

The COBRA Story: The Campaign to Open Blackford Railway-station Again

Blackford Railway Station was opened in 1848 and closed in 1956. Today, passenger trains to and from Stirling, Perth and beyond pass through it every day, but they don't stop. COBRA wants the trains to stop again, and to stop on a regular basis.

Founded in 2002, COBRA is an active pressure group which has obtained the support of the residents of Blackford and the surrounding area, as well as local businesses and local councillors, MSPs, MPs and MEPs. The COBRA website can be viewed at www.cobra-blackford.org.uk and requests for information can be sent to info@cobra-blackford.org.uk

COBRA recently organised an e-petition to the Scottish Parliament which was first considered in January 2008. Following consultation with relevant organisations, including a further response from COBRA, the Petitions Committee debated the matter again in May 2008 and decided to keep the petition open for more information.

COBRA's efforts have been dedicated to raising the awareness of the benefits to the public that would result from a re-opened Blackford Station. TACTRAN, the Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership have developed a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for an improved Arbroath to Perth service which could be extended to Stirling or Glasgow. Blackford is included as 'a possible new station' under the Stirling and Glasgow option. Any such station re-opening has to be appraised using the Government's Strategic Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG). TACTRAN are currently preparing a brief for the STAG assessment.

The Ryder Cup comes to Gleneagles in 2014. A re-opened Blackford Station would be a considerable help to the local transport infrastructure at that time and ever after. For the population of Blackford, Strathallan and Strathearn, Blackford Station would be on the right side of the A9 and would be suitable for disabled rail-users as the site is flat and level



and could also provide space for an integrated bus-exchange. The site has a large reserve of railway-owned land for park-and-ride facilities suitable for approximately 100 cars, and would be adjacent to the existing signal box which is manned 24 hours per day hence providing a much greater degree of security for the travelling public. COBRA are in touch with Events Scotland regarding the Ryder Cup facilities.

A station at Blackford with a regular train service and a competitive fare structure would provide a significant benefit to travellers from Auchterarder, Crieff, Dunning and all over Strathearn and Strathallan. Benefits would also be felt at Dunblane where existing station parking is often swamped with car drivers from much further up the A9 than Auchterarder or Blackford. Any move which can reduce traffic on the A9 is of great environmental and public safety benefit.

Please contact www.cobra-blackford.org.uk for more information about the campaign.

