TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE
MEETING

AGENDA

11th Meeting, 2007 (Session 3)
Tuesday 20 November 2007

The Committee will meet at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 5.

1. **Scottish Water Annual Report and Accounts 2006/07:** The Committee will take evidence on Scottish Water’s Annual Report and Accounts 2006/07 from-

   Ronnie Mercer, Scottish Water Chair, Geoff Aitkenhead, Asset Management Director, Douglas Millican, Finance and Regulation Director, Scottish Water; and Mark Powels, managing Director, Scottish Water Business Stream.

2. **Petition:** The Committee will consider Petition PE1064 on the replacement of the Forth Road Bridge.

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The papers for this meeting are as follows:

**Agenda Item 1**

Private briefing paper

**Agenda Item 2**

Cover note from the Clerk
Submission from the Petitioner
Introduction

1. This note asks the Committee to consider for the first time the following petition which was lodged on 12 June 2007:

   Petition by Bruce Whitehead, on behalf of Queensferry Residents Against Another Forth Crossing, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to reconsider its decision to replace the Forth Road Bridge and await pending studies on the feasibility of repairing it, to consider FETA’s proposal for road user charging, to invest instead in improved public transport with new bridge tariffs to reward vehicle sharing and to endorse the Prime Minister’s declaration that “we cannot simply build more and more roads, particularly when the evidence suggests that traffic quickly grows to fill any new capacity.”

2. The Public Petitions Committee (PPC) considered the petition at its meeting on 23 October 2007 and agreed to refer it to the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee as part of its scrutiny of this issue. The relevant extract of the Official Report from the PPC meeting is attached at Annexe A of this covering note.

3. Members will note that the PPC, in referring the petition to the Committee, did not undertake any action in relation to the petition.

Replacement Forth crossing

4. As members are aware, in February 2007 the previous Administration announced its intention to build a replacement Forth crossing following reports on the condition of the existing Forth Road Bridge.

5. The Forth Replacement Crossing Study is part of the current Scottish Government’s strategic review of Scotland’s transport requirements from 2012 onwards and in August 2007, the Scottish Government undertook a series of public information exhibitions on the proposals for a replacement Forth crossing.

6. At its meeting on 11 September, the Minister provided the Committee with further information on the consultation exercise and following this, the Cabinet Secretary confirmed at the meeting on 2 October that the Scottish Government is currently reviewing the options for the Forth replacement crossing and that a statement will be made in Parliament on their favoured option.
7. In October 2007, Transport Scotland provided the Committee with an informal briefing on the options being considered in relation to the replacement Forth crossing the results of which should be known in due course.

8. In November 2007, in response to the Committee’s Stage 1 Report on the Abolition of Bridge Tolls (Scotland) Bill, the Minister stated that the Scottish Government will be announcing their preferences on the form of the replacement crossing in the near future.

9. Given the significance of this project, in its work programme the Committee agreed to closely monitor its development and to identify appropriate opportunities to engage with Ministers and relevant stakeholder organisations.

10. The Petitioner has submitted written evidence to the Committee in advance of this meeting from the Forthright Alliance which has been circulated with the papers. The Forthright Alliance is an umbrella group of national and local heritage, wildlife and environment groups. Members of the Alliance includes The Cockburn Association, Friends of the Earth Scotland and TRANSform Scotland.

Recommendation

11. The Committee is invited to:

- express a view on the main request in the petition that the Scottish Government should be urged to reconsider its decision to build a replacement Forth crossing.

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EXTRACTS FROM THE OFFICIAL REPORT OF PPC CONSIDERATION OF THE PETITION

Bridge Replacement (PE1064)

The Convener: PE1064, from Bruce Whitehead, on behalf of Queensferry Residents Against Another Forth Crossing, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to reconsider its decision to replace the Forth road bridge and to await pending studies on the feasibility of repairing it; to consider Forth Estuary Transport Authority's proposals for road user charging; to invest instead in improved public transport with new bridge tariffs to reward vehicle sharing; and to endorse the previous Prime Minister's declaration that

"we cannot simply build more and more roads, particularly when the evidence suggests that traffic quickly grows to fill any new capacity."

To date, the petition has attracted 206 signatures.

We have had a chat with the petitioner since PE1064 was lodged, and peace and love may have broken out on the issue. Petitioners may be unable to give oral evidence to Parliament, but we treat all petitions as being of equal worth, irrespective of whether the petitioner is sitting at the table or is unable to be called. We have to manage our time to ensure that we can deal with the number of petitions that are before us. Tricia Marwick and other members have pointed out that we are trying to deal with a substantial number of petitions. I make that point on the record, so that the petitioner may understand the process. The committee treats every petition with absolute seriousness and wants to explore the issues that it throws up, so that we can decide how best to deal with it.

I invite members to comment on the petition. Robin Harper has spoken about the issue previously, so I will leave him until the end.

Rhoda Grant: The Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee is looking into the issue and has visited the Forth bridge. It is important that we refer PE1064 to that committee and ask that it be dealt with as part of its in-depth inquiry. There is little point in our gathering information on the issue when the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee can include it in its findings.

The Convener: Robin, I presume that that is what you are going to comment on.

Robin Harper: Indeed. If you want six reasons for sending PE1064 to the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee, I can give them to you. They are from the National Trust for Scotland's submission—the ink is hardly dry on it—to Transport Scotland's consultation. The reasons are as follows: the case for the additional crossing has yet to be made; climate change is the most important issue to consider; increasing road space for private cars conflicts with Government policy; major improvements to all forms of public transport are essential; we need greater clarity on the future of the existing road bridge—we simply do not know what is happening with that yet; and the corridor C tunnel options could have unacceptable environmental impacts. Those are six cogent reasons why the discussion should be continued and the petition considered by the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee.

Tricia Marwick: It will not surprise the convener to hear that I disagree with PE1064 for a number of reasons. Nonetheless, the matter will be considered by the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee as part of its scrutiny of the proposal for a new
crossing and it is entirely appropriate that the petition be sent to that committee so that it can form part of its consideration.

The Convener: That is the appropriate course of action, given the thoroughness with which the issue needs to be explored. The Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee has a big responsibility. The proposal is controversial, irrespective of its progress through different Governments, and the debate needs to be aired clearly at that committee. If what Rhoda Grant says about a visit to the bridge is accurate—as I presume it is—that indicates that the issue will be scrutinised seriously. We should recommend that the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee deal with PE1064. To reassure the petitioner, I expect the members of that committee to interrogate the issue rigorously, irrespective of their starting positions. Other members—perhaps even members of this committee—will articulate their views on the issue to the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee when appropriate and when they can.

I thank committee members for their agreement on that.
Submission from the Petitioner – 15 November 2007

FORTHRIGHT ALLIANCE - POSITION STATEMENT, OCT 07

Since the ForthRight Alliance was formed it has successfully defeated several lobbying attempts to build a new Forth crossing. However, in the aftermath of the 2007 election the bandwagon for a second road crossing has gained new momentum with the support of the media, most politicians and a sometimes misinformed public. The recent consultation exercise demonstrated that any new crossing is likely to be additional and not a replacement.

We have re-constituted the ForthRight Alliance because we believe that Ministers' promises to examine all options have not been fulfilled. In particular, the preliminary cable repair studies published by FETA in June 2007 show that the road bridge can be repaired if de-humidification fails to arrest corrosion, and if necessary without ANY closures. In addition, related issues such as the potential diversion of traffic via the new Kincardine bridge, and the expansion of rail passenger and freight services, have not been adequately considered.

For these reasons we have drawn up the following campaign points for the revival of the ForthRight Alliance campaign:

1) The existing Forth Road Bridge is not falling down. It can be refurbished to last for its designed life of 120 years [1].

2) It has now been shown that the existing bridge can be repaired by 2016 without closing it [2].

3) An additional bridge cannot be built before 2016. If there is a weight limit on the existing bridge from 2013 a new bridge cannot be built before refurbishment of the existing one is completed.

4) Spending £1500 million [3] on refurbishing the existing bridge and a new bridge is profligate. The existing bridge can be repaired without closure if necessary, and in our view should be repaired [2].

5) Additional road capacity will encourage even more unsustainable travel. People locked into this will then blame politicians for ever-worsening congestion.

6) The economy of Fife is not automatically boosted by additional road capacity, especially if this results in slower traffic speeds and clogged roads.

7) It is misleading to hold a public consultation exercise (forthreplacementcrossing.com) when close analysis shows that the crossing is likely to be additional, not a replacement [4].
8) The Forthright Alliance says ministers should now re-consider all options in the light of FETA reports showing that cable repair is possible without closing the bridge.

Notes:

[1] FETA - Feasibility Study for the Replacement (or Augmentation) of the Main Cables of the Forth Road Bridge - Preliminary Findings - 1/6/07 - Section 6.1.

[2] Above report. Sections 5.1 to 5.3. Duration of work 5.5 to 7 years.

[3] £1500 million at 2006 prices, according to statements in the summer of 2007. The figure at 2016 prices is likely to be £2500 million. *John Swinney has recently increased this estimate to £3bn

[4] Transport Scotland - Forth Replacement Crossing Study - Report 5 – Executive Summary - undated - does not mention demolishing the existing bridge at all. It only mentions using it alongside the "replacement" bridge