

Points to ponder for COP26 delegates as they sample Scotland's transport

A lot of what they say will be good, but they may find roads across Scotland busy but public transport still empty, says **John Yellowlees**



As delegates prepare to assemble at COP26 in Glasgow this November, it is to be hoped that at least a few of them find the time to investigate the transport priorities of the country that they are visiting. They may encounter a few interesting talking-points.

Of course, a lot of what they will see is good, with for example passenger security protected by extensive networks of online CCTV with Help Points. As tourists, they will be encouraged to enjoy interaction with locals by using public transport rather than being confined to bespoke operations that are for visitors alone.

All across Scotland, they will find evidence of how our highway network has caught up with the quality of road infrastructure elsewhere, with provision of estuarial crossings from the Forth and Tay in the 1960s and many Highland crossings in the 1980s and 1990s. However they may be surprised to note that in Climate Emergency we are persisting with roadbuilding, including City Deal projects such as the new Clyde bridge replacing the Yoker ferry, and dualling the A9 and A96 while the parallel railways remain largely single-track and with little freight because the loops are of insufficient length for modern trains. And if they spot either of the canals that traverse our country, they will find a complete dearth of freight vessels.

They may observe gaps on some shop shelves and consider how sustainable an economy can be with major imbalances between the supply of HGV drivers and the unmet demands from a transport sector which has relied on drivers from other European countries for many years.

Eyebrows may be raised when they find that many of the flights at Scotland's main airports are to and from London, a journey that should be within rail's grasp. Visiting ports, they may be surprised at the absence of direct links with the Continent including Scandi-

navia. When the delegates sample our urban transport, they may notice the limited use of smartcards, with several operators having their own card rather than a single inter-available one. Those from cities in say North America and Australia may be surprised to find that we still charge for city-centre transport at all when at home they may have become used to it as the norm.

Except in Edinburgh, they will search in vain for the light rail networks that are the norm elsewhere, and in Glasgow they may be puzzled to learn that since becoming the world's third-oldest in 1896 the Subway has never grown. They will see new developments, and may wonder what contributions from developers make towards the running costs of public transport.

Electric cars will be visible, but not in the numbers perhaps found back home, and they may wonder that the Scottish Government prefers promoting a public network of charging-points rather than working with networks of filling stations and supermarkets to develop their networks.

Any who venture to our more rural parts may wonder why Road Equivalent Tariff was allowed to promote islanders taking their cars with them to the cities. And they may encounter the filth left behind by tourists in campervans for whom initiatives like the North Coast 500 have provided no mechanism on funding facilities for overnight stays.

Of course they may find roads busy but public transport still empty and wonder at the sanity of the prolonged messaging that said during a Climate Emergency that in a pandemic going by private car was safer. It is to be hoped that when they head home after COP26, delegates will take fond memories of Glasgow hospitality and of Scottish transport icons such as the Forth Bridge. They may also have a few points to ponder.

John Yellowlees, Scottish chair, CLT



Committed to the



RHASS supporting sustainability and innovation to ensure a future for Scotland's rural communities, writes **Alan Laidlaw**

Contrary to what people may think about the agricultural sector in the UK, farmers are among those at the forefront of sustainable change. Indeed, they have to be – farming is intrinsically linked to the wellbeing of the land, with a healthy environment essential to our food production systems.

The Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland (RHASS) was founded over 200 years ago, and in that time the world has seen huge amounts of environmental change. Committed to ensuring that future generations can continue to live and work in Scotland's rural communities, RHASS supports sustainable practices and helps advance innovative thinking in the sector.

The Royal Highland Show, the Society's flagship event, is an important, if not the most important, annual meeting place for farmers in Scotland and beyond.

The Show provides a forum for farmers to discuss new ways of working, share best practice and discover new solutions that will help them to farm to the benefit of both their business and the land.

The RHASS Technical Innovation Awards are a key part of RHASS's charitable remit and recognise the new products and inventions that are helping to develop the sector.

The award entries are truly heartening each year, as we witness first-hand the incredible designs that are helping to revolutionise the industry; whether that's a filter which reduces food waste caused by potato peels or an environmentally efficient grain drying system.

But sustainability isn't just about being green, it's also about ensuring that we build an industry that can meet

the demands of tomorrow. Young people are the key changemakers of the future, so it's essential they are supported and encouraged to pursue careers in the agri-sector.

One of the ways RHASS does this is through a series of awards and grants, focused on giving young people opportunities they wouldn't usually have had access to, like overseas projects and attending top conferences. One invites applications from ambitious young people from or based in Scotland wishing to attend the Oxford Farming Conference, while another awards funding for a prestigious Nuffield Farming Scholarship.

The Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs (SAYFC) is another organisation that the Society works closely with to cultivate young leaders. In recent years, RHASS has helped fund a study trip to California, and every year provides access to SAYFC members to the Royal Highland Show.

Looking back along the years, RHASS has a long history of supporting innovative ideas that have helped advance the sector. RHASS were pioneers at the time in funding scientific research and the furtherment of veterinary studies through the patronage of, among others, The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies.

More recently, the Society has supported the development of progressive wheat breeding programmes and studies into regenerative agriculture. The claims surrounding the ecological impact of Britain's farmers have been unfairly levelled against the industry in recent years.

Take the immediate debate around CO2; because of rising energy prices, manufacture of fertiliser products in the UK has been stopped. In some peo-



ple's view this is a good thing because of the reduction of emissions, however, the CO2 produced as a by-product of fertiliser is essential for a number of medical procedures, food preservation and other uses that are vital to our daily functioning as a country.

The question is not whether to eat meat or not – the discussion must centre instead on how we ensure agriculture and closely aligned trades are best placed to ensure the sustainability of

future of farming

our nation's food supply, and delivering it in the most holistic fashion possible.

Events like the Highland Show and the awards and grants provided by RHASS help prompt change, encourage the farming community to bring the environment to the forefront of their thinking, and, ultimately, help shape a sustainable sector.

Alan Laidlaw, Chief Executive of the Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland

↑ RHASS is encouraging the farming community to bring the environment to the forefront of their thinking.



integrate their business and environmental, social and governance (ESG) strategies to support broader environmental and societal goals.

The pandemic has also brought family businesses together, with older generations stepping back in to provide counsel and experience, and younger generations sought for a fresh perspective. We have observed an increase in family conversations, on several governance and succession-related questions that are being accelerated as business opportunities unfold in entirely new directions.

When it comes to succession planning, family businesses will be aware of continued anticipation of capital gains tax and inheritance tax reform, which could have a significant bearing on future decision making for family businesses.

KPMG is proud to be sponsoring Family Business United's Scottish Family Business Road Trip 2021 in partnership with Schroder's Personal Wealth. We'll be visiting family businesses across Scotland to hear how their resilience has allowed them to weather the pandemic storm by adapting and diversifying. Stops on the #ScottishFamilyBizRoadTrip include well known family firms such as Arnold Clark and Graham's Family Dairy – with the team travelling the length and

breadth of the country to meet a broad cross section of the family business community.

Scotland's family businesses have tackled the challenges of Covid-19 better than most. By showing incredible resilience, agility and adaptability in the past 18 months, it will come as no surprise to watch as they emerge even stronger. **Chris Smith, family office and private client tax director, KPMG**



RSPB Scotland is asking for bold action from Holyrood

To achieve what is needed for wildlife there must be collaboration between national and local government working across all sectors, says **Esmé Clelland**



Whether it's birdwatching from the kitchen window, spinning along a leafy cycle path or visiting a local nature reserve, in tough times nature provides a unique and valuable therapy.

However, wildlife is under threat and climate change is part of the problem. With the UN Climate Conference (COP26) rapidly approaching, the Scottish Government's commitment to tackle the nature and climate emergency will be tested this autumn, with a public consultation and parliamentary scrutiny of their draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4).

The Scottish Government describes NPF4 as 'a long-term plan for Scotland that sets out where development and infrastructure is needed to support sustainable and inclusive growth'. NPF4 will be one of the most important plans of the coming decade, guiding decision-makers by setting out priorities for development, including how nature and climate should be considered, where development should go and what Scotland's towns, cities and countryside should be like. NPF4 will look up-to and beyond the 2045 net-zero emissions target and commitments to protect 30 percent of land and seas for nature by 2030. It needs to set strong foundations to support this transition to a net zero, nature positive Scotland.

NPF4 will be driven by the overarching goal of addressing climate change, however, we cannot forget the nature crisis is inextricably linked to this. In Scotland we are seeing declines in the numbers, spread and variety of animals and plants. Scotland has met only nine of the 20 Aichi biodiversity 2020 targets signed up to in order to halt these losses, with

significant pressures on biodiversity remaining.

The Scottish Government recently called on parties to the upcoming United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in China in 2022, to "take strong and bold actions to bring about transformative change... in order to halt biodiversity loss". This is encouraging, but systemic change is needed now if change is to be delivered.

To contribute to resolving these challenges, RSPB Scotland and Scottish Environment Link has called for NPF4 to include a Climate and Nature Network as a national priority. The network would help guide investment in nature restoration by identifying links between our most precious and protected places for wildlife, where new habitat can be created or enhanced.

For instance, connecting areas of nature rich peat bog by restoring degraded peatland between sites allows wildlife to travel between them, increasing the resilience and diversity of species. Healthy peatlands also soak up and store carbon, contributing toward net-zero targets. The network would benefit people, provide jobs and could help naturally manage issues such the risk of increasingly severe floods and droughts.

To achieve what is needed, there must be collaboration between national and local government working across all sectors, including planning, farming and forestry.

RSPB Scotland is asking for a bold NPF4 that fully commits to playing its part in addressing the nature and climate emergency and creates places rich in wonder and beauty we can all benefit from.

Esmé Clelland, Senior Conservation Planner, RSPB Scotland



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