

20 May 2006

Mrs Zoé Tough
 Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
 TG.01
 Edinburgh
 EH99 1SP.

First ScotRail

Atrium Court
 50 Waterloo Street
 Glasgow
 G2 6HQ

www.firstscotrail.com

Dear Mrs Tough,

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1115

I am sorry that our first response to Mr David was not received. An amended version follows, this takes account of a slight change due to the extension of our Franchise.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on this petition.

I note that the specific petition appears to relate to public transport policy citing Blackford Railway station as a specific case. Obviously the policies of public bodies, who we seek to serve, are not a matter that it is appropriate for First ScotRail to comment on. I have presumed that you wish us to comment on the specific example of Blackford.

We deliver rail services as required by Scottish Ministers under the terms of a Franchise Agreement and have not been asked to investigate providing a service if Blackford station were reopened. For this reason we have not had cause to investigate the opportunities that the station may or may not offer. We can only comment in general terms on the operational issues that opening a station at Blackford would raise.

The station would be on a line we currently serve. Our commuter type services to Glasgow and Edinburgh terminate at Dunblane about 10 miles south of Blackford and could not currently serve Blackford station. To extend them to Blackford we would need to acquire additional rolling stock. The only regular service we operate, which passes Blackford, is the longer distance hourly service between Glasgow and Aberdeen. The recent agreement to extend the Franchise also includes an option for Scottish Ministers which would require us to operate an hourly service between Perth and Glasgow. If this option is exercised then this service could include calls at Blackford if the station is opened.

It has to be noted that the economics of stopping the Glasgow Aberdeen trains are not likely to be good. A call would add at least 3 minutes to the end to end journey time on a route where there are aspirations to reduce journey times.

We would recommend that any proposal to reopen Blackford Station should also include a proposal to make the investment necessary to extend the commuter services which currently terminate at Dunblane. This would also provide an opportunity to consider the merits of other campaigns to reopen stations on that route, especially Greenloaning.

Should Scottish Ministers require us to serve Blackford station either with existing trains or by extending services from Dunblane we would, as always, seek to deliver it in a cost effective manner to the standards required. We very much see ourselves as delivering services to the specification and requirements of Scottish Ministers and while we offer advice on the practical detail of service delivery and the detailed effects on our existing business of any timetable change, we are not equipped to research the economic benefits of new railway stations that we do not currently serve. This reply is therefore very much aimed at the practical aspects of delivering a service to Blackford rather than any cost vs. benefit aspects of opening a station there, which we do not feel qualified to comment on.

Yours sincerely



Steve Montgomery
Deputy Managing Director