

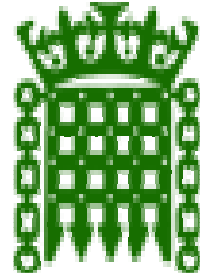


**All Party Parliamentary
Light Rail Group**

House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Light Rail & Trams, Affordable & Sustainable Transport

"The past we inherit, the future we build ourselves"



"TramTrain does it Greener and Cheaper on lightly used railway lines and in the streets"

All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group

Wednesday, 25th May 2016

Chairman: **Greg Mulholland** MP

Speakers:

Drew Hendry MP

Scottish National Party
Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey

Rachid Meftah

Area Sales Manager. Commercial Department
Stadler Rail Valencia S.A.U

Mark Barry

Professor of Practice in Connectivity
Cardiff University, School of Geography and Planning

Greg Mulholland welcomed the audience to the meeting and thanked the sponsors of the APPLRG, Colas Rail and the LRTA, for their continuing support. He spoke briefly of the situation in Leeds and the DfT announcement that they accepted the inspector's decision to turn down the NGT trolleybus scheme but that Leeds could still have the £173m allocated. APPLRG would be meeting in Leeds on Friday to discuss possibilities, particularly the previously considered TramTrain proposal. He also called for a Leeds transport summit of all interested parties. He then introduced the speakers.

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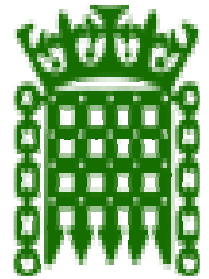


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Drew Hendry MP

Drew Hendry introduced himself as the SNP Westminster Spokesperson for Transport. In his own constituency light rail was at the very top because they had the highest light rail scheme in the UK, the Cairngorm funicular railway.

He reviewed the Edinburgh tram project which started with an index-linked budget of £375m. It was clear early on that things were not going well and the Edinburgh to Leith section was dropped. The SNP opposed going ahead with the project, not because they are opposed to light rail but because the project was badly prepared and was thought unlikely to deliver its promised benefits. It was not a well-handled project and in the end was delivered five years late and in loans cost nearly a billion pounds, vastly over its original budget. It was a bad thing for light rail and in Scottish politics was very detrimental to the reputation of trams. The SNP manifesto supports low carbon transport and travel with a commitment to make some real changes by 2020. There is a low carbon transport and travel programme which is worth some £62.5m and there is a promise to refresh the National Transport Strategy. Light and very light rail, as low carbon, could well be included in plans and the Scottish Government would look at ideas to be properly assessed through the STAG process (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance). So it could look at new light rail projects if they fit that programme. The value of the STAG assessment can be seen in other projects and any lobbying should be done with a view that it is going to be assessed properly. The Borders heavy rail project, for example, was delivered on time and under budget. The Queensferry crossing, nearing completion for later this year, will also be delivered on time and under budget because it has gone through the proper appraisal process. So there is a way to counteract the toxicity left by the Edinburgh tram project and this will be to ensure that any future project, heavy or light rail, goes through the proper assessment. On time and under budget may seem a strange concept for transport projects but it can happen if the proper approach is taken and there is a future for light rail projects if they are taken in that context.

There are lots of competing options for low carbon transport and light rail will have to demonstrate its flexibility alongside concepts such as autonomous vehicles. This will be a challenge for any fixed infrastructure. There is also the competition with current heavy rail projects but there will be a place for light rail. Now that the Edinburgh trams are in place they are very popular with the public and people who were fundamentally opposed to the tram concept, let alone the cost overruns, are now wholly in favour of trams. There are thoughts of extending the tram network – completing the route to Leith – and if that can be done in a sensible well-costed and properly approached way then it will give the ability for the city and for Scotland to get to the next stage.

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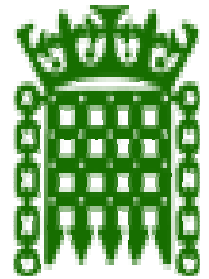


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The initial project now belongs in the past but the lessons must be taken forward. The SNP Government is keen to hear ideas and to see proposals and to take forward those ideas where they are appropriate. Please bring forward such schemes but bear in mind that they will be properly assessed

Questions

John Parry (PPM Ltd) felt that much of the anger around the Edinburgh tram project was not to do with money but about how long it took and the disruption of the city. A similar thing is happening in Birmingham – four years of turmoil in the city streets, all to do with installing infrastructure in the conventional way. New technology is needed and attention must be given not just to rolling stock but to track and power supply. Would the authorities in Scotland be interested in coming together with those involved in the development of more affordable and quicker to install infrastructure to speed up construction and reduce the cost of tramways?

Drew Hendry agreed about disruption. Edinburgh had an excellent bus service and there was a question about whether or not trams were needed. There was much disruption on the Leith route, with groundwork for track that was never laid. Little wonder there was hostility to the trams. It emphasises the need for projects to be well thought out well planned and well costed. In answer to the question, yes there would be interest, the new ministerial team in the government would be very interested in the deployment of new technology.

Daniel Giblin (Consultant) spoke from his experience in the Middle East of the production of a masterplan approach drawn from the experience of city mayors together with early contractor involvement.

Drew Hendry thought that interesting. In putting forward the city deal bid for Inverness was based on a transport masterplan, inevitably based on road. But the principal was correct and people from all levels of participation, developers, engineers, end users and local agencies were involved in order to put together a plan for the city. This is the way to do it. There should now be masterplans for all cities and their surrounding rural areas.

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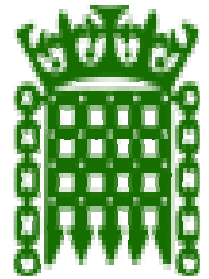


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Dave Halliday (STRAIL UK) suggested a more innovative view should be taken of these schemes such as putting trams under Princes Street rather than on it.

Drew Hendry agreed that there was a need for innovative thinking and for long-term planning not just thinking of an electoral term and there are signs that this is happening but it does not happen often enough.

Chris Bell (Conservative Transport Group) said that their research had shown that availability of necessary skills is a bigger factor than the availability of money. This is likely to be a problem with the big infrastructure schemes that are currently being talked about because of the length of time required to train people to the necessary skill level. Light rail should be moving towards a higher level of prefabrication so that less skilled labour is required on site.

Peter Cushing (TfGM) said that regardless of the amount of technological innovation and prefabrication, the complicated on-site jobs such as moving utilities, often uncharted, managing street works and generally dealing with a host of unexpected problems would still remain.

Drew Hendry agreed that the skills gap was a recurring topic in talking about transport schemes. As regards disruption caused by construction, he cited the A9 road scheme in Inverness, a long term project, which is using a phased approach to minimise disruption and is also involving local schools in the "A9 Academy", encouraging pupils to become involved with the engineering skills required as the scheme progresses. This approach could well be used in other places and other industries. There is every reason to expose young children to the excitement of transport engineering and it is important to encourage girls and young women into engineering.

Jim Harkins (Light Rail UK) said that all transport schemes in Scotland now required a STAG costing about £100,000. This cost is holding back potential new schemes proposed by small organisations.

Drew Hendry would be happy to ask whether there is a way of making the STAG requirements more flexible and affordable but the STAG process does subject proposals to rigorous examination and can prevent less viable schemes from going forward and thereby encourage more suitable alternatives. There must be a rigorous system which prevents a repeat of the Edinburgh tram fiasco.

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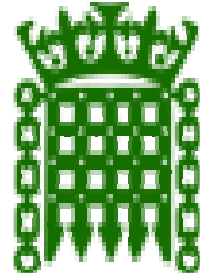


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Jim Harkins added that Inverness did not need a light rail system but a tram system. The problem in England is that the existing systems are all light rail and the Treasury allowed extensions to these existing systems but has prevented new smaller schemes being considered. This is likely to become the case in Scotland as well.

Greg Mulholland thanked **Drew Hendry** who left the meeting at 15:40.

Rachid Meftah

Rachid Meftah spoke to a power point presentation that can be found at <http://www.apprguk.co.uk/media/files/LR-Apprg-Stadler-Sheffield-Tramtrain-25-May-2016pdf>

This described Stadler Rail Valencia as part of the Stadler Group and its range of products. The concept of TramTrain, defined as "one train, two systems", was covered and the Stadler Citylink TramTrain and its variants described, with varying power combinations, varying floor height etc. The specification of the Sheffield-Rotherham vehicles was presented together with the timeline for production and delivery.

Questions

Greg Mulholland asked for Rashid's assessment of why there had been so much delay in bringing TramTrain to the UK when it was operating successfully in other countries.

Rachid Meftah replied that from the point of view of the vehicles all was going well with all certification to be in place in time for final testing. All should be in place by July 2016. The link between the two networks, however, is not yet done, so the final tests at 25kV on the heavy rail section cannot yet be carried out. That is the main problem. As soon as access to the infrastructure is available, testing can start.

Greg Mulholland asked what was wrong with the system in this country that we had so many problems installing something which was operating successfully elsewhere.

Rachid Meftah thought that the decision to have a trial was correct but was unable to account for the series of delays in installing the infrastructure.

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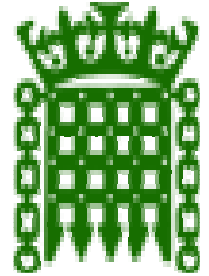


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Greg Mulholland said he would welcome views on the subject via email because the politicians needed to be aware of what and where the problems were. He said that there was a perception in some quarters that Network Rail did not want TramTrain and were being deliberately obstructive.

Rachid Meftah said that heavy rail and trams were operated in different way by different types of organisation. TramTrain was a new concept that was trying to link these two worlds. There were always those who would be resistant to change but in the end the issues will be resolved.

Greg Mulholland asked **Jim Harkins** to arrange a meeting with Network Rail to discuss these problems.

Paul Rowen said that the project started in 2008 so is now nine years on. What was the average time in Europe to get a project like this off the ground?

Rachid Meftah said that in Europe it is quite a long process for any rail project. In Alicante they started talking about the project in 2000 and it was achieved in 2007.

Greg Mulholland thought that the process was too long and a meeting with Network Rail was necessary to start constructively challenging whatever the issues are that are causing such delay. Leeds would not want to wait so long for TramTrain, but nothing can happen until the Sheffield trial is up and running successfully.

Greg Mulholland then spoke about Leeds and that if TramTrain were to come to Leeds, unlike Sheffield, the TramTrain would come first and the urban tramway would follow. Would that be an appropriate course for developing light rail?

Rachid Meftah said that the whole point of TramTrain was to link heavy rail with a tram network. If there is no tram network then TramTrain does not really make sense. There are examples, however, of two projects, tram and TramTrain, being developed together. All transport networks develop in a step by step manner.

Greg Mulholland left the meeting at 16:10 and **Paul Rowen** took the Chair.

John Parry said that in converting the Stourbridge Town branch to a form of light rail Network Rail were very cooperative. He asked the cost of the Sheffield TramTrain vehicles.

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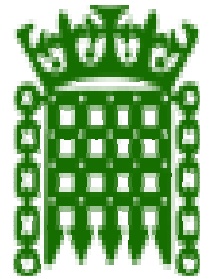


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Rachid Meftah said that the Sheffield vehicles were the first TramTrains in the UK with the risk associated with gaining certification etc and that only seven vehicles were ordered. The price per vehicle was about 4.8m Euros

Jim Harkins said that the total cost of the project was £56m

Tim Kendell (Independent Consultant) pointed out that only four of the vehicles were specifically for the project, the others were part of an agreed increase to the Sheffield tram fleet. In effect money was saved by combining two projects.

On the infrastructure side, he pointed out that there were misunderstandings about the differences between the UK infrastructure, the French infrastructure, the Belgian infrastructure and the German/Swiss/Austrian infrastructure.

They are all different, Belgium for example does not have the safety systems. We have a safety system which will probably be good enough. We have differences in the track which requires alteration to the wheel profiles on the TramTrain and certain bits of the track structure. So, just saying that if they can do it in Germany they can do it in England is not correct.

We work on different safety systems although we both run to the same level of overall safety. What we do have a problem with in this country and that is in construction generally, not just Network Rail, is the inability to get focussed on what we should be doing. One reason this project is behind is that there are many people saying "we can't do that because ..." but not coming up with ways that we can do it, while others say "to do that you will have to do this, this, this, this and this and that is going to cost you ...".

We should be looking for people with a good sense of safety, a good sense of the industry, a good sense of the infrastructure looking at how we can facilitate a project like this safely (absolutely important) and at a reasonable cost.

The level of safety should, under the Health and Safety at Work Act, be as low as low as reasonably practical and we should not try to be any safer than we are at the moment.

Network Rail do have responsibility for safety on their system. Network Rail has heavy rail skill sets and is bringing in a lot of people from outside the industry to boost its project management skill sets but these people do not have light rail skill sets. Those skill sets are available but there is reluctance to call upon them and that is where we have to make the change – get the people with the right skill sets in the job working out how best to do it.

We could have had the overhead wires up by now at half the price by using a light rail overhead system and then if that bit of railway is ever electrified at 25kV take it down and replace it as part of the larger electrification project.

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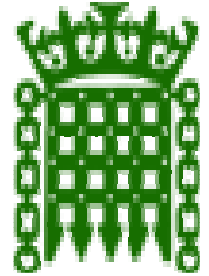


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The overall cost would be less. It is down to getting people with the right skill sets in place and realising that absolute safety is not required, only good enough safety. If things do go wrong, rather than looking for someone to blame, we should analyse the failure and do things better next time.

Ian Ambrose on behalf of Network Rail endorsed what Tim Kendell had said.

Mary Bonar (FPC) asked if the recent track replacement programme in Sheffield was because the track was worn or because it was not suitable for TramTrain. **Ian Ambrose** replied that the Sheffield vehicles had a much lower flange than those on most other systems which caused track wear making it unsuitable for the TramTrains.

Paul Rowen then introduced the final speaker.

Mark Barry

Mark Barry spoke to a power point presentation that can be found at <http://www.applrguk.co.uk/media/files/LR-Applrg-METRO-Summary-25th-May-2016-V1pdf>

It outlined the development of the idea of a metro system for the Cardiff City Region based on the existing Valley rail lines, the main objective being to increase connectivity to promote economic development and tackle deprivation.

Questions

Chris Bell commented on the similarity of the map of the proposed Cardiff Metro with that of the London Underground. London's success is due to the connectivity that the Underground brings and light rail would provide the connectivity in our other big cities to move from having 70-80% of commuting by car towards the 20% of London. Light rail is the key.

Nicholas Falk (URBSD) pointed out the increase in land values due to public transport investment.

Mark Berry agreed that governments had been too slow to make this connection and exploit it. The Metro project, however, was designed to stimulate commercial development.

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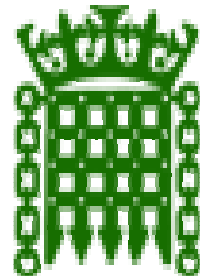


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Iain Souter (Independent consultant) said there was something fundamental in London which accounted for its success and that was the ticketing system, allowing journeys to be made without the penalty of financial embarrassment. He asked where the bus operators fitted into the Cardiff project because without their cooperation in a comprehensive ticketing system the project would not succeed.

Mark Berry replied that there had been attempts to introduce smart ticketing which had failed because bus operators would not cooperate. Attitudes are changing but there needs to be a willingness to work alongside other operators. This is something which needs to be developed at the same time as the infrastructure project.

Tim Kendell asked if it was proposed to take over responsibility or ownership of the Valley lines from Network Rail

Mark Berry said there had already been discussions between the Welsh Government and Network Rail. Network Rail would not be expected to manage light rail infrastructure.

Tim Kendell said that with the St Albans Abbey line Network Rail had proved unwilling to hand over responsibility to the local council. It would require legislation to transfer powers but if it is not done Network Rail will be there imposing standards and working practices incompatible with efficient light rail operation.

Mark Berry took the point and said that this was something that would be clarified as the project progressed.

John Parry asked why the plans included bus rapid transit when this had not been very successful elsewhere, for example in Swansea.

Mark Berry agreed that the Swansea scheme had not worked out but well-planned BRT had a role for routes where light rail was not feasible and where ordinary bus services were not sufficient as long as it was fully integrated into the network and the ticketing system.

John Parry said that we must distinguish between a fully segregated guided bus and a BRT system which used bus priority measures on the normal roads and which thereby reduced road capacity for other traffic.

Mark Berry said we needed modes which had the attributes of rail but which were affordable and we look to the market to deliver these.

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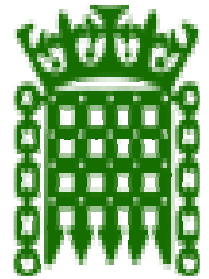


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John Reed (Smart Group UK) asked whether with reference to transit oriented development densification as well as completely new development had been looked at.

Mark Berry said this was being looked at. Denser development around stations should be encouraged. How this would be implemented is still to be worked out

Paul Rowen thanked the speakers.

The meeting closed at 17:00.

Connecting Cardiff, Newport and The Valleys (2011)
A Cardiff Capital Region Metro – Impact Study (2013)

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