

Cross Party Group on Rail

2 April 2019, 5:30pm

Committee Room 3

MSPs attending: John Mason (Convener), Jackie Baillie, Lewis MacDonald, Colin Smyth, John Finnie, Alexander Stewart, Liam Kerr

Other attendees: Allison Cosgrove, RailFuture Scotland; David Prescott, Allan Rail; Don Barclay, Levenmouth Rail Campaign; Iain MacDonald, Light Rail UK; Jim Baxter, ASLEF; Jim Grieve, SESTran; Ken Sutherland, RailFuture Scotland; Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF; Lawrence Marshall, Capital Rail Action Group; Liz McLeod, ORR; Richard Ardern, Friends of the Far North Line; Rosemary Blumfield, West Coast Rail 250; Simon Walton, Campaign for Borders Rail; Stewart Leighton, RailQWest; Vic MacKinley, Light Rail Transit Association; Jonathan Pugh, Network Rail; Heather Noller, Network Rail (secretary)

Apologies: Pauline McNeill MSP, Liam Kerr MSP, Oliver Mundell MSP, Maurice Corry MSP, James Harkins, Light Rail UK; Helen Martin, STUC; Tim Olton, Hitachi Rail.

Jonathan Pugh, Strategy and Planning Director for Network Rail Scotland Route, gave an overview of the route's plans for Control Period 6, with a focus on the enhancements pipeline and how long term planning will work over the Control Period. The continued focus on safety was noted.

Further information on Network Rail's plans for Control Period 6 is available here:

<https://cdn.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CP6-Delivery-Plan-High-Level-Summary.pdf>

Further information from the Scottish Government on Control Period 6 is available here:

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/44516/scotland-s-railway-control-period-6-2019-2024.pdf>

Lewis MacDonald welcomed the previous investment in North East Scotland but noted that the Montrose-Usan single track section constrained capacity in this area and asked if investment was going to benefit the whole network. Jonathan advised that investment in particular areas would have an impact across the whole network, noting that the pipeline approach was more responsive to change based on evidence and assessment of need.

Jackie Baillie asked if there had been an underspend at the end of Control Period 5, and also asked about several constituency issues. Jonathan confirmed that as projects spanned Control Periods, there was some money taken forward to CP6. The constituency issues were noted for further information to be provided at a later date.

Simon Walton, Campaign for Borders Rail, asked if 5-year control periods were suitable for a long-term planning process. Jonathan said that Control Periods were useful for accountability but long-term forecasting would often be difficult.

Colin Smyth welcomed the commitment to investment in the south of Scotland at Carstairs junction, and asked about plans for the Glasgow South Western Line. It was agreed this line could potentially be better utilised as a relief line for the West Coast Main Line.

Allison Cosgrove asked about stations at Reston and East Linton, and the potential for developments at Portobello. The station projects are progressing through the pipeline and there are discussions to be had about the level of service that new stations would receive, as there are other enhancements in the pipeline that would have an impact on this area of the network too.

Richard Arden noted that the pipeline's approach to establishing a business case for progression might have an impact on less densely populated areas of Scotland, and that long-term strategy and planning should look at the wider benefits of enhancements and renewals. Jonathan noted that although it can be difficult to quantify some of the wider benefits, engaging with stakeholders and identifying the benefits took place at several stages of the pipeline approach.

Alexander Stewart asked about funding through city deals and questioned how joined-up the approach was in Fife. Jonathan agreed that there had been more joined-up working in some areas than in others but noted that Network Rail has close relationships with regional transport partnerships and other regional transport stakeholders. He noted that recent developments in Fife such as the Talgo announcement had had a multi-agency approach.

Kevin Lindsay asked about freight growth. Jonathan noted that freight traffic has declined and noted that targets had been set to grow freight traffic, and that this needed to happen by working together with freight operators and with industry to encourage use of rail freight, as well as upgrading the network to support electric freight services.

Stewart Leighton asked how the electrification strategy would evolve in the future, stating that double-tracking of some parts of the network needed to happen before electrification. Jonathan said that programmes such as Inter7City would be a priority but that a strategic approach would be taken to electrification.

Don Barclay asked about the progress of the Levenmouth Rail Link through the pipeline; Jonathan reiterated that although there is strong local support for this work, it remains a decision to be made by Transport Scotland as to how it progresses.

Jim Grieve asked for further information about East Coast Main Line developments; Jonathan noted that Network Rail is looking beyond CP6 for developments here but noted that cross-border connectivity is important.

Lawrence Marshall asked about Edinburgh Waverley approach issues; Jonathan noted that this linked to longer term ECML developments and acknowledged that the eastern approach to the station was currently a constraint on the network and was part of the long term planning process.

Ken Sutherland asked for an update on Glasgow Crossrail proposals; Jonathan noted that this is a complex issue which would continue to be assessed by looking at projected demand and ensuring that there is best use of existing assets.

John Finnie praised the aspirations to grow freight traffic but noted that single-tracking on the Highland Main line would be a constraint. Jonathan said that there had been significant developments for passenger service on the HML recently with the delivery of the HML upgrade, nothing that developments can be incremental as demand is linked to availability. He further noted that the potential impact on performance such as that caused by breakdown on a single track section of line would feed into the business case for enhancements.

Liam Kerr asked about support for heritage railways by supplying recycled and reused equipment and infrastructure; Heather Noller will look into this.

John Mason thanked everyone for participating in the discussion.

Future meetings of the CPG on Rail

- 8 May, 1.00
- 25 September, 5.30
- 13 November, 5.30

Future topics for discussion were identified:

- Freight
- East Coast Main Line
- Scenic rail routes
- Cross-border services
- Fife
- ScotRail