



Dragons Den on Transport Solutions for Scotland: Getting Scotland to Work

Scottish National Party Autumn 2009 Conference

Overview

The Centre for Scottish Public Policy (CSPP) held a fringe event at the SNP Autumn 2009 Conference in Inverness on the future prospects for the country's transportation. Entitled 'Transport Solutions for Scotland: Getting Scotland to Work', the event took the form of the popular television series, *Dragons Den*, in which five key stakeholders in Scottish transportation presented their proposals to the Dragons.

Chaired by Ross Martin, Policy Director for CSPP, the event displayed the diversity of transport initiatives open to Scotland. Presentations included telecommuting solutions, high speed rail, an automated transport system for Glasgow, modernisation of Glasgow's subway system and developing and promoting cycling solutions in Scotland.

Transport Solutions

- **A Home-working Revolution that Tackles Climate Change Without Leaving the House!**

The event began with Steve Gillies of BT offering Scotland a way to confront the issue of Climate Change by radically overhauling the working environment of the public sector. Gillies argued that a national telework programme would save the public purse up to £5 million over a 5-year period.

Gillies considered that a typical healthcare worker could spend up to 20 per cent of his or her time commuting to work, another 20 per cent with clients, and a further 20 per cent consulting with colleagues and doing general administration.

With the right infrastructure, technology and security (approximately £1,000 per worker), public sector workers would be able to work remotely, not only saving half of their current time on travel, but also developing a suitable and sustainable work life balance to meet their needs. Gillies also drew on examples from North America which has seen growing popularity in telecommuting. He pointed to a case study by the US multinational, Cisco Systems, which showed that investing in telecommuting increased productivity by up to 20 per cent.

Among the Dragons, however, the verdict was less than enthusiastic. Notable was Scott McIntosh who was quick to question the costs of implementing such a programme, particularly in terms of the physical start-up costs pertaining to developing a workplace environment within the home. He was also sceptical about the benefits that teleconferencing offered over face-to-face meetings which were in his opinion more productive and personable. This mood was prevalent among the Dragons with the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change, Stewart Stevenson MSP questioning the costs involved in implementing such a programme.

Scott McIntosh x	Mike Connelly x	Stewart Stevenson x	Grant Thomas x
---------------------	--------------------	------------------------	-------------------

- **High Speed Rail Line**

Putting forward his proposal for high speed rail, Graham Bell of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce said that the time had come to turn the ‘aspiration’ of high speed rail into ‘inspiration’. Focusing on commuting patterns between central Scotland and central London, Bell highlighted that today up to 1 million people commute by either rail or road, while a further 6 million people commute by air.

Not only would high speed rail take 3.5 million people out of airports and save up to £1 billion in time, it would also dramatically reduce carbon emissions. With the costs of building a high speed rail line in Britain expected to be up to £30 billion, Bell suggested that the cost of incorporating Scotland into the wider UK proposal could realistically see costs rise by a further £8 billion over 20 years.

He believed that the onus is on Scotland to ensure that it is included in the construction and development of a high speed rail. Bell also advocated the proposal that the line would split at the border ensuring that that both Edinburgh and Glasgow would be similarly served.

The Dragons were equally enthusiastic, but with some caveats. Minister Stevenson though persuaded was particularly concerned about the costs involved. Scott McIntosh, on the other hand highlighted the fact that a number of studies had been done on the issue of high speed rail in the UK and the question now needed to be asked as to how this would be delivered. High speed rail for McIntosh had to be part of an integrated transport system and while it has the support of both the public and the private sectors he argued that without the involvement of the private sector such a project could not be delivered.

Scott McIntosh ✓	Mike Connelly ✓	Stewart Stevenson ✓	Grant Thomas ✓
---------------------	--------------------	------------------------	-------------------

- **CAT 2014 – A Commonwealth Legacy**

Keeping with the public transport theme Peter Weightman of Siemens outlined CAT 2014, an automated Transit Solution for Glasgow ahead of the 20th Commonwealth Games to be held in the city in 2014. Weightman suggested that the project would play an important role in the development of public transport in Glasgow’s East End ahead of the Games.

He added that not only would the system be an important contribution to the Clyde Gateway, but was expandable and could be delivered with minimal disruption compared to other projects. Highlighting the problems facing the construction of Edinburgh Trams, Weightman, argued that such a project

would not face similar disruptions because it would be built around the utilisation of the city’s disused railway lines.

Mike Connelly of tie ltd was very supportive of the proposal, referring to the important contribution the project could make to the Clyde Gateway scheme. Minster Stevenson was also supportive of the project, but ever aware of the costs involved in delivering it.

On the other hand Scott McIntosh was guarded in his support. Underlining his view that the development of Glasgow had been ‘disastrous’ over the past 40 years, McIntosh pointed out that Glasgow had just become another ‘Detroit’. While acknowledging the need to develop Glasgow’s End East he was sceptical about the proposal, believing the project needed a more Northern focus.

Scott McIntosh x	Mike Connelly ✓	Stewart Stevenson ✓	Grant Thomas ✓
---------------------	--------------------	------------------------	-------------------

- **Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT): Subway Modernisation**

Staying with Glasgow, Councillor Alistair Watson of Glasgow City Council and Chair of SPT put forward his proposal for upgrading Glasgow’s subway system to meet the ‘challenges of the 21st century’. Councillor Watson stressed the importance of an integrated transport system for Glasgow and sought to illustrate the value of upgrading Glasgow’s current infrastructure. He was also keen to highlight that the project would be financially viable with some of the project being self-funded.

There was much enthusiasm for the project among the Dragons. Minister Stevenson stressed the ‘value’ afforded to such a project which could significantly cut existing operating costs, improve peak frequency and ‘reduce Glasgow’s carbon footprint’.

Councillor Grant Thomas of Glasgow City Council was equally supportive of the project, but citing major international cities such as Hong Kong and Toronto as examples, he argued that there needed to be better planning surrounding the development of the public transport system. In this respect Councillor Grant suggested that facilitating development around the main subway stations was one possible option.

Scott McIntosh was less supportive of his fellow dragon, arguing that there was not as much potential as Councillor Grant suggested since Glasgow is much smaller than either Hong Kong or Toronto. He also questioned the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing subway, particularly in terms of its off-peak and weekend frequency.

Scott McIntosh ✓	Mike Connelly ✓	Stewart Stevenson ✓	Grant Thomas ✓
---------------------	--------------------	------------------------	-------------------

- **The Business Case for Cycling**

Finally Paul Tetlaw of Transform Scotland offered a transport solution for Scotland from the perspective of a cyclist. Tetlaw suggested that in Scotland 40 per cent of journeys could be done by bike or foot. He offered the example of Copenhagen where 37 per cent of journeys are done by bicycle with projections of up to 50 per cent by 2015.

Tetlaw questioned whether Scotland wanted its cities to mirror Northern Europe or the US. He added that not only would cycling be beneficial to the environment and people's health, it would reduce congestion and 'wean us away from oil'.

Directing 10 per cent of transport investment into cycling, Tetlaw suggested, would prevent the need for draconian measures to be introduced at a later stage due to the consequences of climate change or oil shortages.

Among the Dragons there was support for promoting cycling, however such support was half-hearted. Scott McIntosh was particularly bullish in his comments, suggesting the externalities of body odour would be costly. Would this mean that employers would have to provide showering facilities for their employees?

Scott McIntosh x	Mike Connelly x	Stewart Stevenson ✓	Grant Thomas ✓
---------------------	--------------------	------------------------	-------------------

Stephen Meredith
October 2009