

EDINBURGH AIRPORT RAIL LINK BILL COMMITTEE

Tuesday 18 April 2006

Session 2

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EDINBURGH AIRPORT RAIL LINK BILL COMMITTEE

1st Meeting 2006, Session 2

CONVENER

*Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP)

*Mr Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)

*Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Jane Sutherland

LOCATION

Committee Room 3

Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee

Tuesday 18 April 2006

[THE OLDEST COMMITTEE MEMBER *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

Interests

Christine Grahame (Oldest Committee Member): I was going to say that I am delighted to convene the first meeting of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee. However, I do not know whether I am that delighted, given that I am in the chair only in my capacity as the oldest committee member.

I welcome members, the press and the public to the meeting. I promise that, despite strictures, I will refer for the first and last time to the Borders rail link only in order to make the point that I hope that this committee does not have such an onerous task before it. I remind members to switch off mobile phones and pagers.

I invite members to make a declaration of any interests, which is a statutory requirement. I remind members that it would be advisable for them to err on the side of caution by declaring any interest that would prejudice or give the appearance of prejudicing their ability to participate in a disinterested manner in the committee's proceedings. I commend the use of the word disinterested, which is so often confused with uninterested, in the appropriate form.

Before I invite members to declare any interests, I note that standing orders also require them to declare that they will act impartially in their capacity as members of the committee and that they will base their decisions solely on the evidence and information that are provided to the committee. I ask each member to declare any interests for the record.

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): I have no specific interests to declare in respect of the bill. I mention briefly that in the past, both as a former councillor and as a member of the Parliament, I have indicated support for the general principle of having a rail link to Edinburgh airport, but not for any particular route, especially from Fife. I will consider the bill impartially and will base my decisions on it only on the evidence that is presented to the committee.

Christine Grahame: You have certainly erred fully on the side of caution.

Mr Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): I have no interests to declare. I undertake to act impartially when listening to the evidence that is put before the committee.

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): I ask members to bear with me. If members have read the promoter's memorandum, they will be aware that my name appears in appendix 8. Four or five months ago, before the introduction of the bill, tie Ltd provided me, as a Fife MSP, with a briefing on the EARL proposal and what tie perceived to be the benefits of the scheme. At the time, I noted that it was an interesting project but that, as with many things, the devil would be in the detail. Most of the contents of the briefing appear in the bill and its accompanying documents. Since the briefing, I have not entered into any correspondence or dialogue with the promoter or any other person in relation to the scheme. I retain an open mind on the scheme and, like all other members of the committee, will be informed by the evidence and information that is provided to us.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I know of no interests that I need to declare. I, too, will be impartial when considering the evidence.

Christine Grahame: I, too, declare that I will act impartially. Apart from the other railway that may link up to EARL and that I will not mention again, I have no interests to declare.

Convener

14:03

Christine Grahame: The second item on the agenda is the choice of a convener. The Parliament has agreed on a Parliamentary Bureau motion that the convener of the committee is to be chosen from the Labour Party and the deputy convener from the Conservative party. I invite a nomination for convener.

Mr Gordon: I nominate Scott Barrie.

Mr McGrigor: I second the nomination.

Scott Barrie was chosen as convener.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I declare that Scott Barrie is duly chosen as convener of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee and invite him to take the chair. That is my shortest stay as a convener yet, but there may be others. In the interests of decorum, we will swap seats.

The Convener (Scott Barrie): I would not want to be mistaken for the oldest committee member.

Christine Grahame: Worse things could happen.

The Convener: I thank members for electing me as convener of the committee. I will hold Christine Grahame to her promise not to mention that other railway throughout our proceedings.

Deputy Convener

14:04

The Convener: Agenda item 3 is the election of a deputy convener. As Christine Grahame said, it was decided on a Parliamentary Bureau motion that the deputy convener should be a member of the Conservative party. As Jamie McGrigor is the sole Conservative party member of the committee, is it agreed that he should act as deputy convener?

Mr Jamie McGrigor was chosen as deputy convener.

The Convener: Congratulations, Jamie.

Item in Private

14:05

The Convener: Item 4 on the agenda is consideration of whether to take the next item—on the committee's approach to preliminary stage—in private. In my view, given that the objection period does not finish until 15 May, on this occasion our discussions should take place in private. That will prevent any of our comments on our approach from being incorporated inadvertently into potential objections. However, I assure members that it is my intention that a summary of the decisions that we take today in private should be published as part of the formal minute of today's proceedings.

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Before we move on to item 5, I seek members' views on how we should approach any future request by other members of the Parliament, the public, objectors or organisations for individual meetings with any of us. As members are aware, it is important that each member of the committee not only acts impartially but is seen to act impartially. In my view, each of us should avoid any individual meetings with others outwith the committee, including members, to discuss the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill. I suggest that, given the importance of impartiality, the committee agrees that all approaches to us as individual members or as a committee should be referred to the committee clerk.

Members indicated agreement.

Christine Grahame: I have not previously been a member of a private bill committee. Is this the normal procedure? It does not apply to other committees, in which members are also expected to act with impartiality.

The Convener: The capacity in which members of a private bill committee act is different from that in which members of other committees act. We err on the side of caution, because we are acting as a quasi-judicial inquiry.

Christine Grahame: I was seeking clarity for the record. We are not setting a precedent for other committees.

The Convener: The committee does not have the power to infringe on what other committees do.

We have agreed to take item 5 in private. I thank those present for attending. I hope to see you again in the very near future.

14:07

Meeting continued in private until 14:57.

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