



MINUTE OF COBRA OPEN MEETING MONDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER 2008-09-23 HELD AT HIGHLAND SPRING

PRESENT

COBRA Committee - Neil Gaunt (Chairman), Caroline Moore (Vice Chair) Jennifer Gordon (Secretary), Ann Gaunt (Treasurer), Alan Moore (IT), Richard Beith, John Law, Joan Moore, Sarah Shankland

Political representation - Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Richard Simpson MSP, Joan McEwen (representing Gordon Banks MP), Miles Briggs (representing Elizabeth Smith MSP).

27 Members of the Public

APOLOGIES

Gordon Banks MP; Elizabeth Smith MSP; Cllr Graham Houston, Stirling Council; Anne McGuire MP; Andrew Warrington, P&K Council; David Brown, Stirling & Clackmannanshire Councils; Robin Harper MSP; John Park MSP; Alec Green, Workman/Eaglesgate; Jamie Hepburn MSP;

1. **CHAIR'S WELCOME** - especially to all the politicians present. He also thanked Highland Spring/Chris Livingstone for the generous hospitality. He went on to draw attention to the two banners on display and thanked Eaglesgate Retail Village for their generous donation of £250 toward the production of these.

He also announced that COBRA was delighted to have secured Desmond Carrington, resident of Dunning and Radio 2 broadcaster as a Patron.

2. **APOLOGIES** - noted above

3. **MINUTE of MEETING on 3RD March 2008** - these were on display on the COBRA website - <http://www.cobra-blackford.org.uk/>

4. **PRESENTATION** by ERIC GUTHRIE, Director of Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership (TACTRAN). This presentation is on the website and also attached to this Minute.

Points discussed at conclusion of presentation:-

- It was thought, given the current 'credit crunch' more people would be opting for public transport, therefore account should be taken of this.
- Freight companies would be more keen to use rail.
- The balance between fast and semi/fast services would need to be examined.
- The question of who would pay for a station at Blackford was raised, with the paying for the new Alloa line being borne in mind. TERS Plus and P&K were involved in the local scoping plan, with an input from the environmental angle. There were many demands on transport money - Forth Bridge, Waverley line etc. Eric gave the figure of around £3m to open a new station.
- With regard to the STAG 2, due to be completed by March 2009, it was asked if this would contain a relatively detailed costing and it was thought it would have broad estimates.



- It was noted that the user figures for Alloa were grossly under-estimated and this, in addition to the growth of population in Perthshire, (one of the two biggest growth areas in Scotland) should be written into the STAG 2 considerations. Eric agreed these were important points.
- It was further noted that the infrastructure for Blackford was 'almost there' ie it would not be a totally new build like Alloa or Bridge of Allan. Therefore, the figure of £3m may well be too high. Anecdotal evidence followed on another re-opened station costing £3m.
- However, it was pointed out that Network Rail had, in 2006, costed a reopened Blackford Station to be in the region of £1.75m.
- Instances of temporary concrete/wooden platforms being used in Yorkshire until the station was proved to be viable were highlighted. Eric would look at this but thought any business case would have to stand up for 30 - 60 years.
- Signalling at Blackford was already scheduled for updating so this should not be part of the cost for a re-opened station but would make sense to tie in the reopening of the station with this work.
- The Ryder Cup at Gleneagles in 2014 was a major issue to be considered. Eric said that Mary Grant CE of Scotrail, was very much aware of this and was also supportive of a re-opened Blackford station.
- Mary Grant's assertion that 24 hours notice was far too long a time period for disabled users of Gleneagles to be required to give Scotrail was also mentioned.

Eric added that he and COBRA should keep each other in the loop of information. He was of the opinion that TERS Plus was the best vehicle for success at Blackford.

The Chair thanked Eric very much for such a full and informative presentation.

5. POLITICIANS' VIEWS

As the politicians had contributed in the presentation questions, Roseanna Cunningham spoke on their behalf by saying that COBRA had across the board support and if specific help was needed then it would be forthcoming.

6. HIGHLAND SPRING

Chris Livingstone said that at the June 2008 Blackford Community Council meeting, 10 year plans were unveiled about the increased production, new production hall, and also investigations into creating a rail siding in order to move some of their products by rail. It was envisaged that the increased production lines would be started early in 2009. Chris said she was really excited at the thought of the rail element. They had employed a company called Deltics Transport Consulting. The view was that a Non-Intrusive Cross-over System (NICS) could be implemented. This made sense, was cost effective with no excessive time delay and Highland spring would be eligible for 75% grant funding. Presently a feasibility study with relevant costings was being carried out. As well as the positive impact on the environment, reduction in the ever-increasing fuel costs would be of great benefit.

Eric said it was good that he/TERS was now aware of these plans. Assurance was given that any freight facilities would not have a negative impact on passenger infrastructure.

7. CHAIR'S REPORT

Neil gave an update on the TACTRAN meeting he had attended in Dundee and also the ScotRail Users forum in Stirling. He had attended a rights of Way society meeting and was impressed by the Transport Minister, Stewart Stevenson, not least because he had travelled to the meeting by train.



He drew the attention of those present to the fact that the Government had required Rail Track to reduce their charges.

8. SECRETARY'S REPORT

Jennifer said that after the March Open Meeting, and with help from Gordon Banks and Richard Simpson's offices (for which many thanks) she made contact with Robbie Clyde, Ryder Cup Project Director, Event Scotland with a view to opening a dialogue regarding access, especially for the physically disabled, during the Ryder Cup in 2014. The advice was to keep PKC in the loop during these early planning stages.

COBRA was contacted re the proposed change to parking at Dunblane Station - as a result members had a meeting with relevant personnel at Stirling Council.

In connection with an announcement from Leonard Cheshire Disability - Disabled Scots missing out over transport], Jennifer contacted Ryan McQuigg, Policy & Parliamentary Officer- Scotland, Leonard Cheshire Disability to put the case for Blackford Station. Email has been acknowledged by Mr McQuigg but as yet have not received any detailed response.

9. TREASURER'S REPORT

Ann said the COBRA balance was £401.76 - this did not include the £250.00 donation towards the display banners but as these cost £350.00 COBRA would need to pay the balance of £100.00. It was noted that Blackford Community Council had donated £100.00 towards planning permission for a COBRA sign adjacent to the level crossing. This was still in progress.

10. IT REPORT

Alan reported that the site was regularly updated with news, current events, updates on progress, Minutes of meetings etc. The website usage had a monthly average of about 500 visits. Work is ongoing on developing and re-developing the website content. Most recently the History pages have been updated to provide a comprehensive history of the development and decline of the railway station. This page includes historic images provided by the Blackford Historical Society. The Supporters page is being revamped to include more information on different types of support, recent media coverage and to download campaign information. He asked for any suggestions from those present.

Funding of the site was discussed - the annual cost is £70.00. Possible commercial sponsors for the site were discussed but it had previously been agreed that COBRA would not go down that line.

The Chair thanked Alan and Caroline for their work in the website and the display banners.

11. AOB

There being no other business, the Chair closed the meeting by thanking Eric for his presentation, all those present for attending and Highland Spring for their generous hospitality.