



**PE1115/N**

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

10<sup>th</sup> October 2010

Dear Ms Wilson,

**PETITION PE1115  
COBRA RESPONSE TO TRANSPORT SCOTLAND LETTER OF 01/09/2010**

The Campaign to Open Blackford Railway-station Again (COBRA) welcomes and acknowledges the most recent response from Transport Scotland to our campaign.

We fully understand the strategic planning considerations relating to rail investment and the need for a structured appraisal process. We also appreciate the pressure exerted by competing priorities over what is a long term investment period.

However, we are disappointed to hear that the current hierarchy for investment is targeted on current stations and services in precedence to new or reopened stations. In the current economic climate and with the anticipated constraints on government spending for the foreseeable future, the focus should be on the comparative business cases associated with the options. We would strongly urge the Transport Minister to reconsider this policy position, not least in time for the 2014-2019 investment period. Most of the existing rail stations and infrastructure date back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century - since then, population growth, wider transport infrastructure developments, changing social and environmental demands mean that investing in the past may no longer be relevant, or financially prudent, to meet current and future rail demands.

We believe, and have strongly demonstrated in the independent business case relating to the reopening of Blackford station, that the same level of investment proposed for Gleneagles could be directed to Blackford and deliver significantly increased economic, social and environmental benefits. Not only that, the return on investment could be realised in the short term as commissioning of the station would be largely unrestricted and benefit from existing station infrastructure.

With the imminent announcement of the Spending Review, and inevitable focus on efficiency and savings, we understand that this will place even greater constraints on transport investment. However, the prominence of The Ryder Cup in 2014 will place Scotland and the Blackford/Gleneagles area in particular under global media scrutiny.

As Transport Scotland recognise, significant transport infrastructure improvements and provisions will have to be made to handle the anticipated 250,000 visitors. The modest £3m investment associated with reopening Blackford station should be viewed against the estimated £100m The Ryder Cup will bring to Scotland's economy. As well as providing a long term and sustainable legacy for the area, there is also the safeguard that the reputational damage of poor infrastructure we have recently seen with the Commonwealth Games will be avoided.

I would like to reiterate that 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 all future activities associated with rail and The Ryder Cup investment in the area.

Yours sincerely

JENNIFER GORDON  
Secretary  
COBRA