



**PE1115/S**

Eileen Martin  
Committee Assistant  
Public Petitions Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
EDINBURGH EH99 1SP

20<sup>th</sup> December 2010

Dear Ms Martin

**PETITION PE1115**

Thank you for forwarding the recent responses from TACTRAN, VisitScotland and Perth & Kinross Council. COBRA appreciates the timely and detailed replies from each organisation to the queries raised at the Petitions Committee on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

Our comments relating to each response are outlined below.

**Perth & Kinross Council**

We note the bodies represented on the 2014 Ryder Cup Transport Planning Sub-Group and the work in progress on a detailed Event Transport Plan. We are interested in how the potential rail passenger numbers have been determined and in the specific considerations relating to rail transport planning for this signature event. We are also interested to understand why TACTRAN, as the regional transport partnership body, do not appear to be directly represented on the Transport Sub-Group.

COBRA would like to submit its views and suggestions on the benefits of re-opening Blackford Station for the 2014 Ryder Cup directly to the Sub-Group as well as contribute directly to consultation on the rail transport elements of the detailed plan before any decisions are finalised.

We would like to ask for the relevant contact details to be provided.

**VisitScotland**

In their response, VisitScotland recognise the constraints posed by the existing rail infrastructure at Gleneagles and the consequent effect this will have on transport planning for the 2014 Ryder Cup. However, it is very concerning to note that VisitScotland state that (at Gleneagles) "....there may not be any significant structural changes to the station or approach roads." Further, it is alarming to assume that the existing, wholly inadequate, arrangements for disabled passengers could satisfy requirements for the event.

We would contend that a global event such as The Ryder Cup requires a coherent, integrated and efficient transport plan, including the adequate provision and necessary infrastructure improvements for public transport access. Investing the comparatively modest sum involved in re-opening Blackford Station would provide a key component of this provision, would overcome the recognised constraints that already exist and leave a

longstanding legacy that will benefit local communities, visitors and golf tourists for generations to come. Set against the expected economic benefits of the 2014 Ryder Cup, this investment would be money very well spent.

We would urge VisitScotland to take a more proactive role with respect to the wider and long term benefits to Scottish tourism presented by re-opening Blackford station in time for the 2014 Ryder Cup.

## **TACTRAN**

We are fully aware of the TACTRAN position with regard to the re-opening of Blackford Station. We would like to reiterate that the independent transport study conducted by AECOM in April 2010 clearly recommended that re-opening Blackford Station is a superior option to enhancing Gleneagles station across the majority of appraisal criteria. This conclusion directly contests with that derived by TACTRAN in the Tayside Estuary Rail Study (TERS) yet, to our continued disappointment and frustration, does not appear to influence any change in the original decision. We continue to urge TACTRAN and Transport Scotland to re-consider the original decision. We especially encourage Transport Scotland to give the AECOM study full consideration when reviewing the TERS service and station proposals and before any decisions are finalised.

Nonetheless, we are pleased to note that TACTRAN do recognise the very significant limitations of the existing Gleneagles station including road access, modal integration and disability compliance. We continue to emphasise that even if the proposed £3.78m investment in enhancing Gleneagles were to go ahead, it would still leave a station that is isolated from the communities it is intended to serve, with significant security and personal safety concerns and consequent under-utilisation. Further, the lead times associated with compulsory land acquisition mean that it is highly unlikely any of the works could be concluded in time for the 2014 Ryder Cup.

However, we do agree with TACTRAN that the 2014 Ryder Cup presents a major opportunity to significantly improve the rail journey experience for visitors and the potential to leave a longstanding legacy for a limited upfront investment. Re-opening Blackford Station is the optimal solution and can easily be delivered in time for the event.

In relation to costs, we would like to reiterate that the AECOM study estimated re-opening Blackford station at £3m-£3.5m, some £0.9m-£1.4m less than the TERS Study and lower than the estimated cost of enhancing Gleneagles. Further, we do not agree that platform lengths at Blackford would have to be extended (and baseline costs further increased) as there are numerous examples in Scotland (e.g. Falkirk Grahamston) and elsewhere in the UK, of stations with reduced platform lengths where passengers are requested to move to the middle of the train at such stops.

Clearly, TACTRAN's position is still reliant on decisions relating to the TERS report. We share the frustrations that it is now some 16 months since the report was published, with limited apparent progress or consideration on funding specific infrastructure elements. However, TACTRAN appear to be confident that Access for All funding still exists until 2015 and that Gleneagles should be a priority.

We would like a specific response from Transport Scotland in relation to Access for All funding for Gleneagles station. The Transport Scotland website states that "...we will be consulting with the rail industry and disabled groups in 2008 on how to allocate the funding for the years 2009-2015." At this stage, no stations are listed for improvements in this timescale.

Further, we strongly encourage Transport Scotland to re-consider the initial decision relating to re-opening Blackford Station in the TERS report, to take full account of the AECOM report and to consider the impact and opportunity of the 2014 Ryder Cup.

In the current economic climate and with a continued squeeze on public expenditure, we strongly contend that re-opening Blackford Station will provide the optimal return on investment in the short, medium and long term. Before any decisions on the TERS study are finalised, we strongly urge Transport Scotland and TACTRAN to re-consider the logic and perceived business case associated with enhancing the existing Gleneagles station against the investment and benefits realisation associated with Blackford.

We continue to be confused, frustrated and disappointed that the focus still seems to be on investing in existing infrastructure, with an outcome that will have ongoing limitations that constrain utilisation and patronage. By investing in Blackford, the investment would be in a solution that has a stronger business case, that will satisfy a wider range of social, environmental and economic benefits and that will provide a key transport solution in time for the 2014 Ryder Cup.

Finally, we would also like to draw the Committee's attention to the submission from the Perth & Kinross Access Group - attached overleaf. They state that "*Blackford Station offers far greater prospects for workable disabled access solutions- both from a physically disabled (including ambulant disabled) and sensory impaired point of view- than its closest neighbour Gleneagles Station does. Gleneagles Station is a listed building and therefore has severe restrictions on what accessible features it can install. It is also more isolated which has a limiting effect on how much use people with sensory impairments can make of it.*

We would like to ask how, in general, Transport Scotland liase with the Mobility and Access Committee Scotland (MACS) on planning for accessible rail transport facilities, what level of priority these considerations are given in overall station appraisal, and specifically, how MACS are consulted on particular rail transport infrastructure projects such as Blackford/Gleneagles.

We trust that our comments are helpful and strongly urge the Petitions Committee to continue our petition. In particular, COBRA would like the opportunity to influence the work on detailed travel planning for The Ryder Cup, to further lobby Transport Scotland and their deliberations of the TERS study and to scrutinise the funding and commissioning timescales associated with Gleneagles.

If you require any further information or clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Neil Gaunt  
Chair  
COBRA

25<sup>th</sup> October to EPetitions Committee  
Subject: Petition to re open Blackford Station  
From: "Raine du Puy" <[rainedupuy@pkag.org.uk](mailto:rainedupuy@pkag.org.uk)>

Dear Mr Cochrane and Ms Martin

Perth and Kinross Access Group is Perthshire's regional access panel, representing the interests of disabled people and their carers across the Region on access related issues.

I have been asked to write on behalf of the Group to express their ardent support to the campaign to have Blackford Station re-opened.

Blackford Station offers far greater prospects for workable disabled access solutions- both from a physically disabled (including ambulant disabled) and sensory impaired point of view- than its closest neighbour Gleneagles Station does. Gleneagles Station is a listed building and therefore has severe restrictions on what accessible features it can install. It is also more isolated which has a limiting effect on how much use people with sensory impairments can make of it.

We feel sure Blackford Station's re-opening would have beneficial effects by encouraging greater social inclusion and independence, economic participation and work prospects for disabled people and that its existence would dramatically reduce road use by our client group. Given Perthshire's ageing demographic and the certainty that the number of people with mobility difficulties and disabilities is going to increase over the next two generations, coupled with the need to offer greener travel solutions than the car, we would argue that this would be money well spent.

Please ensure that our name is included in the petition to have Blackford Station reopened.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely  
Raine Du Puy

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