

PE1115/L



Alison Wilson
Assistant Clerk
Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH EH99 1SP

14th June 2010

Dear Ms Watson

PETITION PE1115

Thank you for forwarding Transport Scotland's response to the Report made on behalf of COBRA by AECOM.

We note Transport Scotland's position appears to be maintaining the status quo, based on the principle of improving existing rail lines and stations first. We contend that decisions on improving rail provision should really be driven by a robust business case that considers all options, especially with the ever-increasing squeeze on public expenditure. As shown by the AECOM report, the case for reopening Blackford Station is substantially stronger than improving the existing facilities at Gleneagles and will provide for greater utilisation and return on investment at no additional cost to the TERS proposal.

We realise there are significant costs associated with rail projects but contend that opening Blackford would provide a station which would achieve optimum utilisation of the current network for the same, or less, cost as upgrading the existing Gleneagles Station, and will provide significantly greater social, environmental and economic benefits, whilst at the same time providing all the additional services as instanced in the AECOM Report.

Investment to improve disabled access at existing rail stations via the "Access for All" programme has, we understand, been cut by 51%. This will directly impinge upon the business case to enhance Gleneagles Station where there is no disabled access at present.

We would also remind Transport Scotland that the 2014 Ryder Cup at Gleneagles will attract worldwide interest and re-opening Blackford Station will provide an effective solution to resolving the transport logistics associated with a high influx of visitors, tourists, media and trade during the event as well as leaving a longstanding legacy from this signature event. We would be interested to learn further about the transport planning associated with this global event and the key role that improved rail provision could make.

Finally, we would like to seek clear timescales associated with the next stages of work between Transport Scotland and TACTRAN, an outline of the approach and key activities involved and clarity on the timescales for publication of revised recommendations.

COBRA are fully committed to working with TACTRAN and Transport Scotland, supported by the extensive cross-party political support for our campaign, and would be very keen to participate in the next stages.

Yours sincerely

JENNIFER GORDON
Secretary
COBRA