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TV personality Hislop backs station campaign

By Dave Lord

TV PERSONALITY Ian Hislop is supporting plans to re-open a Perthshire railway station.

Enthusiast Mr Hislop has backed COBRA (the Campaign to Open Blackford Railway Station Again) after presenting a programme on the devastating Beeching closures.

He is now urging Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson to heed the demands of campaigners who have been fighting a long battle in a bid to see the halt once again pressed into service.

Mr Hislop, Private Eye editor and a regular on the long-running TV quiz show Have I Got News For You, said he was "delighted" to support the project. The work of COBRA came to his attention he presented the recent BBC4 programme Off The Rails which examined the consequences of the 1963 Beeching cuts.

"I am delighted to offer my support to the Campaign to Open Blackford Railway-station Again," he said.

"Good luck to COBRA."

The campaign was raised in parliament last week and Mr Stevenson confirmed he was aware of the group and planned to meet local councillors to discuss COBRA's aims.

Perth MSP Roseanna Cunningham is delighted to see it apparently moving up the political agenda.

"It is clear that Stewart Stevenson is well aware of this campaign and it is very much 'on his radar'," she said.

"It is very welcome news, after many years of dismissal from previous administrations, that this government is apparently prepared to engage so positively in the process.

"There is a growing demand from commuters along the A9 between Perth and Dunblane for a better, more accessible service to cater for the current and future expected growth of the area."

South Perthshire MP Gordon Banks is similarly enthusiastic about the campaign.

"As the MP for Blackford I am strongly committed to seeing the return of rail passenger services to the area," he said.

"COBRA have done a terrific job in promoting their aims and objectives and I back their efforts 100%."

As support for the campaign grows, MEP John Purvis also had warm words.

"The substantial development taking place in and around Blackford and its position within commuting distance of Perth, Dundee, Stirling, Edinburgh and Glasgow, indicate that it would be socially, economically and environmentally desirable to provide this facility," he said.