may not make a challenge. We are clearly having to look at what the risks are if a challenge is made and how it might impact on the project.

The Convener: As there are no more questions for the panel of witnesses, I will mention the process by which we get updates. We have been in the habit of having a verbal update at a meeting such as this one every six months or so. Given the complexity of the project and the on-going developments that will be taking place, it might be useful for us to get a written update more frequently than that, maybe every couple of months or thereabouts. Is that agreeable to you?

David Climie: Yes. I see no reason why it should not be possible to do that.

The Convener: That would certainly be helpful. Thank you very much.

There being no further questions, I bring this agenda item to a close. I thank you all for your time in answering questions and we look forward to the first written update.

We now move into private session for the third item on the agenda.

15:04

Meeting continued in private until 15:16.

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