Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill

Bill Number: SP Bill 54
Introduced on: 31 January 2006
Introduced by: Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport) (Private Bill)
Passed: 29 November 2006
Royal Assent: 15 January 2007

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Passage of the Bill

The Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill [SP Bill 54] was introduced in the Parliament on 31 January 2006. The 60 day period for objections ended on 3 April 2006, with 47 admissible objections lodged. The Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee was established and met for the first time on 14 March 2006. The Committee published its Preliminary Stage Report on 8 June 2006. The Parliament then debated the Bill at Preliminary Stage on 21 June 2006 and agreed (by a majority) the general principles of the Bill and that the Bill should proceed as a Private Bill. The Parliament also passed the Financial Resolution on the Bill.

Phase one of Consideration Stage began on 22 June 2006 and concluded on 30 October 2006 with the publication of the Consideration Stage Report. Phase two of Consideration Stage was concluded on 14 November 2006 when the Committee considered and agreed 35 amendments to the Bill. The Bill was passed following the Final Stage debate held on 29 November 2006 in which 118 members voted for the Bill and eight voted against.

Purpose and objectives of the Bill

The Bill authorises the construction of a double track electrified railway, approximately two kilometres long, from a point east of Paisley St James Station to a new station at Glasgow Airport. The Bill also authorises the upgrade and expansion of approximately nine miles of existing railway between Paisley St James Station and Glasgow Central Station. It also allows for works related to the construction and operation of the railway.

Provisions of the Bill

The Bill grants the promoter, and their successors, the powers to build the railway line as well as authorising the construction of other works associated with it. To this end the promoter is granted a power of compulsory purchase and the power to stop-up roads and footpaths where necessary.
Parliamentary consideration

While the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee supported the progress of the Bill from the Preliminary to Consideration stage they concluded that the business case for the scheme would be substantially improved if the Glasgow Crossrail scheme, which would link rail services from the north and east of Scotland with those from the south-west, were also constructed. In addition

Brian Monteith MSP, a member of the Committee, dissented from those parts of the Report which stated that the “The Committee supports the general principles of the Bill” and that “the Committee recommends to the Parliament that the general principles of the Bill be agreed to”.

Much of the evidence during the Consideration Stage of the Bill was heard by an independent assessor, Professor Hugh Begg. This was the first time an assessor had been used during the consideration of a Private Bill. No major amendments were made to the Bill at this Stage, although minor amendments were agreed and commitments given by the promoters to secure the upgrade of St James’ football pitches in Paisley and to reduce the hours during which construction of the line could be undertaken. The Committee also asked that the promoter investigate whether the hours of operation of the line could be extended to meet early/late flights.

Concerns were also raised during the Consideration Stage about the possible impact the proposed Edinburgh Airport Rail Link might have on passenger numbers, and therefore the economic viability, of the Glasgow scheme. The Transport Minister made several statements in oral and written evidence to emphasise that the impact of the Edinburgh project on the Glasgow scheme would be minimal.

Although no objections were upheld a number of changes were made to increase the mitigation provided to address the impact of constructing the rail link including the upgrading of the St James’ football pitches in Paisley and reducing the hours during which construction of the line could be undertaken.