

**Meeting of the Cross Party Group on Rail in the Scottish Parliament**  
**Minute of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2015, 5.30pm**

**Present:**

John Mason MSP (SNP; Glasgow Shettleston), Allan McLean (Secretary), Vic MacKinlay (Light Rail Transit Association), Trond Haugen & Alex McAulay (SESTRAN), Roderick McDougall & Allison Cosgrove (RailFuture Scotland), Stewart Leighton (RailQwest), Paul Tetlaw (Transform Scotland), Scott McIntosh (APPLRG), Dom Barclay (LMRC), Robert Drysdale (Campaign for Borders Rail) Steven Young (Steven Young & Associates), Barrie Forest (RAGES), Iain Wilson (ScotRail), Rosemary Blumfield & Trevor Roberts (WCR 250), David Spaven (Rail Freight Scotland), Alison O'Connell (Bill Kidd MSP Office), Keith Robson (KRC), Duncan McKay (Weber Shandwick).

**Apologies:**

Eric Guthrie, Norrie Innes, Cameron Buchanan MSP, Iain Richard, Mick Hogg, Jim Gray, Phil McGarry, Bill Forbes, Ken Sutherland, Nigel Kirby, Robert Samson, Gordon Martin, John Finnie MSP, Neil Bibby MSP.

**Welcome from the Chair**

John Mason welcomes the meeting before stating that minutes of the previous meeting couldn't be approved as only one MSP was present at this stage. He then passed on to David Spaven.

**Presentation from the Rail Freight Group's David Spaven:**

A presentation was made by David Spaven of the Rail Freight Group in Scotland. He said that modern rail freight terminals tended to be in separate locations away from main passenger stations. This, coupled with the fact that much freight moved at night, meant that freight on rail was a bit of a mystery to some members of the travelling public who were more familiar with the passenger railway. But freight on rail made an important contribution and included the major growth success of intermodal container traffic as well as the more traditional traffic of coal, which was in decline because coal was in decline as a fuel.

The Rail Freight Group in Scotland had more than 100 member-organisations. He outlined some of the freight currently on rail, including cement from Dunbar and significant volumes of business at Grangemouth. He described Coatbridge as Scotland's inland port which was fundamental to Scotland's exports of containers via ports in England but the Coatbridge rail container terminal still depended on cranes that were designed in the 1960s. He also outlined the growth in domestic container traffic, largely for supermarkets. There was much potential for more freight on rail, including between Scotland and Continental Europe through the Channel Tunnel, where there had been a failure to get as much traffic on rail as had been hoped.

He said that the supposed unreliability of rail was just a myth, the reliability of rail being proved by the success of prompt deliveries for supermarkets. The steel wheel on steel rail meant rail was more cost-effective than road for heavy loads; while the cost of road rises with mileage, rail becomes even more cost-effective over distance. He stressed that there was potential for more freight on rail in Scotland, including whisky north of the Central Belt. Among other points he made were that there was a potential freight terminal already at Bathgate and that Dundee was a large city with no railway freight facilities but needed them. He outlined a need for enhanced gauge clearance, longer loop lines to cope with the biggest freight trains on the West Coast Main Line and elsewhere and a strategic upgrade to the network north of the Central Belt to benefit freight as well as passengers.

Mr Spaven said that road was favoured over rail when it came to public investment on the Perth/Inverness corridor where the A9 was being dualled but much of the railway remained single line. Public payments for other transport modes meant there was an unlevel playing field. Rail needed simplicity to compete more effectively with road. Rail freight offered resilience, much potential, and ticked policy objectives of the Scottish Government.

#### **Q&A with David Spaven:**

Mr Spaven responded to questions and comments by several members of the group, including concerns about Scotland not currently benefitting from the kind of financial and planning policies that potentially favoured rail elsewhere in Europe. A need for information being made available about railway freight options was highlighted as well as concerns about potential benefits from the spending of public money and also Network Rail's commitment to freight. Mr Spaven said that pump-priming finance from the Scottish Government could help developments.

#### **Date and Time of Next Meeting:**

Confirmed as happening at 5.30pm on 24<sup>th</sup> June.

#### **Any Other Competent Business:**

Roderick McDougall of Railfuture Scotland expressed concern about disruption to train services between Edinburgh and Glasgow during electrification and other investment work at Winchburgh Tunnel and Glasgow Queen Street station. He said that there seemed to be no guiding mind to avoid conflicting engineering works.

Mr Mason wanted to draw the CPG's attention to an approach from a transport police officer about views being invited about the proposal to merge the role of British Transport Police (BTP) in Scotland into Police Scotland. Paul Tetlaw of Transform Scotland expressed concern that railway expertise within BTP may be lost.

Barrie Forrest of the RAGES group sought to clarify timescales for the introduction of a new ScotRail train service from Edinburgh serving new stations at East Linton and Reston. Abellio had said there would not be enough trains to provide this service before 2018, although the Minister had said that the earliest date for such a service would be December 2016. Mr Mason agreed that issues of concern that had been raised may be among topics to be put to the Minister, Derek Mackay MSP, at the next meeting.