



**PE1115/U**

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

31<sup>st</sup> January 2011

Dear Ms Martin

### PETITION PE1115

Thank you for forwarding the recent response from Frances Duffy, Director of the Rail Directorate, Transport Scotland.

COBRA is very disappointed to note that, at this stage, further consideration to re-opening Blackford Station will be considered as part of the 2014-19 Control Period.

As we have repeatedly argued, the Ryder Cup in 2014 presents a major opportunity to re-open the station and provide direct benefits not only as an integral part of the transport plan for this signature event, but also as a long term legacy that improves access to the rail infrastructure across South Perthshire.

Given that investment in the transport infrastructure will be essential to the success of the 2014 Ryder Cup we would strongly argue that, from a rail perspective, the best use of public funds at this time is to direct early investment towards station re-opening and in doing so, also achieving completion of a crucial rail intervention in this area. Waiting until the next Control Period to consider station re-opening will miss a vital opportunity for this economy of scale to be achieved.

We are very surprised to note that work on transport planning for the event seems to be at such an early stage and that no programme of works or provisional costings have been derived. One of the key lessons learned at recent Ryder Cup events has been that transport planning should be undertaken at a very early stage and if not addressed properly will have a direct impact on the economic value of hosting the event as well as reputational damage on an international scale.

Although it is stated that the Transport Plan for the event will take place iteratively over the next 3 years, this runs the very high risk of failing to identify and quantify the crucial investment needed in time to ensure that the commissioning work can be delivered for 2014. Consequently, COBRA would urge early development of the Transport Plan and repeats its offer to directly contribute as part of the working group.

The Ryder Cup event is second only to the Olympics and the World Cup and will contribute an estimated £100m to the Scottish economy. To efficiently transport c.200,000 visitors, it is already evident that improvements to the rail infrastructure in the Gleneagles area will be a vital component in the Ryder Cup Transport Plan and that this investment will be required within the current Control Period, ie within the next 2-3 years.

As shown in the independent transport study conducted by AECOM, re-opening Blackford Station is the most economic approach and could easily be delivered within this timescale.

Finally, we would like to thank the Committee, our supporters and all stakeholders who have contributed to the debate on our petition so far. We trust that our comments are helpful and strongly urge the Petitions Committee to continue our petition until transport planning for the Ryder Cup has advanced to the stage that decisions on rail infrastructure improvements have been reached.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Gaunt  
Chair  
COBRA