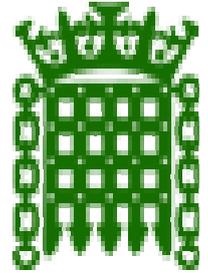




**All Party Parliamentary  
Light Rail Group**

House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA  
Light Rail & Trams, Affordable & Sustainable Transport

*"The past we inherit, the future we build ourselves"*



*"TramTrain does it Greener and Cheaper on lightly used railway lines and in the streets"*

**Wednesday, 24th February 2016**

**Chairman: Greg Mulholland MP**

**Speakers:**

**The Right Honourable Jenny Randerson, Baroness Randerson of Roath Park**

**Peter Cushing  
Metrolink Director, Transport for Greater Manchester**

**Paul Rowen  
Former Lib/Dem MP and inaugural Chairman of the APPLRG, TramForward**

**Greg Mulholland** welcomed the audience to the meeting and introduced the speakers.

**Peter Cushing**

The talk was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation.

Peter Cushing said that the conurbation of Greater Manchester is one of the fastest growing cities in Europe and an economic powerhouse for the North and Metrolink plays a big part in that. Transport for Greater Manchester has a 2040 strategy that has been developed over the last 18 months the most important feature of which is developing world class connections for long term sustainability. He outlined the expansion of Metrolink since 2008 and the currently developing Second City Crossing and Trafford projects. He stressed the development of connectivity with heavy rail and bus services, with bus interchanges at Bury, Rochdale and Wythenshaw for example. Future plans will further extend these links.

There are many points at which passengers from across the North of England can connect with Metrolink services. Metrolink connects residential areas, including many relatively deprived areas and areas of low car-ownership, with areas with a high density of employment opportunities.

Opening new light rail lines has caused a significant reduction in journey times across the city from the tram journeys themselves and from the reduction in car traffic, which has also had a significant impact on air quality and health.

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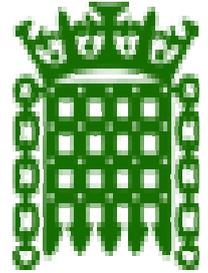
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There has been a big increase in event traffic on Metrolink, football matches, concerts, etc., with heavy flows to venues from both city centre and tram-served suburbs as well as from further afield via intermodal interchanges or park-and-ride.

So Metrolink is providing connectivity not only within Greater Manchester but allowing people from outside easier access to the whole city.

The new Trafford Park route will serve an area with relatively few residents but with a very high density of employment opportunities. It will allow those from other parts of the city to access these jobs.

### Questions

**Andrew Haldane** (Northwest Region Liberal Democrats) asked about ease of construction of the Trafford Park line.

**Peter Cushing** replied that although it was a relatively short extension and one would think building a tram line through an industrial area would be fairly straight forward, there were considerable difficulties.

**Susan Perriam** (Smart Specialisation) asked how Manchester had managed to progress its tram network without substantial government financial support.

**Peter Cushing** replied that a transport fund had been set up and money borrowed to develop the tram network. Metrolink pays for itself and takes no subsidy. Fare box revenue pays for operational costs and repays the borrowing for the extensions.

**Tim Kendell** (Independent Consultant) asked whether car-ownership was reduced when a new tramline was opened.

**Peter Cushing** said that car-ownership did not reduce but car usage did. Over time this may result in the reduction of the number of households with second cars.

**John Parry** (Parry People Movers) asked if there had been any thought of using lighter rail transport to extend beyond the point where large trams became uneconomic.

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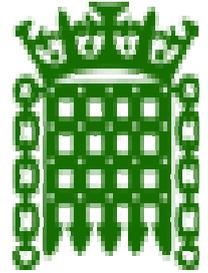
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**Peter Cushing** replied that with a network that pays for itself it is important that any further extensions must be financially viable. However, alternative ways of expanding the network, including use of a lighter type of vehicle, are being looked at.

**Emma Doherty** (SNC Lavalin). asked how Metrolink determined the correct price level for its tickets.

**Peter Cushing** replied that ticket prices are set by a Transport for Greater Manchester committee and reviewed annually. Operational and borrowing costs have to be covered but prices have not been increased for two years and with patronage growing so fast it is difficult to argue that the tickets are not value for money.

**Jim Harkins** (Light Rail (UK)) asked that, given the current promotion of Connectivity for the North and the interest of Warrington in improving its links with Manchester and Liverpool, what role there was for Metrolink in going West.

**Peter Cushing** replied that this would not be a pure Metrolink solution but was potentially TramTrain, which could be run by Metrolink or the local heavy rail operator. TramTrain solutions for areas closer than Warrington, such as Marple, are already being looked at. TramTrain is seen as the means of serving more distant communities while still providing connections to the city centre.

He agreed with Jim Harkins that TramTrain could also provide connections to park-and-ride sites on the M6.

**Greg Mulholland** said that Leeds looked enviously at Manchester Metrolink and he hoped an APPLRG visit to Metrolink could be arranged. The decision on the NGT trolleybus in Leeds was expected soon and could be a "no", in which case would a tram or TramTrain network for Leeds-Bradford be a viable proposition?

**Peter Cushing** felt it was a great shame that it had not happened previously but that it could be a viable proposition. If Birmingham-Wolverhampton can work, why not Leeds-Bradford?

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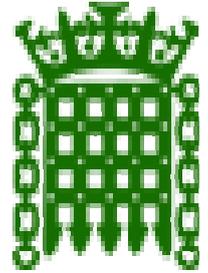
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### Paul Rowen

The talk was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation.

Paul Rowen began by reviewing the achievements during the five years of the last Parliament, much of it under Norman Baker as light rail minister. First, the launch of "Green light for light rail" and the removal of the marking down of light rail schemes by the Treasury for reducing car usage and therefore Treasury income, and establishing the view of light rail as a positive force, getting people out of their cars and reducing pollution.

One recommendation that has not been implemented is that concerning the need for mass repositioning of utilities at a cost largely borne by the light rail scheme. During this period a number of extensions were agreed and all of the eight light rail systems in the UK have gone through schemes for extension or replacement.

What of new schemes? Edinburgh opened, despite controversy, and the Scottish Government and Edinburgh Council are now pressing ahead with further extension.

This shows that, once people get a light rail system, they like it and want more.

Another major advance was the setting up of UKTram, not without early resistance from certain groups and individuals. When Manchester started, light rail was a new industry. All the previously existing expertise had gone.

We now have a body of knowledge and expertise with people who have now worked in the industry for several years and the importance of UKTram is in bringing that body of knowledge into one place so that people who are looking at new schemes are not reinventing the wheel.

Importantly, it gives the industry one voice.

Another development is the TramTrain trial, although this has taken far too long to appraise something which they have been doing on the continent for ages. But, nevertheless, it is now happening.

The number of people travelling on light rail, on just eight systems, compared with the falling numbers using bus, is significant.

The Transport Focus tram survey, now in its third year, shows that, compared with the other two modes of public transport, people prefer, when they have an option, to go by tram.

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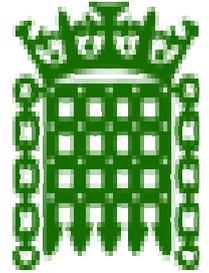
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Now for the future opportunities. Firstly devolution. The Scottish Government is now embracing light rail, with discussions, not just in Edinburgh, but in Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen. Light rail is now being talked about in South Wales. After the Assembly elections in May there will be a new administration and a new transport minister, which will give Wales a great opportunity to develop a system.

Further devolution is occurring in England with elected mayors. In France, in particular, it has been elected mayors who have led the way in developing light rail systems. Only last night on the news, the Mayor of Liverpool was talking about spending £3 billion to get HS2 to Liverpool. Rail North and the Northern Powerhouse offer a tremendous opportunity to get improved connectivity.

The Infrastructure Commission, a far-sighted Labour Party policy the Chancellor has copied and which is led by Andrew Adonis, will decide, and it will be announced in the budget, what the spending is going to be for the next five years.

The Northern Powerhouse is putting in a bid for that and, hopefully, the North will get a lot more than in the past, giving a real opportunity to plan infrastructure projects over the longer term and for the more expensive projects to get off the ground.

Air pollution is another important topic that has taken centre stage and it is now accepted that there are 40,000 deaths per year that are a direct result of air pollution, at a cost to the economy of about £20 billion per year.

The fact that the UK Government has lost a battle in the Supreme Court and must comply with the agreed pollution levels, means that something has to be done, and while the report that was published yesterday talks about temporary bans of vehicles outside schools etc., running vehicles on alternated days and using more electric buses, it is going to need other, greener solutions.

The worst polluted areas are predominantly in the big urban centres. By 2020 (or 2025 for London) policies must be in place to do something about the pollution level. Light rail, while not the only solution, can do much to bring down the unacceptable levels of pollution.

The £58 million TramTrain project, although now delayed by yet another twelve months, is a tremendous opportunity to link separate urban areas. There are many lines within and around Manchester, for example, where that could be developed. Adding short tramway lines to take TramTrains into towns and cities will confer a huge benefit.

When the Metrolink line to Rochdale was agreed, the Department for Transport were not willing to fund the extension from the station to the town centre. It is a nonsense to expect people to walk a mile up a steep hill to reach the station and Greater Manchester paid for the extension and patronage is now way above what was anticipated because the tram is going to where people are and is providing connectivity. TramTrain has huge possibilities for the future.

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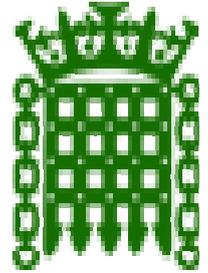
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HS2 will provide another opportunity. Passenger Focus has been running a passenger panel for HS2 asking people what they want to see with a new railway being built from scratch and they are very keen to see that what is provided is designed for today.

They want to be able to get to the station with their luggage quickly, safely and easily. If you look at the positions of some of the stations, it is a golden opportunity for TramTrain to provide that connection.

Studies are already taking place in Nottingham and Derby for an extension of the existing NET line to the HS2 station at Toton and on to Derby and in Birmingham with an extension to the HS2 station.

We owe a lot to Geoff Inskip for his efforts in getting people together to create UKTram, which is going to be a really powerful body. Their £3 million Low-Impact Light Rail competition is to encourage innovations to bring down the cost of light rail.

There is also a huge opportunity for ultra-light rail to develop

Smart ticketing is essential in getting people to switch to public transport. At present tram travel is included in tickets for rail journeys that involve a cross-Manchester connection but, with the new franchise, Arriva North is extending this to allow through ticketing from Metrolink stations to destinations elsewhere in the country. Talks are underway to extend this to Nottingham, Sheffield and Newcastle.

On the Isle of Wight, where the existing ex-London tube trains are life-expired, consultants have recommended consideration of a light rail replacement. It is up to us to make the case for light rail here and for new systems in other places. Certainly cities with existing tram systems will see them grow.

### Questions.

**John Parry** said he had only recently appreciated just how massive the tram industry used to be with 150 towns and cities with tram fleets of more than ten vehicles. Today's fleets are much smaller with, excluding DLR and Tyne and Wear, only about 275 vehicles in the whole country, about 1% of the total in the early 1930s.

Given that the rail network is now full to overflowing, should we not be shouting a lot louder for more trams and tramways?

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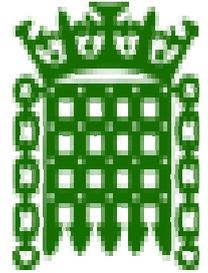
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**Paul Rowen** replied that in the 1930s trams began to disappear largely because of the availability of cheap, reliable buses. We should not look to the past but to the future with modern cities where people can move about easily and that is where light rail will deliver.

**Greg Mulholland** made a plea for assistance with making the case for light rail in Leeds, particularly the link to Leeds-Bradford Airport..

**Ian Ambrose** (Network Rail) said that NR had worked with West Yorkshire PTE about ten years ago and had made the case for a light rail (TramTrain) link to the airport and that he would be very happy to revisit this with Greg.

**Tim Kendell** said that he had been looking at South Wales and saw a great deal of opportunity for light rail but he had been disappointed with the reception of his idea of replacing the underused Cardiff Bay rail link with a tram line along Lloyd George Avenue.

**Paul Rowen** said that there would be a new Welsh transport minister in May which might be an opportunity for some revisited thinking.

**Jim Harkins** felt that as an industry we were not making a sufficiently robust case on air pollution. How can we get this problem in front of the politicians?

**Paul Rowen** thought that the possibility of legal action, if targets were not met, would concentrate the politicians' minds. Restrictions on motor vehicles are only a limited answer and less-polluting vehicles, including trams, are a major way forward. It is up to our industry to make that case

**Jim Harkins** asked how we could pressure the powers-that-be to adopt light rail.

**Paul Rowen** looked to the devolved administrations and the elected mayors to put money into pollution reduction in their cities.

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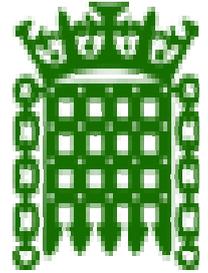
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### Baroness Randerson of Roath Park

Baroness Randerson spoke about the Liberal Democrats' light rail policy. The party's core values in relation to transport require a measurement of how green it is and how customer-focused. Firstly, air quality must be tackled, secondly noise reduction, noise also has considerable health impacts, and finally reduction of traffic congestion, which is a mounting problem with increased urbanisation.

Those are the tests that a transport scheme has to pass in order to be acceptable from the environmental point of view.

People will always want to travel, despite the increased popularity of working from home, and they want to travel conveniently, comfortably and quickly. In order to lure people out of their cars, public transport has to achieve all of these.

That is not the way things are working at the moment. Recent figures show that train and bus travel has fallen outside the south of England. The reason given for this is that there are more out-of-town offices, which are difficult to serve by public transport. That is an important issue that needs to be addressed.

Liberal Democrat priorities are firstly to improve public transport services in general by improving their frequency and reach. Frequency should be turn-up-and-go in urban areas and a useable bus survives in rural areas.

As well as being frequent, the service has to be reliable, which is a problem with increasing congestion. Smart ticketing is another aspect of convenience for passengers, intermodal transfer must be easy, season tickets must be flexible.

There is strong emphasis in Lib Dem policy on less polluting public transport. Improved public transport will not, however, do away with the private car, so the policy is for further development of low-emission vehicles.

Finally it is policy to establish more low-emission zones in cities, not only to reduce pollution overall but to promote cycling.

Where does light rail fit into all this? The Lib Dem party is a firm supporter of light rail, it is clean, it is quiet, it is quick, because it is less prone to delays, it attracts a new and different sort of customer who would not consider bus travel, it can access city centres with minimum disruption, and it is cheaper than heavy rail.

There are, however, problems with the length of time it takes to plan and construct. Access to Cardiff Bay was discussed earlier, but there have been discussions about this and about trams and light rail since the 1980s and nothing has happened.

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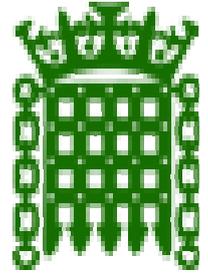




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There needs to be full local authority commitment both financial and political and, in the present climate of government spending cuts, it is difficult to see how local authorities will be able to give these schemes high priority. Some cities that have installed tram systems have found the process incredibly lengthy and complicated but it does not have to be like that.

We do need to go through a proper planning process but it is only some rails in the road where a bus would otherwise go – the whole process is unnecessarily complex and as a result more expensive than buses for local authorities to deliver.

Looking ahead, we probably need legislative change to give local authorities more power to control things. There is a Buses Bill coming up and that could surely be adapted to make life easier for light rail.

Environmentally, light rail is an absolute winner, although it has competition from an increasing range of low-polluting buses, and it looks more and more attractive with increasing urbanisation and traffic congestion. It is not a solution to every problem but it has a firm and lasting place in the public transport of the future.

TramTrain, though the trial period has been too long, offers great flexibility.

In Cardiff much has been spoken of the South Wales Metro, although it is not always clear what is meant by "metro". At one extreme it merely a general sprucing up of the current heavy rail services with a few more bus feeders but there are great possibilities for light rail not least in the linking of Queen Street and Central stations in Cardiff. Queen Street is too congested to accommodate additional heavy rail services and cannot, economically or practically, be enlarged. It remains to be seen whether the Welsh government can summon up enough political will to deliver.

### Questions

**John Parry** spoke about the scrapping of the "bendy-buses" in Swansea – an innovation which had proved unsuitable in practice. He queried the current practice of running very long single-deck trams, when double-deck vehicles would be more economical of road space. Also local political rivalries had often worked against worthy light rail schemes.

He and Tim Kendell are part of a UKTram group looking at the barriers preventing the return of the tram and will be considering these two topics.

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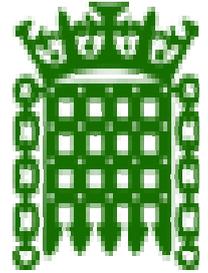
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**Baroness Randerson** took the point about use of road space but felt she should defend politicians who only reflected the wishes of the electorate. There is always local dissatisfaction over allocation of public finances. Giving local government more control would help, particularly strategic control of public transport.

**Tim Kendell** said that rail operators and many local transport operators were using ITSO smart ticketing but that different schemes were not inter-operable due to differences with the back-office processes.

While these processes are run by individual operators this is unlikely to change as there is no advantage to them to put in the additional effort to enable their system to talk to others. What is needed is a centralised clearing house system to enable inter-operability between different transport systems and also with the banks to allow use of contactless bank cards. What views did Baroness Randerson have on what should be done?

**Baroness Randerson** replied that she had asked many questions on this topic, particularly on the SEFT scheme on which the government spent £37 million and which was 70% complete but was now being left to the market to complete via individual franchises. This will take a long time and requires franchises to be very carefully worded to ensure that inter-operable systems result. The whole thing is likely to be overtaken by changes in the technology which is moving towards contactless systems.

The devolution of transport powers will make it easier to force commercial transport operators to move towards common ticketing.

**Jim Harkins** said that light rail and trams bring in votes. What are the Lib Dems going to do to take advantage of this?

**Baroness Randerson** replied that she had been in a meeting that morning that had highlighted the need for the party to update its transport policy.

The aim is to set out a clear and simple set of principles which can be applied in local situations and make it easier to set up local campaigns. There has to be realism as regards costs but light rail, although more expensive than bus, is cheaper than heavy rail solutions and real progress should be achievable.

**Greg Mulholland** thanked the speakers. He called for topics that could be raised as questions in Parliament or ideas for further consideration by the Group.

The meeting closed at 16:00.

These meetings are by invitation only, where MPs, Stakeholders etc., within the Light Rail industry and invited members of the Public will have a chance to discuss debate and raise questions concerning Light Rail

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