



Scottish Association for Public Transport

SCOTTISH TRANSPORT MATTERS

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Testing of the new Hitachi Class 385 trains for EGIP services has now started on the Gourock line (photo above by Ann Glen). Electric services on the Edinburgh-Glasgow line, due to start in the summer, have now been delayed by electrification faults.

2017 Members Meetings (see page 2 for details)

AGM:

EDINBURGH **June 6th** **10.30-13.00** Jurys Inn*, 43 Jeffrey Street
Guest Speaker: Transport Minister Humza Yousaf

Regional Meetings:

INVERNESS: **June 20th** **14.00-16.00** Mercure Hotel, Church Street
HITRANS strategy, InterCity Rail north of the Central Belt

ABERDEEN: **September 22nd** **13.30-15.30** Jurys Inn, Union Square
Nestrans Transport Developments

GLASGOW: **October 31st** **18.30-20.30** Mercure Hotel, Ingram St
HS2 to Scotland, ClydeMetro, CalMac Developments

* Regrettably there is no wheelchair access to the meeting room in Jurys Inn Edinburgh

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SAPT Meeting Agendas

SAPT AGM Tuesday 6th June 2017 Jurys Inn, 43 Jeffrey St, Edinburgh

10.30 Tea/coffee

11.00 Guest Speaker **Transport Minister Humza Yousaf MSP**

SAPT have expressed interest in the following topics being covered:

Timescales for completing the National Transport Strategy Review,
and National Planning Framework

Plans for development of the strategic InterCity rail network, including Central Belt-
Aberdeen/Inverness, and Aberdeen-Inverness,

The potential to link urban rail development with City Deals to maximise economic
benefits

Progress with Electronic Ticketing

Prospects for rail re-openings, eg Levenmouth, Ellon, Hawick, St.Andrews

There will be a short question and answer session after the Minister's presentation.

If you wish to pre-submit a question, please send this to sapt@btinternet.com

Please note that time for questions will be limited

11.40 Update on ScotRail Alliance projects, including EGIP and Scottish InterCity plans

12.00 SAPT Business Meeting

13.00 Close

Highland Meeting Tuesday 20th June Mercure Hotel, Church St, Inverness

14.00 HITRANS Update on Inverness, Dalcross and Forres station and line upgrades

Response to HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy

(Details of the draft HITRANS strategy are at
www.hitrans.org.uk/Strategy/Regional_Transport_Strategy)

InterCity developments north of the Central Belt

Rural bus services

Trains and Tourism on West Highland, Kyle and Far North lines

16.00 Close

Aberdeen Meeting Friday 22nd September Jurys Inn, Union Square

13.30 NESTRANS Transport Developments: Update by Derick Murray, Director, Nestrans

Bus Park+Ride possibilities

Ellon rail-reopening

Stewart Stevenson, MSP, SAPT President, will attend

15.30 Close

Glasgow meeting Tuesday October 31st Mercure Hotel, Glassford Street

18.30 – 20.30 Agenda in next newsletter

Following the Council elections in May, transport organisation in Scotland's cities is likely to see major changes. The largest party in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee is now the SNP, though without overall control in any of these cities. Transport policy will depend on agreement with coalition partners in each city. The parties' manifestos for the two largest cities show some of the changes to be expected.

Glasgow

The SNP manifesto proposes a **Transport for Glasgow** body. This will investigate bus franchising, improved Bus Quality Partnership agreements to deliver a more comprehensive, integrated network across the city.

The rail network is described as one of the jewels in the city's crown with potential for greater use. Extension of the Subway, with management taken over by the City Government, is also proposed.

A smart one-ticket system for use across all public transport is also proposed.

SAPT View: *Most of these proposals are welcome and indeed are similar to SAPT aspirations.*

Extending the Subway would, however, involve expensive tunnelling. The ClydeMetro SAPT concept, using the City Union Line (see the following section 3, "Rail Investment Priorities") may provide an alternative, cost-effective approach, and we look forward to discussing this with the new council.

Transferring control of the Subway to be managed by the "City Government" would affect Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) who currently run the subway and the modernisation programme currently underway. SPT have also pioneered the Bramble smartcard which could be extended as the smart one-ticket system for all public transport. As most rail services and many bus services around the Glasgow conurbation extend beyond the Glasgow City Council boundary, a "Transport for Greater Glasgow" body may be a better fit than "Transport for Glasgow", though this would require co-operation with other councils (eg East Renfrewshire where the Conservative Party has the greatest number of councillors).

Edinburgh

The SNP manifesto for the city proposes retaining Lothian Buses and the Edinburgh Tram under municipal ownership, recognising the good operational performance being achieved. The manifesto makes a positive statement that "extending the tram represents the best means of building the capacity we need in our public transport" provided an acceptable business case is made. The SNP also propose to work with other councils and bus operators to improve public transport links to the city centre. The Labour, LibDem and Green manifestos have a similarly positive approach to public transport in the capital.

The Conservatives, who have 18 seats (compared with the SNP's 19), would retain Lothian Buses in public ownership, but would reject the business case for extending the trams as too expensive, too long, and too soon, and would await the results from the inquiry by Lord Hardie, which has already cost well over £3 million, lasted 3 years, and hasn't started taking evidence yet. The Council expects to pay a further £2 million in participating in this inquiry.

SAPT View: *While the Edinburgh Tram project is a textbook case study in how not to build a tram system, the viability of the half-built line (and air quality in central Edinburgh) depends on extension to Leith and Newhaven. Tram systems in England have been completed successfully, and the Manchester and Birmingham networks are now being extended. Requesting contractual and engineering know-how from south of the border to advise on extending the Edinburgh system would be better value than a legal inquiry.*

SAPT looks forward to suggesting some imaginative public transport developments with the new councils. Co-ordination of bus and rail transport can improve service to the travelling public, reduce road congestion, and improve the business case for much-needed public transport infrastructure investment. The next "Transport Matters" will show what could be achieved.

Transport Scotland (TS) are soon expected to finalise the High Level Output Statement (HLOS) defining investment priorities for the ScotRail network for CP6 from 2019 to 2024. With government budgets under pressure, and transport commitments already made for expensive road schemes including the A9 and A96, there is a danger that growth in rail usage will stall unless adequate funding is allocated to projects that maintain or increase rail's competitiveness. With completion of EGIP electrification, the most important strategic priorities over the 5 years from 2019 are likely to be:

1. **Increases in speed and capacity of InterCity routes north of the Central Belt**
2. **Extending the ScotRail network where this can boost local economies**
3. **Progressing jointly with DfT towards the 3-hour HS2 London-Glasgow/Edinburgh journey target**
4. **Developing urban rail services to support local authority economic development plans**

1 InterCity Priority

Over the 5 years from 2019, focus should be on upgrading capacity and speed on the InterCity network north from the Central Belt. The Strategic Transport Projects Review promised "to improve inter-urban rail journey times, making them more competitive with private car". Car and rail example journey times are:

	Car (AA)	Train (av)		Car	Train (average)
Edinburgh-Aberdeen	2 h 33 m	2 h 29 m	Glasgow-Aberdeen	2 h 41 mins	2 h 40 m
Edinburgh-Inverness	3 h 11 m	3 h 28 m	Glasgow-Inverness	3 h 12 mins	3 h 16 m

The train has little if any advantage over car times (based on the AA route planner) on these journeys.

HST 125 trains due on InterCity routes by 2019 will make fewer stops, with intermediate stations served by additional regional trains, and this is expected to cut some InterCity journeys by around 10 to 12 minutes. Further reduction is desirable and this could be done by upgrading suitable stretches of track to allow the HST trains, capable of 125mph, to reach higher speeds than the current 100 mph Turbostars. Enhancing permissible speeds for HSTs on curves, as already introduced on the Midland Main Line, would also help.

The HLOS should fund a programme to raise InterCity line speeds, breaking through the 100 mph barrier. A new loop east from Elgin to allow an hourly Aberdeen-Inverness frequency should also be funded in CP6

2 Rail extensions

The economic benefits from rail re-openings have been confirmed by the Borders Railway, following the successful Airdrie-Bathgate, Alloa and Larkhall projects. But there are no schemes currently underway. **Restoring rail services to Levenmouth** along the existing route from Thornton would be realistically achievable in CP6 and should be significantly easier than the preceding projects. If co-ordinated with buses from Levenmouth this could transform public transport to the East Neuk of Fife.

In Aberdeenshire, **reopening the Ellon-Dyce** (-Aberdeen) line with connecting buses to Peterhead and Fraserburgh would revolutionise public transport in the north-east and cut road congestion and pollution.

Extending the **Borders Railway to Hawick** should also be added to the "pipeline" of CP6 projects.

3 Anglo-Scottish Rail

With HS2 trains to Glasgow due to start by 2026, and additional East Coast trains to Edinburgh starting by 2020, upgrade plans for the ECML and WCML in Scotland are needed soon to allow work to begin.

Priority projects are **remodelling Carstairs and Portobello Junctions** to eliminate single-lead junctions and 15 mph speed limits. On the approach to Glasgow, a **Cambuslang bypass** (a 2 mile re-opened line for local trains from Newton to Carmyle, then to the Argyle Line) would cut delays to WCML and Lanarkshire trains.

4 Urban Rail

In Glasgow, Network Rail has identified options to expand platform and track capacity into Central station and through the Partick bottleneck. An alternative approach is to develop the under-used City Union Line as a metro route for short distance rail services linked via a new 800 metre line from Bridgegate and St. Enoch to Central station. This would relieve Southside routes into Central and also link Springburn (Cumbernauld interchange) and Bellgrove (Airdrie interchange) to Central for connections to the south and west. Stops at College Lands, Glasgow Cross, Gorbals, Stockwell St and St. Enoch would boost these regeneration areas.

In Eastern Scotland, priorities are to extend the Edinburgh Tram system and lengthen Fife-Edinburgh trains.

TS should set up working groups with the City Councils, RTPs, economic development interests, NR and bus operators to formulate strategies for developing integrated transport networks for the cities. Rail projects identified by these groups could be funded by City Deals or added to the "pipeline" of TS projects.

AVIATION

Scottish Economy Secretary Keith Brown sees a third runway at Heathrow offering significant benefits for Scotland. Increased competition will help cut prices to and from Scottish airports with both more direct flights overseas and increased services from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness to Heathrow and a new Prestwick- Heathrow route added by 2030. This will reverse the near 25% fall in Scottish flights to Heathrow between 2006 and 2016. DfT is consulting on a draft National Policy Statement on airports with responses by 25 May. It has a focus on expansion in south-east England also with benefits to other regions.

With respect to cuts in APD at Scottish airports, this will make it harder to deliver cuts in greenhouse gases. Virgin Trains has argued that present plans will affect the viability of Anglo-Scottish rail improvements, including a shift towards HS2 services. Writing in the Herald (13Feb), Pinstripe argues that while there is economic benefit in some cuts in high rates of long-distance APD, cuts should not apply to trips by air within Britain. Tax experts have called for more detail on the mechanics and actual impact of APD changes proposed in Air Departure Tax (Scotland) Bill

There is increasing criticism of the potential for Scottish government owned Prestwick to become viable, even allowing for some growth in military use and success in gaining spaceport status. Argyll & Bute Council is supporting spaceport status for Machrihanish.

Ryanair has announced 13 new routes from Edinburgh to European destinations but some may be scrapped if APD is not reduced. Edinburgh Airport has introduced a congestion charge for peak flights but proposals for revised flightpaths may ease the situation. A second runway may be needed by the 2040s

Budget airline Norwegian is preparing a Scottish base and plans a new low-cost Edinburgh to USA route. Ryanair reduced average ticket prices in late 2016, seeking to fill spare capacity. A weakening £ has brought more tourists to Scotland but may depress outward travel by Scottish residents

Loganair has gained the contract for the Orkney inter-isles service over the next four years. Arran Brewery, also the majority shareholder in HJS Helicopters, is planning a heliport on Arran for north business and tourist use. Wick Airport is being urged to reverse falling usage by attracting more tourist use and exploring direct international flights

The Dundee-London Stansted service has been secured for a further two years following grants of £3.7m from the UK and Scottish Governments and Dundee City Council

MSPs have approved the principles of the Air Departure Tax (Scotland) Bill but have called for more evidence on the expected economic impact. Adverse impacts are feared on public finances and on targets for cuts in greenhouse gas emissions with low gains for the economy (H1&16Apr)

Loganair has started flights from Edinburgh to the Isle of Man while Flybe is introducing extra flights from Edinburgh and Aberdeen to Heathrow. Scottish Heli-dining is introducing helicopter tours combined with fine dining – including whisky-tasting trips to Islay.

Scottish flyers seek a ban on passengers reclining their seats on short flights. Complaints have been made at higher set-down/pick-up charges at Glasgow Airport. This has led to increased congestion around the airport but the airport wishes to see greater use of public transport

Aberdeen Airport has resumed passenger growth while high growth continues at Glasgow and Edinburgh. March saw a 23.5% rise at Inverness Airport while Glasgow had a 13.7% rise in international passengers with domestic up 1.4%. At Edinburgh the international rise was 5.5% with domestic at 2.5%. Aberdeen had 4.3% international rises and 2.4% domestic.

BUS and TRAM

Due to funding pressures and increased numbers in older age-groups, the Scottish Government is consulting on a review of the bus concession scheme (LTT 715 3Feb). The Scottish Government estimates that raising the age for a free bus pass from 60 to 65 would save almost £1m a week (H20Mar)

Transport Focus reports an overall bus passenger satisfaction rate of 90% but 1 in 5 are unhappy with poor timekeeping, mainly due to rises in road congestion. First has announced a 10% rise in bus fares on some Glasgow routes and 7.5% elsewhere. Over December and January, Glasgow City Council gained £211,000 from fines from car users ignoring the bus and taxi zone at Nelson Mandela Place.

Pressures have risen for a more rapid shift to non-diesel buses to improve air quality in cities. Lothian buses has accelerated shifts to Euro 6 buses reducing CO₂ by 30%, NO_x by 98% and particulates around 80%. 66% of the Lothian fleet now meets European standards but much remains to be done.

Bus union leaders, bus users and Edinburgh local tax payers have objected to proposals that Lothian Buses contribute £20m to extend Edinburgh trams to Newhaven. At a cost of £1.2m, consultants have been appointed to prepare detailed plans for this tram extension likely to cost £145m. A decision on extension has been delayed until after the local elections in May but the local Labour Party favours extension to Newhaven and from Haymarket to Granton. The Granton Central Development Masterplan has been amended to facilitate a tram extension.

The first hearings into the Edinburgh tram inquiry are now expected in September, three years after the chair Lord Hardie was appointed. Doubt has been expressed at the value of the inquiry compared to a quicker assessment of what went wrong with the Edinburgh tram scheme.

WL Hogg (S31Dec) has urged that Edinburgh trams and buses should complement each other, not compete, for airport traffic. He suggests cutting the Airport express bus to a 30minute frequency. Trams offer much better space for luggage. An LTT correspondent also says that modern doubledeckers have only 30% of passenger space on the lower deck, creating problems for disabled travellers and others having difficulties on stairs. He urges a shift to trams and single-deck urban buses

After three difficult years, First Scotland East has made a successful transition, withdrawing from East Lothian but concentrating on improved services and higher-standard buses on the more populated western corridors from Stirling, Falkirk and Bathgate through to Edinburgh. First Bus has sold Midlothian and Border bus operations to West Coast Motors.

CMA has ruled that creation of a subsidiary, East Coast Buses, to rescue some bus services in East Lothian has not made Lothian Buses too dominant in the market

Stagecoach subsidiary, Highland Country Buses, reports a fall in profits and headwinds leading to further cuts in the Highlands and Islands. Yearly profit was down from £2m to £1.6m with revenue down from £19.8m to under £19m.

Lothian Buses has introduced a new half-hourly service from Ocean Terminal to Edinburgh Airport via north Edinburgh. An Edinburgh City Council survey finds that 68% of the city population had used buses in the previous month. Other surveys show a fall in those satisfied with Lothian buses punctuality from 91% in 2013 to 85%. In terms of overall satisfaction, Lothian Buses fell from 96% in 2013 to 93% (equal to the Stagecoach rating but with First Bus down from 92% to 87%). All operators complain of the extra costs and lost income arising from growth in city road congestion though the rise of home delivery and private hire was also having some adverse impact on bus usage.

Stagecoach is withdrawing the South Queensferry-Edinburgh service. Stagecoach also plans to halve off-peak daytime express services to an hourly frequency between Glasgow and Kilwinning via the Garnock Valley – citing fewer trips by pensioners and a fall in bus use for trips to Glasgow city centre (partly due to the introduction of a half-hourly ScotRail Glasgow-Ayr service running non-stop between Glasgow and Kilwinning). Some Stagecoach off-peak services may divert via Braehead Shopping Centre while adjustments are proposed for other local services to provide a half-hourly service between Kilwinning and Garnock Valley towns without any need to seek social support for daytime services. Stagecoach also propose to cut Ayr-Dalmellington frequency from every 20 minutes to half-hourly.

RAIL

Both the UK and Scottish Governments and ORR are aiming for tighter control of rail finances and projects but allowing greater flexibility to shift funding between schemes in the light of revised costs and benefits. NR is expected to receive more grants towards network enhancements rather than financing these from borrowing – but grants will be from a range of other parties with an ability to borrow or raise annual funds to cover new borrowing. HS2 is also likely to be affected by such changes. Tenders being invited for new 225mph HS2 trains are due to be awarded in 2019. Specification includes study of ways to reduce peak energy demand with trains able to operate beyond new HS2 route. Construction work on Phase 1 of HS2 will start later this year.

Former Transport Minister, Tom Harris, has called for more passenger rail competition, especially on Anglo-Scottish routes but with fair levels of track access charges (H24Feb) West Coast services from Carlisle to Glasgow were disrupted by engineering works over five days at Easter.

In a Which survey, Virgin West Coast was rated best for reliability on longer-distance services.

Crewe is likely to be confirmed as an improved transport hub when new HS2 route is extended from Lichfield to Crewe in the late 2020s.

Though the West Coast franchise will initially be integrated with HS2 operation, the UK government may ban extension of the franchise to cover East Coast services in the interests of promoting competition for inter-city travel (LTT713 6Jan). Virgin report a record of 294,000 users between Glasgow and London on the West Coast Main line in the 24 weeks to 31 March while Trans-Pennine report strong growth in usage between Manchester and Glasgow/Edinburgh. Cross-Country has abandoned plans to cut services from England through to Aberdeen from 6 to 2 per day from December 2017

The Scottish Government sees the present rail framework as unnecessarily complex and is seeking full devolution of control over Network Rail in Scotland (H18Jan) or possibly nationalisation of rail track and services in Scotland. H editorial on 30 March supports view that Network Rail in Scotland should be under full Scottish Government control. This could offer savings and efficiency gains up to £100m a year with the Scottish Government deciding the best use of such funds. NR methodology is being changed to highlight the costs of rural railways with a hint that this could lead to closures or new ways of operating rural lines and assessing their benefits (LTT713 6Jan)

UK Government is withdrawing annual support for 3 of the 6 Anglo-Scottish rail freight services presently supported. Scottish Government is seeking review of this action in the light of the clear benefits of trunk rail freight. DfT say costs of a large-scale shift from road to rail freight would be prohibitive (LTT717)

A Scottish media campaign on the failings of Abellio ScotRail may have contributed to the decision of MD Phil Verster to take charge of the Oxford-Cambridge rail project. Yet ScotRail performance remains good compared to many other operators at a time when NR track and signalling problems plus major enhancement schemes are causing some disruption. 90.3% of ScotRail services arrived within 5 minutes of scheduled time in February, compared with 87.3% average in England and Wales.

Full redevelopment of Glasgow Queen St station may be delayed a further seven months due to complex negotiations over the nature of the delayed Buchanan Galleries shopping and entertainment project. The Scottish Government has been attacked on 'back of a fag packet' plans for a temporary rail fares freeze with Alastair Dalton arguing for a more dramatic fares reduction to fill the empty seats still available on many trains, especially since total trains available will rise as new train sets arrive with older sets mainly retained in Scotland (S 19&20Jan)

Carillion has won the £49m contract for wiring the Carfin-Shotts-Calders line by 2019 which will give a further electrified route from Glasgow to Edinburgh. Delivery of new electric trains for services across central Scotland is progressing but energising Edinburgh-Glasgow wiring has been held up by technical problems.

Glasgow City Council is contributing £10m to the £18.3m cost of a new station at Robroyston close to land already developed to the north and a further 1,600 homes expected to the south. Glasgow's contribution will be repaid from a section 75 deal contributing £11,000 per house built. The balance of funding will be met by £7.1m from Transport Scotland Stations Fund and £1.25m from SPT. The site is close to an M80 junction and will include park-and-ride, opening in late 2019. Trains from the station will include direct services to Edinburgh via Cumbernauld and Falkirk Grahamston.

Toilets and a café are now open at Tweedbank station and some trains on services to Edinburgh have been lengthened. CBR (Campaign for Borders Rail) is developing a case for rail extension, and land safeguarding, from Tweedbank to Carlisle. The Scottish Government is assessing this project but funding problems may restrict reopening to the section between Tweedbank and Hawick in the next decade.

A new station at Dalcross, close to Inverness Airport and new housing, is likely to open by 2019. Costs around £5.5m include £3.3 m from the Scottish Stations Fund. SWestran has dropped plans for an early reopening of Beattock station but hoped applications to the Scottish Stations Fund could allow earlier reopening of Easttriggs or Thornhill (at c £10m each).

In the SPT area, train trips continue to rise though more slowly with some adverse impacts from service disruption. The 57.6m trips in 2013/14 may reach 63.5m in 2016-17. The Edwardian pier and station at Wemyss Bay has been restored to its former glory in a £10m upgrade since 2014

FERRIES & SHIPPING

Peel Ports have opened a £400m mega-container ship terminal at Liverpool and expect over five years to double business at Greenock Ocean Terminal through feeder links to Liverpool.

Extensive media coverage continues on ABP proposals that the Ardrossan service to Arran could be moved to Troon. Arran opinion remains firmly in favour of a continued link to Ardrossan (H editorial on 30 Jan and report on Arran opinion 13 Feb). Rather than tinkering with the Ardrossan terminal, major spending including a contribution from Clydeport (part of Peel Ports) may be needed to improve bad weather reliability. Ardrossan terminal upgrades have been announced but calls have been made for the rail terminus to be closer to the ferry berth and for a faster catamaran-style service with two ships permitting an hourly service. Other suggestions included greater use of passenger-only ferries serving more places over the main tourist season. A STAG study has confirmed Ardrossan as the best port for the ferry link to Brodick (H21Mar)

Scottish Government reports that EU rules do not necessarily preclude a return to nationalised ferry operation within Scotland rather than the present franchise system (H3Feb). An early morning sailing from Port Ellen had to be cancelled after some crew failed breath tests. A terrorist adviser has expressed concern at risks from potential bombers using Northern Ireland-Scotland ferries.

For the first time in 20 years CalMac carried over 5m passengers in 2016 - mainly due to extension of RET cut-price ferry fares. Ardrossan – Brodick was the busiest route with 828,262 passengers (up 8.7%) and over 200,000 vehicles (up 6.8%) The next busiest routes were Largs-Cumbrae (738,549 passengers) and Wemyss Bay-Rothesay (675,714 passengers). Cars on the Rothesay route were up 19% and by 40% on Oban-Craignure route (the fourth busiest for passengers). The steepest rise (from a low base) was 74% on the Tobermory-Kilchoan route. Over the year, more than 5,000 sailings were cancelled.

Western Ferries (Clyde) report a marginal dip in annual profits from £2.7m to £2.6m but plan to upgrade quayside infrastructure at McInroy's Point and Hunter's Quay.

The larger new ferry being built for the routes from Uig to Lochmaddy and Tarbert will require Highland Council to spend £23m on harbour improvements at Uig with related rises in harbour dues. Ten years of community operation of the small Glenelg-Kylerhea vehicle ferry to Skye is being celebrated by a £60,000 modernisation of the wheelhouse of the vessel which used to provide the Ballachulish ferry until the bridge there opened in 1975. Despite the bridge now available to Skye, the Glenelg ferry carried 36,000 passengers and 12,500 vehicles in 2016.

The issue of a hovercraft link from Fife to Edinburgh has again been raised. The Maid of the Loch, mothballed at Balloch, may return to service on Loch Lomond if fundraising efforts are successful. Scottish Canals is considering an app allowing canal users to open swingbridges but costs may preclude early action (EN 2Jan)

Freight on the P&O Cairnryan-Larne route has reached its highest volume for five years. Volume in 2016 was up 7.5% on 2015. 2016 was the first year in which none of the 4,774 sailings had been cancelled (a marked contrast with CalMac sailings on the Ardrossan-Brodick route).

The Herald Annual Review of Scottish Ports (20 Jan) reports cruise passenger numbers up 5.3% on 2015 with some 484,000 disembarking for various shore visits. Over Scotland, 656,000 cruise visitors are expected in 2017. A new £16.5m jetty at Lerwick allows larger cruise ships to call. 62,000 passengers are expected this year, a quarter up on 2016. Argyll & Bute Council is investing £3m in cruise ship pontoons and marine tourism.

After a 70 year gap, Loch Tay Safaris, based at Kenmore, is introducing 12 seat cruises in 2017.

Aberdeen Harbour Board has signed off £350m plans for a new deeper water terminal at Nigg Bay, (also able to take cruise ships). Ship to ship oil and gas transfers in Scapa Flow are now significant earners for Orkney Council.