



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 9 February 2010



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**TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE  
4<sup>th</sup> 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:**

Alex Macaulay (South East of Scotland Transport Partnership)  
Phil Matthews (Sustainable Development Commission Scotland)  
Bob McLellan (Fife Council)  
Marshall Poulton (City of Edinburgh Council)  
Sasha Trifkovic (Sustainable Development Commission Scotland)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Steve Farrell

**SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK**

Alastair Macfie

**ASSISTANT CLERK**

Clare O'Neill

**LOCATION**

Committee Room 6



## Scottish Parliament

### Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

*Tuesday 9 February 2010*

[The Convener opened the meeting at 14:00]

### Subordinate Legislation

#### Water Services Charges (Billing and Collection) (Scotland) Order 2010 (SSI 2010/10)

**The Convener (Patrick Harvie):** Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the fourth meeting this year of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee. I remind everyone present that all mobile devices should be switched off rather than just being put on silent. I record that we have received apologies from Cathy Peattie, Rob Gibson and Alex Johnstone, and I welcome Alasdair Allan, who is appearing as a committee substitute.

The first item on the agenda is subordinate legislation. SSI 2010/10 is a negative instrument, which provides—in relation to the years 2010-11 and 2011-12—for each local authority in Scotland to be responsible for demanding and recovering the charges that are payable in respect of the water supply and sewerage services that Scottish Water provides to dwellings in that local authority area.

The committee will be aware that no motions to annul the order have been lodged and that we have received a report from the Subordinate Legislation Committee, which made no comments on the order. Does the committee agree that we do not wish to make any recommendations on the order?

**Members indicated agreement.**

## “Sustainable Development: Third Annual Assessment of Progress by the Scottish Government”

14:02

**The Convener:** Item 2 on the agenda is an evidence session with the Sustainable Development Commission Scotland. I welcome Phil Matthews, senior policy adviser, and Sasha Trifkovic, policy officer.

Members have a number of questions about the commission's third assessment report, but before we begin them, I offer the witnesses the chance to make some brief opening remarks.

**Phil Matthews (Sustainable Development Commission Scotland):** I will set the report in context: it is our second annual report on the current Administration. The next report, which will be published in December this year, will be an overall appraisal of sustainability performance across the lifetime of the Administration. In other words, the report is the second in a three-stage process of appraisal.

**The Convener:** In a previous evidence session, the commission told us that, as an independent adviser to Government,

“We have good access to cabinet secretaries, so we can provide information to Cabinet when we need to do so.”—[*Official Report, Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee*, 5 May 2009; c 1708.]

I want to explore that a little further. Is the commission fully engaged in the policy and decision-making process on an on-going basis, or is its opinion sought by the Government on an ad hoc basis?

**Phil Matthews:** As far as the civil service is concerned, we have good relationships with people across the Administration. As you know, since 2007 we have had a proper team in Scotland; before that, we had just one person here. Over the past few years, we have built stronger ties across the civil service, by which we are extremely encouraged.

As far as involvement with ministers is concerned, we will have a review meeting with Mr Swinney early in March. We do not request meetings with ministers that often, because they are extremely busy people, but when we do we always receive a positive response and we have certainly found them very welcoming. Although we seek civil servants' advice and they actively approach us about our work, we do not engage proactively with ministers in that way.

**The Convener:** So you would say that it is a two-way dialogue with civil servants, but you have

to go asking for meetings with ministers—they do not come knocking on your door.

**Phil Matthews:** Yes, although I would not frame it in quite that way. I appreciate that ministers are very busy people, with whom many other people seek meetings. When we have sought meetings with them, we have always found them responsive.

**The Convener:** How does the commission measure its success in supporting the creation of a sustainable economy, society and ecological base?

**Phil Matthews:** As members will know, our assessment reports are our core task every year, although we are also engaged in all sorts of other work. In our assessment reports, we provide a series of recommendations and we outline what we intend to do over the coming year. In the appendix to an assessment report, we review whether we have done what we said last year that we would do, and whether the recommendations that we made to the Government last year have been implemented. Our reports are in the public domain, so it should be open to others to see whether we achieved those aims.

We are, however, just one of many bodies involved in such discussions, so it is hard to identify and track how our engagement has led to changes in the performance of Government policy. As part of our work on planning this year, we had very positive direct engagement on the revised Scottish planning policies and we feel that the text on sustainable development in the new draft SPPs is directly linked to some of our discussions with the officials involved.

**The Convener:** Other members will ask about climate change legislation, so I will leave that aside just for the moment. In general terms, what progress has the Scottish Government made towards meeting the five challenges that the Sustainable Development Commission set out in its previous report? What are the barriers to more progress?

**Phil Matthews:** I will run through the five challenges in turn.

The first was to introduce a challenging framework for action on climate change. Obviously, the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 was passed with cross-party involvement and we very much welcome that. We also welcome the targets under the act. As we outline in our report, the challenge now will be to ensure that we deliver on them, especially in key areas of the economy—transport being the obvious one—where there are particular challenges.

Another challenge was to address fuel poverty. We support the energy assistance package, which

lends a greater coherence to the overall approach. The problem is that a gulf exists between the resources allocated—although I appreciate that we are in very difficult financial times—and the resources that everyone accepts would be required both to address fuel poverty within the Government's timescales and to cut the carbon emissions from our housing stock.

Infrastructure was another challenge. There is a lot of focus still on large infrastructure, much of which does not seem to be particularly compatible with achieving a 42 per cent cut in carbon emissions by 2020. We think that the national planning framework is reasonably well aligned with sustainability principles, but there is a disconnect between that and the cumulative effect of planning decisions on the ground. In most local authority areas, the sorts of developments that are still being approved are not compatible with the sorts of targets that the Government has set or with wider health targets—I am referring not just to climate change.

Procurement in the public sector was another challenge. The Government has produced a sustainable procurement action plan, which we very much welcome, but there is still a concern that the wider public sector will not necessarily develop challenging plans to integrate sustainability into procurement. We plan to review that over the next year.

The fifth challenge—the big one—was on the sustainability of the economy generally. There is evidence that the Government is seeking to engage in discussion on that. Our economics commissioner, Tim Jackson, who prepared our "Prosperity without growth?" report, spoke to Government officials last week and engaged in debate on that. Clearly, it is a major challenge to alter our economy from its current course, but the issue certainly needs to be explored further by Government.

**The Convener:** Would it be fair to say that each of those five challenges could be set with the same emphasis this year as when the commission published last year's report?

**Phil Matthews:** We now have the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, which meets our challenge that the Government should put in place ambitious and challenging legislation to tackle climate change. The Government and the Parliament collectively have achieved that. However, a major challenge will be to move to policies that deliver on the aspirations of the act. I am not sure that, taken as a totality, individual decisions that have been made so far can be reconciled with those aspirations. Clearly, it will take some time to move forward on that issue, which also involves other players such as local authorities.

The problem in relation to fuel poverty is not the aspirations in the framework, but the resources that have been allocated to it.

As far as the wider economic issues go, we are seeing the first steps towards looking at clean technology and encouraging marine energy through some of the green new deal or green growth-type arguments. The bigger question about whether a growth-based economy is sustainable in the long term is a discussion that is not really taking place within Government.

**The Convener:** Is the concept of sustainable economic growth still open to the same questions? Is the meaning of the phrase still not clear, even though an explanation has been sought for several years in a row?

**Phil Matthews:** It is a general phrase. We can ask 10 economists what "sustainable economic growth" means and get 11 answers. Note the question mark in the title of the report "Prosperity without growth?" by our economics commissioner, Tim Jackson, in which he explores how growth-based economics has not delivered the social or environmental outcomes that we seek. The report was intended to start a debate about whether a growth-based approach is the best way forward and what the alternatives are. Tim Jackson is following up on that work and will report in the next year or so with more positive suggestions for a way forward.

**The Convener:** What are the barriers to more progress? Why has there not been more creative thinking about the long term? Why has there not been policy change on the transport decisions that you criticised in your report? Why has greater priority not been given to cutting emissions in the housing and energy sectors and so on? Why have things not moved forward, when it seems so clear that questions need to be answered?

**Phil Matthews:** All Governments face a degree of inertia. The attitude is, "This is how we've always done things," so people continue to do things in the same way or edge forward with small, incremental changes. The challenge of climate change is such that we need much more than small, incremental changes; we need substantive changes very quickly. That is part of the problem.

Another issue is the silo mentality in Government. The Government tried to address that by reforming how the Cabinet and civil service work. Proper cross-departmental, cross-portfolio working might be working better in some areas than it is in others.

Another challenge is that a large percentage of the public still support many policies, for example in transport, that do not conform to the aspiration to cut carbon emissions by 42 per cent. There is a real job to do of engagement and discussion with

the wider public on alternatives that will deliver the same outcomes but not necessarily in the conventional ways that are currently being explored.

**The Convener:** Do we also need a process of engagement with the wider political landscape and all the organisations that try to influence policy? In my generous moments I might concede that it would be difficult for Government unilaterally to do some of the things that you call for. Do we need the kind of process that led to consensus on the intent of the climate change legislation?

**Phil Matthews:** Yes. I think that that is the logical next step from the 2009 act. The 2009 act poses significant challenges to our current ways of doing things. It will lead to outcomes that are better for everyone concerned and there will be wins all around, but it will also involve decisions that are not politically popular in the current climate. There was a lot of positive cross-party working around the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill and it would be great if that continued and wider civic society was engaged positively in establishing a new consensus on the way forward.

**Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab):** In December, the Sustainable Development Commission Scotland published its third annual assessment of progress by the Scottish Government. Is there evidence that the Scottish Government has considered and acted upon the previous two assessments?

**Phil Matthews:** As I said in response to Mr Harvie, in each assessment we review the recommendations that we made in the previous one and report against them on what the Government has done and on what the commission said that it would do. You will see from the third assessment that the Government has responded to a number of our recommendations, although certainly not to all of them. There is a mixed picture.

14:15

**Marlyn Glen:** Will you give us details of that mixed picture on the record?

**Phil Matthews:** I am trying to think of specific examples. There are fundamental points about the economy and areas in which we have pushed for change. Those are possibly the bigger and more difficult issues and there has been less acceptance of our recommendations on them. There has been more acceptance of specific actions that we thought that the Government could take on health and the development of better internal performance, for example. There is a mixed picture. The report is broad and covers many areas.

**Marlyn Glen:** The commission reports that many of the key indicators of a sustainable society are moving in the wrong direction and that, although the Scottish Government's aspirations and framework for action are going in the right direction, that is not yet mirrored by action. That is basically what you have said. Given that there is no significantly positive trend in any one of the indicators that are reflected in the assessment, where are we on the journey towards a sustainable Scotland?

**Phil Matthews:** I am not sure that there is no significantly positive trend in any of the indicators—we are moving quite fast on renewable energy, for example, and on elements of waste management—but the picture is mixed.

We always focus on outcomes for society. Our recommendations are aimed at policy changes that will, we hope, achieve those outcomes. That is the next step down.

There are major areas of concern with respect to outcomes—the two biggest are health and transport, which we have already touched on. There are still huge challenges in health in tackling obesity, smoking, drinking and wider divisions in healthy living between more affluent and poorer communities in Scotland. There are big and difficult challenges for the Government that will require joined-up thinking. Action on health is not just about action by the national health service; it is also about action on housing, planning and diets. We would like to see a further move towards integrated policy making. That is the only way in which we will start to turn around our negative outcomes and trends.

**Marlyn Glen:** Have we taken the first steps on the journey towards a sustainable Scotland?

**Phil Matthews:** As I said, there are positive trends in outcomes in some areas. What is happening with municipal waste in particular, although perhaps not with waste overall, is a good example of what can be achieved, and greenhouse gas emissions are falling, although they are not doing so nearly fast enough in light of our targets. We need to do a lot more about the intransigent health indicators and outcomes, and there are big issues and challenges to do with the transport aspects of carbon.

**Marlyn Glen:** Basically, you are up against the inertia of Government.

Your assessment report draws on a stakeholder survey that was carried out to gauge opinion on sustainable development progress. One of the commission's conclusions is that respondents were concerned that the Scottish Government was focusing too heavily on economic growth to the detriment of social and environmental factors.

What were the main conclusions of the stakeholder survey?

**Phil Matthews:** That was one conclusion. I return to a point that has already been made. There is a lack of certainty about what sustainable economic growth means and how it tracks through into policy decisions. My recollection of the survey is that it showed that there was a lukewarm view of the Government's progress against outcomes. We asked quite a large number of questions, and the overall conclusion was that stakeholders and the public more generally are not so engaged in the changes in the mechanics of governance—in the national performance framework and such things. Rather, they are, rightly, more concerned with outcomes. There is concern about the disconnect between the two.

**Marlyn Glen:** Yes. They cannot see the outcomes, and they are responding to that.

**Phil Matthews:** Yes.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP):** In the section of your report that deals with the "Wealthier and Fairer" objective, you say that all capital expenditure and investment that is supported by the economic recovery plan and the Scottish investment bank should be based on the principles of sustainable development. Can you provide the committee with more details of your discussions with the Government on that issue and indicate whether it is minded to implement your recommendation?

**Phil Matthews:** We have had no direct discussions with the Government on the issue. As I said, we will meet Mr Swinney in early March; that will be our opportunity to raise the issue. Our engagement to date, since the report was published in December, has been largely with civil servants and has not addressed the specific issue that you raise.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Does the same apply to another part of the section, in which you say that businesses in receipt of support from the Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise or Highlands and Islands Enterprise should have a carbon reduction plan? Will that issue be raised in the same meeting with Mr Swinney, or have you had initial discussions on it with the cabinet secretary, Scottish Enterprise or Highlands and Islands Enterprise?

**Phil Matthews:** I have had informal discussions with people from Scottish Enterprise who are involved in sustainability, to inquire about what is happening in Scottish Enterprise. My understanding—it is not based on a huge amount of detail—is that active consideration is being given to such issues in the enterprise networks. I am not sure exactly what point they have reached and what their outcome will be. The issue is



important and we would like to pursue it over the coming year.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** It seems that the Government is not closed to the recommendation, as you have received no negative feedback yet.

**Phil Matthews:** We have received no negative feedback, but we have not discussed the issue with the Government. I do not want to pre-empt that discussion.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** So it is too early for you to comment on the issue.

You mention the work that you think should be done with VisitScotland, for example, on sustainable tourism. Is that matter at too early a stage for you to comment on it in detail? There is still a lot of work to be done on it, but you have raised it as a key issue for the coming year.

**Phil Matthews:** The assessment report is both backward looking and forward looking. We review the previous year. A lot is happening, but we identify the key developments with which we would like to engage and seek to do that in the year following the report's publication. We have not yet had a conversation about the issue that you raise.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** In their questions, a number of committee members have touched on the issue of transport. You say that you are developing a sustainable transport hierarchy and that a report on that will be published later this year. In a previous year, we heard from you that there was still

"a significant policy gap relating to carbon and transport".

Has the Scottish Government accepted the sustainable transport hierarchy that you are developing, or is there still a large gap about which you are concerned?

**Sasha Trifkovic (Sustainable Development Commission Scotland):** We are in the process of drafting the report and hope that it will be published before the summer. We have engaged with the Scottish Government on the hierarchy, and it has been open to discussion about the suggestion, in which it is interested. The main issue is that the hierarchy is problematic in terms of public acceptability, because demand reduction is at the top. The Government accepts the principle of a sustainable transport hierarchy but has some difficulties with it and wants our advice on how it can best and most acceptably be taken on board.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Earlier we talked about the need for cross-party and civic Scotland involvement in pushing the rest of society towards difficult decisions. How is that progressing? Is the political system living up to the legislation that we

passed? Is civic Scotland still engaged? How can we best deliver such decisions, now that we have delivered the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009?

**Phil Matthews:** Phil Matthews: Are you asking specifically about transport?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Yes.

**Sasha Trifkovic:** The behaviour change strand of the 2009 act will definitely have a role to play. We do not think that the problems in transport policy, especially public attitudes, can be addressed only through transport policy interventions. The public duty and the behaviour change strand of the 2009 act will be a significant opportunity to exert influence in that area.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Have you been asked for advice on, or are you involved in, any of the major construction projects that will be happening soon, such as the Aberdeen bypass and the new Forth crossing?

**Phil Matthews:** We have not had direct engagement on either of those projects. Generally, our comments are directed towards the broad thrust of policy, rather than individual schemes.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Have you sought engagement and been refused, or is it just not an issue? As one organisation you can cover only so much, so is that where you have to limit what you do?

**Phil Matthews:** We are a small team. The position paper on sustainable transport, on which Sasha Trifkovic is leading, is a critique of current policy. That is the level at which we would like to work. We want to focus on framing future Government transport strategy. As I said, individual schemes will make it more difficult for Government to meet carbon targets, but we would rather focus on the general principles, and issues such as the hierarchy of transport, which Sasha Trifkovic mentioned.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Have the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland in particular been fully engaged with and supportive of that project. Are you getting the information that you require to carry out the analysis?

**Sasha Trifkovic:** Yes. The Government and Transport Scotland have engaged, although they are understandably wary, because the issue has proved so intractable in the past. They are worried about whether the action that they are taking will be considered to be not enough. However, they are aware of the problems and they are focused on finding solutions and answers. It is a tricky area, but they are engaged.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Will you write to the committee when that report is completed, so that we can review it?

**Phil Matthews:** We will be happy to do so.

**The Convener:** I have a supplementary question on transport. Your assessment report mentions the carbon assessment of the Scottish budget, which was conducted for the first time in relation to the budget that the Parliament has just agreed. Have you expressed a view on the Government's decision to treat transport emissions as those arising only from the construction of infrastructure and not from its use? Is that a fair representation of the carbon impact of transport spending decisions?

**Phil Matthews:** The same method is used for the carbon appraisal of the strategic transport projects review. The majority of carbon emissions come from the use of new roads, rather than their construction. I saw a presentation about the new Forth crossing, at which it was clear that efforts have been made to minimise the carbon that is involved in the construction, which is welcome. However, the overall long-term impact of the road must be the focus.

**Sasha Trifkovic:** As happens with money, we want carbon to be costed on a whole-life basis and not just for the construction.

**The Convener:** So you argue that a reliable methodology is already available—we can do it now, without another year of theoretical work.

**Sasha Trifkovic:** It probably cannot be done perfectly. Evidence might still be required here and there, but it would definitely be possible to get an estimate.

**Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** I turn to chapter 2.2, which has the headings "Smarter" and "Education for Sustainable Development". That is the area in which the Scottish Government appears to have made the most progress. Can you explain why it is easier to embed sustainable development principles in the education sector than it is in other sections of society?

**Sasha Trifkovic:** There are a variety of reasons. Young people are fairly receptive to the ideas and the agenda. Education is a closed and defined community, so it is easy to target and engage. The people are located in one place—in schools or universities. That is why community learning is the most problematic, because it does not happen in one place. For historical reasons and because of the attributes of education, it has been slightly easier to make progress.

**Alison McInnes:** You say that sustainable development has been quite well embedded in the curriculum for excellence and so on. How long-

lasting will the effects of such an approach be? Will we create a new set of citizens who do not find these kinds of decisions as difficult to make as we do or will the effects not last as long as that?

14:30

**Sasha Trifkovic:** We will have to wait and see. As we say in the report, we want the implementation of curriculum for excellence to be adequately resourced, and the Scottish Government must emphasise its proper embedding in Scotland's schools to ensure that it carries through into further and higher education. However, although education is important, ultimately it is by no means the only source of society's values.

**Alison McInnes:** Moving on, I appreciate that the recommendations for Government in the "Healthier" chapter of your report focus on a number of different issues including fuel poverty, energy efficiency, active travel and environmental education and action. Is there an understanding across Government that these policy areas are all crucial in delivering better health in Scotland?

**Phil Matthews:** There has been some movement in that respect. Our appraisal of the Government's new policy statements and strategies since it came to power suggests that they are more integrated than they were before. However, as I said earlier, there is still so much more to do. Given the need for an integrated approach and the scale of the health challenges facing Scotland, we have to be more active in making such links and in linking local, regional and national action across the country.

**Alison McInnes:** That echoes the theme in your report of the need for a more holistic approach. What more can the SDC do to assist that kind of cerebral activity around the issue? You have recommended that we need

"further progress on integrating health with wider policy especially in relation to transport/active travel"

but that will clearly need support. Can you offer that?

**Phil Matthews:** The sustainable transport paper that we are developing considers exactly those issues. Although we are now examining the carbon as well as the economic impacts of transport, we have not yet appraised the wider health benefits of active travel. The Government's transport carbon assessment, for example, is looking at the cost effectiveness of various measures. Of course, on that scale, walking comes at one end and cycling at the other but once we factor in wider sustainability objectives around health, for example, both modes become very desirable. We would very much like to create more understanding in that respect.

**Alison McInnes:** I was interested to note in the “Safer and Stronger” chapter your comment that

“planning decisions are not always delivering sustainable and low carbon communities.”

Such decisions are based on local plans, and it takes a long time to turn them around. As a result, a lag might well have developed. Will the new suite of plans from local authorities stop that move away from sustainable development and turn things back in that direction?

**Phil Matthews:** I have not looked at those plans in detail. However, after looking at the options set out in a couple of draft city region plans—not, I should add, as part of any scientific appraisal—I cannot see how they will deliver the 42 per cent carbon cut or, indeed, many of the other sustainable development outcomes that we seek.

There is certainly a time lag in this respect. Although, as I have said, the current national planning framework is much better than it was, the challenge for local authorities and central Government is to move the process on quickly and reconcile the two levels of planning.

**Alison McInnes:** Local authorities will tell you that they believe in sustainable development principles, have signed various charters and so on. What practical support can you provide to help them to move forward in this matter?

**Phil Matthews:** As a small team, our focus is very much on the Scottish Government which, with the concordat, has a particular relationship with local authorities. However, other bodies such as the sustainable Scotland network already work on sustainability issues with local government. Although our attention is focused on national Government, the debate is so important that we are interested in engaging with local authorities on that general approach.

**Alison McInnes:** Is it an attainable goal for principles from the Scottish sustainable communities initiative to be standard practice in all planning decisions?

**Phil Matthews:** It has to be. Again, I would not pretend that that will be easy given the history of planning and house building in Scotland over the past 20 years, but we have targets that we must meet. The other message on planning is that a sustainable approach delivers much better communities—communities that people want to live in, that are healthier, less stressful and more socially inclusive and where people can work near where they live. Both local and national Government must aspire to that goal.

The problem that we have always suffered from is that we have lots of great pilot initiatives, such as the work on sustainable communities, but translating those into uniformity on the ground

takes a hell of a long time, if it happens at all. We really need to see that happen—and quickly.

**Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab):** How are you engaging with the public bodies that are identified in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 to ensure that they are equipped to help reach Scotland’s climate change targets?

**Phil Matthews:** We had a meeting with the Government yesterday about the public duty and we will, we hope, have some engagement in the consultation exercise on that duty—how it is framed and how the views of all the different important parts of the public sector feed into the process. That is how we are directly engaged.

**Charlie Gordon:** So you are getting ready for the engagement, but it has not actually started yet.

**Phil Matthews:** The engagement is a Government process. The Government is developing a public duty as required by the 2009 act. Consultation is coming out on that, and we are helping to advise the Government on the consultation process and methods.

**Charlie Gordon:** So there is going to be consultation about engaging on the public duty.

**Phil Matthews:** Developing the public duty is not our responsibility; it is in the gift of the Government, as required by the 2009 act. Our role is to encourage a process that is inclusive and effective in developing a duty that mandates local authorities and other public bodies to deliver much lower carbon outcomes.

I do not quite understand your question. I am not sure what role we would take other than to advise Government on something that it is required to do.

**Charlie Gordon:** So you would not do any hands-on engagement but instead advise the Government on elements of that engagement.

**Phil Matthews:** Before Christmas, at the Government’s request, we convened a discussion involving various public bodies, including the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. In fact, the process goes back further than that. Quite a long time ago, we had a discussion with the Scottish Government, COSLA and others on the desired approach to the public duty in what was to become the 2009 act. Our engagement was in working out what would be a realistic public duty, which was, we hope, fed into the parliamentary process. The duty is now a Government responsibility, and we are contributing to the process as much as we can as a small public body—clearly, lots of other organisations have a role to play, too.

**Charlie Gordon:** You have highlighted behaviour change as a key delivery mechanism

for the requirements of the 2009 act. What should an engagement strategy contain, and how should it work in practice?

**Phil Matthews:** Again, we have had some initial discussions on that. To me, behaviour change has many different facets. Too often, Government can approach behaviour change with the idea that, if it gives the public a lot of information, the public will think that something is a good idea and change their behaviour because of it. There is nothing wrong with that—it is part of the process—but there has to be more than that.

There has to be much more active engagement both in specific projects, such as alternatives to new road projects, and more generally. There have to be fiscal incentives, education at every level, engagement with communities and things such as the climate challenge fund. The challenge is to develop a coherent approach, which helps to build up wider public support, so that support for lower-carbon communities becomes a consensus position.

**Charlie Gordon:** Do the public have to see that there is something in it for them?

**Phil Matthews:** I will not pretend that every decision that the Government must make on climate change will have positive outcomes for everyone. However, as I said in response to an earlier question, more sustainable communities are better all round for people. The heart of the message must be positive, although people must also recognise that difficult issues must be explored, for example to do with how we do things fairly, how we include people and how we make people feel that their voice is being listened to. It is a complex issue, which has many different strands.

**Charlie Gordon:** What is your opinion of the Scottish Government's performance on greenhouse gas emissions from its estate and transport, which rose in 2007-08? How does the Government's performance compare with the record of United Kingdom Government departments?

**Phil Matthews:** Emissions from Scottish Government buildings and transport went up in 2007-08, which is the most recent year for which there are figures. That is not good. The Government is meant to be leading by example and it must do that by cutting its own carbon emissions.

The data are such that a comparison with other Administrations' performance is problematic. However, there are aspects of the Whitehall estate in relation to which we have a more active role in appraising performance. Some Government departments down south are doing better than the

Scottish Government is doing; some are doing less well.

We are keen to develop the framework within which the Scottish Government develops its approach, to make it more robust and open to scrutiny. Yesterday I had a discussion with Scottish Government officials about whether the commission can adopt a role that is similar to our role as an auditor of Government in Whitehall and the Welsh Assembly Government.

**Charlie Gordon:** You said that you have a more active role in appraising the performance of other Administrations. Are you saying that you aspire to do more in relation to the Scottish Government's responsibilities?

**Phil Matthews:** Yes. We are in discussion with the Scottish Government on that. There is a role for audit and scrutiny in driving performance generally, and such scrutiny would contribute to better performance by the Government in future.

**Charlie Gordon:** You would like to be more police officer than policy person.

**Phil Matthews:** I envisage our reports as a contribution to the overall scrutiny of Government—that is the intention. We can identify good performance, areas of concern and good practice that we think the Scottish Government would do well to adopt. There are different facets to what we do, but scrutiny is part of the process.

**Charlie Gordon:** You have said that the Scottish Government should develop a framework for

"Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate".

Will you say more about that?

**Phil Matthews:** Yes. As I said, we have been in discussion with the Scottish Government on that. There are two aspects of what we do in Whitehall, one of which is SOGE—there are different pronunciations of the acronym, but the Government prefers something that sounds better than "soggy"—

**Charlie Gordon:** Run that by me again.

**Phil Matthews:** Sustainable operations on the Government estate—SOGE. The SOGE framework in Whitehall involves environmental targets—the Scottish Government has equivalent targets. There are many mandated mechanisms, for example to ensure that the Building Research Establishment environmental assessment method—BREEAM—is included in what the Government does. There is also the procurement aspect. The Scottish Government does environmental reporting, but we want the framework to be broadened, in the first instance to include something equivalent to mandated mechanisms and to include wider work on

procurement. In future the Government could also develop better corporate citizenship in relation to how it manages its estate in the context of economic and social performance—such an approach would go beyond the environmental aspects.

The second aspect of what we do in Whitehall is the sustainable development in Government—SDIG—process, which is the appraisal of performance under SOGE.

We are interested in both aspects and we undertake both functions for the UK Government and the Welsh Assembly Government. We are discussing with the Scottish Government whether it would be appropriate to develop a similar approach here.

**Charlie Gordon:** How has the Scottish Government reacted to your aspiration to have more power?

14:45

**Phil Matthews:** I would not frame it in quite those terms, but the discussions have been very positive. There is a recognition that performance has not been good in some areas of the estate. For example, the Government has got involved in the Carbon Trust scheme—a carbon management scheme—and is trying to turn some things around. Nothing has been agreed yet, but the Government appears to be interested in developing a wider, more robust framework for appraising the process. If we could help with that, we would be happy to, as it is important.

**The Convener:** I have a few additional questions on energy. The “Climate Change and Energy” section of your report touches on energy efficiency and a renewable heat action plan, and mentions the forthcoming position paper on coal, which might say something further about carbon capture and storage and whether we should be approving new coal-fired power stations before CCS is available. The position paper might also say something about the expansion of opencast extraction and its social, health and community impact.

However, there is less on the wider issues of energy generation and the Scottish Government’s role in determining questions around grid infrastructure and use of the planning system in relation to wind power. There are also issues around the balance between large and small renewable generation, decentralised energy and community ownership, which would have additional benefits for social justice, community empowerment and economic considerations, as it would help to cushion people against rising energy prices. Is there scope for the SDC to address more of those questions?

**Phil Matthews:** Over the past few years we have prepared reports on various aspects of energy. At the UK level, we have done reports on the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets and on nuclear power. As you say, we are preparing a statement on coal. We have done a report on wind, too. I agree on the points about demand reduction and about developing an energy infrastructure that is sustainable in the wider sense and which includes small-scale, community-level contributions—which we actively support.

We are just about to finalise our work programme for 2010-11 and it is likely to contain further work on demand reduction and other issues at a UK level.

**The Convener:** When the current Scottish Administration was formed, one of its stated intentions was to create an energy policy for Scotland, albeit that the regulation of energy is a reserved matter. There are important decisions for Scottish ministers that impact on the sustainability of the energy system. Has a sustainable energy policy for Scotland emerged, or are we still some way off that?

**Phil Matthews:** As we acknowledge in our report, there has been a lot of progress on renewables, and there is interest in the Government on the next frontier in renewables—marine power and so on. We welcome much of that. There has been some action on demand reduction and energy conservation, but a lot more needs to be done on that front. That should be the focus of energy policy.

There is no particular incoherence in what is being done, although more needs to be done in certain areas, and there are big questions ahead for our generation and infrastructure requirements.

**The Convener:** There are no final questions for the panel. Do you wish to say anything that has not come up in our questions?

**Phil Matthews:** No—that is fine.

**The Convener:** Thank you very much for your time and for answering our questions.

14:49

*Meeting suspended.*

14:55

*On resuming—*

## Forth Crossing Bill

**Patrick Harvie:** Agenda item 3 is continued evidence taking on the Forth Crossing Bill. Today we will hear from witnesses representing local authorities and transport organisations. During this and the sessions over the next few weeks, we will examine the proposals in the bill to create a public transport corridor, and we will consider the impact on public transport services. Just to recall comments from last week's session, I note for the record that the Forth Crossing Bill Committee will lead on the bill, and this committee will focus specifically on public transport aspects. We will report to the lead committee in due course.

I welcome our panel of witnesses. We are joined by Alex Macaulay, partnership director at south east of Scotland transport partnership; Bob McLellan, head of transportation services at Fife Council; and Marshall Poulton, head of transport at the City of Edinburgh Council. I thank you all for joining us and for providing your written evidence to the committee, which members have been given. Do any of you wish to make brief opening remarks before we begin the questions?

**Alex Macaulay (South East of Scotland Transport Partnership):** I will kick off, and I will be brief. First, I want to correct a minor typo in my written submission. In the covering letter, I refer to a meeting with the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change on 20 January, but the meeting was on 19 January. That is correctly recorded in the note of the meeting.

More important, I stress that SEStran supports the progress of the bill through Parliament and does not want there to be any delay in the process. We have expressed to the minister our concerns about the lack of public transport facilities within and associated with the bill. It is fair to say that the measures that we seek can be developed outwith the legal process of the hybrid bill. Powers are available to the Scottish Government to deliver the public transport measures that we seek.

I refer the committee to annex C of attachment 5 of our written submission, which is the most recent version detailing the public transport measures for which we are seeking the Scottish Government's support. My role today on behalf of SEStran is to encourage the committee as much as I can to seek a commitment from the minister and the Scottish Government to implement the measures in that annex. I emphasise that the proposals flow from a paper that was prepared jointly by SEStran and three of our partner authorities, two of which are represented here today, and one of which has

a representative in the public gallery. At our last meeting with the minister, Russell Imrie, SEStran's chairman, expressed support for the general proposals in annex C, and SEStran seeks the committee's support in achieving the Scottish Government's support for the implementation of those public transport measures.

15:00

**Marshall Poulton (City of Edinburgh Council):** I thank the committee for the opportunity to give evidence on what the City of Edinburgh Council believes to be very important issues. We object to various elements of the bill, but we do not object to its principle. I would like to make it clear that we support the development of a new crossing strategy.

We have serious concerns in three key areas, one of which Alex Macaulay has already mentioned. First, City of Edinburgh Council believes that the bill should be amended to allow the construction of infrastructure that will deliver significant benefits for public transport, and thereby mitigate the adverse effect of any increase in traffic that results from building the new bridge. We believe that such a strategy would accommodate any future growth in cross-Forth trips that might arise from economic development. Secondly, the council objects to the removal of certain of its powers as a roads authority, especially with regard to the transfer of future liabilities, because that will restrict the council's ability to programme and co-ordinate road works, which is important. Thirdly, the council objects to the removal of its powers to control air and noise pollution during the construction period and the impact that that will have on local people and communities.

I am happy to answer any questions.

**Bob McLellan (Fife Council):** I thank the committee on behalf of Fife Council for the invitation to attend this meeting.

For the avoidance of any doubt, Fife Council supports the development and implementation of the new Forth crossing project. Furthermore, the council does not object to the bill per se, and we do not want to delay its passage, as we believe that the delivery of the project is crucial to the successful economic wellbeing of Fife, the south-east of Scotland and the country as a whole. However, we are concerned about some aspects that are not currently addressed by the proposals. It is said that there is likely to be a 39 per cent increase in traffic by 2017. We firmly believe that complementary public transport measures must be developed and implemented as an integral part of the overall project, preferably before the new crossing is in place.

Our three concerns rest on the need for further development of public transport, and we are working—as has already been said—with colleagues in Edinburgh, West Lothian and SEStran, and with the Scottish Government and the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change. The bill—or one of the related documents—mentions that the crossing will not be carbon neutral. We believe that the introduction of a proper public transport strategy in advance of the new crossing being built will solve that part of the equation. In addition, the increase in local traffic will be an issue.

We believe that a proper public transport strategy will address the public transport deficiencies in the current proposals, the emissions issues and the local transport issues.

**The Convener:** Thank you all for your opening remarks, many of which were geared towards public transport. The lead committee may address the timescale of the scrutiny of the bill and the wider impact on the existing powers of local authorities more specifically than we will.

In your joint position statement, which reflects much of what you have said in your opening remarks, you state:

“the project being developed by Transport Scotland does not include any significant measures to encourage greater use of public transport”.

You have all said that you would like such measures to be included.

Several members of the committee were surprised last week by the evidence from the developers on the extent to which some fairly obvious first questions do not appear to have been asked or considered in the development of the project. Some of the answers to those questions may not need to be in the bill, but they should be developed alongside it and inform the overall project.

Can you expand on the public transport measures that you have suggested? Can they be prioritised, or is it an all-or-nothing list?

Do you have suggestions for bus-related infrastructure or other public transport impact issues that you wish to be included in the bill or developed alongside it?

**Bob McLellan:** We have referred to annex C of attachment 5 of our paper, which relates to the public transport strategy and has been developed by Transport Scotland and three councils that are involved in SEStran. You asked about priority. Some projects in annex C have been developed over time. For example, Halbeath park and choose and Rosyth park and choose were covered in work that SEStran undertook as part of the SEStran integrated transport corridor work that was done in

2005. Those projects underwent the Scottish transport appraisal guidance process and both emerged positively, so all the assessment work for those two schemes was done four or five years ago. Both schemes also feature in the strategic transport projects review and have therefore been identified. All that we are saying about those projects north of the bridge is that they have been identified and they have positive cost benefit ratios. The Rosyth facility would provide park and ride for bus and rail. Significant benefits could be derived if the schemes were implemented—even more so if that were done before construction on the north side of the bridge.

As everyone knows, Ferrytoll has been a successful park and ride and has won several Scottish, UK and European awards. Construction of the new Forth crossing will cause much disruption. We do not want to put people off public transport, so it is a no-brainer that public transport measures should be in place north of the bridge, over and above Ferrytoll, to complement what exists. During construction, public transport usage should increase rather than decrease. That could be achieved with relatively small sums of money for the projects that I have mentioned. Colleagues can talk about other projects if you are minded to ask about them, convener.

**The Convener:** Transport Scotland did not seem able even to guesstimate the modal shift that it hoped would be achieved or the demand for park and ride and other parking provision in the rail network to the north of the Forth. Does it strike you as a little disappointing that such questions do not seem to have been addressed?

**Bob McLellan:** Yes. The work that was undertaken on the Halbeath and Rosyth facilities was financed by the previous public transport fund. Those projects have been developed to a stage at which we are almost ready to apply for planning approval. The issue is the construction costs.

In the past five to seven years, Fife Council has been involved in several public transport programmes, including some with colleagues in First ScotRail and Network Rail. Railway platforms have been lengthened; First ScotRail has increased service frequency; park and rides have been created; additional parking—about 1,200 extra spaces—has been provided at railway stations; and Ferrytoll's capacity has been increased from 500 to 1,040 spaces. Many public transport improvements have been made.

From its day of opening, the new bridge will rely completely on modal shift from car to public transport. Not taking account of how to develop further the public transport successes that I have just described—and they can be developed further—would be a big gap in the development of

the project. Of the traffic from the north-east, 51 per cent passes Halbeath interchange on the A90/M90. Of the traffic to the current bridge, 21 per cent comes from Rosyth and Dunfermline. If we caught a reasonable percentage of that 72 per cent of traffic, we could have a huge additional impact on modal shift, particularly at the peak time on the bridge.

**Alex Macaulay:** I will add information on modal share. It has been calculated that, in 2005, about 10 per cent of cross-Forth trips were made by bus. Transport Scotland projects that, for various reasons, that modal share will drop to 5 per cent by 2022 rather than increase.

I emphasise that much more technical work has to be done on the public transport measures and I share Bob McLellan's disappointment that, despite pressure from local authorities and us to do it, it has not been done long before today.

Transport Scotland reckons that, if all the measures in annex C of attachment 5 of our submission are implemented, buses' modal share will return to the 2005 level. The assumption in the analysis—bearing in mind that the replacement bridge is being built with limited vehicular capacity—is that any further growth in demand for cross-Forth travel will have to be met by public transport. The Edinburgh to Glasgow rail improvements will increase rail capacity across the Forth. However, unless buses are given a fair crack of the whip in comparison with cars, we know that drivers and passengers will sit in their tin box, with their air conditioning or heating on, listening to their quadraphonic sound, rather than get out of their car and use public transport. The fact that there is restricted capacity on the new bridge will not automatically mean that further growth will shift to public transport.

For some time, we have been making the case collectively to Transport Scotland that we need a much more rigorous projection of how much modal shift we will achieve as a result of improvements in public transport. To date, the minister's response has been that annex C is a good starting point for a public transport strategy for cross-Forth movements. He has committed himself to seeking a commitment from the Government to implement such a strategy, once we know exactly what must be done, what it will cost and when it should be done. Let us not undermine that—it is good news and a major step forward from where we were six months ago, when we were making the case to colleagues in Transport Scotland.

Convener, you make a valid point. Transport Scotland may have been reticent about estimating modal shift because, frankly, much more technical work needs to be done to get an accurate projection. In round terms, even with annex C, it

would appear that we are getting the 2005 status quo in percentage terms, which is not great.

**Marshall Poulton:** I share my colleagues' concerns. I am a bit disappointed that Transport Scotland did not address the issue at an early stage, but the minister's comments on 19 January were welcome. My two colleagues have alluded to annex C, which we and the minister regard as a good starting point. The whole package of measures comes to about £50 million. One project—A90 northbound bus priority—was missing from the list. While the annex is a good starting point, when we examined it in more detail we discovered that it covers measures only for the morning peak hour—the pm peak hour is not covered. We would like to go further to bring about rail improvements and cross-Forth ferry improvements.

At the committee's last meeting, Transport Scotland referred to the strategic transport projects review. We would welcome acceleration of two projects, in particular: bus orbital movements in Edinburgh and, more important, hard shoulder running on the A720. Transport Scotland alluded to the benefits that could be accrued from having intelligent transport systems on the crossing, which we welcome.

The A720 is one of the biggest congestion hotspots in and around Edinburgh and the Lothians, so it is essential that that project is brought forward.

As my colleagues have said, if we are to implement the package of measures, it must be done before construction starts, to mitigate any effects from the construction traffic.

One other concern is about modal shift. In the morning peak hour on Queensferry Road in Edinburgh, we have a tailback of approximately 1.7km without any incidents having happened. That is a concern in relation to climate change and our air quality management thresholds. Even without additional traffic, we will struggle to meet the nitrogen dioxide threshold. Whatever we do on a managed Forth crossing, it is essential that increased public transport facilities are put in place.

15:15

**The Convener:** I have one more question before I bring in other members. Previously, a new multimodal crossing was expected. Instead, the Government announced that it was going to build an additional road bridge and make the existing road bridge a public transport corridor. How much prior discussion was there with your organisations about that option and when were you made aware of the decision?



**Alex Macaulay:** I can answer the first bit, but I cannot give you the exact date on which we became aware of the decision. There was no prior notice of the shift from a multimodal crossing to a managed crossing.

**The Convener:** There was no dialogue on that.

**Alex Macaulay:** I do not recall any dialogue with SEStran. I cannot remember the date when the announcement was made, but it will be on record somewhere.

**The Convener:** I am not really looking for dates; I just want to know whether discussion took place before the decision was announced.

Mr Poulton, was there any prior discussion with the City of Edinburgh Council?

**Marshall Poulton:** I am relatively new in the council, so I cannot really talk about the dates or the background.

**The Convener:** It would be helpful if you could let us know in writing whether prior discussion took place with the council about the option.

**Marshall Poulton:** I can certainly get back to you with that information.

**The Convener:** What about Fife Council, Mr McLellan?

**Bob McLellan:** One issue at the outset was that the consultation was targeted via the regional transport partnership and reference groups so, technically, local authorities were not in the loop on the full range of consultation. However, in fairness to SEStran, it kept us informed of its dialogue with Transport Scotland. The phrase “distress project” seemed to come out in the past couple of years, when we heard about the condition of the existing bridge and other reasons for the project. However, at no stage was there an intimation of a change from one mode of bridge to another.

The SEStran integrated transport corridor study in 2005 usefully described how it envisaged the two bridges operating together. From memory, I think that the terminology was that it was a “balanced strategy” that sought to optimise the use of the existing bridge and the new one by public transport and other vehicular traffic. We have raised concerns with Transport Scotland about the interoperability of the two structures. I note from last week’s evidence to the committee that that has been raised by other witnesses.

**Alison McInnes:** You have all said that you do not want the project to be delayed. I share those concerns, but it is a multibillion pound project that will provide infrastructure for decades to come—at least we hope that it will—so surely we want the project to be truly multimodal right from the start. If we do not amend the bill to ensure that that

happens, how can we ensure, given the lack of dialogue with Transport Scotland to which you have referred, that the public transport elements are delivered, either in advance or at some point?

**Bob McLellan:** As I said at the outset, Fife Council has not objected to the bill; indeed, we are working with Transport Scotland, ministers and other councils on the matter. At some stage, however, there needs to be a commitment to deliver a public transport strategy and the projects set out in annex C of attachment 5 of the SEStran submission or some enhanced version of that annex. We are looking at putting some timescales against some of those projects which, at the moment, have only indicative timescales, such as less than five years, five to 10 years and so on.

Fife Council has already significantly developed the two projects north of the bridge that I mentioned—the Halbeath and Rosyth park-and-ride schemes—and as our submission makes clear, we believe that we can deliver those projects if a funding package is made available by 2013. The last time we spoke to Transport Scotland, it confirmed that that would more or less tie in with the construction time for works north of the bridge. Obviously, we need to go through planning, due diligence and such like, but we should be able to deliver not only those two projects but the hard shoulder running from Halbeath to the bridge in parallel with the timescales for the new crossing.

**Marshall Poulton:** Although we have objected to the bill on the grounds that it should cover the construction of the infrastructure, I do not think that we will have any problem if a memorandum of agreement is set up and if annex C or whatever we come up with gets a funding commitment and that funding is ring fenced solely for public transport.

**Alex Macaulay:** We are now looking for a parallel track such as the memorandum of agreement that Marshall Poulton has suggested.

To be fair to the minister and, indeed, the Transport Scotland representatives and Scottish Government officers who attended the meeting on 19 January, I do not think that anyone has demurred from the content of annex C. The main issue is how it will be paid for. This is how the term “distress purchase” seems to have come into the vocabulary; in other words, they are saying, “We’re going to build a bridge because that’s all we can afford to build.” I think that that represents a seriously missed opportunity. As Bob McLellan has said, some of the projects in annex C are also in the STPR, which means that they have legitimacy and can be regarded as national priorities. All we are asking for is a commitment from the Government to implement them. That is not a lot to ask, given the proportion of the

project's total cost that these public transport measures represent.

**Charlie Gordon:** You said that when you met Transport Scotland on 19 January and discussed annex C, which sets out your cross-Forth public transport aspirations with regard to the Forth crossing project, its representatives did not demur from your proposals. What did they have to say to the notion that, if the Scottish Government does not sign up to a memorandum of understanding, you might maintain your objections to the main project?

**Alex Macaulay:** Perhaps I can chip in on this question. We did not say at that meeting that the Government needed to sign up to such a memorandum or we would continue to object to the project.

**Charlie Gordon:** Is that what you are saying now?

**Alex Macaulay:** That is not what I am saying, and that is not what SEStran is saying. We are simply saying that we seek the support of not only this committee but, given the opportunity, the Forth Crossing Bill Committee in encouraging the Scottish Government to give us that commitment. In opening the 19 January meeting, Councillor Imrie, the chair of SEStran, welcomed the progress that had been made in developing the public transport strategy and said that it broadly met the aspirations of the three councils in SEStran that were represented.

I also emphasise that the projects set out in annex C are not the proposals that the councils and SEStran initially put to the minister; instead, they are Transport Scotland's response, which was supported by the minister. In other words, annex C is the Government's response to our case. According to my document references, our initial case is set out in the joint position statement, which is attachment number 1 in my written submission. Marshall Poulton has already referred to some other elements of attachment 1 that the Government has not included as part of annex C.

**Charlie Gordon:** That is what I would like to get a feel for. I will not call what Mr Poulton mentioned a wish list, but he mentioned a couple of other projects in the context of the £50 million. I assumed that when he referred to the projects in annex C, he was using today's prices, but I am less sure of that in the light of what Mr Macaulay has just said. What is the value of the package that, ideally, the three organisations would like to be provided? What is the value of the package that constitutes Transport Scotland's response? I just want a rough idea.

**Marshall Poulton:** Annex C, which excludes the A90 northbound bus priority, has a lower-range figure of £43 million and an upper-range

figure of £51 million. I alluded to some other, desirable-but-not-essential aspects of public transport strategy that we would like to see implemented, but no figure has been attributed to those.

**Bob McLellan:** At the initial meeting with Transport Scotland in December, there was discussion of wider projects such as the Edinburgh orbital bus route and a cross-Forth ferry/hovercraft, some of which will have a direct link to the new crossing and some of which will have a slightly less direct link to it. After the discussion at that meeting, annex C was put forward at the January meeting, but there was an omission. We are not talking about an add-on: Transport Scotland has accepted that the A90 northbound bus priority should have been on the list. To all intents and purposes, it is included in the cost. As has been said, the cost of the projects to improve public transport that can be directly linked to the Forth crossing project is somewhere between £43 million and £50 million.

**Charlie Gordon:** Okay, but annex C does not represent the final stage of the negotiations between yourselves and Transport Scotland.

**Bob McLellan:** Fife Council is looking to focus on the projects in annex C. As we say in our submission, the cost of the projects in Fife equates to £7.1 million for the Halbeath project and £6 million for the Rosyth project. Taken together with hard shoulder running for high-occupancy vehicles and bus priority running from Halbeath to the bridge, the total cost will be £25 million. In other words, about half of the £50 million will be required north of the bridge, so I presume that the other half will be for projects south of the bridge.

**The Convener:** Shirley-Anne Somerville has a brief supplementary.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** I want to clarify something to ensure that we are getting the right figures. Am I correct in saying that the £50 million that you are talking about is based on 2006 prices, not outturn prices, and that it does not include VAT or optimism bias, so the final figure for any work done would be higher than £50 million?

**Bob McLellan:** I can speak only for the Fife projects. I do not think that the figures for them include optimism bias, but I can check that and get back to the committee after the meeting if that is not the case.

The prices have been updated from 2005 to 2006. I understand that 2006 is the baseline year for the bridge project and therefore for any associated projects.

**Alex Macaulay:** If the projects are delivered by the public sector, they will be zero rated for VAT, so that is not an issue.

**Marshall Poulton:** Like Bob McLellan, I can check, but my understanding is similar to his—they are 2006 prices and optimism bias is not included.

**Charlie Gordon:** Charlie Gordon: Have you consulted communities to the north and south of the Forth with a view to establishing how cross-Forth bus services could be improved following the opening of the new Forth crossing?

**Bob McLellan:** The project per se is being driven by Transport Scotland, which has held a number of consultation and information meetings in various towns on the Fife side. People have had the opportunity to come to those meetings, primarily to look at nice pictures of the new crossing but also to ask questions, if they have been of a mind to do so.

Detail on bus service improvements has not been provided because, as has been said, they have not been included as part of the project. The only reference in the existing documentation is to improvements to the circulation of buses and traffic in and out of Ferrytoll.

Obviously, that is of interest to the people who use Ferrytoll. I use it on a daily basis and there is no doubt that, because of its success and the number of buses that go through it, that facility will need to be improved with or without the new crossing; that improvement will take place as part of the new crossing project.

With regard to specific meetings about public transport and buses, the public transport aspects appear to have been considered separately from the crossing, so that type of consultation has not—to my knowledge—taken place, at least in Fife.

15:30

**Marshall Poulton:** I concur with that statement. Similarly, on the south side, there has been no direct consultation with local communities at all, certainly not by the City of Edinburgh Council or officials. However, there have been consultations and exhibitions from Transport Scotland and consultants with regard to the construction of the bridge.

**Charlie Gordon:** But my question is whether you, as local authorities, have consulted communities on either side of the Forth about their public transport aspirations. You are showing us an annex that represents your aspirations for projects; I am trying to establish the extent to which they reflect the recently expressed aspirations of the local communities.

**Bob McLellan:** The Rosyth and Halbeath projects in Fife have featured in our local transport strategy since 2006. As part of our development of that strategy, extensive consultation was done

with stakeholder groups, including local communities.

Three short-term measures were outlined in the 2006 strategy. Those were to

“Provide new Park & Choose sites at Halbeath and Rosyth”;

to

“Provide a HOV lane between Halbeath and the northern bridgehead”;

and to

“Introduce bus priority measures on the approaches to the bridge”;

all within a five-year period.

A fourth measure was to examine feeder services that would go not only into Edinburgh, but out to the Gyle and West Lothian. The consultation took place in that context back in 2006.

**Charlie Gordon:** I take it that something similar happened, in terms of local consultation, with regard to most of the projects that are mentioned in annex C.

**Marshall Poulton:** Yes. Those projects emerged as part of our local transport strategy, which runs from 2007 to 2012. Although all the details were not available at that time, they would have been available around 2006.

We have just developed a transport 2030 vision, which has very high-level overarching principles. We did that as comprehensively as we could, with quite a limited budget, and we approached key stakeholders in the community to get their views.

**Alex Macaulay:** The SEStran regional transport strategy document was approved by Scottish ministers in July 2008. It was developed over a two-year period, and extensive consultation was done around it, which included the consultation that Bob McLellan identified on the park-and-ride proposals. The document specifically refers to the relative capacity of the Forth crossing with regard to cars, buses and high-occupancy vehicles, high-occupancy vehicle lanes and so on.

SEStran is seeking to put the flesh on the bones of that regional strategic position, as the extensive consultation showed a high level of public support for the RTS. We are confident from a strategic point of view that we are taking the right direction.

**Charlie Gordon:** You have anticipated my final question. The policy memorandum states that the Forth Crossing

“will not provide a step change increase in the capacity of the route”

and that

“increased travel demand for movement across the Forth will need to be met by improved public transport.”

Do you consider that scenario likely? What needs to be done to make that happen? Presumably the answer is, "Most of what we have already mentioned."

**Alex Macaulay:** Yes, that is fair enough. We are trying to achieve what is stated in the policy memorandum. Interestingly, that statement complies with the position statement in paragraph 5.5.2 of our regional transport strategy:

"the combination of old and new crossings should provide no more than the current two lanes in each direction available to single-occupant cars".

That has been done, because the old bridge will carry public transport. The next bullet point in paragraph 5.5.2 states:

"all new traffic lanes across the Forth need to be dedicated to buses and high occupancy vehicles (HOVs) ... Consideration should be given to the possibility of allowing HGVs to access these lanes".

I do not think that we have achieved that with the balanced crossing, but the RTS just referred to consideration being given. The next bullet point refers to

"HOV priority measures ... on the A90/M90",

which is what we promote in annex C. The next one refers to

"physically separate running lanes for the mixed use of buses, HOVs and ... as far as possible, flexibility ... to enable full vehicle carrying capacity for traffic during periods of bridge maintenance".

That is another issue that my colleagues have raised through their representations to the bill committee. Importantly, the final bullet point in paragraph 5.2.2 states:

"the promoter should be required to put in place"

a package of measures

"that will seek to ensure that traffic in Edinburgh will remain at or below the levels that would have been forecast without an additional crossing."

That recognises that, even if we do not have an additional crossing, there will be increases in traffic in Edinburgh. However, we want to avoid the step change of releasing capacity restraint at the Forth crossing. I think that that position is reflected in the policy memorandum and largely reflected in the fact that the new crossing will simply be two lanes in each direction, plus a hard shoulder, which will be available for public transport when high winds require diversion from the existing bridge.

The Government has therefore gone a long way towards meeting what the RTS sought. The question is whether we can get the public transport measures that will support the statement in the policy memorandum—that is key to why we are here today.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** My question is initially for Marshall Poulton, but others are more than welcome to comment. The City of Edinburgh Council states in its written evidence that the Forth crossing will result in increased traffic levels—we have already discussed that slightly. What impact will such increased levels have on cross-Forth bus traffic? What can be done to alleviate any problems?

**Marshall Poulton:** Currently, there are about 425 bus movements per day over the bridge, some of which have spare capacity. We would look to use and expand that capacity, especially with the Rosyth and Halbeath park-and-choose schemes being in place.

With regard to the volume of traffic that comes over the bridge, Transport Scotland has proposed a number of ITS measures, which are very welcome. Being an advocate of ITS and having implemented a number of ITS tools throughout Glasgow and down in London, I believe that they are very good, although they come with a downside. The benefits come from ITS reducing congestion, and improving safety and the environment; the downside is that ITS are such good tools that we will always get additional throughput—the benefits are eaten up by induced traffic coming back on board. Research has shown that to be the case in Glasgow, on the M42, which has active traffic management, and in and around the M25 in London. We would therefore welcome ITS, but they come at a price; there is increased efficiency, but more traffic comes on board. That is why we want the public transport strategy to be an integral part of the scheme.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Would the ITS be north of the river, or south?

**Marshall Poulton:** They would be both north and south.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Is there any way in which the ITS can be designed to improve journey times for public transport or HOVs? Can the system be designed so that some of the problems that you have discussed can at least be alleviated?

**Marshall Poulton:** Yes. That is why I look forward to seeing what tools Transport Scotland will use—will it be gantry control, headway control or ramp metering? Transport Scotland has not specified what tools it will use. There is an ITS toolkit, and the ITS measures are all there to pick and choose from.

**Bob McLellan:** At the moment, buses score quite significantly over cars by going in the auxiliary lane at Admiralty junction to Ferrytoll and picking up passengers, but the auxiliary lane stops at the bridge. Under the new and revised arrangements for the new crossing, the existing

bridge will be for public transport and the buses will go right through, so journey times for bus traffic will definitely improve. Depending on the level of congestion or otherwise on the new crossing, it will be more advantageous to use the bus.

There is an issue with northbound traffic coming from Edinburgh at the afternoon peak. Since the changeover from the A8000 to the M9 spur, priorities have changed, as we all know, so rather than traffic tailing back on the A8000, it tails back on the M9 spur, which just means that the car park effect has moved. There are definitely issues around bus priority, and some of the projects that are listed in annex C seek to address the afternoon peak traffic coming out of Edinburgh.

There are a couple of hot spots around Edinburgh, such as Blackhall and Queensferry Road. Buses have some priority at Blackhall, but it becomes more difficult on Queensferry Road. However, there is no point in giving buses all the priority in the world at Blackhall and Queensferry Road if they have no priority northbound on the bridge. Traffic gets out of Edinburgh relatively easily, but it gets caught up on the south-side approach to the bridge, which defeats the purpose of prioritisation. Prioritisation must be in place both in Edinburgh and on the approaches to the bridge.

**Alex Macaulay:** Bob McLellan referred briefly to annex C, which contains proposals for hard shoulder running on the M9 southbound on the approach to Newbridge.

The current proposal for improvements to Newbridge is to provide bus lanes at the expense of general traffic lanes through the key elements of the junction. That would fit in with Marshall Poulton's ITS strategy. The roundabout is signal controlled and grade separated, so improving the signal control and the flow through it, particularly for public transport, would be key.

I flag up one of the proposals in annex C as being medium term. If new slip roads from the M9 spur down to the B800—that is the new name for the A8000—are combined with hard shoulder running on the M9 south of that area, that would get traffic on to the B800 as, effectively, a dedicated public transport route up to and across the old bridge.

Our proposals address many of the key issues for public transport priority, but a fair amount of work is still to be done to convince us all that the proposals are as good as they can be.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** It seems as if a lot of the issues south of the river arise from problems that could have been foreseen but were not dealt with when the M9 spur was built. Reference has been made to changing the traffic flow because a different car park effect has been created, and to

hard shoulder running on the M9 spur. Were those issues foreseen? Are we talking about trying to redesign our way out of a problem that arose only a few years ago when the spur was built?

**Bob McLellan:** I will answer that, because I referred to the change in priorities on the M9 and A8000. We do not have the space on the existing bridge to give priority to public transport. Whatever is done at the moment with regard to giving priority to public transport on the southern approaches to the bridge, it has no priority once it is on the bridge. Whether the new crossing is a balanced crossing strategy or a replacement or additional bridge, it will provide the capacity to allow priority to be given to public transport. It will also allow enhanced measures for public transport on the north and south sides of the river so that it can use the additional space.

There will be opportunities at the approaches on the south side that have not been available so far, with just the existing two-lanes-either-way bridge. With the new crossing in place and the relatively small cost even of the whole package of projects in annex C—at £50 million, compared with £2.3 billion or whatever the overall costs will be—such measures can be delivered, and they will make the crossing a truly integrated public transport project rather than just a crossing with limited public transport access from both sides.

15:45

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** The policy memorandum that accompanies the bill states:

“those travellers who do not need to drive in single or low occupancy cars will be encouraged to transfer to public transport.”

We have mentioned high-occupancy vehicles in passing in our questions, but I would like some more detail on the type of encouragement that should be given to people to travel in high-occupancy vehicles or on public transport.

**Bob McLellan:** I believe that 80 per cent of all vehicles going across the Forth road bridge are single occupancy. They represent the lion's share of the traffic, and they are creating the lion's share of congestion during peak times, particularly the morning peak. Making inroads into that number will obviously relieve congestion. At the same time, and probably more important, it will get people on to public transport, which will help with emissions and such like.

That will not be done just by having a public transport route on the bridge—there will have to be complementary measures. As you know, most of the coaches that run between the main towns in Fife and Edinburgh have leather seats and wi-fi, and travelling by bus is now a more pleasant experience than travelling by train. I use the bus

every day between Edinburgh and Fife. It is a choice trip for me; I could use my car or the train, but I use the bus.

The quality of public transport has improved dramatically over the past three or four years. The operators are waiting—in particular, they are waiting for the public sector to play its part, not only on the crossing but also on enhanced public park-and-ride facilities and such like. Operators will play their part, and some of them have said openly that they would invest further in their fleets to provide routes.

The public transport strategy that is being developed between Transport Scotland, councils and SEStran will show that not all people go into central Edinburgh. That is a key point. Some bus routes go from Ferrytoll to West Lothian, the Gyle, Heriot-Watt University's Riccarton campus and so on. They need to be improved—there is a lot of transport there. There are very poor linkages with Victoria Quay and the north of Edinburgh from Ferrytoll, which need to be improved. If the journey opportunity, the choice and a short journey time are available, people will use the services.

The cost benefits are not mentioned very often. Fife Council is marketing the fact that people who car share or use public transport can save more than £1,000 a year. That can pay for things that people need to buy, or cover the cost of their annual holiday, or whatever. People can get financial benefits. If the choice exists, and the journey time is parallel and comparable with a car journey, people will use public transport.

Three years ago, six people might have used a bus from Edinburgh to go to Fife in the morning; now it is 20 to 30 people. Buses pick up people all the way to Barnton—the services have become very successful. We should be able to build on such success.

**Alex Macaulay:** We have been emphasising the public transport priority in association with the development of the new crossing. There is a wider agenda, too. We need to have the information in place as well as the infrastructure, so that people know what services are available. Bob McLellan referred to the quality of the product that is provided. I can give a couple of examples with which SEStran has been pretty successful so far, or is about to be.

One example is TripshareSestran.com, which is a simple, cost-effective website that matches people's journeys so that they can share them in the same car. Since the site was introduced at the end of 2006, we have saved something like three and a half round trips to the moon in vehicle kilometres.

That impact will be increased significantly if high-occupancy vehicle lanes are available on the

areas of major congestion so that multiple-occupancy vehicles can bypass the queues in which the single-occupancy vehicles will be stuck. In general, it is fairly easy to arrange such trips. The bigger the population of people who participate, the more opportunity people have to have their journeys matched; and the bigger the scheme, the more successful it becomes.

We produced a park-and-ride strategy last year for the SEStran area. An awful lot of detailed information on the existing park-and-ride sites in the area came out of that strategy. One initiative for this year is to get that information out. We will set up a web-based, information technology-based system that will enable anybody to find out how long it will take them to get from their house to the nearest park-and-ride site, what public transport services are available from the site and how far they can get within half an hour or an hour by public transport—it is amazing how far it is possible to get within an hour by public transport from a lot of the park-and-ride sites within SEStran. The data will also identify the services at the site, such as whether it is staffed, has closed-circuit television to protect travellers' cars, is sheltered and has heating in the waiting room.

That is a big issue, because many car drivers do not think that way. If we get such quality of information out into the public domain, it will help to encourage people to come out of their cars and use public transport. It will also help them to use the park-and-ride sites as park-and-choose sites, where they can choose to trip share with another car driver and thereby cut down the number of vehicles.

Those are only two examples. There is a wide range of other things that we need to do, but those two will happen anyway.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Two will do just now, because I can feel the pressure from the convener to move on to my final question.

We already had some discussion about whether bus operators wish to supply different services. We heard in last week's evidence that Transport Scotland believed that discussions with bus operators about improved cross-Forth services were a matter for local authorities or regional transport partnerships. What are your views on that? What discussions have you had to date with operators? Perhaps we could start with Mr McLellan, because he mentioned operators in his previous answer.

**Bob McLellan:** In Fife, 93 per cent of bus services operate commercially, so the council supports very few services, but that support still costs £4.5 million per annum. I mention that only because it is expensive to subsidise bus routes, as we all know.

One incentive in which the Scottish Government or Transport Scotland might be interested in the short term for routes that are perhaps not as well patronised as those between Edinburgh and Dundee—routes that go to slightly lesser areas to try to generate travel—is the bus route development grant that operated previously, which is now devolved to local authorities. Just last week, Fife Council let a bus route development grant for a service from Kirkcaldy to Ninewells hospital going through a number of populated areas in Fife. It is subsidised to the tune of £1.1 million over three years. After that, the operator has to operate it on a commercial basis for at least a year.

We have operated a number of such schemes. The 747 bus to Edinburgh airport began as a bus route development grant scheme, as did the X99 from St Andrews to Dundee. Those routes were not commercially viable and operators would not come in and run them except on the back of a bus route development grant. The grant is basically a subsidy for the first three years. If the patronage goes up, the council, Transport Scotland or the Government pays less, so we have paid a lot less than we anticipated over the subsidised period for some of the routes supported by the scheme. That is a good way of sharing the risk between the operators and the council on routes that are less attractive than the main ones. At the same time, operators will not sign up to it if they cannot deliver after year 3.

The quality and accessibility—low floors and wheelchair access—of the buses that are used have improved immensely over the past few years.

In general, operators who speak to us, whether they operate in Fife alone or cross Forth, appear to be willing to invest, and at the end of the day operators are willing to invest only if they can make money. They need, as we do, to be sure that proper public transport facilities will be in place. They know that at Ferrytoll people can watch telly, go to the toilet and get a snack while they wait—people do not wait long, because the buses are frequent, which is good—and that people are not in bus shelters getting wet, because there are proper facilities. If there were similar facilities at Halbeath, Rosyth and equivalent places south of the Forth, more and more people would use buses.

**Marshall Poulton:** Our main bus operator is Lothian Buses, so we have not had discussions with other bus operators.

**Alex Macaulay:** Alex Macaulay: SEStran has not had specific discussions in relation to the new bridge, but we have been promoting the Edinburgh outer orbital bus rapid transit project, which Marshall Poulton mentioned. The system would

provide services round the city bypass corridor, with connections to services across the bridge. I reiterate that although bus operators are interested in projects of that nature, they will be convinced only if they are sure that there is a business case. We developed the business case for the outer orbital bus rapid transit project and we are presenting it to operators who might want to use the system.

It is unfortunate that that has not happened to date for the Forth replacement crossing. That is why we are here trying to get the public transport strategy nailed down. From that will flow the operational business case for the services that come out of the public transport strategy. That is the point at which we need to convince the bus companies that getting involved is worth their while.

**Alison McInnes:** Given that the new Forth crossing and the existing road bridge will constitute a balanced or managed crossing—however we describe it—would there be benefits in having both bridges managed by one organisation? If so, should that organisation be the Forth Estuary Transport Authority, the Scottish Government or a new body?

**Alex Macaulay:** I will jump into the deadly silence that followed that leading question. There is no doubt that there would be operational benefits to having the crossings managed by one organisation. There are two alternatives: Transport Scotland and FETA. FETA has 40 years' experience of managing a complex suspension bridge and has world-renowned expertise in managing big bridges. FETA also has 40 years' experience of managing the traffic problems that are associated with the existing bridge. Offset against those arguments is the fact that the new bridge will be a different structural animal. It will not be the same type of bridge as the existing bridge, so it could be argued that the expertise on the new bridge will rest with Transport Scotland and its professional advisers.

From an operational point of view, to have the two bridges managed by different authorities would potentially be a recipe for problems. SEStran has not taken a position on the issue, but I tend towards backing the organisation that has been managing the crossing for the past 40 years, because it has not done a bad job.

**Marshall Poulton:** A perfect vehicle is currently available: the national network control centre, which is undertaken by the traffic Scotland service on an agency basis for Transport Scotland. It has eyes and ears and various systems for strategic and tactical management and perhaps for the local management that Alex Macaulay talked about. The current organisation is doing a good job. Perhaps the maintenance of the structure and the

fabric of the bridges could be done by FETA, but the operational traffic control should be done centrally by traffic Scotland, so that, for example, traffic can be moved from the Kincardine bridge to the new, balanced crossing.

16:00

**Bob McLellan:** I am glad that the plan is for the road network on either side of the bridge to revert back from local authority to trunk road status. That has been an anomaly for years on both sides, and the current situation—in which there is a 2-mile section of local authority road that should be part of the national trunk road network—is not satisfactory.

The future operational management and maintenance of the new bridge must be a question for Transport Scotland to answer. It has to consider any potential benefits in FETA managing both bridges rather than the new one becoming another bridge—such as the Kingston and other bridges, which are equally complex structures—that Transport Scotland manages itself.

**Alison McInnes:** Transport Scotland told us last week that it was in discussions with Fife Council on the park-and-ride sites at Halbeath and Rosyth. Will you confirm that the discussion on 19 January that you referred to—the joint meeting—is the most recent meeting, or have you had a separate meeting with Transport Scotland?

**Bob McLellan:** I can confirm that the most recent meeting was on 19 January. As the Halbeath and Rosyth projects are perhaps slightly further advanced because they were presented for consideration as part of the STPR, part of the discussion on 19 January was on how we can take them forward. As a council, we were not in a position to fund the construction of the sites at Halbeath and Rosyth, so we took the decision two years ago that, considering the financial climate, there was no point in developing the projects further when there was no likelihood of having the funds to build them. Since then, the bridge project has developed, and we believe that the sites should go ahead as part of the rounded public transport elements of that project.

The figures show that, if the projects at Rosyth and Halbeath come to fruition and are 80 per cent occupied, they will save a whopping 876,000 single-way trips—almost 1 million trips—per annum across the bridges. At £12 million, those two park-and-ride projects represent a decent bang for the buck.

**Alison McInnes:** That is helpful.

Transport Scotland told us last week that it will be possible, following the opening of the crossing, to open a new park-and-ride site to the south of

the Forth on the carriageway at the current A90 Echline junction but that that project would be taken forward by SEStran and the City of Edinburgh Council. Can we have an update on that? Given that SEStran has no capital funding and that councils are pretty hard pressed at the moment, what is the likelihood of the project progressing?

**Alex Macaulay:** I will get my begging bowl out again.

I referred earlier to the SEStran park-and-ride strategy, and we were aware of Transport Scotland's suggestion of using that section of the old A90 as a park-and-ride site. I must say that it did not appear as a priority in our park-and-ride strategy, primarily because of the danger that it would attract more trips across the bridge from Fife. There is an alternative argument that it would serve the corridor along the A904 out towards Bo'ness, but on balance it was not a high priority for us. I would not hold my breath.

**Alison McInnes:** Thank you.

**Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP):** Branching out slightly, I want to ask what involvement your respective organisations have had with STPR project 25—light rapid transit between Edinburgh and Fife. Can you say anything about the status of the project and what stage it has reached?

**Alex Macaulay:** I will make a start on that. Before the publication of the bill, SEStran took the view that we would need to know what we were aiming to do with light rapid transit across the estuary because, if either the new structure or the existing structure could carry light rapid transit, somebody—such as yourself—would ask where it would go.

A couple of years ago, therefore, we did a feasibility study on establishing corridors for light rapid transit or bus rapid transport in the major extension area to the east of Dunfermline, primarily to ensure that the corridors were protected as the development progressed.

We have achieved that because we have now provided that input to our planning colleagues in Fife Council. The corridors for light rapid transit and bus rapid transit in that eastern extension of Dunfermline have now been reserved, with the appropriate connectivity to the bridge.

More recently, last year we carried out a feasibility study for light rapid transit and bus rapid transit on the south side of the bridge. The study concluded that the preferred route for light rapid transit should come down the old A8000 through Kirkliston and link to the extension of the Edinburgh trams system west of Newbridge. We have fed that information in as part of our



consultation with Transport Scotland. We also identified two—or perhaps three—bus rapid transit corridors: the M90 and the M9 down either as far as Newbridge or through Newbridge and into Edinburgh.

We have carried out initial feasibility studies to establish preferred routes, but we have not done the full-blown STAG appraisal of those routes or provided a business case for them. However, we have identified which routes could be used if we wanted to go ahead with them.

On timescales, it is fair to say that the delivery of light rapid transit across the Forth is a long time off—I do not wish to put a date on it because, frankly, I cannot really look that far ahead. However, the bus rapid transit proposals are potentially more medium term and would fit reasonably well with the proposals in annex C of the public transport strategy document that was referred to earlier.

**Bob McLellan:** From a Fife perspective, I can confirm what Alex Macaulay has just said. In our local plans, which are currently being revised, renewed and updated, we have certainly taken account in the planning process of the public transport corridors that might be used for rapid bus transit or trams in the future. All of that has been fed in. Obviously, rapid bus transit is more likely to be developed in the short to medium term—or even the relatively long term—but the corridors will nonetheless be reserved for public transport.

**Alasdair Allan:** So we are a long way from the stage of putting together a business plan and specifying a cost for a rapid bus transit scheme.

**Bob McLellan:** For north of the Forth, we need first and foremost to reserve the line and then to decide where the project fits into the council's overall local transport strategy and into the regional transport strategy. The proposed alignments are currently being put into an on-going update to the local transport strategy. The proposals will be provisionally costed, but they will not be the subject of detailed work because, as several people have mentioned already, we need to be careful and realistic about the extent to which we can achieve construction even of bus priority lanes in the short to medium term. If the situation changes and an abundance of money becomes available for bus priority lanes and the like, the good news is that we will have preserved the alignments so we will be ready to go. We would be able to construct the lanes fairly quickly and go through the planning process fairly quickly.

**Alex Macaulay:** Bus rapid transit in the development area east of Dunfermline and its connections to the bridge have been costed at a preliminary stage as part of the feasibility work. Not surprisingly—although I do not have the

figures to hand—bus rapid transit came out significantly cheaper than light rail rapid transit. For the south side of the bridge, the costings are very much in line with annex C because the alignments that we identified for bus rapid transit are the alignments that we are looking for as part of annex C. Costings are available but they are all at that first stage and are, obviously, not detailed design costings.

**Alasdair Allan:** Does Mr Poulton have anything to add?

**Marshall Poulton:** We have a challenge finishing off our tramline 1A project. Obviously, we would like to see the tram network finished.

I would not like to give a timescale for that, but we want to build on the success of park and ride at Ingliston, Hermiston, Straiton, Newcraighall and so on. We would like the tramline to be extended at some point from the airport out to Newbridge to help to alleviate the problems at Newbridge that are caused by the mixture of the trunk road and the local roads from Edinburgh and, more important, the local roads from West Lothian—many residential developments that have been built in West Lothian are experiencing problems because of the bottleneck at Newbridge. That is why we welcome proposals for the future, such as the ones in annex C, either for LRT to go out to the new bridge or, if it is more cost effective, for bus rapid transit.

**Alasdair Allan:** So you are not threatening an extension of the road works as far as Dunfermline just yet.

**Marshall Poulton:** Not yet.

**Alasdair Allan:** I turn to buses in the here and now and in the shorter term, with regard to the construction period for the new bridge. What impact will that have on public transport, particularly cross-Forth bus services?

**Bob McLellan:** That has already been tested to a certain extent. When we built phase 2 of Ferrytoll—the multistorey element—we fortunately had an overspill car park from the Deep Sea World facility adjacent to Ferrytoll. Nonetheless, there are two busy roundabouts there and the buses went through both: they went through the existing Ferrytoll and through the supplementary Ferrytoll facility, where there was a Portakabin, that was used during the construction of the multistorey building. There was a significant downturn in the number of people using Ferrytoll during that period as a result of that disruption, which was relatively small in comparison with what might happen during the construction of the new crossing.

On the whole, the argument for public transport is about the longer term, but in the short term people who have chosen to move to public

transport could choose to move back again if the experience is not what it should be. As I said, the opportunity existed and the time was available to allow public transport schemes to be put in place before or at the same time as construction commences on the north side of the bridge. If priority is given to Halbeath, that will have the added advantage of getting people on to public transport closer to the origin of their journey, rather than adopting the dartboard approach of getting them on to it as close to the bridge as possible. It would be a great outcome if there was an improved modal shift to bus as a result of building a new crossing, rather than the opposite being the case. I think that that can be achieved if there is an overall commitment to building the park and rides at the right time, marketing them properly and making the option attractive enough, even for some of the routes that operators find less attractive.

**Alasdair Allan:** I am keen to hear a bit more about how you can nudge people into making use of public transport alternatives once the new bridge is built. In particular, do you have any plans around the potential to promote bus priority measures on the roads leading up to the Forth road bridge?

**Bob McLellan:** We currently operate Ferrytoll. Fife Council and Stagecoach have a joint partnership arrangement, so we have experience of working with the private sector on an award-winning facility—as I said, it has won Scottish, UK and European awards. We want to develop the facility. A lot of marketing would have to be done to emphasise all the benefits, including the environmental benefits of and cost savings from using public transport and the fact that there will be less wear and tear on your car. I have a car but I rarely use it, which means that it is still in reasonable condition and does not have hundreds of thousands of miles on it. Nonetheless, it is still an option for a journey when public transport might not be appropriate.

We have had informal discussions with Stagecoach, which is our primary operator. Three years ago Megabus and Citylink did not go through Ferrytoll.

We have won awards for transport integration at Scottish and UK levels. We won the UK bus transport integration award last year, as a result of promoting the park and ride at Ferrytoll, the linkage to the new Norfolkline ferry to Europe and the rail interchange at Inverkeithing. People are coming off the train and getting on a bus or the ferry. They are also coming off the train at Inverkeithing and going to Ferrytoll and then to Edinburgh airport on the 747 bus.

There has been a colossal increase in the patronage of those schemes; I do not have the

figures to hand, but the percentages are at least in the tens—if not heading towards 100 per cent—for some of them over a two or three-year period. Wee buses used to be used on the 747 airport service, for example, but larger buses have to be used now. Those facilities are all accessible, and there have been successes.

16:15

However, if the Halbeath or Rosyth schemes come to life, a joint public-private partnership approach will be key, and the schemes must be marketed. We will have to let people know that the facilities are there, and we must convince them of the journey times and the quality of the experience so that they will choose to use those facilities rather than viewing them as a second or third-rate transport option. That is why I choose to use public transport, and because people have convinced me, I would like to think that I can do the same for hundreds of thousands of others.

**Marshall Poulton:** I go along with everything that Bob McLellan said. One other aspect that we could consider is some form of dynamic traffic management on Queensferry Road, which has some junction and link capacity problems. There would be some spare capacity if we could operate an intelligent transport system, which would involve examining the tidal flow into and out of Edinburgh. There has not been a detailed study of that so far, but the technology is available. The legislation is not in place at present, but we could get some benefits from implementing such a system.

I do not want to quantify the benefits and say that they are great, because the tidal flow is not quite an 80:20 situation; it is closer to 65:35. We could examine the situation to see whether there would be any benefits in terms of improving the bus journey times into and out of Edinburgh and providing the reliability that Bob McLellan mentioned.

**Alasdair Allan:** Out of curiosity, what type of legislation would be needed?

**Marshall Poulton:** Legislation would be needed to give a lane over to buses. The lane could be dedicated, by using green slurry seal, for either 24 or 12 hours a day, but if we were managing that dynamically, we could put up gantries on Queensferry Road. That would come with an aesthetic downside, as it would not look too pretty, but it would be quite efficient in a functional sense. Such systems are used to great effect on the continent and in America to get the best use out of road capacity.

**Alex Macaulay:** Just for clarification, I do not think that my colleague means primary legislation: he is talking about road traffic regulation orders

and planning permission. The Parliament need not concern itself with primary legislation—the legislation exists, but the orders do not.

We carried out a study about a year and a half ago on a similar project to give buses priority on Queensferry Road. I will happily give Marshall Poulton a copy of that study, which perhaps came out before he arrived in Edinburgh. Things can be done on Queensferry Road to give buses greater priority without being detrimental to the general traffic, particularly within the urban section.

To return to Alasdair Allan's question about encouraging people to use public transport, one initiative that we in SEStran are keen to promote is real-time passenger information. We already have it in Edinburgh, courtesy of the City of Edinburgh Council, where it has been part funded by SEStran in the past. We are now rolling the system out to East Lothian and the Borders, and we have a bid with the European Commission for funding to roll it out in Fife. That will be a step change in people's knowledge of and confidence in public transport, which is a big issue.

I remind the committee of the developments that Traveline Scotland has delivered during the past few years. It has an access telephone line, a website and now an iPhone application so that people can contact it to find out exactly when the next bus is scheduled. It provides a good information service.

Traveline Scotland suffers from having a small promotional budget. If its promotional budget were a bit bigger, the general public's appreciation of the services that it provides—which are really very good public transport information services—would be much wider and it would have a much bigger impact.

**Alasdair Allan:** That is all very positive. I take it that we will see an end to local authorities putting signs up at bus stops that say, "We don't know when the next bus will come, so please phone Traveline"—I cannot remember in which local authority I saw that. I also take it that we will encourage local authorities to overcome the reluctance that they sometimes have to putting information on notice boards.

**Alex Macaulay:** I do not think that any local authorities in SEStran have resorted to those tactics. SEStran has approved a regional bus passenger information strategy, which identifies standards for the information that must be provided at bus stops and bus stations throughout the region. The strategy, under which the onus is on the operator to provide the information, is still with some authorities that have yet to consider and adopt it. If an authority has an approved and adopted bus passenger information strategy and the operators do not provide the information, the

authority has the power to provide the information and charge the operator for that service. The bus passenger information strategy is an important part of the legislation's implementation.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Can you give us more information about how that may work in Fife? What percentage of services could use the real-time passenger information scheme? The initiative is successful in Edinburgh, but I understand that it would not capture such a great proportion of the information elsewhere. Although it sounds good, would it work in practice for a person waiting for a local bus in Fife?

**Alex Macaulay:** I will answer, although you were looking at Bob McLellan.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** I was looking at Mr McLellan, and his microphone is on.

**Alex Macaulay:** We are promoting a contract for real-time passenger information in partnership with Stagecoach, which is the dominant operator in Fife. If we get the funding for such a scheme in Fife, all Stagecoach services in Fife will be covered by real-time passenger information. The next stage, further down the line, will be to bring the smaller operators into the scheme.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** My question was, indeed, directed to Mr McLellan.

**Bob McLellan:** I can give you what is known as the real-time Bob information. There are different tiers in Fife. I think that we were the first council in Scotland to have a bus passenger information strategy, and we now have the guidelines from SEStran, which are excellent. We would encourage all local authorities in the SEStran area to do the same. There is information at every bus stop in Fife—I accept that that is not what you asked about. They all have the code number, so that people can phone Traveline. If a person at a bus stop has a mobile phone, they can text Traveline and it will text back—for every bus stop in Fife, no matter how remote—when the next planned service is due. That is not real-time information but information on the next planned service. I understand that Traveline is moving towards providing real-time information. When and if that happens, rather than being just a planned information service, it could realistically become a real-time information service, which would be better.

Most people pick up public transport information at the bus stop. We have bus stations in Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes, St Andrews, Leven and other places. That is where about 90 per cent of bus passengers either kick off or finish their journeys, although not all of them—I accept that. Detailed electronic passenger information is available at all those bus stations. At the moment, it shows only planned service times. However, if

the SEStran RTPi scheme for Fife comes to fruition, that will become real-time information.

A full-time member of staff from Stagecoach is based in our Glenrothes office. We do not pay for him—Stagecoach pays for him—and his sole responsibility is to ensure that the passenger timetables and information are updated. Stagecoach provides 93 per cent of services in Fife, and we provide timetables in conjunction with it for other operators as well. That engenders a good working relationship. People pick up the timetables. The fact that all services are registered through the traffic commissioner for Scotland means that operators stick to their schedules. In fact, they even slow down along Leith Walk in the mornings so that they do not get ahead of their schedules—things are running too smoothly there now, Marshall.

However, this is another important point. I very rarely check a timetable, but I check the excellent bus tracker information in Edinburgh, which is available on my phone and on everything else. It is great to have that assurance that a bus is coming, but it is also reassuring that normal bus services are pretty damned reliable. Arguably, the more rural the location and the further removed a place is from the city centre, the more need there is for timetable information and the less need there is for real-time information, given that there is less chance of buses being delayed in a rural area.

**The Convener:** Obviously, we have touched on some important issues, but we have strayed slightly away from the bridge. The next question is from Marlyn Glen, who I am sure will mention the bridge in her question.

**Marlyn Glen:** Might your organisations consider using bus quality partnership or quality contract powers to ensure best use of the Forth road bridge for bus services following the opening of the new Forth crossing?

**Bob McLellan:** As I have mentioned, we currently share costs at Ferrytoll with our primary operator. That is all up front and comes under a partnership arrangement. That could be a contract, but we feel that the current arrangement works well. If we are in a position to deliver park and ride at Halbeath and at Rosyth, we will look to do exactly the same by widening that partnership agreement between Stagecoach and us. Obviously, all operators have right of access—that goes without saying—and the system works very well.

In effect, all the services that come across the Forth are currently operated on a commercial basis. If services are taken into areas where they need a bit of a kick-start, the bus route development grant might be one avenue for doing that. If that avenue was not attractive, we could

consider entering into a contract. However, I think that there will always be a demand for travel across the Forth. From a Fife perspective, we have been operating the Ferrytoll facility since 1999 or 2000, so we have that experience of a partnership approach. I think that we would look to continue that approach at Halbeath and Rosyth.

**Marshall Poulton:** We have a similar experience. The quality bus partnerships work very well in Edinburgh, so I see no benefit in moving to contracts and service level agreements at this time.

**Alex Macaulay:** As far as SEStran is concerned, the real-time passenger information project is being promoted very much in partnership with the two big operators. FirstGroup and Stagecoach are active participants in that project. We have a partnership agreement—not necessarily a quality contract—with them for joint provision of services.

**Marlyn Glen:** As Mr Macaulay mentioned earlier, it is envisaged that, if the Forth road bridge is ever shut due to maintenance or high winds, buses will use the hard shoulder of the new Forth crossing. Do you have any comments on that proposed arrangement? For instance, what would happen in the event of breakdowns on the new Forth crossing?

**Alex Macaulay:** We need to be clear that the hard shoulder's primary function relates to road safety for dealing with breakdowns. The existing Forth bridge does not have a hard shoulder, so any breakdown causes major congestion and delay.

The question arises what the risk is that a vehicle breakdown that required the use of the hard shoulder would coincide with high winds, when public transport would generally use the hard shoulder. Obviously, the need for a coincidence of those two events reduces the risk of that problem arising. In effect, if a breakdown occurred on the hard shoulder when public transport was using it, the bus would need to stop and wait until it could find its way back out into general traffic to get past the broken-down vehicle. Such a system could operate perfectly safely, but it would involve disruption to public transport in those circumstances because the bus would need to wait to get out into the general flow of traffic. However, there would be much less disruption than would be the case if public transport was banned from the bridge altogether.

**Marshall Poulton:** I would go about tackling the issue by ensuring that ITS were in place. I would have an enhanced service by ensuring that a recovery vehicle was available to get any broken-down vehicle out of the way and off the bridge so

as to free up the route for the public transport vehicles.

**Bob McLellan:** In my experience of using buses during the past five, six or seven years, high winds have forced the bus not to go across the bridge on only one occasion. That was quite convenient for me anyway, as I could just walk up the road to Inverkeithing and go straight into Edinburgh on the train, but it has only happened once, so the wind will—I hope—not be a major issue.

**Marlyn Glen:** I suppose that there is a greater possibility that the crossing would be closed due to maintenance.

16:30

**Bob McLellan:** That is a fair comment. As a caveat, I point out that I use coaches or single-decker buses on most of the routes between Fife and Edinburgh; the situation would be different for double-decker buses.

**Marlyn Glen:** Should the Forth crossing include provision for cyclists and pedestrians?

**Bob McLellan:** The new crossing should certainly include provision for cyclists and pedestrians. At some stage in the future, maintenance will need to be carried out on the new crossing and it will need to be closed at certain times. The existing bridge might be able to provide cyclist and pedestrian facilities, and the new crossing should also have such facilities. The Clackmannanshire bridge was opened not too long ago by cyclists going across it, but I do not think that that can be done with the new Forth crossing.

**Marshall Poulton:** I go along with that—there should be provision for cyclists. In Edinburgh, we aspire to meet the aims of the charter of Brussels by getting the number of cyclists up to 15 per cent by 2020. We are working closely with Transport Scotland on implementing our active travel plans. It is a long way to cycle from the Forth crossing to central Edinburgh, but it would be nice to get cyclists over the crossing by various modes of transport, assuming that there are no 50mph winds.

**Alex Macaulay:** The one caveat is that segregated facilities would be needed if the new bridge is to be of motorway standard.

**Marlyn Glen:** That could be a big caveat.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Given that you have answered that you wish such provisions to be made, how much extra money would that add to the cost of the project, which is already expensive?

**Bob McLellan:** I think that I was slightly mixed up in my comments a moment ago, for which I

apologise. The existing bridge will require continued maintenance and, at some stage, the cyclists and pedestrian facilities on the existing bridge will not be available. If there are no facilities on the new bridge, what will cyclists and pedestrians do? That was the point that I was trying to make; I got the old and the new crossing mixed up.

I do not know what the cost implications would be, but in all new development proposals for transport, with regard to environment law and every other aspect of life, we build in public transport considerations. The Forth crossing project is no different.

**Marshall Poulton:** I would like cycling to be built into the plans for the future, but by utilising the current bridge, if that is possible. I certainly would not like to make a stab at the cost; I have not looked at that at all.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** I am a bit confused. Are you not asking for the new bridge to have pedestrian and cyclist access? Is it all about the current bridge?

**Bob McLellan:** We believed during the earlier stages of “engagement” that there would be pedestrian and cycling facilities on the new bridge. However, I am sure that, during the development of the project and the various iterations of the project design, those issues, including cost considerations, have been examined more closely. There is no doubt that, as Alex Macaulay said, cycling and pedestrian facilities would be very costly due to the need for segregation. However, the councils—and most people—would say that, aside from cost considerations, the new crossing should be future-proofed to carry cyclists and pedestrians. What happens if the existing bridge is closed for significant periods of time in the future and pedestrians and cyclists cannot access it? That will be very difficult.

**The Convener:** I have one final supplementary question, which relates to the issue of the existing bridge being a public transport-only route.

The use of the existing bridge has been a controversial issue. There were long-standing public campaigns against tolling to the extent that the money that was spent on smart tolling kit was, in effect, put down the drain and the tolls were abolished. There were long-standing campaigns for an additional bridge because of concerns about capacity, queueing and the time that it takes to get over the bridge in the rush hour. What guarantee is there that, from day one of the new bridge being open, if the Parliament approves it, if queues again start forming as people try to get over the bridge during the rush hour, people will not look over their shoulders, see a half-empty bridge next to them and put exactly the same pressure on any

future transport minister or any future Scottish Government to open the bridge to let them over faster, dumping all that extra traffic into Edinburgh's streets?

**Bob McLellan:** We have asked that question at meetings that we have had with colleagues from Transport Scotland and its consultants. On day one, if people are sitting in their cars in congestion on the new bridge and there are buses—albeit more buses, we hope—going across the old bridge, that will not be a good position to be in after the expenditure of perhaps £2 billion. That is why we believe that the public transport measures that must be put in place at minimal cost if we are to have a chance of getting people to move from cars to public transport are so important, as that situation cannot be allowed to arise. If lanes are free, it must be a possibility that cars in a congested lane would be diverted. However, if the bridge is designed properly, with enhanced public transport to start off with, people will hopefully start to move across to public transport and that question will not have to be asked. Nevertheless, I share your concern that, if lane space is available anywhere, people will always ask why it is not being used.

On the wider question of interoperability between the two bridges, it seems that, at some stage, fairly early doors in the development, the decision was made that one would be a public transport bridge and one would not be. However, that might not be the best way of utilising the capacity of both structures.

**The Convener:** With the current approach, we are still at “hopefully”, not guarantees.

**Bob McLellan:** Hopefully.

**Marshall Poulton:** We have covered most of the issues. If that happened, it would be a great shame and a disappointment to the ministers. We talked earlier about the public transport improvements that have been made over the past few years to make public transport more comfortable. I am a great believer in trying to change people's travel behaviour. Alex Macaulay talked about real-time passenger information. We are working on personalised travel information and getting that right to the source. We are also looking at car-sharing schemes and high-occupancy vehicles. A mixture of those measures, along with the bridge and ITS, will go a long way towards ensuring—we could not guarantee it—that the structure will be one to be proud of and will cope admirably with the increased traffic in the future, assuming that we get an economic upturn.

**Alex Macaulay:** I agree with my colleagues that the trick is to get good public transport in place. Public opinion can never be guaranteed, as I am sure you know.

**The Convener:** To my cost. Thank you all very much for your time in answering our questions. We will report back to the lead committee on the bill and the process will be with that committee from then on.

*Meeting closed at 16:39.*

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