

Cross-Party Group on Sustainable Transport

01 October 2025, 18:00

Topic: Last Mile Deliveries: how do we move goods sustainably at street level?

Present

MSPs

Graham Simpson MSP (Convener, chairing)

Sarah Boyack MSP (Deputy Convenor)

John Mason MSP (Deputy Convenor)

Invited guests

Guest speaker: Oliver Lord, (Clean Cities Campaign)

Guest speaker: Emma Bayliss-Chan, (Royal Mail)

Guest speaker: Toby Hiles, (Grid Smarter Cities)

Non-MSP Group Members

In-person

Aaron McHale (individual)

Adam Kesby (TransiT Heriot-Watt University)

Alexander Foote (Heriot-Watt University)

Allison Cosgrove (Rail Future)

Andrew Mcfarlane (Sweco UK)

Brendan Hill (Light Mobility Association UK)

Colin Howden (Transform Scotland)

Emine Zehra Akgun (Heriot-Watt University)

Harald Tobermann (Leith Central Community Council)

Ian Budd (Friends of the Far North Line)

Jingjun Li (Heriot-Watt University)

Katherine Scott (Transform Scotland)

Mark Shields (Sustrans)

Robert MacBean (Sustrans Scotland)

Rosiaina Browning (Transform Scotland)

Stewart Leighton (Scottish Association for Public Transport)

Abigail Fletcher (Graham Simpson MSP office)

Online

Alexandra Herdman (Logistics UK)

Aghdas Badiee (Heriot-Watt University)
Augustijn van Gaalen (Edinburgh Bus User Group)
Chris Day (Edinburgh Bus User Group)
Chris Thompson (Living Streets Scotland)
Craig McAulay (Arup)
Craig Laws (Enterprise)
Dave du Feu (Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign)
David Hansen (individual)
Gus Russell (Tweed Valley Railway Campaign)
Ian Wainwright (Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport)
Irene Boctor (Whistl)
Jonathan Cowie (Napier TRI)
Keith Fiskien (South East Scotland of Transport Partnership)
Ken Haig (Levenmouth Rail Campaign (LMRC))
Kimberley Ewan (Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership (Tactran))
Margaret Douglas (Public Health Scotland)
Martin Bignell (Rail Freight Group)
Mike Harrison (individual)
Peter Ovenstone (Heritage Railway Association)
Richard Gale (Highland Council)

Apologies

Mark Ruskell MSP (Deputy Convenor)
Paul Tetlaw (Transform Scotland)
Jim Harkins (Light Rail UK Group)
George King (The City of Edinburgh Council)

Welcome and introductions

Graham Simpson MSP, Convener of the CPG, opened the meeting at 18:10. He covered the agenda for the evening and apologies before introducing new members and guest speakers:

Accepted new members

Sweco UK, Light Association UK, Scotland's Regeneration Forum (SRF), Rail Freight Group (RFG).

Presentations

AGENDA ITEM 1: Oliver Lord, Clean Cities campaign

Oliver introduced the Clean Cities Campaign and its mission to build public support for cleaner, healthier cities by advocating for the electrification of road transport. He highlighted key statistics on road miles driven in Scotland, associated carbon emissions, and the gap between electric car and van sales. He noted that since 'dieselgate' in 2015, one million additional diesel vans have been added to UK roads. Oliver referenced successful European policies (particularly in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden) such as zero-emission zones for freight, which support the gradual transition to electric vans and trucks. In the Netherlands, 18 cities currently implement such zones, with a goal for all new vehicles to be electric by 2030. He also cited London's progress in cutting emissions from last-mile deliveries, including a doubling in cargo bike use over the past two years, driven by improved cycling infrastructure.

AGENDA ITEM 2: Emma Bayliss-Chan, Royal Mail

Emma introduced her role at Royal Mail and provided an overview of the organisation's presence in the UK, including delivery to 32 million addresses - 3 million in Scotland. In Scotland, RM employs 11,000 people, operates four mail centres, 167 delivery offices, and maintains 11,000 postboxes. The Scottish fleet includes 4,500 vehicles, 300 of which are electric; six delivery offices operate fully electric van fleets. She explained RM's 'last mile' delivery (the final and most visible part of the delivery journey) and the 'feet on the street' model, using 80,000 postal workers to achieve the lowest carbon emissions per parcel in the UK. Emma outlined RM's 2040 goal to transition all delivery routes to zero-emission modes. Since 2021, total emissions have reduced by 25%, and the electric vehicle fleet has expanded. Over 22,000 staff have been trained in charging management, and more than a third of vehicle technicians are now skilled in electric van servicing. She also highlighted innovation trials, including drone deliveries in rural areas like Orkney, hydrogen fuel cell e-cargo bikes in Aberdeen, and solar-powered postboxes. These new postboxes allow the public to post parcels (up to shoebox size) without visiting a post office.

AGENDS ITEM 3: Toby Hiles, Grid Smarter Cities

Toby introduced Grid Smarter Cities' kerbside booking platform, which enables local authorities to digitally manage kerbside space. The platform allows freight and delivery operators to book virtual loading bays in advance, improving access and efficiency while reducing congestion and environmental impact. He likened the system to AirBnB for loading bays, offering timed access for specific vehicles in restricted areas. The platform supports more efficient logistics - vehicles can arrive, complete tasks, and leave quickly. Integrated features include EV charging ('chageries'), allowing users to book, park, charge, and pay in a single transaction. A

“rogue vehicle” button allows users to report unauthorised vehicles occupying reserved spaces, alerting enforcement teams. The system also collects usage data to identify patterns and problem areas, enabling more effective enforcement. Toby highlighted Tesco as an example, where the platform reduced delivery windows from four hours to two and a half, and allowed for fewer, larger vehicle trips. Grid Smarter Cities recently won at the British Parking Awards for this booking platform.

AGENDA ITEM 4: Q&A Discussion

Sarah Boyack MSP, asked: what is the incentive for this innovation?

Emma replied that Royal Mail's motivation is largely driven by its major commercial clients, many of whom have set ambitious decarbonisation targets.

Oliver replied that fleet operators have privately acknowledged to him that such policy initiatives helped them make a stronger internal business case for investment in cleaner technologies.

Toby replied that failed or missed deliveries, especially common in London due to restricted access, can cost operators over £500 per incident which prompts the need for policy and cost-cutting measures.

Dave du Feu, Spokes, asked: what prompted the increase in e-bikes and cargo bikes?

Oliver replied that the uptake of cargo bikes in London is still quite low but increasing due in part to the congestion charge.

Emma replied that RM have one cargo bike operating in Scotland and 10 total in the UK, however they are starting their first large-scale trial early next year. Emma stated that RM is focused on reliability and delivering parcels on time six days a week, which doesn't allow for much innovation.

Ian Budd, Friends of the Far North Line, asked: until a few years the RM had a fleet of electric trains but these got scrapped, are you planning in the future to go back to electric railways instead of lorries?

Emma replied the electric rail freight routes got scrapped due to economic concerns. In the meantime RM have made efforts to decarbonise their lorry fleet.

Martin Bignell, Rail Freight Group, asked Emma to get in touch. He then observed that trucks have been demonised in urban spaces which has led to an increase in smaller vans doing more frequent trips. He asked if cycle couriers are the solution? He noted that we need to understand the differentiation between large companies and small home deliveries - he questioned if consolidated deliveries could be the solution? These questions were left unanswered as observations.

Chris Thompson, Living Streets Scotland, asked: should mail be consolidated at local delivery offices where people can pick it up in-person?

Emma replied that the RM already has a very similar design but there is room and more opportunities for consolidation.

Oliver suggested creating incentives to collect parcels and a charge to dis-incentivise home deliveries.

Graham reminded the audience of the importance of bearing in mind individual differences, as someone who is housebound cannot collect parcels.

Allison Cosgrove, Rail Future, asked Toby: how would renting out kerbside effect taxis, presumably there's an extra cost into this. Taxis are very often operated by a single owner driver. Aimed at Oliver: how relevant are electric vans to huge areas of Scotland which are very affected by cold?

Toby said the platform is intended for the users to reserve and pay for the electric charger, not kerbspace - so taxis won't be charged.

Oliver replied: We must act today how we can, and act tomorrow once technology changes. For rural areas we must wait for technological improvement of vehicles.

Aaron McHale (individual): Policies live or die based on public perceptions and how they are communicated, are there lessons we can learn from looking abroad?

Oliver answered: there needs to be a comprehensive communication package for policies like this to get through to businesses in time.

Richard Gale, Highland Council: There used to be a postbus that ran around the Highlands which reduced the carbon footprint of deliveries - is there any possibility that this service could be reintroduced?

Emma said she would follow up with colleagues about the postbus and reflected on the importance of looking to the past for innovation.

Emine Zehra Akgun, Heriot-Watt: public policy should address urban last mile deliveries. But how is it going to happen in your ideal world?

Oliver replied: The Netherlands are a good example here. They set their climate agreement in 2019, where they enabled city municipal authorities to define the size of the zero emission freight area, to define who is exempt from these schemes, how it works, what type of vehicle standards etc.

Ian Wainwright, Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport asked about localised solutions.

Colin Howden, Transform Scotland, replied: the government is working on a new climate change plan, it will be useful for the materials from this session to be sent to the government in order for them to consider these issues.

Chris Day, Edinburgh Bus User Group, asked Toby: how will these bookings be enforced in cities or towns when parking on double-yellow lines in Edinburgh is still an issue?

Toby replied: local authorities and their enforcement officers are responsible for managing issues (e.g. for when people stay in booked bays too long).

Jingjun Li, Heriot-Watt, stated: I lived in Belgium and Netherlands for more than six years, technology cannot solve everything - for example in Norway people switched to EV but as a result vehicles were used more often than before. We need to shift people's behaviour and delivery preferences, not just technology, if we want to hit environmental goals.

Emma replied that RM load vehicles to absolute capacity in order to do less trips, they do data-driven analytics for trips and they are expanding out-of-home delivery networks using lockers. They recently announced they had bought a 49% stake in Collect Plus.

Andrew Mcfarlane, Sweco UK, asked about the potential uses of kinetic energy. Emma replied she would ask her colleagues.

Keith Fiskien, South East Scotland of Transport Partnership: we have done a lot of work on sustainable logistics with DPD and RM. Have previously looked at how business models can be taken forward on a larger scale. Fiskien offered to share his email for people to get in touch.

Brendan Hill, Light Mobility Association UK, asked about cargo bikes and stressed the need for a step change in leadership and investment.

Oliver replied that public consultation is essential and cargo bikes are an industrial opportunity for the UK.

7:37 Graham wrapped up

Date for subsequent meetings and close of meeting

Graham confirmed that the next meeting will be Tue Dec 2nd, on UK Supply Chains. The final meeting will be in February, with a focus on international supply chains, the exact date to be decided.

Graham thanked the speakers and attendees for joining and contributing. Graham closed the meeting at 19:48.

Minutes

Draft minutes prepared by Katherine Scott (Transform Scotland) on 08.10.25.