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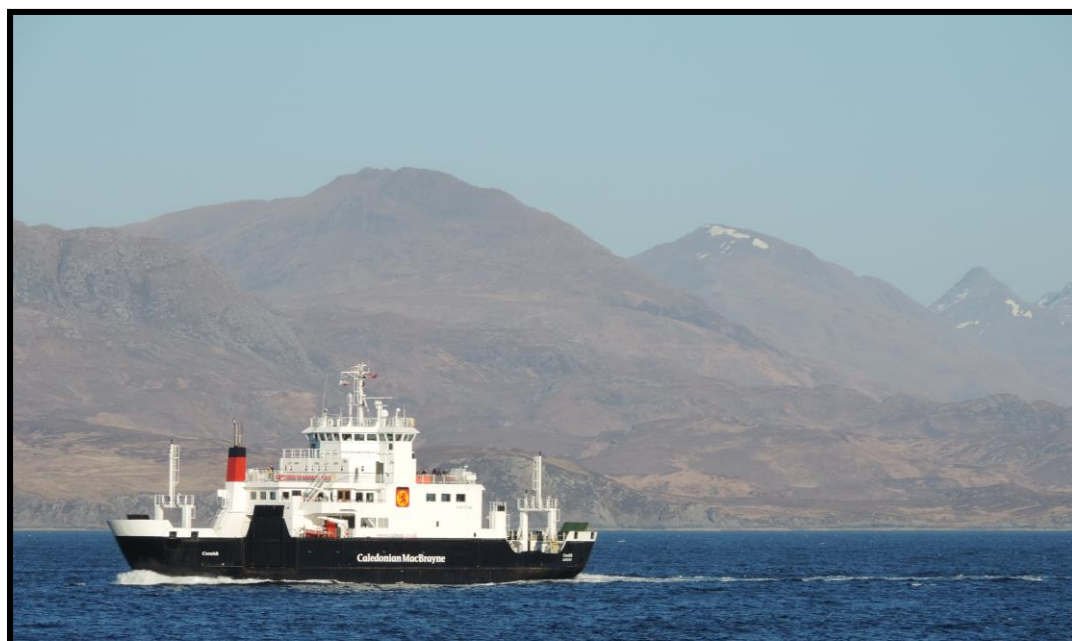
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Scottish Association for Public Transport

SCOTTISH TRANSPORT MATTERS

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Summer 2016 will see major changes to CalMac ferry services. The current proposal is for a daily Lochboisdale-Mallaig sailing, a dedicated Oban-Barra ferry, more capacity to Tiree and Colonsay, and a two-ship Oban-Craignure service using Isle of Mull and Coruisk (above)

Season's Greetings from the SAPT committee to all our members

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1 Highlands and Islands Developments

Islands

The main ferry link to Bute has been diverted from Wemyss Bay to Gourrock for 24 weeks while the linkspan at Wemyss Bay pier is being refurbished. Crossing time is increased from 35 minutes to 60 minutes requiring a temporary timetable with fewer sailings.

Major improvements to CalMac ferry services are planned for summer 2016. To cope with the rise in vehicle traffic generated by lower Road Equivalent Tariff fares, ferries are being redeployed to provide more sailings. The new *Loch Seaforth* on the Stornoway-Ullapool route has replaced *Isle of Lewis* which is being transferred to serve Barra from Oban. This in turn is allowing a number of changes:

- New daily (SuX) Lochboisdale-Mallaig return sailing by *Lord of the Isles*. This will cut the Lochboisdale sailing time from 7 hours to only 3 hours 45 minutes and connect at Mallaig with Glasgow trains.
- More sailings on the Mallaig-Armadale route, provided by *Lord of the Isles* and the smaller *Lochinvar*
- Daily Barra-Oban return sailing, probably to be provided by the *Isle of Lewis*
- Frequent two-ferry service between Oban and Craignure, by *Isle of Mull* and *Coruisk*
- A 30% increase in capacity to Tiree, Coll and Colonsay provided by *Clansman*

The proposed timetable has been criticised by some islanders. One of the complaints is that the *Lochinvar* to be used on the Armadale route is slower and smaller than the *Coruisk* which currently maintains the summer service (though four crossings per day would be provided by the much larger *Lord of the Isles*).

SAPT welcomes higher frequencies, the shorter Lochboisdale-Mallaig route, and the greater prominence now given to train connections in the Calmac timetable. But we continue to argue that ferry/rail passenger fares under RET should be much cheaper than taking a car by ferry, an environmentally expensive option which increases the need for ever larger ferries.

Highlands

Phil Verster, the Managing Director of the ScotRail/ Network Rail alliance, gave an update on progress at a HITRANS conference in Inverness on December 11th 2015.

Network Rail have added £1.6 M per year to the tree clearance budget, but it is recognised this is not enough. Priority order is:

1. Where overhead wires are threatened
2. To improve operational safety, eg HML (trains were up to an hour late on the day of the conference, due to snow-laden trees obstructing the track north of Blair Atholl)
3. Lastly, where tourist views are obscured

Highland Main Line: Inverness-Perth journey times will be 10 minutes quicker on average by 2019, with an hourly frequency. Infrastructure upgrades are being reviewed now that HSTs are to be introduced by 2019. Opportunities for higher speeds are being examined. Trains are likely to cross at Pitlochry and Aviemore so track improvements are planned for there. Stopping patterns will also be standardised south of Perth. Further journey time cuts will depend on funding from Transport Scotland.

Inverness-Aberdeen Line: Double track is now being relaid from Aberdeen to Inverurie to allow a half-hourly frequency to be introduced by 2019. A new station at Kintore is planned.

A new station at Forres is to be built on a straighter alignment. Elgin will have a new footbridge and third (bay) platform for Inverness-Elgin trains (initially 3 per day) to be introduced by 2019. A single platform station at Dalcross will serve Inverness Airport and housing at Tornagrain, dependent on funding.

Faster Aberdeen-Inverness journeys and an hourly frequency will need Transport Scotland funding in control periods after 2019.

Far North line: Extra crew have been recruited to reduce cancellations. 6 km of track is being renewed, and drainage improved. An Inverness control room has been set up to improve performance.

Network Rail published a *Scotland Route Study* in December. This is a consultation document laying out a vision of the railway in 2043, and a series of choices needed to achieve the vision. Forecasting almost thirty years in advance is ambitious, but, given the long lead time for transport projects, SAPT welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation.

Future capacity requirements are based on growth forecasts which are at a higher annual rate to 2023, with total growth as follows:

<i>Projected Increase in travel by:</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2043</i>
Edinburgh commuter	56%	114%
Glasgow morning commuter	47%	108%
Aberdeen morning commuter	52%	151%
Interurban	156%	206%
Rural	60%	154%

The analysis identified seven areas for change, and possible intervention options as follows:

- 1. Edinburgh to Glasgow and Fife**
Fife bypass (Inverkeithing-Halbeath)
Almond chord (Winchburgh-Edi.Gateway)
Electrify Edinburgh-Perth/Dundee
- 2. Edinburgh Waverley/Slateford to Berwick**
More through platforms in Waverley, mezzanine floor, and double track through Calton North tunnel
Remodel Portobello & Slateford junctions
Quadruple track Prestonpans-Wallyford
Electrify Suburban line for freight, access to Millerhill Depot, and diversionary route
- 3. Glasgow Cen HL to Carlisle and Haymarket**
Expand Central station, or build new station
Grade separation at Uddingston, Holytown and Law, and remodel Carstairs Junction
- 4. Glasgow Queen St - Aberdeen & Inverness**
Improvements to speed and capacity.
Widening of single track at Montrose and Perth. Perth & Inverness track remodelling.
Electrification Perth-Aberdeen/ Inverness
- 5. Strathclyde suburban network**
Central LL expansion, Partick-Hyndland resignalling or quadrupling
Electrification to East Kilbride (plus second platform), Barrhead, Ayr via Kilmarnock, Anniesland via Maryhill
Bellgrove junction remodelling

6. Aberdeen to Inverness

Improvements to speed and capacity.
Extra loops, dynamic where possible

7. Far North line Inverness-Dingwall

New loop and signalling south of Dingwall
Georgemas chord (avoids reversals)

The consultation makes clear that it offers choices for funders (mainly Transport Scotland) and that enhancements for different parts of the network will have to compete for priority over the next five control periods to 2043.

Initial Response to NR Study:

The Scotland Route Study has been published before the HS2 report on extending High Speed Rail to Scotland, which is due to be released early in 2016. Many of the capacity constraints (Glasgow-Lanarkshire, Edinburgh- Berwick /Carstairs, and Edinburgh-Glasgow) could be changed if, as SAPT hopes, new high speed track is constructed in Scotland. This could be more effective than upgrading existing Victorian alignments and junctions in the central belt

Some of the proposals to be achieved by 2043 have been mooted for many years and deserve high priority for completion by 2024. This includes Aberdeen-Inverness hourly frequency, much faster journeys on the key Glasgow/Edinburgh-Perth-Dundee-Aberdeen InterCity routes, and upgrading the Highland Main Line for higher speed and reliability.

Another issue is the effect of more rail re-openings. After the popular Borders re-opening, pressure for restoring rail services Ellon (see section 3), Levenmouth, Grangemouth, Alloa-Dunfermline, St. Andrews, Hawick etc could change capacity requirements. Alternative solutions like Tramtrain could be considered for short distance routes eg restoring passenger services to the Edinburgh South Suburban line, linking at Haymarket into the Tram route.

NR's list of upgrades is based on rail traffic considerations. Transport Scotland is likely to include economic benefit as a criterion.

The SAPT committee will be putting together a response early in 2016. Members views would be welcome by email to sapt@btinternet.com

3 Transport Study for North-East Scotland

A Fraserburgh and Peterhead to Aberdeen Strategic Transport Study has been commissioned by Nestrans, and Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils. The Base Report analyses existing transport in the area, and mentions future possibilities including re-opening the Aberdeen-Peterhead/Fraserburgh railway, and improving bus services including sections of guided busway which could use parts of the railway solum. A consultation on the study closed on December 15th 2015.

Aberdeenshire suffered the most from the Beeching cuts in the 1960s, losing all its suburban and rural railway lines. Train services to Fraserburgh and Peterhead were withdrawn in 1965 and these are now the furthest isolated large towns (more than 10,000 population) from the Scottish rail network.

The successful re-opening of the Borders rail link to Galashiels shows that a fast rail service is attractive to commuters and other travellers. In Aberdeenshire, the re-opened Dyce and Laurencekirk stations confirm that good train services are popular with travellers (Dyce usage has risen by 239% since 2002).

A fast train service from a railhead at Ellon via Dyce to Aberdeen in under 30 minutes would attract car commuters and help to regenerate the economy and reduce road congestion and pollution in Aberdeen city centre. Co-ordinated bus links from Fraserburgh and Peterhead to an Ellon railhead could be the first steps towards fully re-opening the railway to these towns.

The SAPT response to the Strategic Transport Study therefore recommended re-opening the 13-mile Dyce-Ellon railway. The track bed has not been built on, now forming part of the Formartine Buchan way. (Converting the railway to a guided busway would not achieve the short journey times needed to attract car users, and could not make use of the Dyce-Aberdeen fast rail link into the city centre). Our response got good coverage in the Press & Journal and BBC Aberdeen, and has been sent to NESTRANS.

4 Glasgow Fastlink officially opens

The Glasgow Fastlink bus route was officially opened on December 1st 2015. The route from Glasgow city centre to the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital consists of sections of segregated roadway (along the Clyde waterfront and across the "Squinty Bridge", illustrated below) and bus priority measures on sections shared with other traffic. 16 buses per hour operate on Hospital-city centre services.

SPT and Glasgow City Council still have to upgrade the city centre section around Central Station where in Union Street pavements are to widened and bus stops upgraded to a "bus hub".

Operators had been unhappy at delays in completing the project and a failure of bus priority sensors for traffic lights to work properly. These issues have since been addressed by SPT and Glasgow City Council.

Fastlink times from the Hospital to Hope St have reduced from 27 to 22 minutes but with only 1 minute saved on the 12 minute onward travel time to Buchanan Bus Station. In the medium term, trip times for the whole route should fall from 39 to 30 minutes. Stagecoach accepted an SPT offer of £1.15m for new Euro 6 low emission buses but McGills have declined a similar offer of £1.3m. McGills has withdrawn its frequent F1 service on the full Fastlink route but has improved another local service route 23, using parts of the route, from 4 to 6 buses per hour.



Two lanes of the "Squinty Bridge" are reserved for Fastlink buses. The bridge is designed to be capable of taking light rail vehicles at some time in the future.

Aviation

A UK government decision on airport expansion in south-east England is expected in December with the SNP indicating that it will support the option offering the best benefits for Scotland. The Airports Commission has favoured expansion at London Heathrow rather than an extra runway at Gatwick.

Scottish political and business opinion is divided on this issue with some favouring an increase in flights from Scotland to Heathrow as the principal UK international hub. Others fear expanded capacity at Heathrow would be used principally for long-haul flights with no rise in 'Scottish' slots at Heathrow and a risk of lower growth in direct overseas flights to and from Scotland. Extra capacity at Heathrow could boost the attraction of London relative to cities in the North rather than promote the aim of a northward shift in the balance of economic activity. High growth in air travel also poses a threat to climate change as well as poorer air quality and environmental deterioration around Heathrow.

Bowing to public opinion, Edinburgh Airport has ended a trial flightpath causing noise and disturbance over parts of West Lothian. But the issue may have to be revisited if Edinburgh continues to experience high growth which has also been creating problems for passengers within the existing airport terminal.

Edinburgh and Glasgow Airports are making strong efforts to secure direct flights to China. From summer 2016, Ryanair is to increase services from Edinburgh to ten European cities. The airport continues to favour runway expansion at Gatwick rather than Heathrow. The former chief civil servant in Scotland, Sir John Elvidge, (now Chairman of Edinburgh Airport) sees 'building a third runway at steroid enhanced Heathrow would be full of risks' in mortgaging Scotland's future connectivity to a southern monopoly (H 19 Oct).

Low cost airline Vueling is to introduce direct flights from Edinburgh to Paris, Rome and Alicante.

The idea of replacing Edinburgh and Glasgow airports with a Central Scotland airport, and no runway expansion in the south-east, has been revived but with little backing. Ian McConnell has urged Prestwick to reduce landing charges to attract low-cost flights from other increasingly congested Scottish Airports (H14Aug). From January 2016, Prestwick will continue to be the base for a privatised Scottish search and rescue helicopter service based on a new civilian contract rather than the RAF/Royal Navy service.

Following the Clutha helicopter crash fatalities in Glasgow, it is likely that helicopters will be required to have flight recorders. Scottish Government is increasing from 40% to 50% the discounts for internal Scottish air travel given to Scottish rural areas with air services. SPARA (Smart Peripheral and Remote Airports) has EU funding to 'decarbonise' access to rural airports and make rural air services more cost-effective. Ryanair is in talks with partner airlines to allow through bookings to far-flung airports and ease baggage transfers.

Glasgow Airport continues to see strong growth with a 14% rise in October users compared to 2014. International travel is up 18.5% and domestic 8.9%. At Edinburgh, the year on year October rise was 8.9% (the sixth month in which Edinburgh passengers were over 1m). Edinburgh hopes to achieve 10m passengers in 2014. Glasgow had 836,798 passengers in October and came fourth in the list of growth rates at medium-sized European airports (with between 5m to 10m annual users). Gothenburg had the highest growth at 16% followed by Budapest and Porto with Glasgow at 12.2%. At Edinburgh, Ryanair expects to be contributing 2.3m passengers to the annual total for 2016. Inverness has new services to Dublin, connecting with transatlantic flights while services to hubs at Manchester and Gatwick were increased. Aberdeen Airport continues to suffer from oil industry recession.

Rail

Abellio has announced the largest-ever improvement of the ScotRail fleet. The £475 million revamp will see all 21 Class 318 units fully refurbished, seven additional Class 320 (ex-321) electric trains, as well as the 70 new Hitachi electric units and 27 fully refurbished HSTs due in 2017 and 2018. Refurbishment of the Class 334 electric fleet, and Class 158 diesel trains, is also in progress. Most trains will offer at-seat power points and free wi-fi.

The UK Government has appointed Lord Adonis, former Labour Transport Minister and high-speed rail advocate as Chair of a National Infrastructure Commission. This will cover all infrastructure but may lean towards transport infrastructure and deal mainly with England. A separate UK/Scottish Government report on HSR is expected early in 2016. 3 hour timings from both Glasgow and Edinburgh to London is the aim by 2030. The Institute of Civil Engineers Scotland says the greatest benefit would come from new High Speed Line over the entire distance (H 2Nov), making a 2 hour 15 minute journey possible.

The volume of rail freight in Scotland will be hit by the closure of Longannet coal-fired power station in 2016 along with the phasing out of coal trains from Hunterston to power stations in England. However, as argued particularly by David Spaven (S 1 Sept), there are opportunities to expand long-distance rail freight and other bulk freight – including more use of longer freight trains and longer passing loops allowing passenger trains to overtake freight on existing routes.

Responding to a Competition and Markets Authority consultation on reforms in UK passenger rail services after 2023, Virgin and Stagecoach have proposed a licensing system for inter-city passenger services in place of franchising – though franchising could continue for regional services.

UK and Scottish media coverage of the reopening in September of Borders Rail from Edinburgh to Tweedbank was almost entirely positive, apart from the initial problem of overcrowding with usage of the half-hourly rail service being much higher than predicted. Construction costs were kept within the £294m budget, with delivery on time. There were 125,000 'normal' users in the first month plus 6,200 in special steam trains. As well as the benefit of easier access to jobs in Edinburgh, the route is already improving prospects for extra housing with clear evidence of a rise in visitors to the Borders. Shop/cafe takings are up in Galashiels and Melrose plus an 18% rise in visitors to the former home of Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford. Two correspondents suggested that the overwhelming majority of Beeching rail cuts had been justified and that Borders Rail offered poor value compared to alternatives elsewhere in Scotland (H8 & 11 Sept) but most media comment argued for increased attention throughout Britain to the merits of rail reopening, extra stations on some existing routes and even some new construction.

Calls have been made for an extension of Borders Rail through to Carlisle, with the immediate aim being an extension to Hawick. Falkirk Council is also seeking a station for Bonnybridge.

A Barrhead South station (on the Neilston line) is being examined as part of City Deal Plans for the Glasgow area and there is renewed campaigning for restoration of passenger services on the City Union link from Bellgrove to Shields Road also serving expanding activities in Gorbals.

Scottish passenger trips are up 35% in the past decade, but seating capacity on trains has risen less than 10% (H 17 Oct) A Glasgow-Manchester Airport Trans-Pennine service tops the DfT list of most crowded trains in Britain on arrival in Manchester (S 10 Sept). Many trains need to be lengthened, but shortage of rolling stock UK-wide means there will be no improvement until arrival of new electric trains in 2017.

ScotRail improvements from December include improved train frequencies between Kilmarnock, Ayr and Stranraer. The Ayr-Girvan service becomes hourly and the Oban line gains an additional Sunday year-round return trip (formerly only running in summer)

The first of the 40 refurbished ScotRail Class 158 diesel trains are now entering service. Seats are better aligned with windows. Passengers will also be able to charge their phones and laptops during journeys.

Abellio ScotRail is recruiting 100 extra train drivers with a £24,550 starting salary. This is linked to moves to a seven-day working week. Over 20,000 applications have been received but there has been criticism of Abellio for insensitive replies to unsuccessful applicants.

40 jobs have been saved at Edinburgh's Millerhill depot after NR dropped plans to switch work to England. Virgin trains will also continue to refurbish engines at the Edinburgh Craigminty depot.

Rail travellers in Scotland enjoy the cheapest fares in the UK for 'anytime' journeys plus lower fares for off-peak travel and advance purchases. 'Anytime' passengers in Glasgow average 33p per mile compared to 56p for London. These fares are substantially higher than the average cost per mile of running a small car with a single occupant (though parking charges have to be added for many trips into cities).

ScotRail passengers continue to rise but at a lower rate (3.5% a year) than around London. Passenger trips in the SPT area are up from 55.65m in 2012/13 to 62.64 m in 2014-15 and an expected 63.5m in 2015-16 (2014-15 saw a special boost of around 0.6m trips from the Glasgow Commonwealth Games). Over the same period, Glasgow Subway patronage has stayed around 12.6m though boosted by the Games to 13m in 2014-15. Edinburgh tram use is running slightly above forecasts at 5m in the current year.

Off-peak rail fares in Scotland are frozen for a third consecutive year but peak and cross-border fares are to rise 1% in January. In the last year of the former First Scotrail franchise, £576,000 was paid in penalties for defects in service quality (£127,000 up on the previous year) but Abellio has paid £265,282 for quality shortfalls in the months July to September. Transport Scotland will reinvest this sum in rail (H 15 Aug; 7 Nov)

Crimes on the Scottish rail network have risen (by 1.3%) for the first time in a decade. Thieves attempting to steal copper from signalling cabling caused major morning peak disruption for travellers into Glasgow Queen St HL. Similar attempts disrupted travel into Edinburgh from the west.

Queen St HL is due to close for 20 weeks between March and August 2016 while the concrete base in the approach tunnel is replaced. At the same time, the platforms will be lengthened as part of EGIP. Details of alternative travel arrangements during the closure period are expected in January. It is expected Aberdeen and Inverness trains will divert via Coatbridge Central to Glasgow Central. Dunblane/Alloa and Edinburgh via Falkirk trains will operate on a loop via Maryhill, Anniesland (where Knightswood South junction has now been restored), Queen Street Low Level, and Springburn (and vice versa). Both these diversionary routes will lengthen journey times appreciably. Edinburgh-Glasgow travellers will be encouraged to use the Bathgate line, and services into Glasgow Central via Shotts and Carstairs.

Toilet charges at Waverley and Glasgow Central have raised £750,000 and £600,000 over the past three years. NR argue that staffed toilets and upgraded facilities cut anti-social behaviour with any surplus funds reinvested in improved passenger facilities.

First Group has retained the Transpennine Express franchise until 2023 with a commitment to 125mph trains giving better services from Glasgow, Motherwell and Edinburgh to Manchester and a service from Glasgow to Liverpool by December 2018. Abellio/Serco has lost the Northern England franchise to Arriva.

Bus, Tram and Roads

Work continues on a £282m modernisation of the Glasgow Subway. Orders for new automated trains are expected early in 2016 but the Subway will close for one month in summer 2016 to allow upgrades of the ramps to and from the Govan depot. Letters to the press have raised the issue of extending the Subway (Underground) to Paisley via Glasgow Airport or, over time, to be a full city Metro network as in Newcastle. Yet the existing Subway is of non-standard gauge with limited height. An alternative suggestion has been to raise some existing shorter-distance ScotRail services to Metro standards, including fuller use of the two existing east-west tunnels through Glasgow and some short network extensions.

Of the four options to extend the Edinburgh tram, the City Council has approved the option with the highest capital cost. A 3 mile extension via Leith Walk to Newhaven is seen as offering best overall value though funding has still to be confirmed. The expensive Edinburgh tram inquiry, now in progress will not determine whether any one is legally or financially liable but will make recommendations on how failings can be avoided in future projects.

FirstGroup has argued that out-of-date restrictions and competition from major rail improvements have inhibited commercial bus operation across the Scottish Central Belt and especially in the East Central area where First has ongoing problems with bus service viability (LTT 16 Oct)

Stagecoach continues to take the lead in opposing proposals for a compulsory franchise approach to local bus services. A review board has also rejected as unaffordable and high-risk Tyne and Wear proposals for bus franchising contracts. SPT continues to support more limited proposals to improve network quality and reduce the overall cost of bus operations (H29 Aug & 4 Nov).

Bus and rail services from Fife to Edinburgh have been upgraded at very short notice to cope with a flood of additional passengers caused by the closure of the Forth Road Bridge following a fault.

Edinburgh City Council has been criticised for providing new bus shelters with no frontal protection from road splashes and seats that are too high. Two recent incidents in Edinburgh and Glasgow city centres have involved buses in pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries.

In Edinburgh, few car users are taking advantages of the trial opening of bus lanes to cars outwith peaks but it has been noted that lengthy stops by buses can cause delays adding to trip times. Smart integrated ticketing with drivers no longer involved in issuing tickets could deliver useful cuts in overall bus times in cities, making services both more attractive and cheaper to operate. Lothian Buses are expanding the use of electric and hybrid buses. Progress has been slower in Glasgow with operators pointing to the higher costs of such operation until further technical advances are made.

First Glasgow is closing Parkhead bus depot with operations concentrated on a new Caledonia Rd depot.

City Sightseeing Glasgow is amending its 28 stop open-top city bus to omit the less-used Duke St stop close to Tennents brewery. The 10 minute peak summer frequency has proved extremely popular. The overall length of route has been trimmed, improving frequency without increasing the bus fleet.

Lothian Buses changed some bus routes and frequencies in Edinburgh on 4 October. The four No 49 buses per hour between the Royal Infirmary and Rosewell via Dalkeith are reduced to 2 per hour beyond Sheriffhall P+R. A new peak limited stop X33 service is introduced from Mayfield and Dalkeith to the city centre. To cut journey times, X29, X31 and X33 have fewer stops on trips to and from the city centre.

SPT is spending £950,000 to improve staff quarters at the highly commended Buchanan Bus Station. This will allow My Bus and other hospital/community transport staff to relocate to there. The quality and safety of Stagecoach owned Ayr Bus Station has come under attack along with suggestions for a new site adjacent to the rail station.

Health Boards have been criticised for spending more than £12.5m on taxis over the past four years. Taxi app Uber was launched in Scotland on 16 October with Uber also winning a High Court action ruling in favour of the controversial minicab-hailing app – but seen as a threat by black cab operators. At the request of Police Scotland, Glasgow City Council has withdrawn the licences of three private cab drivers but, on cost grounds, licensing officials have refused to tell councillors the number of cabbies with criminal convictions (H21Aug & 19 Sept)

Construction has begun on a five-mile £35m initial section of A9 dualling between Kincaig and Dalraddy. Keith Brown, Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities says Perth-Inverness A9 dualling will bring enormous economic and social benefits. A contract is imminent on £50m of appraisal and design work on options for dualling the 29 miles of the A96 between Auldearn and Fochabers. This could include a bypass or other relief for Elgin. Aberdeen is to have £18m for a third Don crossing plus £30m to upgrade the notorious Haudagain roundabout.

Ferries

Atrocious weather in November and December has again caused havoc with ferry services, causing widespread cancellations. Caledonian Marine Assets has awarded a £1.85 million contract to the Scottish Communications Group for new CCTV systems at 25 ports on the Clyde and West Coast. This should help Calmac and ferry crews by remotely providing views of the local conditions at ports.

A part of a City Deal, £14m is to be spent on expanding Greenock's ocean terminal and building a visitor centre for cruise passengers and other visitors. Annual passenger numbers are now over 100,000

The Dunoon-Gourock Ferry Action Group is seeking a 'proper' ferry for both passengers and vehicles on this route. The Group says a new operator is interested but is being deterred by CMal, the public body owning the Gourock terminal, seeking pier dues and berthing charges of £3m a year. Ferguson Marine has delivered the third hybrid diesel/battery ferry (Catriona) for the CalMac fleet. Costing £12m, it can carry 150 passengers and 23 cars. The Campbeltown-Ardrossan car ferry route is to continue year-round.