Public Petitions Committee – a template for e-petitions

Should you wish to submit an e-petition allowing signatures to be gathered online on the Public Petitions Committee e-petitioner web pages please complete the template below. Before submitting your e-petition please consult the Guidance on submission of public petitions for advice on what is and is not admissible. You may also seek advice from the Clerk to the Committee whose contact details can be found at the end of this form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details of principal petitioner:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please enter the name of person and organisation raising the petition, including a contact address where correspondence should be sent to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev Neil MacKinnon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text of petition:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The petition should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Parliament to take in no more than 5 lines of text, e.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament considers and debates the implications of the proposed Agenda for Change legislation for Speech and Language Therapy Services and service users within the NHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petition by Reverend Neil MacKinnon, calling for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to review the long term planning, social, economic and transportation issues surrounding the creation of “new towns”, such as Cumbernauld.</td>
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<th>Period for gathering signatures:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Please enter the closing date for gathering signatures on your petition, which we would usually recommend is a period of between 4-6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing date: 26 August 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional information:

Please enter any other information relating to the issues raised in your e-petition, including the reasons why the action requested is necessary. The text entered in this field should not exceed 2 pages. However, you may wish to provide further sources/links to background information.
Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting an e-petition:

Before submitting a petition to the Parliament, petitioners are expected to have made an attempt to resolve their issues of concern, by for example, making representations to the Scottish Executive or seeking the assistance of locally elected representatives, such as councillors and MSPs. Details of those approached should be entered.

Cathie Craigie MSP
Andrew Wilson (Defeated candidate for Parliamentary elections.)
William Homer – Councillor
Barry McCulloch - Councillor
M: Porch – Director, Environmental Services
M: Jukes – Director, Community Services
M: MacKenzie – Customer Services Manager, NLC
M: Watson – Manager, Roads Department, NLC
Secretary to the Chief Executive - NLC
Open letter to the Cumbernauld News
40 years of complaints from the town-centre community falling on deaf ears.

Comments to stimulate on-line discussion:

Please provide at least one comment to set the scene for an online discussion on the petition, not exceeding 10 lines of text.

Cumbernauld Town Centre has attracted some of the most humiliating comments made about any peace-time centre of population anywhere in the world. Compared invariably with war-torn Afghanistan, Beirut and Eastern Europe, Cumbernauld town centre suffers enormous damage to its image and reputation in the world of business, tourism and commerce. Millions of pounds are lost in revenue to the town each year because designer-label shops and high street brand names, company headquarters and hotels refuse to locate in the town centre. Indeed, their question is, “Where is there a “town centre” in Cumbernauld?” There just isn’t a town centre! With the additional embarrassment of having not just one, but two motorways cutting a swath of unnatural barriers to the integration of its several districts into one complete whole; Cumbernauld town centre’s future prosperity is irredeemably prejudiced. Incomprehensible planning decisions have determined that 4 lanes of fast-moving traffic and a retail park dominate the heart of our town centre land where our most prestigious buildings, open-air town squares and designer-label shops ought to stand.

Request to speak:

Petitioners may request to appear before the Public Petitions Committee in support of their petition, although it should be noted that requests to speak will only be granted if the Convener considers that a brief statement from the petitioner would be useful in facilitating the Committee’s consideration of the petition. Due to the large volume of petitions being considered, the Committee will usually only hear presentations on up to 4 new petitions at each meeting.

Please indicate below whether you wish to request to make a brief statement before the Committee when it comes to consider your petition.

Yes (No)

*Delete as appropriate

A template for e-petitions. July 2004
Signature of principal petitioner:

When satisfied that your petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance on submission of public petitions, the principal petitioner should sign and date the form in the box below. Other signatures gathered should be appended to this form.

| Signature .. |
| Date 30th June 2005 |

For advice on the content and wording of your e-petition please contact:

The Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5186   Fax: 0131 348 5088
e-mail: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk

Note
Completed e-petition forms should also be sent to petitions@scottish.parliament.uk
Dear Dr. Johnston

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE – CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE887

Thank you for your letter of 27 October on behalf of the Parliament’s Petitions Committee requesting the Executive’s views on PE 887 relating to development in town centres and using the example of Cumbernauld in particular.

I note from the Official Report of the Committee’s consideration of the petition on 6 October, that the Committee is looking for general views on the issues raised in the petition. I will therefore set out the Executive’s current national planning policy with regard to Scottish town centres followed by two current initiatives on the revision of such policy and Business Improvement Districts. However, the petition raises particulars issue relating to Cumbernauld which I will conclude with including some indication of Executive funded local projects and issues relating to the A80 and A8011.

Current planning policy in relation to town centres is contained in National Planning Policy Guideline (NPPG) 8: Town Centres and Retailing.

The underlying aims of NPPG 8 are to:

- sustain and enhance the vitality, viability and design quality of town centres, as the most appropriate location for retailing and other related activities;
- maintain an efficient, competitive and innovative retail sector offering consumer choice, consistent with the overall commitment to town centres; and
- ensure that ways of meeting these objectives are compatible with sustainable development and, in particular, that new developments are located where there are good public transport services, and better access for those walking and cycling, leading to less dependence on access by car.
NPPG 8 sets out in clear terms the Executive’s commitment to the protection and enhancement of town centres. Retail developers and planning authorities should adopt a “sequential approach” to selecting sites for new retail, commercial and other key town centre uses. Town centres should be the first choice, followed by edge of centre and then out of centre sites.

The Executive is committed to protecting and enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres. This concept is central to maintaining and enhancing these centres. NPPG 8 offers a framework for assessing vitality and viability. In this way, the strengths and weaknesses of town centres can be analysed systematically and planning authorities will be able to ascertain how well centres are performing in terms of their attraction, accessibility and amenity. Should such a “health check” indicate that a centre may be 'at risk', NPPG 8 suggests that in such instances a multi-disciplinary strategic approach should consider the centre as a whole. It should aim for a realistic vision for the centre, drawing on the support of all interested parties and an action programme that mobilises resources and promotes effective town centre management.

Work is underway on a number of Executive initiatives relating to Scottish town centres.

Revision of Planning Policy on Town Centres

We are currently reviewing NPPG 8 with a draft document out for consultation over the autumn. Consultation draft Scottish Planning Policy 8: Town Centres is very much a refinement and condensing of NPPG 8 taking into account major changes in the retailing sector since 1998, although there is no major change in policy direction. It continues to support new development and for it to be located in town centres.

The draft SPP acknowledges that whilst retailing is key to the success of town centres, other uses support and are supported by the retail function and all contribute inter-dependently to the vitality and viability of town centres. There is therefore less of a specific emphasis on retailing and the title has been changed to reflect this.

The responses to the consultation are now being evaluated and will feed into a finalised SPP to be published in the spring.

Business Improvement Districts

The Scottish Executive is legislating to introduce Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to Scotland. A BID is a partnership agreement between local businesses to secure additional services and make agreed improvements in order to improve the business and shopping environment in local areas. They are initiated by the business sector and are funded, at least in part, by local businesses. At a time when large out of town shopping malls are providing real competition for our City and Town centres it is clear that businesses need to be able to respond more readily to their customers’ needs. BIDs will help by giving businesses the means to come together in an equitable way to decide what their priorities are for improvements in the local area. The creation of town centres which are vibrant, prosperous, attractive and safe places to shop, to visit and to gather will benefit local residents, shoppers and visitors alike.

Regeneration Projects

Although Communities Scotland has not been involved with any projects specifically in Cumbernauld Town Centre, it is supporting various housing projects in the close vicinity (all within 5 minutes walk from the centre). These include:
Seafar – Bield Housing Association have recently completed the development of 28 very sheltered houses in the Seafar area. This involved a grant of £2.1m from Communities Scotland.

Ainslie Maclehose, Kildrum – Demolition and replacement of 108 flatted dwellings. The site area has been extended to include an adjacent former school site and around 140 new houses will be provided in a mix of rent, Homestake (shared equity), and outright private sale. It is intended to approve first phase of 48 units in March 2006 with completion in March 2007. First completions around October/November 2006. Total costs likely to be circa £14m.

Langlands Primary School – the site was acquired by Cumbernauld Housing Partnership (CHP) during 2004/05. Capacity for 50 units and 2006/07 funding approval.

Carbrain – The cleared site of the former Scottish Homes was transferred to CHP and given tender approval for 25 houses in March 2005.

I will conclude in relation to specific comments made in the petition relating to the A80 and A8011.

It should be recognised that the A8011 is a local road and as such is a matter for the Local Authority. The upgrading of the A80 to M80 has followed due statutory process in that draft statutory orders were published for comment, objections were received and a Public Local Inquiry was held. All who wished to object to the draft orders and make a submission to the Public Local Inquiry could have done so. The issues regarding the alignment of the proposed upgrading of the A80 to M80 were dealt with in detail at the Public Local Inquiry and it would therefore be inappropriate to comment while the Reporter is considering the evidence presented at the Public Local Inquiry. The Reporter is expected to submit his report to the Scottish Ministers in the spring of 2006, in the light of which Ministers will take a decision on the progression of the scheme.

I trust the Committee find this information useful in its deliberations.

Linda Craik
Development Department
Dear Dr Johnston

Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee – Consideration PE 887

I refer to your letter dated 27 October concerning the above petition by Reverend Neil MacKinnon urging the Parliament to review the long term social, economic and transportation issues in “new towns” such as Cumbernauld.

Please find enclosed North Lanarkshire Council’s written submission. I would like to thank the Committee for affording the authority the opportunity to submit a response.

An electronic copy of this submission was sent on Monday 28th November and we are happy that the document be published, in whatever format, as a public paper at the meeting.

Should the Committee require any further information I would be pleased to be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Chief Executive
The Scottish Parliament
Petitions Committee – Consideration PE887 by Reverend Neil MacKinnon
Written submission to the Committee from North Lanarkshire Council

The Petition

The petition urges the Executive to review the long term planning, social, economic and transportation issues surrounding the creation of “new towns” such as Cumbernauld.

The Submission in Response

The authority shares the petitioner’s concerns regarding unwanted adverse publicity concerning the town. Externally generated manipulation of the media completely undermines the positive work done by North Lanarkshire Council, partners and developers to maintain and build on progress achieved in recent years. Such persistent negative publicity is unwarranted and severely undermines and prejudices the strenuous efforts being made to secure and finalise private sector investment for the town and its centre.

This submission is evidence based and factual. It is made on behalf of our partners, businesses and the community of Cumbernauld. It is hoped the Committee will recognise the authority’s commitment, efforts, investment and success in serving residents and reinvigorating the town, its faith in the potential of Cumbernauld. The expressed views of residents, as measured in the authority’s 2002 residents’ survey, paint a very different picture of their perceptions of the authority.

The petition questions decisions taken by the authority and the Executive regarding recent developments, all of which have brought, or will bring, positive benefits to the town. It contains views and opinions which the petitioner has every right to express about the town, the Council and Scottish Executive’s Roads projects.

Background

New Towns in Scotland were pursued as a means of accommodating overspill population from urban areas. Not all people living in older parts of cities could be reaccommodated as redevelopment schemes replaced high density housing with lower density designs.

In 1956 the New Town (Cumbernauld) (Development Corporation) Order formally established the New Town of Cumbernauld and the Exchequer funded Development Corporation which would oversee its planning, land acquisition, design and development. 1,680 hectares of land was designated for the development of the New Town.

Cumbernauld would draw 80% of its population from Glasgow and had an initial target population of 50,000. In 1960 this target rose to 70,000. To accommodate this increase and the trend towards ever lower housing densities, the original designated area was extended in 1973 by a further 1,472 hectares. This broke away from the original design concept around which the new town was conceived.

The original Plan was that all shopping would be in a multi-purpose town centre with neighbourhoods linked by pedestrian footpaths, a single town centre surrounded by high-density neighbourhoods none of which would have a retail centres.

The original designated area was compact. Population density was higher than in other New Towns. Pedestrian routes were entirely separate from roads. The town centre would be accessible to all residents. The design successfully ensured safety for pedestrians. The extension of the designated area to the north of the M80 put paid to the original concept and the aspirations of the town’s original designers.

The Development Corporation was dissolved in 1996 and the town came under the democratic control of the new North Lanarkshire Council.

North Lanarkshire Council

The total population of the town is now 66,000, 20% of North Lanarkshire’s population. The authority has ensured that Cumbernauld can continue to grow. Population projections indicate that, whilst population decline is a characteristic of the former industrial towns of North Lanarkshire, falling by -0.32% in
Motherwell and -1.68% in Coatbridge, Cumbernauld is different. It buckles this trend with a population increase estimated at +2.16%. The town's modern business locations are an important economic asset accommodating growing and attracting incoming businesses. Relative to the rest of North Lanarkshire unemployment rates are falling faster. Since 1996 unemployment has fallen by 46% compared to 40% in North Lanarkshire. Close links between business and the town's further education college ensure that training programmes fit the needs of local companies and the skills of the workforce are continually refreshed. Compared to North Lanarkshire as a whole, in Cumbernauld there are:

- Fewer people on benefits: fewer receive one of the three main social security benefits
- Fewer children living in poverty: 21% of children live in households dependent on Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance compared to 27% for North Lanarkshire
- Fewer poorer pensioners: 17% of elderly people claim Income Support compared to 21% for North Lanarkshire
- Fewer people on Disability Benefits: 6% of under 65's compared to 8% for North Lanarkshire

The range of housing is extending. Large scale private housing development has been sustained, particularly at the upper end of the market, attracting new people to the town, and retaining some families who might otherwise have moved away. 700 new homes are being built on the Smithson site following an investment of £2.5M on infrastructure and a new link road. The quality of the environment is also an important feature. The town was designed with extensive landscaping and forestry, and is surrounded by open countryside with plenty of opportunity for outdoor recreation.

As the new town was to accommodate people from Glasgow, the town's planners wanted to give Cumbernauld an urban style of architecture rather than the more traditional 'garden city' approach to designing new towns. Cumbernauld was a pioneering experiment in urban planning, and for many years it attracted visitors interested to see its futuristic housing layouts and town centre. Some of its innovative housing layouts have worked well, but the fabric of some of its experimental housing has not stood the test of time.

The original town centre was described as innovative and radical. It was conceived as a single structure within which all the retail, municipal, leisure and entertainment needs of its 50,000 people would be met. It was prominently located at the centre of the town straddling the main dual carriageway. Whilst Cumbernauld may have boasted the nation's first covered shopping mall, its town centre never fully realised its potential. It was unable to sustain planned entertainment and leisure facilities.

Today it is recognised that the general layout of towns and their centres needs to be flexible and capable of adaptation through time to the changing patterns of lifestyles, commercial development and retailing. Unfortunately the town centre structure in Cumbernauld was not designed with this in mind. It was inflexible.

The style and type of retailing evolved. Shopping needs were being met, not just in town centres, but in retail outlets located outside towns. Cumbernauld town centre was left wanting. The principles on which the new town had originally been based were negated as a consequence of the extension of the designated area and changing patterns of life. New town residents did not respond positively to the stark concrete exterior and its windy shopping malls. The Commercial sector was not enthusiastic about investing in such an unusual town centre and major retailers failed to make investments. The original plan for the centre was never fulfilled. The exterior was painted and improvements were made to the malls.

Cumbernauld town centre was not without its problems. It was only 29 years old and already in some difficulty when North Lanarkshire Council came into being in 1996.

The authority's corporate plan recognises, as a priority, the need to invest in all of its town centres. North Lanarkshire Council cannot provide Cumbernauld, or any other towns, with comprehensively redeveloped attractive town centres through its own efforts alone. The authority was, however, instrumental in ensuring Cumbernauld town centre was identified as a preferred location for new retail, commercial leisure and other town centre uses in the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan and has consistently encouraged and directed development accordingly.

The authority was aware that new development was necessary and that Cumbernauld required a modern, high quality extension to the existing town centre building, making Cumbernauld a significantly more attractive location for prime retailers by providing units to meet the current requirements of major chains.
The authority has consistently taken the view that more required to be done across North Lanarkshire to boost local retailing and stem leakage of expenditure to other shopping centres outwith the area. Investment in town centres has remained a top priority for the authority. Following a public local inquiry into local objections, planning consent was granted by Scottish Executive Ministers for the Tesco development at Tryst Road in November 2002. This was the first significant step in the redevelopment of Cumbernauld town centre. The council played a key role in securing this 85,000sq. ft. development which has created 500 jobs for the area.

Five months later, in April 2003, planning permission was granted for the extension of Cumbernauld Town Centre in two stages. The estimated construction costs were £24m and £4m with around 200 construction jobs created by the development and a further 300 permanent full time jobs on completion.

The proposals for the first stage included 36 units around a central covered mall running east to west, on the south side of the existing town centre buildings. The majority of these units would be occupied by shops, however, provision was also made for a small percentage to be occupied for other uses eg. banks, estate agents and cafes. The development will fill the gap between two existing supermarkets.

Also included within the proposals were new road links, the upgrading of existing car parking, improved pedestrian links and landscaping works. The second stage development provides for a link across Central Way to the existing town centre and contained seven, mainly catering, units and a new bus station. At the time the application had to be referred to the Scottish Ministers in accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Notification of Applications) (Scotland) Direction 1997.

The authority shares the concern of the petitioner and residents regarding the time it is taking to realise this development and the current appearance of the town centre. It is unfortunately not unusual for large-scale developments of this value and type to take some time to reach fruition. Major legal agreements and financial issues have to be resolved between private developers and their backers. The granting of planning consent is but the start of these complicated processes. Adverse negative publicity does not help.

It is not within the power of North Lanarkshire Council to set a date for the commencement of the development. This is a multi-million pound project being driven by the developer, London & Regional. Delays are not the fault of the council. The council, together with Campsies Centre, has, and will continue to play a key role in securing development in Cumbernauld working on its own and in partnership with other agencies. The final development is scheduled to start early in the new year.

North Lanarkshire Council wishes the Committee to note that few Scottish towns the size of Cumbernauld have £60M investment plans for their town centres.

- The first phase of the expansion of the town centre saw the completion of the largest Tesco store in Scotland with 300 new jobs.
- Preparation work is well underway for the delivery of the new Antonine Centre shopping mall with 600 new jobs.
- The Tryst Sports Centre is being refurbished by the Council to deliver 21st century facilities at a cost of £2M.
- The Council is investing £1.5M in roads and lighting in and around the town centre. A map of new town centre projects is contained in Appendix 2.

Cumbernauld’s first joint campus Primary school has been built at a cost of £5M. Underpasses have been renovated and a new park-and-ride facility with 320 spaces is being constructed at Greenfaulds station with associated roadworks, footways and cycleways at a cost of £2.5M. A new recycling centre at Wardpark is costing £1M.

The authority disagrees that the majority of residents think Cumbernauld town centre has been neglected by North Lanarkshire Council. It was experiencing difficulties well before 1996.

The council has conducted two residents surveys in 1999 and 2002. Whilst only 50% of those interviewed in 2002 thought that bringing new life to town centres was being tackled well, this was 3 times the
proportion in 1999. The survey preceded the announcement of the Tesco and mall consents.

The survey also provided important evidence that the authority's services were improving. The North Area had the highest proportion of residents in North Lanarkshire who had contacted the Council through the new First Stop Shop – 22% compared with 12% for the whole of North Lanarkshire. The number of people in the North Area contacting the Council to make a complaint about either a Council service or something else had fallen from 20% in 1999 to just 3% in 2002 – the biggest drop in North Lanarkshire.

The same aspects of service scored most highly for satisfaction in both North Area and North Lanarkshire – ease of contacting someone who could deal with the enquiry and helpfulness and politeness of staff or reply received. However, in the second survey, instead of being slightly less satisfied with each aspect of service delivery than North Lanarkshire as a whole, North Area residents were more satisfied than those in the rest of North Lanarkshire.

There was a significant increase in satisfaction levels of North Area residents between 1999 and 2002 rising from by 11 to 32 percentage points compared with 7 to 20 percentage points for North Lanarkshire overall. Satisfaction with the speed of action taken or work carried out, the overall quality of service or work carried out and the outcome of the enquiry in North Area increased by more than half the 1999 response. The table in Appendix 1 provides a summary of the results.

The above information is a clear indication that North Lanarkshire Council is not ignoring Cumbernauld and that residents seem pleased with services received. In comparison with the unsubstantiated opinions on which the negative publicity appears based, greater reliance can be placed on the residents' survey results. Interviews were carried out by a leading, locally based, independent market research company, T L Dempster Strategy and Research, at residents' homes between October and November 2002. In total 2,758 interviews with adult residents were achieved across the whole of North Lanarkshire, of which 403 were in North Area. Residents were selected for interview using a random sampling method designed to give reliable results at Area level.

More recently, on 9th November, representatives of the Council, the Cumbernauld Community Forum and the Association of Community Councils signed an agreement to work together to promote the interests of Cumbernauld. Issues will be identified, explored in depth and a series of actions will be developed. Through this arrangement efforts will also be made to request the media to give a more balanced view of the town.

In response to the petition, the authority is not of the view that Scottish New Towns should be taken out of the democratic control of local authorities. At a time when the Parliament is expecting the Scottish Public sector to work more cohesively, in more streamlined and efficient ways, such a proposal would be divisive.
### Appendix 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact/Outcome of Contact</th>
<th>North Area</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>North Lanarkshire</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied Or Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Dissatisfied Or Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Satisfied Or Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Dissatisfied Or Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ease of contacting someone who could deal with your enquiry</td>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The helpfulness and politeness of staff you dealt with or reply you received</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td>The promptness with which you received a reply to your enquiry</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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<td>75%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The speed at which any action was taken or work carried out (if applicable)</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The overall quality of the service you received or the work carried out</td>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<td>The outcome of your enquiry</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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NB: figures may not sum due to independent rounding.
5th December 2005

Dr James Johnston  
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee  
TG.01  
Parliamentary Headquarters  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Dear Dr Johnston

Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee – Consideration PE887

Thank you for your letter of 27th October, which I was able to discuss with one of your colleagues on the 10th November. The attached petition form and letter dated 10th June from Rev Neil MacKinnon confirm a state of affairs in Cumbernauld with which Architecture + Design Scotland (A+DS) is familiar.

Earlier this summer a design workshop was undertaken by Channel 4 with the involvement of Joanna Averley, the Deputy Chief Executive of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). Brought together were a group of talented designers and urbanists, to spend 24 hours reviewing the current position of Cumbernauld’s Town Centre, and brainstorming a range of ways in which its state could be rejuvenated.

Much debate focused on the potential for reuse of the often disparaged megastructure and its iconic image. We understand that a consensus emerged which favoured, in conjunction with a number of other radical steps, its retention as a significant and potent image of the Town.

The application of current techniques of spatial analysis and urban design, combined with the natural commercial interest in the opportunities offered by retailing in this central location, indicated that, appropriately harnessed, alternative approaches to the regeneration of the Town Centre could usefully be pursued, which could fulfil the wishes of resident, retailer and visitor alike. This would build on the studies already undertaken by Scottish Enterprise Lanarkshire with the Local Authority and others, into the future of the Lanarkshire towns.

Architecture + Design Scotland as the national champion of good architecture and urban design would be willing to engage with all the relevant parties concerned with the future of Cumbernauld’s Town Centre. For such an exercise to prove fruitful, issues of civic leadership, long-term commitment and vision would need to be addressed. During its formative years, the Town Centre was seen as a potential model for other pioneering settlements, and was visited by leaders in architecture and planning from all over the world. More recently the success of other British towns and cities in transforming their centres provides some confidence that similar positive change could be effective here. Such a success would not go unnoticed outwith Scotland.
A+DS is not aware that the other New Towns of Scotland are tackling challenges of an equivalent order – indeed, they are generally considered to exhibit patterns of successful development, albeit in a variety of ways.

Yours sincerely,

Sebastian Tombs
Chief Executive
Dr James Johnston  
Clerk to the public Petitions Committee  
TG.01  
Parliamentary Headquarters  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

15 November 2005

Dear Sir

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT PETITIONS COMMITTEE – CONSULTATION PE887

I refer to your letter dated 27 October 2005 addressed to Ms Wrenn, Chief Executive, RIAS.

The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) is the professional body for Scotland’s 3000 Chartered Architects. They work in a 1000 practices, some large but many very small, as well as in organisations as diverse as house building and local and central government. Their projects range from domestic alterations to major developments for both private and public clients. The RIAS has charitable status and offers a wide range of services and products for architects, students of architecture, construction industry professionals and all those within an interest in built environment and the design process.

Ms Wrenn has asked me to respond on behalf of the RIAS. I am Director of Practice but in addition have a personal interest in Cumbernauld in that I am resident there and furthermore spent a short time 1968 working in the architect’s department of Cumbernauld Development Corporation on Phase 2 of the Town Centre (as a very junior assistant). Furthermore over my 30 years architectural career I have considerable experience of commercial and retailing architecture, which is very pertinent to the problems of Cumbernauld Town Centre.

The RIAS is naturally aware of the bad publicity that Cumbernauld has received as a result of various polls. As I understand it, the public criticism of Cumbernauld is directed at the town centre rather than at the town as a whole.

It is important to understand why the situation in Cumbernauld has arisen and to do this one must go back to state of knowledge at the time it was conceived. There was published around that time, a document called ‘Traffic in Towns’ authored by Professor Colin Buchanan. It was highly influential in terms of planning for the motorcar. It must be appreciated that this was back in the days when car ownership was not nearly as extensive as it is today. Planners and architects were struggling to find ways of coping with the new phenomenon as car ownership increased. The whole concept of Cumbernauld town plan and layout was geared to the motorcar. In traffic engineering terms what was provided at the time now looks extremely dated but none the less, that was the state of the art for planning of the day.
It was decided that the town centre should accommodate the motorcar. To do so, the first phase of the town centre was conceived as being, first floor for pedestrians with vehicle access and servicing carried out at ground level i.e. vertical segregation of traffic. Thus it was decided that the main route vehicle route would run “smack bang” through the middle of the town centre. This decision has had profound implications for the town centre ever since, in that other options are limited. What we see today is rather similar to the underside of an airport passenger terminal except that the public are required to drive through the equivalent of the baggage handling areas. This is a less than attractive welcome to the town centre.

The second significant decision in architectural terms was to use board finish re-inforced concrete. This was the new brutalist architectural fashion of the day, and indeed was thought to be cutting edge design. Concrete, of course, is now generally acknowledged as being a very unattractive finish and indeed when exposed to the elements leads to staining and deterioration of the concrete.

The third problem with the town centre is that because the whole of Cumbernauld is geared to the scale of motorcar there is very little residential accommodation in close proximity to the town centre, although an attempt was made in an initial design to include residential penthouses, although I understand most of these have now gone to commercial use. The net result of this dispersal of residential accommodation is that it is virtually impossible for any Cumbernauld residents to approach the town centre on foot given the distances involved. The use of the car if almost obligatory although public transport is to some extent available, it is not an easy option. Therefore the town centre is effectively isolated from the community. In other words is different from a traditional town centre. Effectively Cumbernauld town centre functions in a way similar to a modern out of town shopping centre. The public is more or less forced to use a car to get there.

The fourth problem with the town centre lies in the structure of the initial building in that it is necessarily a very heavy structure because of what it is carrying. In structural terms this makes space extremely inflexible and not readily adaptable in retailing terms. The town centre has therefore become unpopular and has consistently failed to attract major retailers. Whether this is due to rental levels or to inherent undesirability is not entirely clear. It should be noted that the early stages of the town centre did include a mall and it was intended that the town centre would extend in a lineal manor along the course of the dual carriageway. The quality of this mall is by modern standards, questionable but at the same time it should be understood that in 60s retailing architecture was not nearly as sophisticated as it is now and in fact the American mall pattern had yet to be established for us to copy. Furthermore, of course, there is the current trend towards out of town retail parks and obviously Cumbernauld town centre should have been well placed to catch this market but this did not take place up until the introduction of an Asda and more recently Tesco stores over the last 7 or 8 years. The reasons for delay are not clear to me.

All in all, the architectural planning concepts behind the town centre were, at the time, very laudable and constituted an interesting architectural experiment. The town centre was an innovative and interesting initiative. However it has patiently failed for reasons that were not fully understood at the time it was conceived. These relate principally to the excessive cost of the type of structure required and the demands of the modern retailer plus of course to the shear unattractiveness as a place for pedestrians to be.
This led after the initial phases of the town centre had been completed to reversal of the concept of the linear street in the air, serviced from underneath. A further phase was built to include a mall at ground floor level with rooftop parking on the north side of the dual carriageway i.e. a complete reversal of the initial design concept. In addition to which an office block was built adjacent to the dual carriageway and the Inland Revenue was built adjacent to the town centre. Both of these unfortunately are indifferent pieces of architecture but at the same time have a very poor pedestrian access to and from the town centre. To the southeast areas, sporadic development has taken place including a police station, the sports centre, the council offices, health centre and further education college which have little architectural cohesion and bear little relationship with the town centre either architecturally or in access.

For all Cumbernauld and its town centre was intended to cater for the pedestrian it singularly fails in this respect.

The net result of all of this is a very un-inspiring user-unfriendly and downright ugly building, which has failed, to attract significant investment from retailers.

Most people’s concept of what a town centre should consist of relates to the shopping streets. Cumbernauld is strategically well placed in central Scotland with excellent road links which means that the population who are very much committed to the use motor car because of the dispersed nature of the new town layout, can all use their cars to access shopping centres in Stirling (20 minutes), Falkirk (20 minutes) and Glasgow (25 minutes) (all by car!) therefore it is always going to be difficult for the town to attract significant retail development. The retailers that currently exist tend to be down market, bargain basement type operations. It is interesting to note that although a hotel was incorporated initially the town centre has failed to support it. Generally, Cumbernauld seems to missed the boat.

The key question posed by Rev MacKinnon is what can be done about this situation. It seems logical that a town the size of Cumbernauld should have a town centre and to some degree it does. To some degree that has been geared to the growth of the town in that accessing the centre very much demands the use of the motorcar. However in catering for pedestrians, it fails totally. One cannot envisage a café culture in Cumbernauld town centre!

The Council have struggled over the years with the retailing problem and one can understand why. It would be good to be able to have a blank sheet of paper to start over again thus avoiding the mistakes over the years but this would be a very expensive solution and would involve demolition of substantial chunks of the town centre if not all of it. Currently the new buildings such as the Tesco superstore back onto the main dual carriageway which is effectively the service road but in a sense is not the service road because one has to go on to minor distributors in order to access the service yards. Customer vehicles also have to use the peripheral service road for access and effectively the new buildings, such as Tesco and Asda face out with their backs to the town centre. This is of course a complete reversal of standard town centre arrangements.

Many views have and will be expressed as to what is best in the circumstances. My personal view is that a good deal of the problem is down to the fact that the main dual carriageway runs through the middle of the town centre site. This would be an acceptable arrangement provided the cost of building over the top that dual carriageway in creating a town centre at first floor level was achievable as originally conceived, but evidently costs limits over the
years have precluded this. In urban design and town planning road engineering terms, a bold and clear statement is required as to where the town centre is going. If it is to be a ground level town centre then the logic is that the dual carriageway which drives through the centre of the site should be removed and possibly diverted into a circumferential arrangement running around the town centre. There is already a loop on the southeast side but this does not exist on the north side of the site. Creating one would probably necessitate demolition of the early phases of the town centre in that servicing to them would become impossible. Additionally the cost would be horrific but it is difficult to see any other solution that will provide an attractive town centre for Cumbernauld other than perhaps relocating everything, in which case a suitable site would be hard to find. The existing road and pedestrian network in the town is such that the existing town centre has to be continued as the town centre.

This raises the question of funding. Whether the commercial sector would be willing and able to undertake this sort of development is very questionable so it would seem that the necessary work would have to fall back on the public purse. Given that Cumbernauld Development Corporation has been incorporated into North Lanarkshire Council who have very limited funds to contemplate anything of this nature it would seem that the only source would be the Government. Presumably PFI purse PPP arrangements could be considered.

Essentially the public would be paying into the future for the mistakes made in good faith in the 60s.

It is perhaps one of the fundamental principles of planning, architecture and urban design that because time scales are long plans have to be flexible and adaptable and allow regeneration of the urban fabric and activities with the passage of time. The fact that Cumbernauld town centre design does not allow this readily is probably its main failing. This should be a lesson for the design and development professionals of the world.

Yours faithfully

Gus Macdonald
Director of Practice
PE825 Petition by Alana Watson on behalf of Rosshall Academy Students' Council and Higher Modern Studies Section calling for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to ensure that every Scottish secondary school provides lockers for pupils' use to stop pupils having to carry heavy bags throughout the school day, potentially causing back problems.
Public Petitions Committee – a template for public petitions

Should you wish to submit a public petition for consideration by the Public Petitions Committee please complete the template below. Please refer to the Guidance on submission of public petitions for advice on issues of admissibility before completing the template. You may also seek advice from the Clerk to the Committee whose contact details can be found at the end of this form.

Details of principal petitioner:
Please enter the name of person and organisation raising the petition, including a contact address where correspondence should be sent to, email address and phone number if available

Alana Watson
On behalf of Rosshall Academy Students’ Council and Higher Modern Studies Section.

Text of petition:
The petition should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Parliament to take in no more than 5 lines of text, e.g.

The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament considers and debates the implications of the proposed Agenda for Change legislation for Speech and Language Therapy Services and service users within the NHS

The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament......
Creates new legislation that ensures every Scottish secondary school provides lockers for pupils’ use to stop pupils having to carry heavy bags throughout the school day, potentially causing back problems.
Additional information:

Any additional information in relation to your petition, including reasons why the action requested is necessary, should not be included here. However, it may be appended to the petition and will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition. Please note that you should limit the amount of any additional information which you may wish to provide in support of your petition to no more than 4 sides of A4.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition:

Before submitting a petition to the Parliament, petitioners are expected to have made an attempt to resolve their issues of concern by, for example, making representations to the Scottish Executive or seeking the assistance of locally elected representatives, such as councillors, MSPs and MPs. Please enter details of those approached below and append copies of relevant correspondence, which will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition.

Rosshall Students' Council have met with councillors from Glasgow City Council and our local MP, Ian Davidson, about the lack of space for lockers in our new PPP school. No space can be found for lockers and pupils at this school, and many others in Scotland, have to carry heavy schoolbags throughout the day.

Request to speak:

All petitioners are given the opportunity to present their petition before the Public Petitions Committee. The Convener will then make a decision based on a number of factors including the content of the petition and the written information provided by the petitioner as to whether a brief statement from the petitioner would be useful in facilitating the Committee's consideration of a petition.

Please indicate below whether you wish to request to make a brief statement before the Committee when it comes to consider your petition.

No* 
*Delete as appropriate

Signature of principal petitioner:

When satisfied that your petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance on submission of public petitions, the principal petitioner should sign and date the form in the box below. Other signatures gathered should be appended to this form.

Signature

Date 1/5/05

Please note that any additional information, copies of relevant correspondence and additional signatures should be appended to this form and submitted to:
Additional Information:
Petition from Students' Council, Rosshall Academy, Glasgow.

We are concerned that pupils throughout Scotland are at risk of serious back injuries as a result of carrying heavy school bags over a sustained period of time. We tried without success to get lockers provision in our school and have discovered that many other schools also do not have any space for locker provision.

There is a body of evidence showing a correlation between carrying heavy bags and back problems such as scoliosis. Scoliosis is a sideways curving of the spine that can result in a 'S' shape or 'C' in the spine and can result in impaired muscle use in one side of the body.

Some other countries have legislated on this matter by, for example, banning the carrying of school bags over a certain weight.

In a survey we conducted in one day in our school we found that pupils were routinely carrying bags weighting between 6 kilos and 11 kilos.

If the average backpack weighs 12 lbs and it is lifted up 10 times in one day x 180 schooldays in a year this will mean 21,600 pounds will be lifted in one school year!

Research also shows that by their teen years more than 50% of youths experienced at least one 'low back pain episode' (Spine 1998; 23:228-34).

Carrying bags on one shoulder may also 'provoke serious postural misalignments' (Backpack Safety America).

Our school is a new school and yet no provision was made for locker space.

We hope that if a law is passed no more new school buildings will be built in Scotland without lockers and that existing school buildings will be altered to provide such provision.

To protect Scotland's children from potential future back problems, we call on the Scottish Parliament to legislate to make sure that every secondary school has adequate locker provision.
Petition PE825

Lockers in Schools - submitted by Rosshall Academy

Responses to the evidence submitted to the committee.

1. Response to Ronnie O'Connor, Director of Education Services

We disagree with Mr O'Connor's evidence to the Committee. He stated that other schools in Glasgow do have lockers and that we could have them at Rosshall if we wanted. This is not the case as this new school was built without the space for lockers (amongst other space shortages). We invited him to come and identify space in our school but he has declined this invitation. He stated in his answer to our invitation that no Scottish council has a policy on lockers in schools. This is one of the reasons we submitted the petition in the first place. New schools are being built all over Scotland under the PPP project and we want to make sure that future schools have space for lockers. Extra space should have been put into the plans for Glasgow's new PPP schools but unfortunately this did not happen as the schools in Glasgow seem to have been built to the barest specifications. We feel this was an opportunity lost. (We enclose a copy of Mr O'Connor's email).

2. Response to Peter Peacock's evidence.

Mr Peacock said that lockers in schools should be up to local authorities and once again we would maintain many local authorities have had the chance to put in locker space under the PPP schemes but they had failed to do this. Therefore, we would again state that direction from the Scottish Executive is needed.

We thank Mr Peacock for his commendation of our use of the Public Petitions Committee.

3. Response the Backcare's evidence

We are pleased with Backcare's support for our petition. We much of our research came from Backcare's web site when we were forming our petition.
4. Response the British Chiropractic Association and
Scottish Youth Parliament
Again, we are pleased with these organisations’ support of our petition
and thanks them for this.
5. Response to the Head Teachers’ Association’s evidence
The HTA supported our petition but then went onto point out 9-10
reasons why lockers were a problem. We thank them for their support
and feel that their objections can be overcome fairly easily in most
schools.

Kirsty Fraser
Advanced Higher
Modern Studies

Jonathan Cunningham
Rosshall Student Council
Public Petitions Committee – a template for public petitions

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Details of principal petitioner:
Please enter the name of person and organisation raising the petition, including a contact address where correspondence should be sent to, email address and phone number if available

Phil Flanders

Text of petition:
The petition should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Parliament to take in no more than 5 lines of text, e.g.

The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament considers and debates the implications of the proposed Agenda for Change legislation for Speech and Language Therapy Services and service users within the NHS

The Petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament conducts an inquiry into the future prospects for the Scottish haulage industry and any knock-on impact for the Scottish economy.
Additional information:

Any additional information in relation to your petition, including reasons why the action requested is necessary, should not be included here. However, it may be appended to the petition and will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition. Please note that you should limit the amount of any additional information which you may wish to provide in support of your petition to no more than 4 sides of A4.

The Scottish haulage industry is essential to the continuing success of the Scottish economy. The vast majority of Scottish businesses rely upon the road transport services operated by hauliers to get their goods to market. Yet those same hauliers are finding it increasingly difficult to operate efficiently and make any kind of profit whilst complying with the raft of regulations that apply.

The Scottish haulage industry as a whole has been struggling for survival for some years. There have been many factors that have contributed to the problem:

- General costs for Scottish hauliers are far higher than everywhere else within the EU;
- There is increasing competition from EU-registered hauliers operating within the UK (the split of foreign-registered vehicles vs UK-registered vehicles travelling through UK ports was 50%-50% in 1996. In 2004 the split was 76% - 25%. This despite a 6% increase in the total numbers of vehicles travelling through);
- Ever-increasing amounts of business regulation – these bring additional costs that are far more difficult for smaller businesses (most haulage businesses would be classed as such) to absorb.

Recently however, the introduction of the Road Transport (Working Time) Regulations has contributed to considerable concern (and unrest) within the haulage industry. The serious impact this legislation would have could not be anticipated during the consultation period but only after implementation. Whilst these issues affect the whole of the UK, their impact is more marked in Scotland. The topography of the country means that Scottish goods have to travel further to get to market. This was confirmed in a report produced for the RHA by The centre for Economics and Business Research CEBR in 2001 entitled "Fair Play On Fuel Towards Parity with Europe".

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition:

Before submitting a petition to the Parliament, petitioners are expected to have made an attempt to resolve their issues of concern by, for example, making representations to the Scottish Executive or seeking the assistance of locally elected representatives, such as councillors, MSPs and MPs. Please enter details of those approached below and append copies of relevant correspondence, which will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition.
We have lobbied many MSPs including Ms Sarah Boyack, Mr Ian Gray and Mr Nicol Stephen during their periods as Minister for Transport at the Scottish Executive.

We have also been active in Westminster where we have met with numerous Scottish representatives including the Executive Committee of the Scottish Group of Labour MPs to which all Scottish Labour MPs were invited.

The RHA has also been active on these issues in Brussels regularly meeting with members of the European Parliament’s Transport and Employment Committee, as well as Commission officials.

**Petitioners appearing before the Committee**

The Convener of the Committee may invite petitioners to appear before the Public Petitions Committee to speak in support of their petition. Such an invitation will only be made if the Convener considers this would be useful in facilitating the Committee’s consideration of the petition. It should be noted that due to the large volume of petitions it has to consider, the Committee is not able to invite all petitioners to appear before the Committee to speak in support of their petition.

*Please indicate below if you do NOT wish to make a brief statement before the Committee when it comes to consider your petition.*

**I do NOT wish to make a brief statement before the Committee**

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**Signature of principal petitioner:**

When satisfied that your petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance on submission of public petitions, the principal petitioner should sign and date the form in the box below. Other signatures gathered should be appended to this form.

**Signature...**

**Date...**

10/8/05

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Please note that any additional information, copies of relevant correspondence and additional signatures should be appended to this form and submitted to:

The Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee,
The Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5186 Fax: 0131 348 5088
e-mail: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk
Dear Dr Johnston,

Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee - Consideration PE876

I refer to your letter of 16 September seeking the Executive's comments on petition PE876 by Phil Flanders, Director Scotland and Northern Ireland, Road Haulage Association (RHA).

The Executive fully agrees with the sentiments expressed in the Committee's Report about the importance of an efficient road haulage industry to the Scottish economy. In recognition of the importance of the industry, the Executive maintains a close working relationship with the RHA via Mr Flanders (and also his counterpart in the Freight Transport Association (FTA)).

National Freight Strategy

The Executive is developing a Freight Strategy for Scotland in consultation with the RHA and other industry stakeholders. This will aim to ensure that the needs of the freight transport industry, including the road haulage sector, and the needs of its customers who, of necessity, require efficient delivery of goods to market, are fully considered when wider transport strategies are being devised - at local and regional levels as well as nationally. Our aim is to complete the Freight Strategy by mid 2006, in parallel with the National Transport Strategy.

Freight Quality Partnerships

The Executive also intends issuing later this year a guide for local authorities on establishing Freight Quality Partnerships (FQPs). FQPs bring together industry, local authority, community and environmental stakeholders to agree sustainable actions which will improve freight movements in a particular area. They can also help to ensure that the key economic and social importance of freight transport is reflected in local and/or regional transport strategies.

Scottish Road Haulage Modernisation Fund

Officials have been working closely with the RHA and the FTA (and other key stakeholders) to deliver a number of agreed projects that aim to promote, modernise and increase the efficiency of the
road haulage industry in Scotland. These are being taken forward under the £12 million Scottish Road Haulage Modernisation Fund (SRHMF).

**Increasing the Pool of Trained Drivers**

One of the main priorities agreed with the RHA for the SRHMF is to support training schemes to increase the pool of trained drivers available to the industry. Over 1600 drivers have registered for training and have either already obtained their HGV driving licenses, or are undertaking their training or awaiting training. These schemes will continue until March 2007 at the earliest.

**Encouraging Safe and Fuel Efficient Driving**

In addition, a programme of Safe and Fuel Efficient Driving (SAFED) is about to begin now that instructors have been trained and are recruiting trainees. The name of the programme is self-explanatory but, in addition to increasing safety on our roads, evidence from similar training in England suggests that drivers can achieve fuel savings averaging 10 per cent. The programme aims to train 1400 drivers between now and March 2007.

Two state-of-the-art truck simulators have also been procured to enable such training to take place 'off-road' and by which new and established drivers can experience driving under a variety of simulated conditions with a trained instructor. One of these "Scotsim" simulators is a mobile unit, which by Spring 2006 will have trained drivers from all over Scotland following visits to Oban, Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee and Dumfries.

**Improving the Efficiency of the Road Haulage Industry**

The Executive also commissioned research work to examine ways to improve and maintain the efficiency of the road transport sector in Scotland. The subsequent report, published in June this year, identifies a number of options for consideration, including the establishment of a dedicated web-based Freight Information Service for Scotland. This will provide road, traffic and other information that truck drivers will find useful in journey planning. The Executive has agreed to fund this service. More generally, the Executive has established a Stakeholder Group, including the RHA and the FTA, together with local authority representation, to prioritise the various options highlighted in the report, agree which could be implemented, and by whom. The report may be downloaded from [http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Transport/FT/ibirep](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Transport/FT/ibirep).

**Hauliers’ Costs and Increasing Business Regulation**

The Executive recognises that fuel and other operational costs may be higher because of Scotland’s geographical position in relation to the rest of the UK and mainland Europe and fully appreciates the industry’s concerns about the matter. The SAFED training programme already described aims to increase fuel efficiencies for road haulage companies. However, the Committee will recognise that fuel duty is a reserved matter for the UK Government.

The Executive is aware that the Road Transport (Working Time) Regulations that came into force in April this year are also a source of some concern to the road haulage industry. The Regulations, which implement European Directive 2002/15/EC, are, however, a reserved matter for the UK Government. While they aim to protect mobile workers from adverse health and safety risks and lay down provisions for a maximum 48-hour working week, rest periods and a minimum of four weeks paid leave a year for drivers, the industry is concerned that their implementation will result in increased operating costs through a compensating requirement for more lorries and more drivers..
While, as noted, these are reserved issues, the Executive will maintain contact with both the RHA and FTA and the Department for Transport about the impact of the Regulations on the road haulage industry in Scotland.

I hope these comments are helpful to the Committee's consideration of the petition.

Yours sincerely

Jackie McCaig
Private Secretary
17 November 2005

Mr Richard Hough
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
TG.01
Parliamentary Headquarters
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Scottish Parliament’s Public Petitions Committee
Consideration of PE876

Thank you for your letters of 11 November and 16 September regarding the above public petition.

SCDI intends to give written evidence to the Local Government and Transport Committee’s inquiry into freight transport policy. In the light of that we do not feel it necessary to make any further comment to the Public Petitions Committee.

With best wishes.

 Alan Wilson
Chief Executive
alan.wilson@scdi.org.uk
RESPONSE TO THE PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE

PETITION - PE876

DECEMBER 2005
Response to the Scottish Parliament’s Public Petitions Committee –
Consideration of Public Petition PE876

1. Introduction

T&G SCOTLAND is the Scottish region of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU). T&G Scotland represents around 80,000 working people and their families throughout Scotland. T&G membership is across all industrial sectors and the union is committed to advancing the interests of workers in the workplace and in the wider community.

As the representative of thousands of professional drivers and related mobile workers across the transport sector in Scotland, with large concentrations in our Road Transport (Commercial) trade group, we welcome the opportunity to submit a response to the committee in relation to its inquiry into Public Petition PE876 calling on the Scottish Parliament to conduct an inquiry into the future prospects for the Scottish haulage industry and any knock-on impact for the Scottish economy.

2. Views on Petition P876

T&G Scotland represents many workers in the freight industry in Scotland and therefore takes a great interest in the future prospects for the Scottish road haulage industry and the impact of changes affecting the industry on the Scottish economy. We note that the Scottish Executive, in partnership with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and in consultation with key stakeholder organisations, is committed to delivering Scotland's first National Freight Strategy for Scotland by Spring 2006, which will look to:

- Be appropriate and have meaning to all areas of Scotland
- Look ahead to the future trends and challenges within the logistics sector
- Consider the needs of different sectors (e.g. timber, food, etc)
- Address the transportation of goods within Scotland as well as goods which are transported in and out of Scotland

T&G Scotland also welcomes the current inquiry being taken forward by the Transport and Local Government Committee into Freight Transport in Scotland and believe that this inquiry, alongside the development of the Scottish Freight Strategy, will serve to examine a number of the issues raised within the petition.

The transport and logistics sector in Scotland employs 137,000 people and our union recognises that the Scottish economy is increasingly dependent on the efficient and cost-effective movement of freight, connecting products to markets nationally and internationally. We also recognise the little understood role that the freight industry plays in ensuring that fresh food and other essential commodities are available in our shops and supermarkets; a service often taken for granted.

Scottish industry is heavily reliant on an efficient transport infrastructure network for its success in European and global markets. Being on the edge of Europe means that Scottish transport costs are higher and industry supply chains are longer, making them more vulnerable to disruption and breakdown. However, whilst recognising some of the concerns raised by the petition relating to the disadvantages that the industry in Scotland faces. T&G Scotland believes that there must be a sufficient
level of regulation within the industry, particularly in the area of working time, in order to address problems of long-hours, low pay and a poor health and safety record, affecting our members. We feel that the imperative for proper regulation is clear from police figures which showed 195 drivers' hours offences on one day (3rd February 2005), according to the Association of Chief Police Officers.

In terms of references to the Road Transport Directive in the petition, it is our view that the new regulations will have limited effect on reducing the working of road haulage workers. Major problems with the regulations include the exclusion of periods of availability from the total hours worked calculations, attempts by employers to offset holidays against working time and different restrictions on occasional drivers, with the potential of creating a two-tier workforce.

In light of these concerns, the TGWU has launched a 'working time watch' to make sure new rules on driving hours for commercial drivers are properly implemented by employers and give workers sufficient protection. The union has called on professional lorry and coach drivers and our shop stewards and full-time officers to monitor closely the operation of the working time regulations and guidelines, which now apply in the sector. Issues of periods of availability, offsetting holidays against working time and the controversy around occasional drivers are still very much 'live' for the TGWU. (A copy of our response to the Department for Transport consultation on the new regulations and guidance for the industry, which outlines our concerns is attached as Appendix A for information)

The TGWU believes that the introduction of the Road Transport Directive was a golden opportunity for industry and government to tackle the ills of the industry and its long hour culture, it is unacceptable that in the 21st century professional drivers are pressured to work 50 to 60 hours a week to make a living wage. The current regulations will do nothing to induce one more person to work in these industries, if anything it will exacerbate the current recruitment crisis in the industry (shortage of 40,000+ LGV drivers in the UK). We firmly believe that the Government and employers failed to take on board work-life balance issue as well as health and safety when implementing the Road Transport Directive and have undermined the directive and the principle of the 48-hour week. A commitment has been given by government to review the regulations within a year following a meeting with representatives of the TGWU, URTU and TUC in February 2005.

3. T&G Policy for Road Haulage

The T&G's policies for road haulage are clear:

- A 48 hour working week without a loss of earnings
- A £25,000 minimum salary for all drivers or £10 an hour
- A final salary pension scheme for all
- Good health and safety standards
- Decent on-road rest facilities
- Vocational training for all
- Full enforcement of all road regulations.

We recognise that the action required to address some of our concerns in relation to working time issues would have to come from Westminster. However, we do believe that there is scope for the Scottish Executive to address both the concerns of our members and problems within the industry in Scotland itself. The vital importance of efficient freight delivery is reflected in Scottish Ministers' support for the Scottish
Road Haulage Modernisation Fund and their commitment to delivering Scotland’s First National Freight Strategy by Spring 2006.

Further practical action could be taken by the Scottish Executive, for example, to address the problem of the lack of suitable roadside facilities for road haulage drivers. The T&G believes that a well treated and rested driver is a “safer driver” and action is needed to:

- put in place adequate and affordable roadside facilities, with proper eating and overnight facilities for transport drivers
- to build parking places in each and every local authority with full security protection with adequate facilities such as toilets, washing facilities, food venues.
- CCTV coverage and adequate lighting

Such moves would serve to support the industry in Scotland.

Other areas in which Executive action could assist the industry include:

- Investment in Scotland’s key trade routes
- Improving maintenance on local and urban roads
- Supporting driver training schemes designed to increase the pool of trained drivers available to the road haulage industry
- Ensuring full industry consultation involving the Road Hauliers, the Freight Transport Association, the TGWU and other key stakeholders on future development of freight strategy.

4. Conclusion

T&G Scotland welcomes the opportunity to submit our views to the Scottish Parliament’s Public Petitions Committee on Petition PE876. Whilst recognising some of the concerns raised by the petition relating to the disadvantages the industry in Scotland faces. T&G Scotland believes that there must be a sufficient level of regulation within the industry, particularly in the area of working time, in order to address problems of long-hours, low pay and a poor health and safety record, affecting our members.

We await the development of the publication of the Scottish Freight Strategy by the Executive in 2006 and hope that the Local Government and Transport Committee inquiry into freight transport in Scotland will also provide an opportunity for both the concerns raised in the petition and the problems faced by our members to be examined.
APPENDIX A

Transport and General Workers Union


The Transport and General Workers' Union (T&G) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department for Transport's (DfT) second consultation on the Working Time Rules for the Road Transport Sector.

We are the largest trade union in the transport sector representing over 150,000 professional drivers and related mobile workers across all our trade groups. With large concentrations of members in our Road Transport (Commercial), Food, Drink and Tobacco, Construction and General Workers trade groups.

We believe that there are serious and potentially detrimental flaws within the regulations and guidance set out by Government, and wish to see changes made before implementation. In particular we have serious concerns in regard to the following areas:

- Periods of Availability
- Scope of the proposal / Occasional mobile workers
- Advice on the use of holiday hours

Consultation Process and Overview
The T&G recognises that a significant number of professional drivers are concerned about the impact of the Directive on their earnings. In our experience workers are not against a reduction in working hours, it is the possible reduction in their already low earnings that concerns them. According to the latest IDS/RHA survey of pay and conditions carried out this year, LGV drivers Category C+E median hourly rate of pay was £6.96. This compares with the UK median rate £11.18 for full-time men – see Table 1 for details.

Our considered view is that the vast majority of drivers would welcome a reduction in their hours if it did not result in a reduction in their earnings. According to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) the median working week for full-time males was 38.3 per week. The IDS/RHA survey p14 reported that: ‘Over nine-tenths of companies in our sample had drivers working more than 48 hours a week in total, indicating little action has been taken to reduce working hours to the 48-hour limit.’

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<th>Lower quartile</th>
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<td>-23.8</td>
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Table 1: Source ASHE 2004 and IDS Pay report 917:10

According to John Allan, President of the Freight Transport Association, when he referred to the difficulties the industry will face reducing the average working week of 55 hours. This comes he said ‘on top of an already serious shortage of commercial vehicle driver’. The latest IDS survey (IDS pay report 91 November 2004: 16) states that: ‘The number of drivers entering the road transport industry is declining at a time when the implementation of the Road Transport Directive means many more will need to be recruited.’

We have consistently argued that the long hours and low pay culture in the profession has acted as a barrier to entry into the industry, distorting the labour market, yet both the industry and the DfT have totally ignored this problem. The DfT appear to listen to siren voices of the employers associations, about flexibility and the status quo, rather than the overwhelming economic case for reducing working hours and increasing earnings to attract new entrants into these industries.
We also find it difficult to equate the rhetoric of this Government in regard to family friendly policies. When the DfT are supporting policies, which would actively, encourage working hours and patterns that are polar opposites of these family friendly policies.

The current proposals will not put one extra driver on the cab of a lorry or bus. If anything they will exacerbate the current shortage.

Specific Comments

As highlighted we have three main areas of concern:

- Periods of Availability
- The Scope of the proposal / Occasional mobile workers
- Advice on the use of holiday hours

Scope of the Proposals

We were surprised to find in the 'Draft formal guidance for industry' page 5 the reference to:

- If a worker is only occasionally undertaking activities covered by the EU driver's hours rules (see details below), they are cover by the Working Time Regulations 1998 (as amended), rather than these regulations.

Further on page 6 it states that: ‘These regulations are primarily for the benefit of Commercial drivers and crew of vehicles participating in road transport activity under EU drivers’ hours rules.’
It is our understanding that this is a misinterpretation of the Directive 2002/15/EC. Article 2 of the Directive, which states:

'Scope
1. This Directive shall apply to mobile workers employed by undertakings established in a Member State, participating in road transport activities covered by Regulation (EEC) No 3820/85 or, failing that, by the AETRA agreement.'

It then goes on to state:

'2. The provisions of Directive 93/104/EC shall apply to mobile workers excluded from the scope of this Directive.'

Under Article 3 Definitions it states:

'(d) 'mobile worker' shall mean any worker forming part of the traveling staff, including trainees and apprentices, who is in the service of an undertaking which operates transport services for passengers or goods by road for hire or reward or on its own account;'

There is no mention of a qualifying period for coverage in the Directive, therefore it is our view is that it must be the case that anybody who undertakes any such work as a mobile worker come immediately under the provisions of the RTD for the duration of the reference period.

Previously the DfT had indicated that all working time (inside and outside the road transport sector) would count towards limits under the new regulations. That advice has now changed and as a result, it would appear that non-road transport activities would not count towards the 48-hour limit under the proposed regulations.

If the proposals were implemented it could mean that if an occasional driver opted-out of the working time directive they could work for 78 hours per week for 30 weeks in a 34-week period and then work under the RTD for 4 weeks of 60 hours. Also non-road transport activities, which would not count towards the limits under the proposed
regulations, could be as much as 78 hours. In theory then it would be possible for somebody to work a legal 138-hour week under these proposals. Such an extreme working pattern would not only put the driver at risk but other road users, and would make a mockery of the working time legislation.

Therefore we believe that the DIT should withdraw all references to a worker who is only occasionally undertaking activities covered by the EU driver's hours rules, both in the guidance and the draft statutory Instrument. Also that all working hours under this and other Working Time Directives should count towards the maximum 48 hour average working week.

Periods of Availability

In the first round consultation we identified PoAs as being a potential source difficulty, and we unfortunately have been proved right about this. The potential for conflict between the employee and employer over PoAs cannot be underestimated. Employees will book periods as working time while the employer will want it booked as PoAs in this situation who is to be the final arbitrator?

We also expect that some employers will use data from tachograph records to monitor the working time of their employees. If the employer wishes to monitor working time using tachograph records, and as recommended by the draft guidance that they instruct their employees to use the: Cross-hammers mode for other work and for any waiting time or periods of availability1 that are not known about in advance, and On-duty and available for work for periods of availability known about in advance (as defined under these regulations).

Given that the driver enters on their tachograph disc could the employer arbitrarily decide that this was a PoA and alter the disk? If not could the driver face disciplinary

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1 The EU tachograph rules (3821/85/EC) have a different definition of periods of availability (PoA). This definition (which will be amended shortly and will match the definition under the Road Transport(Working Time) Directive - 202/15/EC), does not require that the duration of the PoA must be known in advance by the mobile worker.
proceedings because the employer wants the period recorded as a PoA? In the last resort the driver may well be the person who can define whether a period is working time or a PoA.

 Conversely, increasing hours worked by deliberately booking genuine working time as PoAs is also possible. The DfT will be fully aware of the existing numbers of driving hours regulations infringements, and we believe that the actual number of violations will increase, and with VOSA softly softly approach these will not be detected.

 We also have specific concerns about PoAs which are given below:

 The Directive defines periods of availability as:

 (b) 'periods of availability' shall mean:
 — periods other than those relating to break times and rest times during which the mobile worker is not required to remain at his workstation, but must be available to answer any calls to start or resume driving or to carry out other work. In particular such periods of availability shall include periods during which the mobile worker is accompanying a vehicle being transported by ferryboat or by train as well as periods of waiting at frontiers and those due to traffic prohibitions.

 These periods and their foreseeable duration shall be known in advance by the mobile worker, that is to say either before departure or just before the actual start of the period in question,

 The draft regulations define working time as activities and responsibilities associated with work within the road transport sector, instead of saying that all working time should count, the DfT has changed its guidance so that non-driving activities, essentially waiting time, do not. Therefore mobile transport workers unlike other group of workers, including other transport workers, will have three types of time: working time, periods of availability and non-working time.
In regard to periods of availability (PoA) the new guidance says workers do not need prior formal notification of a period of availability and its duration - it is simply enough that they know about it in advance.

The draft guidance also states that: 'Like breaks and rest periods, a PoA can be taken at the workstation. Providing the worker has a reasonable amount of freedom (e.g. he can relax and read), for a known duration, this would satisfy the requirements for a PoA. Where the mobile worker knows about a delay in advance, but it is deemed prudent that the driver should remain in the cab for reasons of security or safety, this should not (in itself), disqualify this delay being recorded as a period of availability. Typical examples might include waiting at a site that is unsafe for pedestrians or staying in a vehicle carrying high value goods or cash.

We believe that if a mobile worker is required to remain at their workstation because the vehicle is carrying high value goods or cash. Then this does not meet the requirement of periods of availability as defined by the Directive. We also believe that the guidance should state that periods spent waiting to load or unload goods or cash should not be counted as PoAs.

The draft guidance also states: 'Mobile workers do not need to be formally notified about a period of availability and its duration in advance. It is enough that they know about it (and the foreseeable duration), in advance'.

While we agree that a PoA can be taken at the workstation. We do not agree with draft guidance that: 'Providing the worker has a reasonable amount of freedom (e.g. he can relax and read), for a known duration, this would satisfy the requirements for a PoA. The guidance should reflect the Directive and make it clear that the mobile worker is not required to stay at their workstation.

Also the advice that:'Where the mobile worker knows about a delay in advance, but it is deemed prudent that the driver should remain in the cab for reasons of security or safety, this should not (in itself), disqualify this delay being recorded as a period of availability. Typical examples might include waiting at a site that is unsafe for
pedestrians or staying in a vehicle carrying high value goods or cash.' needs to be revised.

We believe that the DfT should withdraw this advice as we are aware of a loophole being opened up as some distribution centres already have notices up telling drivers the length of time till unloading. Under the new guidance this could count as the driver knowing in advance the length of the delay. We believe that if PoAs remain they should be agreed before the start of the workers driving duties. This would lead to far less confusion and help produce a common sense framework within which to operate.

Calculating the Average week when leave is taken

We are seriously concerned with the apparent contradictory advice in the regulations in regard to calculating the Average week when leave is taken. On page 13 it states: 'Generally speaking, annual leave/sick leave cannot be used to reduce the average working time of a mobile worker. For each week of leave that is taken, 48-hours working time must be added to their working time; for each day's leave, 8 hours must be added to working time.'

However on page 17 it states:

'Q: Can I use Annual leave and sick leave to reduce my average working time?

Generally no. Sick leave and the annual leave entitlement (paid leave under the Working Time Regs 98) cannot be used to reduce average working times. However, any additional annual leave over and above the 4 week entitlement, can be used bring down the average working time once the 4 weeks leave entitlement has been used up.'

All we would ask the DfT to do is delete the last sentence making it neutral in its advice. Otherwise this will be used to undermine existing collective bargain agreements.
Concluding Comments

We are extremely disappointed that the DfT have failed to take this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve the health and safety of mobile transport workers, as well as to address the recruitment crisis brought about by the long hours and low pay culture which is prevalent in the road transport and the bus and coach industries.

The DfT even at this late stage should ignore the siren voices of those who claim any reduction in working time will damage the industry. As the current proposals stand we can only foresee major industrial relations problems in these industries due to liberal interpretation of the Directive by the DfT.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Woodley
General Secretary
Dr James Johnston.
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee.
TG.01
Parliamentary Headquarters
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

30th November 2005.

Dear Dr. Johnston,

Re: SUBMISSION TO SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE – CONSIDERATION PE876

In response to your letter of 16th September, please find attached our submission.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Armstrong.
Timber Transport Project Manager.
SUBMISSION TO SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE – CONSIDERATION PE876

Summary

The number of round timber1 hauliers is contracting as a result of pressures described in the RHA petition; specifically fuel prices, taxation and the Working Time Directive.

The impacts have been particularly acute for the timber industry and are limiting the potential for economic growth and job creation in Scotland on the back of the increasing timber resource.

Impacts are compounded by institutional and policy constraints, specifically maintenance of the rural road network, and have wider implications for both Scotland’s economy and Natural Heritage.

SCOTTISH TIMBER INDUSTRY IN CONTEXT

It is estimated that around 40,000 jobs in Scotland depend on the forest industries and that if the sector were to disappear it would result in a fall in gross output of £811m. This industry and these jobs depend on an active and competitive haulage sector.

The forestry industry is a low margin, heavily regulated industry, which must compete on an international market. For a variety of reasons and despite concerted efforts, the transportation of timber is a weak point in the supply chain, representing a high proportion of delivered-in costs. The cost figures compare poorly with international benchmarks. The pressures on the timber haulage community from increasing fuel costs and the Working Timber Directive (WTD), combined with industry codes of practice, regulations and voluntary agreements, are forcing hauliers out of business.

The WTD has added around 30% to the wage bill of hauliers, representing, in combination with the increases in fuel prices a cost increase of around 20% since the introduction of the directive earlier in the year. Figures vary between different businesses.

The UK imports around 85% of its processed timber and we must compete on an international market. The price of round timber in the UK has been severely depressed in the UK for the last few years. The supply chain in the forest industry is very tight and it is extremely difficult for hauliers to pass on their costs to customers or suppliers.

The main markets for timber in the UK are in the high population areas of England. The cost of hauling finished goods from processors in NE Scotland to key

1 Round timber here refers to logs, i.e. timber taken from the forest to the processor (e.g. sawmill), the transport of which has different characteristics to general haulage. The distinction is used to differentiate from the movement of processed timber (e.g. sawn planks) which are hauled from the processor and which is more akin to general haulage.
markets in SE England is now greater than the cost of shipping for Scandinavian competitors to those same markets.

The trend of timber haulage businesses disappearing is set to continue and the future of the timber haulage industry is uncertain. The implications of this for the forestry and timber industries is unclear.

WIDER IMPACTS ON SCOTLAND’S FOREST HERITAGE
Timber haulage is a fragile link in the supply chain essential to both Scotland’s timber industry and the management of Scotland’s forests. The forest industry underpins the management of Scottish forests and the environmental and social benefits that they provide. The annual aggregate value of the social and environmental benefits provided by Scotland’s forests is estimated at over £100 million per year. Round timber hauliers enable the timber processing industry in Scotland to buy timber which in turn pays for the management of Scotland’s Forests. Without a haulage sector much of Scotland’s forestry heritage would not be managed and would not generate many of these social and environmental benefits. The Forests in Scotland are some of the best managed in the world. Indeed, around 80% of timber harvested from Scottish forests achieve internationally recognised social and environmental certification.

Much of the imported timber against which the home grown timber competes does not match these high standards.

Additional transportation costs are borne by hauliers whilst the benefits of Scotland’s managed forests are enjoyed by the wider community.

INDUSTRIES EFFORTS TO HELP ITSELF
The forest and timber industries have been active in developing partnerships to support the haulage sector and to develop partnerships with key stakeholders, notably between the industry and Local Authorities. Established in 2000 the Timber Transport Forum and the network of Regional Timber Transport Groups have worked on a collaborative basis to find solutions to transport issues. Together they have developed an effective network of agreed haulage routes and Code of Practice amongst other initiatives. The round timber haulage industry has been active in these partnerships. In doing so it has been willing to exposed itself more than many other haulage sectors to scrutiny from outside for the benefit of mutual cooperation.

WHY HAVE FUEL PRICE INCREASES AND THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK IMPACTED SO HEAVILY ON THE ROUND TIMBER HAULAGE?
The roundwood haulage sector is different in several key ways from the general haulage industry:
Timber haulage accounts for broadly 20% to 50% of the cost of wood delivered to Scottish mills and is therefore a key factor in determining the profitability and competitiveness of the sector. The high cost of transport is recognised as a key area in which the UK forestry is not internationally competitive. In part this is a consequence of nature of the rural roads infrastructure, which was not designed for timber transport. However, the high cost of timber transport in Scotland is to a large degree a function of taxation policies, regulations and restrictions. Compared to our international competitors, the relatively high proportion of the cost of fuel accounted for by taxation puts the industry at a significant competitive disadvantage.

Where many of our international competitors are permitted to use a “dual-fuel” system (using lower cost red diesel for part of their haulage) the system is not permitted under current interpretation of legislation in Scotland. As the industry seeks innovative solutions to reducing on-road haulage by using in-forest roads instead, not allowing a “dual-fuel” system limits the options open to the industry. The importance of the “dual-fuel” option to economic growth is significantly higher in Scotland than in other parts of the UK given the proportionally higher forest cover in the country.

ROAD CONDITIONS AND COSTS
Much of the driving must be done on poor roads, and rough in-forest roads. These conditions have higher fuel costs than the better quality roads over which most of Scotland’s hauliers operate. Roundwood hauliers operate on approximately half the number of miles per gallon than general hauliers. Poor road conditions also result in higher running costs, estimated at 5 times for in-forest roads and 2.5 times for rural roads as compared with the costs of general hauliers. Increases in fuel costs have a disproportionately big impact on round timber haulage as compared to general hauliers.

ALTERNATIVES TO ROAD HAULAGE
Alternatives such as rail, sea and inland waterway, are being explored but are only viable in a limited number of cases. A fundamental constraint is the relative location of the forest resource, the processing facilities and the alternative transportation networks (rail or water). The cost of infrastructure development for water or rail transport is prohibitive in almost all cases for timber, given its low value. An indicative value of a lorry load of timber would be in the order of £500. There are also significant institutional difficulties in developing rail alternatives to road haulage.

SPECIALIST SKILLS
Given the remote locations that forests are situated in and from which round wood hauliers must pick up loads, drivers must also double as crane operators and mechanics. They must be able to negotiate narrow and technically challenging in-forest road conditions. Drivers must understand, be able to interpret and conform with various codes of practice that are specific to the forest industry. They require specialised and multiple skills and drivers with these skills are in short supply. It is
not possible to use agency drivers for round timber haulage. Timber hauliers command higher wages than general hauliers.

Drivers must load and unload the logs from their trucks using onboard cranes. Crucially, in terms of the requirements of the WTD drivers cannot use loading or unloading times as Periods of Availability. The delegation of the loading and unloading responsibilities from the driver is common amongst general hauliers. Loading and unloading represents around 20% of the driver’s working time.

To comply with the Working Time Directive and to move the same amount of timber hauliers have to employ additional drivers. These drivers command wages higher than general hauliers. Increases in the number of drivers required to move the same volume of goods has a disproportionately large impact on round timber haulage as compared to general hauliers.

**SPECIALIST MACHINERY**
Specialist round timber lorries are unable to carry a wide range of goods, unlike most general freight transporters. They are designed for the difficult conditions in which round timber hauliers operate. As such, it is not possible for round timber lorries to arrive with raw materials and leave with finished goods. Flexibility in the use of the lorries is severely restricted, limiting the logistical efficiency of lorry routing. **Opportunities for flexible working to minimise the impacts of the WTD are limited given the specialist nature of the industry and the lorries.**

**OUTLOOK**
The number of specialist round timber hauliers continues to decrease with businesses disappearing on a continuing basis. The outlook is that this trend will continue. Hauliers are unable to make the justification for investing in new lorries at the end of their working life given the low returns on capital invested that this represents. **Every indication is that the number of round timber haulage businesses will continue to decline.** The impact of this in terms of number of jobs and on the wider forestry and timber industries is unclear.

The key issues for the round wood haulage industry relate to the Working Time Directive and the cost of fuel (both the taxation element and the interpretation of legislation relating to dual fuel use). The issues however are compounded by wider policy and institutional factors such as the rural roads network.
30 November 2005

Richard Hough
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
TG.01
Parliamentary Headquarters
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Richard,

Please find enclosed a copy of CBI Scotland’s submission for Consideration PE876 of the Public Petitions Committee on behalf of Alan Mitchell, Assistant Director, CBI Scotland. If you require clarification of any of the points raised within the enclosed document then please feel free to contact myself or Alan.

Yours sincerely,

Iain Ferguson
Policy Executive

Enc.
CONSIDERATION PE876

Introduction

CBI Scotland welcomes the opportunity to assist this inquiry by the Local Government and Transport Committee.

Freight transport policy is important to the economy of Scotland and this inquiry represents an opportunity to assess the benefits of all modes of freight transport in that context. The Scottish Executive must take a balanced view when it assesses the different modes of freight transport. Issues of cost to business, practicality of mode and reliability must be afforded adequate consideration.

CBI Scotland represents a broad spectrum of business in Scotland, the majority of whom are affected by the Scottish Executive’s policy decisions on freight transport, whether they are freight transport providers or users. The Scottish business community is relying on the Executive to take decisions with regard to freight policy that will help in achieving the Scottish Executive’s primary stated objective – economic growth. The road haulage industry provides an essential service to the Scottish business community and is a key factor in supporting the growth of the economy.

The future prospects for the Scottish road haulage industry and the impact of changes affecting the road haulage industry on the Scottish economy

In recent years, there has been a tendency of government at both EU and UK levels to influence a modal change of freight transport away from road. Environmental objectives largely lie behind this. Business accepts that protecting the environment and tackling climate change are important policy objectives for the Scottish Executive. However, the Scottish Executive must realise that it is very difficult to move significantly away from road transportation. Road will be the dominant mode of freight transport for the foreseeable future. Even if freight is transported by rail, water or air, it usually involves road transportation at the beginning and end in order to complete each journey.

The road haulage industry in Scotland is facing many challenges. Scotland’s historically low levels of economic growth places an immediate constraint on the industry. It is hard to grow your business if your market is not growing.

Customers, particularly but not exclusively in manufacturing, are demanding greater efficiency, reliability and responsiveness from hauliers. This is a natural consequence of increasingly fierce global and national competition. The hauliers customers have no option but
to take this approach with all of their suppliers/supply chain partners. Increasingly, their own survival in the global market depends on their ability to reduce their costs and improve their efficiency. Hauliers are expected to provide the high levels of service that manufacturing industry, for example, needs to develop the just-in-time production processes that enable them to remain competitive. These demands are not unique to Scottish hauliers. Their counterparts elsewhere in the UK and Europe will have to respond to the very same demands.

Nor is there any doubt that the Scottish road haulage industry is capable of rising to the challenge. On a level playing field, they can compete with anyone and provide Scottish industry with a quality, value-add service.

What they currently lack at this time is a level playing field in terms of government-imposed costs:

- High fuel duty means that UK diesel fuel is the highest in Europe;
- The impact of The Road Transport (Working Time) Regulation is particularly marked in Scotland because many Scottish-produced goods have to travel further to get to market;
- There has been a significant rise in the overall tax burden placed on business in recent years;
- The growing burden of red tape and regulation has added considerable cost to business, and eroded many of the competitive advantages that the UK (and, therefore, Scotland) has traditionally enjoyed over the rest of the EU. This is most marked in the area of labour market flexibility.

Faced with rising costs, hauliers will seek to raise their prices. They will not always be able to do so, and their own profit margins will be squeezed as a consequence, impacting on investment and training. Where they can push through higher prices it is their customers, who may themselves be working on small profit margins, who may have their competitiveness undermined.

We recognise that the Scottish Executive has no direct powers to intervene in many of these areas but it needs to act to address these burdens where it can (where it balances environmental and economic interests when it implements EU environmental legislation), and it needs to influence UK Government policy as much as possible.

The Scottish Executive also needs to work more closely with the road haulage industry to provide effective and targeted support and assistance. There are already some good examples. CBI Scotland welcomes the commitment that the Scottish Executive has already made in addressing key problems within the road haulage industry such as the recruitment and retention of LGV drivers. The Scottish Road Haulage Modernisation Fund demonstrates recognition of the key role that Scottish road haulage industry plays in developing the economy. This fund is central to improved environmental and fuel efficient operations within the industry and the following initiatives must be commended:
- Safe and Fuel Efficient Driving (SAFED) ‘in-cab’ Training Scheme;
- Retrofitting of vehicle emission reduction technology.

More of this type of support and partnership working is required to alleviate concerns about the long-term prospects for the road haulage industry in Scotland. There are potentially worrying implications for Scotland’s economy arising from a major decline in our ‘local’ road haulage industry. It would not be in Scotland’s interests to be overly reliant on EU registered firms to support our industrial base. Potentially there will be less competition, which could drive up prices and undermine manufacturing cost-competitiveness. Continuity of supply and speed of response could be adversely affected, which again could undermine prospects for Scottish
businesses, particularly manufacturers, who are trying to ‘re-engineer’ their operations to make them more efficient and competitive. It is important, therefore, that Scotland preserves an indigenous haulage industry. It is the industry itself that will have the main responsibility for achieving this, but the Scottish Executive can and must support it.

The present and potential contribution of all modes of freight transport, including road, rail, water and air, including the environmental impact

There are two factors that dominate businesses’ decision on which mode of transport to move freight – cost and practicality. Before considering the present and potential contributions of individual modes of transport, the Executive must understand that these factors are the key motivators behind decisions on modal choice of freight transportation.

Road haulage offers flexibility to businesses that other forms of transport cannot. Haulage operators can triangulate their activities, meaning there is less movement of empty containers. As has been mentioned, road freight transport is vital in supporting Scotland’s economy. There must be increased investment in Scotland’s road infrastructure to assist haulage firms in playing this support role to businesses. Increased investment will also positively influence congestion – currently one of road haulage’s biggest challenges.

If there is to be increased use of the rail network in Scotland to transport freight, a choice that has undoubted benefits for the environment and assists in reducing road congestion, it should be encouraged for longer distance journeys. Freight transport by rail is expensive to businesses and shorter journeys are more practical by road. We are supportive of Network Rail’s Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) in Scotland and hope that it will achieve its aim of more effective use of the network in Scotland – an outcome that should also improve the efficiency of the current service for businesses.

Both water and airfreight transportation are, similarly to rail, expensive. There is potential for increased use of these modes over longer distances, but they must be co-ordinated with road freight transportation as it is rare for these modes to offer the complete journey for freight from the origin to destination. Also, when considering freight transportation by water, the area of flow of the freight often makes this mode impractical.

There is undoubtedly scope for all of the mentioned modes of transport to offer freight services. It is important that there is an effective infrastructure that assists in co-ordinating all modes, as many journeys are dependant on more than one mode from start to finish.

The Scottish Executive’s targets in encouraging the transfer of freight from road to rail and water

Businesses in Scotland do not dispute the environmental benefits of transferring freight from road to rail and water but believe that prerequisites of such modal transfers are:

- That journeys concerned are over longer distances that will justify the higher costs of these modes of transport to businesses and will demonstrate significant environmental and road congestion benefits. These types of journeys commonly involve the transportation of aggregates and coal.
- That the mode utilised is the one that is most practical. For freight transport to be moved from road to rail or water, the freight corridor must be two-way and encompass the start and finish of the journey for the transported goods.
We welcome the priority that the Executive is showing in enabling the carriage of freight by rail, which contrasts favourably with England. However, it is important that the Executive does not ignore the critical role that Scotland’s road haulage industry provides in moving raw materials to manufacturers and goods to market. Over 70% of Scottish firms sell more than half of their goods/services in Scotland. This is a higher percentage than anywhere else in the UK. While the figure for manufacturing goods is probably lower, it nonetheless clearly indicates the high proportion of goods/product movement in Scotland that requires a relatively short journey and that can only be economically transported by road. This highlights the importance of the road haulage industry to Scotland.
Hough R (Richard)

From: Angela Kubski [admin.scotland@fsb.org.uk]
Sent: 17 November 2005 13:59
To: Hough R (Richard)
Subject: SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE - CONSIDERATION OF PE876

Thank you for your letter of 11 November regarding the Federation’s response to the above. I understand the Local Government and Transport Committee is holding the same/similar inquiry, to which we intend to respond.

Niall Stuart
Press & Parliamentary Officer

Scottish Press & Parliamentary Office
Federation of Small Businesses

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Public Petitions Committee – a template for public petitions

Should you wish to submit a public petition for consideration by the Public Petitions Committee please complete the template below. Please refer to the Guidance on submission of public petitions for advice on issues of admissibility before completing the template. You may also seek advice from the Clerk to the Committee whose contact details can be found at the end of this form.

Details of principal petitioner:
Please enter the name of person and organisation raising the petition, including a contact address where correspondence should be sent to, email address and phone number if available

| THE ASSOCIATION OF CAITHNESS COMMUNITY COUNCILS |
| CONTACT: Secretary: Mrs S Gordon |

Text of petition:
The petition should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Parliament to take in no more than 5 lines of text, e.g. The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament considers and debates the implications of the proposed Agenda for Change legislation for Speech and Language Therapy Services and service users within the NHS

We request that the Scottish Parliament considers investment in infrastructure, rolling stock and timetabling as part of a strategic root and branch review of the provision of rail services between Inverness, Thurso and Wick, with unrestricted thinking on how best to shorten journey times and ensure the continuing future of the railway to these destinations. Thought should also be given to ensuring that the existing communities of the ‘Lairg loop’ are provided for.

Additional information:
Any additional information in relation to your petition, including reasons why the action requested is necessary, should not be included here. However, it may be appended to the petition and will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition. Please note that you should limit the amount of any additional information which you may wish to provide in support of your petition to no more than 4 sides of A4.
Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition:

Before submitting a petition to the Parliament, petitioners are expected to have made an attempt to resolve their issues of concern by, for example, making representations to the Scottish Executive or seeking the assistance of locally elected representatives, such as councillors, MSPs and MPs. Please enter details of those approached below and append copies of relevant correspondence, which will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition.

Scottish Executive Transport minister's
Area and List MSP's
Local MP

Copy attached of letter (22/3/2005) sent to

Eleanor Scott MSP
Marched MacInnes MSP

Petitioners appearing before the Committee

The Convener of the Committee may invite petitioners to appear before the Public Petitions Committee to speak in support of their petition. Such an invitation will only be made if the Convener considers this would be useful in facilitating the Committee's consideration of the petition. It should be noted that due to the large volume of petitions it has to consider, the Committee is not able to invite all petitioners to appear before the Committee to speak in support of their petition.

Please indicate below if you do NOT wish to make a brief statement before the Committee when it comes to consider your petition.

I do NOT wish to make a brief statement before the Committee

Signature of principal petitioner:

When satisfied that your petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance on submission of public petitions, the principal petitioner should sign and date the form in the box below. Other signatures gathered should be appended to this form.

Signature ....

Date ................................. 15 September 2005 .................................

Please note that any additional information, copies of relevant correspondence and additional signatures should be appended to this form and submitted to:

The Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee,
The Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5186 Fax: 0131 348 5088
e-mail: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk
22 March 2005

To all Highland MSPs etc

Dear Sir,

**FAR NORTH RAIL LNE**

The rail design and engineering company CORUS gave a presentation of their report "**A Better Railway for the North**" at a recent meeting in Wick. The main objectives of this preliminary assessment are:-

(a) A new line over the Dornoch Firth (alongside the road bridge) and Loch Fleet (at Little Ferry).

(b) New stations at Conon Bridge, Evanton, Dornoch and Halkirk.

(c) **Bypassing Georgemas Junction.**

(d) Upgrading the line to enable trains to travel faster so that the journey time between Thurso and Inverness could be reduced to 2 hours.

The association has already written Nicol Stephen, Minster for Transport in June 2004 requesting consideration be given to a new rail link between Tain and Golspie via a bridge over the Dornoch Firth. At our meeting on 21st February 2005 members agreed that a plea be made to all north MPs, MSPs and influential bodies to support a full strategic study of North rail services which CORUS now hope to produce.

In the reply of 26th July 2004 from the Transport Minister’s department assurance was given that he would consider any proposals for the area which demonstrate viability and local support and on those two points my observations are as follows:-

**Viability**

The far north line to Wick and Thurso is currently under used because the average car journey is 2 to 2.5hrs to Inverness and the train is at best 3.5 to 4hrs. If the time of 2hrs from Thurso to Inverness could be achieved it would become a very desirable way to travel and would attract commuters/day trippers all the way along the line.
The Caithness local economy is still reasonably buoyant but as the decommissioning of Dounreay speeds up redundant workers will be encouraged to remain resident in Caithness and commute because of the excessive property prices in and around Inverness. Also those already in employment in Inverness may be enticed to move further north – a lower mortgage could cover their rail travel costs. Retaining and increasing workers with young families in Caithness & Sutherland is essential for the overall economies of these Counties.

A faster line would encourage more bulk freight traffic to and from Caithness/Orkney thus saving fuel and reducing polluting emissions from HGV’s. Two areas on the outskirts of Wick are currently being considered by property developers as sites for retail stores such as Homebase, Argos and Tesco.

A feasibility study on the benefit a large cash injection in a complete upgrade of the far north line should be considered on the same criteria as the rail line to be reinstated to from Edinburgh to Jedburgh. The viability of restoring that line must be on an equal or even more speculative basis and is dependent on new housing developments in the Borders.

Three private quality housing estates totalling over 300 houses have been built around Thurso over the last 20 years and further land is available for another 300. We have the residents and housing but desperately need a fast commuter line to keep them here!!

Local Support

The Highland Council Structure Plan 1999 recognises the need for a new rail link from Tain to Golspie by bridging the Dornoch Firth.

In the Scottish Executive’s 2001 Report ‘Strategic Priorities for passenger Railway’ the Tain-Dornoch-Golspie rail link is recognised as Scotland’s fourth most wanted improvement project.

This proposal has the full support from all Highland Councillors, Trades Council and Community Council members in Caithness & Sutherland.

Other Matters

The Lairg Loop

There is concern by residents in areas around Lairg which will be bypassed and rightly so. However this can be resolved by providing a local sprinter service departing Golspie via Rogart, Lairg, Ardgay and on to Tain picking up passengers at all stations thereafter en route to Inverness. This would ensure that these Sutherland communities would not be isolated. This service could run in mornings and evenings to suit commuters as well as other services to connect with trains southbound to/from Inverness.

The Wick-Thurso service to Inverness would not stop after Dornoch – it would be an express service to Inverness.

Fuel supplies & CO2 Emissions
The Government is currently implementing a Renewable Energy policy to reduce CO2 in the production of our electricity supplies which is estimated to contribute one third of total emissions in Britain. At least another third of Britain’s CO2 emissions is created by traffic and an equal emphasis must sooner or later be applied to cutting transport emissions by reducing all types of road traffic. Having high quality rail links will encourage passengers and freight to use the railways.

Yours sincerely

S. Gordon (Mrs).

c.c. John Thurso MP.
   Jamie Stone MSP.
   Rob Gibson MSP.
   Eleanor Scott MSP.
   Mary Scanlon MSP.
   Maureen Macmillan MSP
   Orkney Isles Council.
   Richard Arden. (Friends of Far North Line).
Dear Mr Hough

The devolved government of Scotland’s current rail strategy consultation will close on 13th January 2006. The Association of Caithness Community Council’s petition will be considered as part of this consultation. Thereafter Ministers will bring forward a rail strategy for Scotland as part of the National Transport Strategy.

We are committed to improving the rail network in Scotland and enhancing the performance and frequency of rail services across Scotland. The rail strategy for Scotland reflects the increased responsibility which has been devolved to us by the Railways Act 2005. We have commissioned a Scottish Planning Assessment to set out the evidence base, addressing where the demand for rail services will be in the future.

We are furthermore supporting the Highland ‘Room for Growth Study’ which has been commissioned by Highlands & Islands Enterprise, which is examining both the constraints of the present Highland rail network and the potential for traffic growth. The results of this study will also contribute to the development of the National Transport Strategy.

Specifically in relation to services between Inverness, Thurso and Wick we have supported the extension of the morning commuter service to start from Lairg since 12th December 2005, funded by HITRANS. We have also agreed to introduce an additional service from Wick and Thurso to Inverness from December 2006. We are also looking, in conjunction with First ScotRail and Network Rail, at timetabling issues which could improve connections for local people.

Yours sincerely

Jacqie McCaig
Dr James Johnston  
Clark to the Public Petitions Committee  
Parliamentary Headquarters  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

2 February 2006

Dear Dr Johnston

Re: Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee – Consideration of PE894

Thank you for giving Network Rail the opportunity to comment on the Public Petition placed before the Scottish Parliament by the Association of Caithness Community Councils seeking increased investment for the railway between, Inverness, Thurso and Wick.

I have enclosed a paper which, sets out Network Rail’s remit and responsibilities, details of our infrastructure and what it supports together with details of some on going work. I have also identified the other parties responsible for evolving enhancement opportunities.

I hope this is helpful, but should you require further assistance please do not hesitate to contact my Public Affairs Manager, Dave Boyce on 0141 555 4107 or e-mail: david.boyce@network.rail.co.uk.

Yours sincerely,

\Bònn [McAulay]
Director, Scotland
Public Petitions Committee – Petition PE894

Network Rail Submission:

1. Background:

Network Rail’s responsibilities are to provide train operators with a robust and reliable network with sufficient paths to meet their reasonable requirements in accordance with our licence conditions and the needs of their customers.

Responsibilities:
- Operations, Maintenance and Renewals
- Industry performance
- Route Utilisation Strategies for both passenger and freight.

Priorities:
- Safety
- Efficiency
- Improving performance
- Facilitating infrastructure enhancements

The Network in Scotland:
- 2729 Route km
- 634 Route km electrified (almost entirely in SPT area)
- 345 Stations
- 114 Freight /Terminals Yards
- 4 passenger service providers and 4 freight service providers
- Supporting over 2000 passenger services and 360 freight paths per day
- Moving 70 million passengers and 10million tonnes of freight per annum
- 6.25million tonnes of this is coal – a large proportion of this is for power stations in England

2. Route Utilisation Strategies – Efficient use and development of the network:

Network Rail is leading a programme of Route Utilisation Strategies (RUS) on behalf of the rail industry. The RUS programme will recommend changes to achieve the most efficient use of the network, given the expected demands upon it, and identify opportunities for developments where gaps are identified. The RUSs will:

- Collate and set out existing network capacity, service provision and usage for both passenger and freight services
- Trace recent demand change and forecast future change
- Consider current operating performance
- Consider Engineering Access requirements
- Identify present and future problems and opportunities for change
- Evaluate opportunities for change
- Put forward for formal consultation those changes that offer the most value for money (and are affordable).

Two closely aligned RUSs will address issues in Scotland: The Scotland RUS and the GB Freight RUS.

- The Scotland RUS will consider the capacity requirements implied by changing levels of demand
- The Freight RUS will produce an agreed ten year forecast of freight demand and the routings preferred by our customers. It will examine the capacity implications of the additional traffic and any associated implications for the capability of the network.
- The Freight RUS will input closely into the Scotland RUS.
- The geographical size of Scotland’s railway network means that the Scotland RUS begins by examining those parts of the network that have the most capacity and demand issues.
• In spring 2006 we will issue the Scotland RUS for consultation. The consultation Freight RUS will be issued in Autumn 2006.

• The RUSs will present appraised options for meeting the expected demands on the network taking account of the Scottish Planning Assessment and are expected to be a key input into the development of the Scottish Executive’s High Level Output Specification (HLOS) of what it may wish Network Rail to provide following the next Periodic Review. The options may include infrastructure enhancements if they emerge from the appraisal work as being value for money.

• In parallel with the RUS programme, Network Rail is currently discussing how it records physical characteristics of the network (‘capability’) and how it communicates changes to capability with its stakeholders (including the Office of Rail Regulation, The Scottish Executive and our customers).

Highland – Room for Growth

• In advance of the Scotland RUS, Highlands and Islands Enterprise are developing a study of the Highland rail network in association with HITRANS, Highland Rail Partnership and Network Rail called “room for growth”. This is expected to be published in the spring and will consider, amongst other things, some of the issues raised in the Petition from the Association of Caithness Community Councils.

Responsibilities for network enhancement:

• Transport Scotland’s responsibilities include the development and enhancement of the railway. Ensuring through funding received from the Scottish Executive that the Transport Policies of the Executive are implemented.

• The new Regional Transport Partnerships will have a key role in identifying and delivering opportunities to improve and enhance the railway.

• Network Rail is committed to supporting the development and delivery of all rail projects that deliver genuine benefits. We intend to ensure we are properly represented on the Regional Transport Partnerships. This will ensure that the RTP’s are properly informed and have access to our support when they are exploring options for improvements/enhancements to the railway.

Summary

• Network Rail will continue to maintain and renew the network across Scotland and will work with all the relevant statutory bodies in Scotland to develop sensible enhancement ideas in accordance with our Network Licence.
Response from the Highland Rail Partnership to Public Petitions Committee
Petition PE894

Association of Caithness Community Councils
“ To consider investment in infrastructure, rolling stock, and timetabling as part of
a strategic root and branch review of the provision of rail services between
Inverness, Thurso and Wick, with unrestricted thinking on how best to shorten
journey times and ensure the continuing future of the railway to these destinations.”

About HRP

The Highland Rail Partnership is a not for profit company funded by:

Argyll and Bute Council, English Welsh and Scottish Railway, Forest Enterprise
Scotland, Freightliner, Friends of the Far North Line, Friends of the Kyle Line,
Friends of the West Highland Line, Great North Eastern Railway, Highland Council,
Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Hitrans, Keith & Dufftown Railway, Moray
Council, Perth and Kinross Council, First ScotRail, Strathspey Railway Company

The aim of the Partnership is to develop the passenger and freight railway. Our recent
achievements include: Tain Commuter, Beauty Station, extra West Highland trains,
Wick/Kyle Sunday services, Arrochar Commuter, Invernet, Lineside loading of timber,
and the return of road salt to rail.

The HRP area is defined Helensburgh and Gleneagles north, Keith west. The organisation
is based at Laig Station in Sutherland.

HRP is currently a co-sponsor of the Highlands and Islands Room for Growth capacity
study and the H&I Rail Demand Study.

Far North Line

The Inverness-Caithness Railway opened in 1873 with two through trains per day. Expansion
in the north continued with the Wick and Lybster and Dornoch Light Railways at the start
of the 20th century. During both wars the route was heavily used for
military traffic.
Additional passenger trains worked from Inverness to Helmsdale and Tain. The line was considered for closure both in LMS days and again in the early sixties. The Lybster line closed after the Second World War. The first cutbacks occurred in 1960 when a number of smaller stations closed, along with the Dornoch branch. The demise of steam led to the closure of Helmsdale depot. Diesel loco haulage with trains splitting at Georgemas continued until two significant changes: the advent of sprinters and of radio signalling. At a stroke costs were substantially lowered with all train control removed to Inverness.

**Privatisation and new services**

In the build up to privatisation the fourth through summer train was removed, as was the arrangement for connecting at Georgemas. Wick became the sole traincrew depot in Caithness, and all trains from the south ran to Thurso first, before going onto Wick, thus ensuring that Wick remained on the rail map. On privatisation in 1997 the three trains per day pattern became enshrined in ORPRAF’s Passenger Service Requirement. In 1998 Scotland’s first new unsupported service began at the south end with the Dingwall Commuter. This extended back to Tain in 2000, and ultimately led to the Inverness scheme, implemented in December 2005 with early trains from Lairg and Kingussie. Meanwhile Beauly Station had reopened in 2002 as the UK’s smallest station and soon built up to 22000 journeys per year. All year Sunday trains to Wick began in 2001 with HRP funding.

**158s**

In 2000 Class 156 sprinters were replaced by 158s, and the new timetable knocked some 19 minutes off the end to end journey time, although this proved to be optimistic as will be seen below. The new units offered 2 toilets and air conditioning but had cycle capacity reduced from 6 to 2.

**Today**

The 3 services per day in each direction optimize the traincrew resource in Caithness of four drivers and four conductors. Departure times are determined by traincrew hours and the ability to pass other trains travelling in the opposite direction. There are 11 passing loops between Inverness and the termini. The early Wick crew work to Lairg and back, which is as far as they can go without a break, while the late crew work to Inverness, where they have their break, and back to Wick.

The railway today has a multitude of roles:
- Connection with Orkney ferries
- Long distance travel to Central Belt and cross border
- Day trip travel to Inverness from Caithness and Sutherland for health appointments, personal business and shopping
- Day trip travel for tourists from Inverness
- Commuting from Central Sutherland/Inner Moray Firth into Inverness
- Shearings-type one way silver bus tourist journeys (3000 Golspie-Wick p.a.)
Weekend/home on-shore trips for students, riggers and relocated Caithnessians
Short break tourism
Lands End John O’Groats (LeJOG) returning cyclists

**June 2005 Timetable revision: TPWS/OTMR**

In June 2005 the end to end journey time was increased by around 20 minutes. Punctuality had become an issue following the introduction of Train Protection Warning System governing the speed into, through and out of loops and over certain structures; and the use of On Train Monitoring and Recording (OTMR) equipment performing the function similar to tachographs in road vehicles. This meant that train drivers no longer had the flexibility to make the old timetable work. At the same time some level crossing upgrading led to increased speed restrictions. Furthermore some request stops became fixed stops with a dwell time in the timetable because of increased usage. The current fastest journey time from Inverness to Thurso is 3h47, to Wick 4h15. This is uncompetitive with the equivalent road journey time that has been reduced with the bridging of the firths. However the railway serves communities by-passed by the trunk road.

**Fares**

Fares are currently attractive, particularly when used with the Highland Railcard, entitling local residents to 50% discount. Apex fares from Wick, Thurso and Brora to Central Belt (£26.50) and Aberdeen (£24.50) can be bought up to 48 hours in advance. At the south end of the line 7 day and flexifares are available into Inverness. Free travel for senior citizens on buses has had an effect on rail patronage

**Studies**

HRP is currently co-funding with Hitrans and HIE two studies: Room for Growth (R4G) and On Rail Demand (ORD). R4G looks at the supply of existing capacity and identifies where investment is required if a certain threshold is reached. It is due to report in February.
ORD identifies potential future demand due to development, population growth, modal shift etc.
Both studies are designed to complement the Scottish Executive’s Scotland Planning Assessment and Network Rail’s Route Utilisation Strategy.

In the short term AEA Technology have been asked by HRP to review Section Running Times (SRT) north of Inverness and to investigate the implications of faster loop entry/exit, higher speeds through the loops, Class 170 times, and SRTs for skip-stopping.

**4th train**

The Scottish Executive has committed funds to providing from December 2006 a fourth train south from Wick at 08xx to make a connection at Thurso with the first inbound ferry
from Orkney, giving an onward link into the 1245 south from Inverness, and enabling same day travel to the south of England. It is hoped that the work on skip stopping mentioned above will lead to a quicker journey time for this train.

**Station Developments**

HRP has coordinated improvements at a number of stations, with new shelters at Kildonan, Tain, Golspie, Alness, Invergordon and Beauly. Tain station has received a multi-agency funded makeover including CCTV, while CCTV is also in hand for Muir of Ord and Brora. In the spring HRP will be running seminars on station development, aiming to identify possible small-scale improvements to every station on the route.

**Freight**

Freight was the mainstay of the line but declined to nothing in the 1980s. It returned in 1995 with EWS’ weekly Enterprise service conveying freezers, coal, and flagstone. This later became a daily service carrying Safeway product for stores in Wick, Thurso and Kirkwall. Pipes are hauled to Georgemas for Subsea 7 on an occasional basis and timber has been loaded at the lineside loading terminal at Kinbrace, though this has currently ceased. Terminals used in the past 5 years include Fearn, Lairg, Kinbrace, Georgemas and Thurso.

The route is cleared for Class 66 locomotives (excluding the Wick section), and is RA10 to Invergordon, RA 5 thereafter. It is a Trans European Networks (TENS) route.

Three Freight Facilities Grant Awards have been made in Caithness: to Norfrost for the Safeway traffic, to Thurso Building Supplies for the creation of a terminal in Thurso station yard, and again to Norfrost for swap bodies. The weekly oil train to Lairg runs with grant aid from the FFG award to BP which covers a number of locations. Additionally the Kinbrace timber has received Track Access Grant.

The cessation of supermarket traffic in November 2004 led to the end of Norfrost traffic, but the acquisition of Norfrost by JG Russell trading as Icetech offers new hope. The Forscot project at Invergordon may offer further opportunities for railfreight.

**Solutions**

We believe that the current studies will inform debate on future enhancements to the line which currently suffers from:
Uncompetitive journey times
Poor rolling stock quality—but reliability up
Many level crossings

In order to improve the current service provision we would identify the following:
Improved rolling stock (1707)
No new stations north of Dingwall
Fourth northbound train to balance the new train commencing Dec 2006
Next generation of signalling to permit faster authorisation to proceed into the next section and expandable to allow new connections
Faster loop entry, exit and through loop speeds
Investigation of higher linespeeds
Skip stopping of the fourth train
Construction of Georgemas chord to avoid reversal
Renewed appraisal of level crossings
New crossing loop between Inverness and Muir of Ord
New crossing loop between Helmsdale and Forsinard
Dear Dr Johnston

Petition PE894: Rail Services north of Inverness

Friends of the Earth Scotland broadly supports this petition. On grounds of both environmental sustainability and social justice we believe that modern public transport links should be a high priority for public investment.

Scotland’s Sustainable Development Strategy, published in December 2005, highlights transport as “an area where the challenges of sustainable development are particularly acute” (para 4.2), suggests that we might “encourage more sustainable modes of travel – by making the choice to use public transport easier through better infrastructure and services, integrated ticketing, better passenger information …” (para 4.6) and promises that the executive will “invest in rail infrastructure projects” (para 4.8).

In environmental terms, investments in public transport, walking and cycling merit much higher priority than investments in new or improved roads, which simply generate increased traffic levels and exacerbate our environmental problems.

Public transport is important not only for meeting our environmental objectives – particularly reducing road traffic and air pollution levels – but also for social inclusion. In rural areas the inequality and isolation faced by those who cannot drive or have no access to a car is even more severe than in our towns and cities. Even where public transport is available, all too often it offers only a poor quality of service. It is not appropriate in a modern Scotland that large groups or areas should be treated as second-class citizens in terms of access and mobility.

Whilst the priority measures to tackle such exclusion are about enhancing local access to jobs, facilities and services, the improvement of public transport links and services is also critical. The Executive rightly puts emphasis on the maintenance of ‘lifeline’ ferry and air services to the Scottish islands, but remote mainland areas such as the far north also merit attention and support.

For these reasons we support the principle of a wide-ranging review considering infrastructure, rolling stock and timetabling. However we do not believe that rail infrastructure improvements should be considered entirely in isolation from other
environmental concerns. Our support for the petition must not be construed as support for any specific option that a review might consider. Moreover, any review generated as a result of this petition should be required to consider fully the environmental impacts of any improvements proposed. In particular we would draw the Committee's attention to the very great importance and high-level designation of both Loch Fleet and the Dornoch Firth for their nature conservation value.

The sites enjoy designation under the Ramsar Convention on wetlands of international importance, and under European law as a Special Protection Area (SPA). According to the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, the Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA is one of the best examples in northwest Europe of a large complex estuary which has been relatively unaffected by industrial development. This is likely to severely constrain the opportunities for new infrastructure development and should the review favour a crossing of the Dornoch Firth, imaginative engineering would be required to avoid negative impacts on the SPA – even perhaps considering the prospect of turning the existing road bridge into a multi-modal crossing.

For all these reasons, there is a strong case for the Scottish Parliament to examine, in a robust, integrated and transparent fashion, the case for investment in infrastructure, rolling stock and timetabling for rail services between Inverness, Thurso and Wick so as to optimise environmental and social benefits.

The Committee may also wish to seek advice from Transform Scotland in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Duncan McLaren
Chief Executive
Ref. 872290

16 December 2005

Dr James Johnston
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
TG.01
Parliamentary Headquarters
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Dr Johnston

Consideration of Petition PE894

I refer to your letter dated 21 November addressed to our Customer Contact Centre at Fort William which has now been forwarded to me for attention.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Petition raised by the Association of Caithness Community Councils regarding the investment in infrastructure, rolling stock and timetabling as part of a review of the provision of rail services between Inverness, Wick and Thurso.

At the present time there are two large-scale studies being undertaken to assess the future options and strategy for Scotland's railway covering all aspects of rolling stock, track and station investment and service levels. The first is the Route Utilisation Study that is intended to assess the medium term (up to 10 years) options around what could and should be done for developing the railway within relatively modest investment and timeframes. This of course also takes account of the many committed schemes and those under development, such as the airport links, etc. The longer Strategic Review considers the options beyond this 10-year horizon and seeks to set a long term investment and operational strategy for the railway to meet Scotland's needs going forward.

First ScotRail is working closely with both of these studies as well as the many scheme studies and developments. First ScotRail believes that the issues raised within the Petition are therefore best dealt with within these ongoing pieces of work where the options and implications of changes across the network can be dealt with consistently and within a wider appraisal framework that takes account of the many competing demands on resources and competing policy requirements.

I am grateful to you for writing to me personally.

Yours sincerely

Mary Dickson
Managing Director
THE FRIENDS OF THE FAR NORTH LINE
Cairdean Na Loine Tuath

President: John Thurso MP
Convener: Mike Lunan; Treasurer: Ron Stevenson; Secretary: Gavin Sinclair

The campaign group for rail north of Inverness, lobbying for improved services for the local user, tourist and freight customers.

Jim Johnston,
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee,
The Scottish Parliament,
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

11 January, 2006

Dear Mr. Johnston,

Petition PE 894

Please find attached the Friends of the Far North Line contribution in relation to the recent Committee's consideration of the petition PE 894, by the Association of the Caithness Community Councils (considered on 9 November 2005) regarding the provision of and strategic improvements to rail services from Inverness to Caithness on the Far North Line.

The Friends of the Far North Line is pleased to support the Association of Caithness Community Councils.

Yours Sincerely,

Gavin Sinclair,
Secretary, FoFNL
THE FRIENDS OF THE FAR NORTH LINE
Cairdean Na Loine Tuath

President: John Thurso MP
Convener: Mike Lunan; Treasurer: Ron Stevenson; Secretary: Gavin Sinclair

The campaign group for rail north of Inverness, lobbying for improved services for the local user, tourist and freight customers.

Public Petitions Committee
Scottish Parliament

PETITION PE894

Introduction

1. Friends of the Far North Line (FoFNL) is pleased to support the petition from the Association of Caithness Community Councils calling on the Scottish Executive to consider the provision of improved rail services on the Far North Line (FNL) between Inverness and Thurso and Wick.

2. The proposed construction of a Dornoch Link line between Tain and Golspie dates back to the early 1980s and is an eminently reasonable aspiration for rail travellers from and to Caithness and coastal East Sutherland, being 26 miles shorter. A convincing business case has yet to be made.

3. There are other improvements which might be made and we are aware that the construction of a Dornoch link might potentially jeopardise services to the existing "Laing Loop" stations. The needs of all users and potential users must be considered.

4. The end to end time taken by services on the line has been lengthened during 2005 by 25 minutes to give a painfully slow and uncompetitive total journey time of 4 hours 15 minutes between Wick and Inverness.

5. The single line nature of the route, a signalling system with no room for further expansion, and an overcautious line speed through the passing loops all contribute to the extraordinarily slow service.

6. All these factors together support the call for the Scottish Executive to identify costed options for accelerated journey times on the FNL.
Infrastructure Improvement

7. The proposed Dornoch Link has generated much discussion over the years, much of it deficient because nobody knows what the cost would be of this 15 mile link with two major bridges, a new station and passing loop at Dornoch, and probably several level crossings. If we assume the Lairg Loop were to remain open, there would be two junctions as well with associated signalling and points.

8. It is highly desirable that an Executive study should establish a well researched indicative cost. Only then can the debate move on to judge whether construction of this line would be justified. Current "guesstimates" are too wide ranging for meaningful discussion.

9. We are pleased to note that all parties seem to agree that under the 2006 timetable, the estimated saving in time if the Dornoch Link were built would be 40 minutes. Other time savings will depend on the amount of money available for investment in track capacity, signalling and rolling stock.

10. Until the signalling system is improved, little time would be saved south of Tain as Wick services would have to stop at many of the stations for signalling purposes.

11. It is important that any study should consider all stations on the line so that users of the Lairg loop stations are not made to fear for the future of their services.

Funding

12. With the costs of major improvements to infrastructure along the line being unknown at present, FoFNL has concentrated on lobbying for important schemes within the current infrastructure which are achievable in the present financial climate. Working in this way with industry partners has been a successful strategy resulting in the introduction of the new "Invernet" services between Inverness, Tain and Lairg; the introduction of all-year round Sunday services between Inverness and Wick; and in increased freight traffic. We are delighted that an additional service has been announced to commence in December 2006 operating from Wick after 08.00 to Inverness and providing new journey opportunities and better connections from Orkney. FoFNL is currently working on proposals for an additional northbound service to Wick leaving Inverness around 14.00.

13. We have also taken the view that there is not sufficient money in the rail industry at present to ensure that a scheme like the Dornoch Link would attract funding. This view is borne out by the failure so far of the Inverness-Aberdeen line scheme to gain business case approval. Accordingly, we have lobbied Scottish Executive ministers to consider the benefits an improved FNL would supply to Caithness and coastal Sutherland if the scheme were seen as part of a regional development strategy for the north of Scotland.
14. As well as funding from the regional development and integrated transport budgets there should be scope to attract money from Europe. The line is designated by the EU as part of the Trans European Network. If this is to mean anything, it should give potential for EU funding rather than being an EU millstone. As literally the end of the line in North West Europe, all the arguments of peripherality and sparsity of population base should permit maximum EU funding largesse to be invoked.

Conclusion

15. Funding the FNL is a true test of the political will to overcome the short-term thinking that typifies much of government in Britain. This is a strategic line to the extremities. When oil becomes scarce or subject to price-blackmail from the producing countries (as has just happened with Russian gas), people and goods will have to rely much more on movement by rail. This is why, if the Dornoch Link is built, it will be essential to retain the Lairg Loop as well.

16. There is no way of providing extra rail capacity in the Highlands on the cheap, but we must start the planning and providing now, so that when oil shortages come, we have the infrastructure capacity in place to reach as many places as possible by rail.

17. The Caithness petition is asking for reasonable and appropriate rail service provision for Caithness and Sutherland. It deserves support from MSPs and the Executive.

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