

PE1115/W



**ST MARGARETS
STIRLING STREET
BLACKFORD PH4 1QG**

Alison Wilson
Assistant Clerk
Public Petitions Committee
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

25th February 2011

Dear Ms Wilson,

PETITION PE1115

Thank you for forwarding the response of 17th February 2011 from Frances Duffy, Director of the Rail Directorate, Transport Scotland.

As you will be aware from the extensive correspondence we've had with the Petitions Committee over the last two years, COBRA is very aware of the current High Level Output Specification programme, the findings of the TERS study undertaken by TACTRAN and the timetable for development of the next HLOS.

We have made our position very clear throughout- the business case to re-open Blackford Station far outweighs the case for investing in an upgrade of Gleneagles Station. Our position is fully endorsed by the independent business case undertaken by AECOM transport consultants in 2010.

Despite repeated calls for a thorough response to the independent business case and for a re-appraisal of the TERS study findings in relationship to Blackford and Gleneagles, we have yet to receive the detailed feedback we would have expected from Transport Scotland and TACTRAN. Bureaucratic obfuscation appears to be getting in the way of business logic.

We fully understand that in the current economic climate investing in both stations is now very unlikely. This makes it more important than ever to ensure that any investment in the area optimises the potential return in relation to key social, environmental and economic criteria. Re-opening Blackford Station clearly stands out as the optimal investment on all such criteria.

As we have also repeatedly argued, re-opening the station will provide an integrally important part of the transport solution for the 2014 Ryder Cup. It is very clear that investment in the transport infrastructure, within the term of the existing HLOS programme, will be necessary and this is a fact of which TACTRAN and Transport Scotland need to take immediate cognisance.

The business case for Blackford Station re-opening clearly stands up with or without The Ryder Cup. If a holistic view is taken, then it is logical that investing in Blackford now will provide dual benefits to the local communities as well as to the global event. Surprisingly, there still does not appear to be a comprehensive transport plan for The Ryder Cup. It would be irresponsible of government if late recognition of the need for rail investment as part of this plan ended up with it being automatically directed to Gleneagles simply because the objective and thorough review of the TERS Study and our independent business case had not been made.

We repeat our call that this ePetition should remain open until the key issues relating to a comprehensive review of the TERS Study findings in relation to Blackford and Gleneagles and a clear picture of the transport planning needs for the 2014 Ryder Cup are resolved. In doing so, we and our widespread political, business and community supporters believe that this will clearly endorse re-opening Blackford Station as a matter of priority and ensuring this is incorporated into the current or, worst case, next HLOS programme.

As always, COBRA representatives are willing to participate in any further examination of the issues and contribute to any working groups involved.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Gaunt
Chair
COBRA