



**Transport Knowledge Hub Scotland Event  
Monday 19 March 2019  
10.00am – 2.00pm, Grand Central Hotel, Glasgow**

**NOTE OF EVENT**

Event chair **Professor David Begg, Chief Executive of Transport Times and Chair of the independent Glasgow Connectivity Commission** welcomed attendees to the Transport Knowledge Hub Scotland event. He outlined the topic for the event is 'transport investment under uncertainty' and argued this is something that the transport industry is wrestling with and so the discussion today is very timely.

**Claire Haigh, Executive Director, Transport Knowledge Hub** welcomed delegates to Glasgow, and outlined the work that the Transport Knowledge Hub does in helping to foster collaborations that are crucial for transport growth across Scotland. Claire said that there was a great potential for what investment can do for transport in the country.

Event chair **David Begg** introduced **Humza Yousaf MSP, Minister for Transport and the Islands, Scottish Government** and invited the Minister give a keynote speech.

The Minister thanked Transport Knowledge Hub for inviting him to speak at the event and said it was a real pleasure to be with transport experts from across Scotland.

The Minister outlined the ambition of the Scottish Government in regards to transport sustainability arguing that it was a hugely important part of his role. He reaffirmed that the First Minister of Scotland had sustainable transport at the very heart of her agenda, highlighting that that transport now accounts 30.1 megatons of carbon. The Minister said that there was a lot of work to be done – and that we are nowhere near where we need to be to achieve sustainable transport fit for future generations.

The Minister then outlined the Scottish Government's strategy to achieve their Programme for Government objectives – firstly to embrace and advance technological change, secondly to induce behavioural change, and thirdly to promote active travel.

In terms of targets, Minister said the Government would phase out diesel by 2032, and that they would establish four low emissions zones in Scotland's largest cities by 2020, Glasgow being the first. The Minister said Scotland needed to address the range anxiety which is putting people off buying electric vehicles, as well as relative cost. He said as range increases it is helping more people to choose electric over conventional vehicles. The Minister also highlighted the importance of infrastructure, saying the Government have put in place rapid chargers and wanted to further increase the number of rapid chargers very quickly. The Minister also said the Scottish Government is interested in loaning electric vehicles to people and businesses as part of their strategy.

In terms of partnerships, the Minister said it was important to work with local government colleagues and has asked them to assist the Scottish Government with electric vehicle infrastructure.

In terms of low emission zones, the Minister said the Scottish Government are delighted to be working in partnership with Glasgow City Council, and said that he viewed buses as part of the solution in bringing down emissions, not part of the problem. He outlined the importance of working with the bus industry to induce a change of attitudes and get more people using the bus. He said that the Glasgow low emission zone will aim to discourage the use of the private car in the city centre.



The Minister reaffirmed the importance of engaging directly with the public. He said that 9 out of 10 people say they want cleaner air, but that they are not willing to make the personal changes needed to achieve this. He said that if we are to achieve the goal of cleaner air, then the Government needed to win the hearts and minds of people to use better and sustainable transport.

The Minister then moved on to the importance of active travel. He said that active travel had huge benefits including on both physical and mental health. He said that the Scottish Government's budget for active travel has doubled from £40m to £80m.

Event chair **David Begg** thanked the Minister for his words and said the move towards cleaner vehicles was really encouraging, but with the benefit of hindsight, previous Governments could have done a lot more. He asked whether the Minister took the view that sustainable transport was something that the industry will crack whilst being able to tackle the congestion problem at the same time? **The Minister** responded by saying that if we can make the most of technologies such as autonomous vehicles, they will help tackle the congestion problem. He also said that the more people we can get on buses the better, and bus use needs to be incentivised.

**Robert Samson, Senior Stakeholder Manager, Transport Focus**, said that satisfaction for bus services was high, and passengers reported their biggest issues were punctuality of journey and delays caused by congestion. **The Minister** agreed that congestion was a problem and that it must be tackled. He said Glasgow was doing a lot on low emission and connectivity, but the question remained on how to take the public with them. He said we need to find a way to mitigate the 'pain' of giving up the use of the private car, and he said he would like local authorities to form strong partnerships with industry partners to help achieve this.

**Kelly Forbes, Policy Manager, Institution of Civil Engineers Scotland** asked the Minister how the government is investing in data about transport. **The Minister** said that he had a conversation with his bus and anti-fraud officials, and that he had found significant amounts of data that the Government can use to make change. He acknowledged that if we are marching towards autonomous vehicles, more needed to be done regarding data and the security of data.

Event chair **David Begg** thanked the Minister for sharing his priorities with the Transport Knowledge Hub and for being available to answer questions from the community the Hub has brought together. David Begg then invited the panel of speakers to address the audience.

**Martin Griffiths, Chief Executive of Stagecoach** said buses remain fundamentally important to the economy. But he said we have a lot more to do if we are going to invest in the future. He talked about the city of Shenzhen in China which has recently become a fully electric bus city. He said Shenzhen have 16,000 electric buses and 300 bus chargers which recharge buses within two hours. Martin mentioned that in 2017 alone, the city of Shenzhen put \$500m in to supporting this project. He said the UK needed to be realistic about timescales and the effort and costs required for a fundamental change. He said that we need to show ambition, and that buses are a huge part of inducing change. Martin said that politicians needed to work on this and that industry partners need to support them to create opportunities through products and infrastructure.

Martin talked about bus use decline in Glasgow where there has been 40 per cent decline in bus patronage over a ten-year period. He said that fundamentally, bus travel is about persuading people that there is an alternative to the private car. He said we will not grow bus use unless we are able to do this. Martin said that he believed market solutions were the right ones, but they have to be in partnership with local authorities who want to see the best for passengers and the community. He said this means that difficult decisions would need to be taken. He said he was glad to hear the Minister confirm that moving people in an eco-friendly way is an interest not a hinderance.



Martin said that the government pay an enormous subsidy for each passenger using rail which we need to recognise as it has consequences for other forms of transport. He closed by saying that partnership working with local authorities is essential, and that they needed to achieve a return of capital for bus operators as well as good travel options for local communities.

Event chair **David Begg** said Shenzhen is very good example. He said that there was a 'perfect storm' hitting the Glasgow bus sector in general, and congestion plays a big part of that.

**John Dowie, Director of Local Strategies at First Group** said that looking back, the bus sector used to be too 'full of itself' and as a result did not invest seriously in partnerships. He said there was always lots of talk of investment, but no actions. He said that we have reaped pain from those mistakes.

John said when he took up his role at First he was struck at how hard it is to put on a quality, first-class bus service day after day. He said he was going to focus on where local transport is going – there is a real contrast with national transport. He said the Scottish Government has a real sense of purpose about what they are doing with travel. John reaffirmed the “chunky” ambition set out by the Minister, but he said if you asked the question of where the ambition is with local authorities, it would be very difficult to answer. He said that local authorities have been living on the legacies of their predecessors and most of the local transport action has been piecemeal while the bigger picture has been ignored.

John said that bus is absolutely central to the future of cities. He said that there is a basic reality that if a city centre is successful then the bus service is successful. He said that there were reasons for optimism – one being the economic potential of cities. He said that master-planning in the city of Glasgow is very exciting, and he said that bus is the best way to get people out of the car and in to a more sustainable mode of transport. He mentioned that across the UK, bus markets were doing well, citing examples in Bristol, Norwich and York which have seen year-on-year growth.

John said that smart ticketing was transformational, within a couple of years all big five and medium operators have switched to contactless and it has had an enormous impact. He said that this starts to create a relationship between bus operators and customers. He closed by saying that there are clear reasons to be positive – but we need to just grab the opportunity and take it to the next stage, and that local authority and bus operator partnership was crucial to this.

Event chair **David Begg** thanked John for his input. He said he thought that the new administration in Glasgow is a “breath of fresh air”, putting sustainability at the heart of everything that they are doing.

**Cllr Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council**, thanked David for his comments. She said since she had taken over as leader of Glasgow she had talked about transport and connectivity more than any other topic. She said that Glasgow City Council was doing a fantastic job on active travel and is taking a lead on active travel and low emission zones.

Cllr Aitken said that Glasgow had been slipping behind other cities across the UK in terms of its ability to move people in and out of city centre and she acknowledged that more needed to be done. She mentioned a desire to move towards a 'Transport for Glasgow' body to understand and provide leadership in relation to vision and clarity for Glasgow's transport. She said that the word 'transport' is limiting and constraining, and in Glasgow it carries memories of mooted big infrastructure projects that never came to fruition.

Cllr Aitken said that transport enables economic activity and public health – so we want to alter language and talk about mobility and connectivity as well as services that need to be provided. She said that Glasgow City Council want to connect people to where they want to go across Glasgow to



enable the city's economy to flourish and encourage investment. Through feedback from community planning, the council has data that shows that the lack of connectivity in the city limits inclusive growth and limits links to jobs and training. She said the people of Glasgow were telling them they have a public transport problem.

Cllr Aitken said that the reality is some of the things being done are limited. She mentioned that parts of the city have no rail station or subway station, and it means that Glasgow needs more buses and better buses. She said that the council had held discussions regarding air quality and congestion – and that those discussions resulted in the Connectivity Commission, which she was very excited about.

She said that the Transport Bill should encourage partnerships between providers and local authorities, make them more strongly enforced, and create genuine partnerships based on meaningful discussions and mutual expectations.

**Jonathan Pugh, Strategy & Planning Director for Scotland at Network Rail** opened his remarks by posing a challenge to the room. He asked if you went back to 2008 or 1998 and you were asked what the mobility and transport sector would be like today, how many of you would be right?

He said that when we are developing strategies to meet the needs of Scotland, we need to think about how get goods in and out of city centres and to the markets as well as people. He said that modes of transport are complimentary, and that they are not competing with each other. He said that the industry needed to stop looking at what they are doing independently, but rather at the bigger transport picture as a whole, and what gives them the best outcomes in terms of efficiencies and affordability.

Jonathan said we need to be really clear about what we need to achieve when we invest in transport, in both people and place. He said just spending money on transport is not a strategy, and more needed to be done in terms of what is being delivered. He mentioned that the industry has got better collectively at making long-term strategic choices and planning, but that they needed to work with others and support both local and national dimensions of policymaking. He said critically, they must provide support and challenge whether or not what we are doing is working. He closed by saying that the industry, particularly railways, need to make transport an enabler of a stronger economy.

Even chair **David Begg** then opened up the discussion to the floor. He said devolution had been positive for transport in Scotland, and when it comes to local transport and city region transport, there is a lot that still needs to be done.

**Derek Halden, Director of DHC Loop Connections** said we need to consider access to jobs as a transport priority. Another attendee said there is a high expectation on the transport industry, but that focusing on transport alone will not solve anything. **David Begg** said there are a large number of people who don't rely on their car but still use it – but one of reasons they use it is because of free car parks. He said you only need a small reduction in car use to make dramatic changes to congestion. An attendee said that if we work closer with employers and education providers, there is a lot we can do to incentivise your employees not to use their cars.

**Martin Griffiths** said that you do not need to drop car use much to change the dynamics, but you do have to believe that there is a really important alternative to achieve it. **David Begg** made the point that policymakers are usually persuaded by more affluent users, and they tend to be car users. **Cllr Susan Aitken** said that Glasgow must make city centre parking more expensive in order to achieve all of the ambitions they want to achieve – particularly around public rail and creating a vibrant city centre. She said Glasgow needed to challenge the accepted wisdom that the only way



to get into the city centre is to drive. She said a city centre where you can let your kids run around is more likely to have a vibrant economy.

**David Begg** said that the more a politician uses a transport mode, the more they understand the challenges, and he made reference to Boris Johnson and cycling advances in London to support that claim. He said we need to demonstrate that cities in the UK which are most prosperous are also ones with the highest percentage of people travelling by sustainable transport. **John Dowie** said people have got themselves into an 'unsustainable cul-de-sac'. In reference to Bristol, he said they actually have very low public transport but are fighting back, but Glasgow and Manchester are becoming less sustainable before unsustainable practices have become too embedded.

**Eric Stewart, Assistant Chief Executive of Strathclyde Partnership for Transport** said that current rate of decline on buses would mean that there would be one passenger left on each bus by 2029. He said we need to start finding ways to get in to the psyche of car users, and convince them to use more sustainable methods. He said that Glasgow is still good bus territory, and there are opportunities from the low emission zones. He said we have to see the glass as half full and strengthen partnerships and innovative and be radical.

**David Begg** invited delegates to talk about other parts of Scotland. **Douglas Robertson, Commercial Director, Stagecoach East Scotland** said we have a lot of 'imaginary lines' all across Scotland which can be very inward looking. He argued that there was no oversight at a higher level and that undermines a lot of the good work that a lot of local authorities are doing.

**Martin Griffiths** mentioned parking charges in areas such as Fife. He said that councils sometimes see parking charges as a reaction to fiscal challenges. He said that is a narrow response and something that will have a negative impact on behaviour. He said that this is damaging to bus patronage. **David Begg** said that the Transport Knowledge Hub allows users to learn lessons from other local authorities, and can tell you what happens elsewhere. He used the example of Cambridge and parking charges, which had a detrimental effect on bus patronage, and they rolled it back when they saw the numbers.

**Derek Halden** said that local authorities across Scotland wonder why are we losing bus patronage while they are building car parks and introduce parking charges. He said we need to shift mindset and work with partners to influence changes. **Jonathan Pugh** said that if you go back 20 or 30 years, patterns of employment in city centres have changed dramatically because employment shifted to city centres. He said we must ask questions about land use. He argued that if we are going to put in better transport, we need high density developments to support it.

**David Begg** asked what was the main stumbling block to achieving sustainable growth in transport? **Kelly Forbes, Policy Manager at the Institution of Civil Engineers Scotland** said we can be too fixated on finding one solution to address a multi-variant problem. She said we need to become more comfortable with working with a number of solutions to address our problems – there is not one silver bullet to address regional problems. **Stevie McGowan, Creative Design Lead at Glasgow City Council** said that if you really want people to change, you need to provide a service that people actually want to use. He said that unpredictable services in cities mean people are less likely to use transport and that is missing from the conversation.

**Martin Griffiths** claimed that if we do not have the customer at the centre of everything that we do, bus companies won't survive. He agreed that there isn't a silver bullet to solve these problems. He said it will be difficult, but if we can reposition ourselves and look at examples like Shenzhen, we can be successful. **Mark Whitelocks, Managing Director, Stagecoach North Scotland**, said putting customers at the heart is what we need to do and that bus networks and transport networks must be able to adapt to that. He said that the central question is where is investment going to come from? **Martin Griffiths** said the reality was there isn't any money, and that playing with regulatory



structures doesn't change the underlying dynamic regarding lack of money. We have to look at how to make money we do have work better. **David Begg** asked how can we create right climate and dynamics so that we can get more investment into the market. He said there is always a tendency to look at legislative levers, but the real issue is the dynamic between people and operator.

**John Berry, Sustainable Transport Team Leader at Dundee City Council** said there can be a tension between bus operators and local authorities. He argued that people in local authorities see bus companies as profit-making companies. He said that when it comes to bus, the profit is going off to the private sector. Should we support a bus industry that operates like this? **Cllr Susan Aitken** agreed that John raised a good point. She said there is no doubt that measures that come forward in the Transport Bill will mean a certain amount of pressure on local authorities to go down the route of setting up own bus companies rather than trying to fix relationships with industry. She said it is her preference to work with the current bus industry and build better and robust partnerships. She said it is much more likely that we will achieve a pace of change by working with providers and doing as much as we possibly can. She said we shouldn't get caught up in an ideology of standing against private sector. **John Dowie** said that John Berry's comment was important. He said bus operators have contributed hugely to the miscomprehension. He claimed that we have to get beyond this if we are going to build mutual trust, it requires honesty regarding how money will be generated to invest in long term. **Chair David Begg** said if a local authority successfully improves bus journey speeds, and bus efficiency, you would need to make sure that the local authority in return would get an investment back such as cheap fares or access to jobs, in order to ensure it's a fair strategy which generates patronage and investment in new vehicles.

David then summed up the discussion, and paid tribute to the work that the Transport Knowledge Hub is doing to bring transport communities together.

**Claire Haigh** thanked everyone for attending. She said the discussion had been excellent and there is a lot of food for thought to be taken away from the session. She said that we must continue to share experiences and encourage people to carry on engaging with the Transport Knowledge Hub.