



31st October 2014

David Stewart MSP
Convener
Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear David

Re: Public Petition PE 1506 on Glasgow Prestwick Airport

In response to Nicola Sturgeon's letter dated 30th September, The Robert Burns World Federation heartily supports Scottish Government's decision to purchase Glasgow Prestwick Airport thereby preventing its closure and safeguarding 1400 jobs. For all Burns supporters, at home and abroad, it is gratifying to see that the Scottish Government has not turned their back on this proposal.

Until we hear from senior management at the airport, as Ms Sturgeon has suggested, we cannot comment on their thoughts. However, the Burns Federation petition continues to gather support and signatures as does the Social Media site.

For purely commercial reasons, renaming the airport would immediately make it recognisable to a worldwide audience. Robert Burns is already a global brand and the airport could capitalise on this aspect.

The situation with Prestwick is unique and cannot really be compared with the London Gatwick, London Heathrow, London Stansted, London City names. They are, and always have been, associated with London. Until comparatively recently, Prestwick and Glasgow and Edinburgh were associated with these specific locations and in a previous life were Prestwick, Abbotsinch and Turnhouse.

A heady mix of Civic Pride and a soupcon of the non-combatant but nevertheless ever present Edinburgh v. Glasgow forced the City Fathers and others in both locations to rename their airports. For Prestwick to be subsumed in to Glasgow was perhaps a feather in the Glasgow cap but greatly diminished the status and recognition of Prestwick.

To have readily available the iconic name of Robert Burns, at no cost and immense gain, adds emphasis to the requirement to rename Prestwick. Incorporating Robert Burns would fulfil the need for a distinctly Scottish identity, utilise the Burns name, promote tourism and be a permanent reminder that this unique Scotsman is honoured in his own land by his own people.

A unique identity is required and the means of procuring and promoting this is available here and now. In-house airport themes, based on Burns, opens up vast possibilities but the foundation on which all that can be built is the simple expedient of changing the name.

As Jim Thomson said in our initial presentation to the Petitions Committee:

I think that this is a unique opportunity. Scotland has a great opportunity to say something to the world about who we are, what is important to us as a nation and what heritage, culture and history mean to the people of Scotland. I see it as a fantastic opportunity. It may well be passed up for all sorts of good, positive reasons — I would not be critical if that happened; I would just be disappointed.

It is more an issue for Scottish Parliament and how it wants Scotland to be seen, not only within Scotland but abroad. I suggest that, although the management team's views and ideas should be taken into consideration, the decision on the name of the airport lies with the Parliament.

Sometimes, you just know it's the right thing to do!

We look forward to your response in due course.

Kindest regards

Alison Tait
Chief Executive