

EDINBURGH AIRPORT RAIL LINK BILL COMMITTEE

Tuesday 23 May 2006

Session 2

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EDINBURGH AIRPORT RAIL LINK BILL COMMITTEE 2nd Meeting 2006, Session 2

CONVENER

*Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Mr Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)

*Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP)

*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 23 May 2006

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 14:01*]

Objections

The Convener (Scott Barrie): I remind everyone present to switch off their mobile phones, so that we are not interrupted.

Welcome to the second meeting of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee. The first item on our agenda is consideration of a paper on the objections to the bill that have been received. As the paper sets out, 47 admissible objections have been received, all of which have been placed on the website. I thank all the objectors for their efforts.

At preliminary stage, the committee must give preliminary consideration to all admissible objections and reject any where we do not believe that the objector's interests are clearly adversely affected by the bill. That is the test that we will apply. The paper asks us to agree that we will be in a position to judge whether the objectors' interests are clearly adversely affected once we have taken sufficient evidence on the bill at preliminary stage. After we have made our decision on each objection, we will inform all objectors accordingly. Do members agree to that approach?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Before we move to the next item on the agenda, I will make some comments on behalf of the committee. The committee is very mindful of the fact that, for some objectors, as well as for those who may be affected but who have chosen not to object, there will be uncertainty about the bill's impact on them and, in particular, on their property. The committee is keen to ensure that that uncertainty is not unduly prolonged, so the deadlines that we set for the gathering of evidence will be both tight and final.

All the objections have been forwarded to the promoter of the bill. There is an onus on the promoter to talk to the objectors at as early a stage as possible, with a view to resolving the objections that have been made. The committee encourages both objectors and the promoter proactively to engage in identifying solutions to objector concerns. The committee will not extend deadlines for oral or written evidence because parties indicate that agreement may be reached

imminently. The dates set will be adhered to unless the objection is withdrawn, and extensions are unlikely to be allowed. The committee will actively keep an eye on discussions, through the monthly update on communications that the promoter provides. I stress that the committee remains dedicated to rigorous and fair scrutiny of the bill.

Adequacy of Accompanying Documents and General Principles

The Convener (Scott Barrie): The next item on the agenda is consideration of written evidence received on the adequacy of the accompanying documents and the general principles of the bill. That evidence was circulated to all members last week. Twenty-two submissions on the adequacy of the accompanying documents and the general principles of the bill have been received. I thank all who responded to our request for information. The evidence will be vital in assisting us to consider the bill's objectives. Members will note that five of the submissions come from the mandatory consultees: the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland, the City of Edinburgh Council and West Lothian Council.

Under standing order rule 9A.6A, relevant mandatory consultees can make a statement in relation to the consultation that the promoter undertook. The committee will also note the substantial submission from the promoter in response to a number of questions that we had about the general principles and the accompanying documents. For ease of reference, that response has been divided into parts. It will no doubt be of assistance to us in questioning the promoter during our oral evidence taking next month. Given the breadth and range of information that was provided in the submission, I hope that any future responses from the promoter will be much more concise and considerably smaller.

Members have indicated that they have no general comments on the evidence that we have received. I invite members to note the responses alongside the comments that have been made on the objections. I also invite members to agree to consider the written responses and the comments on objections during our oral evidence-taking meetings.

Members indicated agreement.

Item in Private

14:06

The Convener: The next item is consideration of whether to take the final agenda item in private. It is my belief that we should take the item in private, as that will allow us to discuss the merits of inviting organisations, as well as some objectors, to give oral evidence. In the case of objectors, it would not be appropriate to discuss that in public, as some objectors may wish to nominate a representative, rather than to provide evidence themselves. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Before we move into private session, I seek members' views on one matter. As members will be aware, four oral evidence-taking meetings are scheduled to take place next month. At those meetings, the committee will take evidence from a range of organisations, with the last witness in each session being the promoter. It strikes me that it would be prudent for the committee to go into private session prior to taking evidence from the promoter, so that we can reflect on the oral evidence that has been given on that day and identify the key issues that we wish to pursue with the promoter. That would allow us to make better use of the time and ensure that we covered any issues that had been raised earlier in the meeting. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

14:07

Meeting continued in private until 14:34.

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