PAISLEY NORTH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

CHAIRPERSON: Mr A W Anderson
SECRETARY: Mrs M L Marshall

GLASGOW AIRPORT RAIL LINK BILL

We, Paisley North Community Council, wish to object to the above Bill being promoted by Strathclyde Passenger Transport. Our objections are set out below.

We object to the whole bill on the grounds of:

1 loss of valuable local amenities,
2 damage to our local wildlife conservation area,
3 irreparable damage to Paisley’s historical heritage,
4 safety factor of viaduct structure given the location of mines beneath the park which seem to have been ignored during the preparation of the Bill,
5 detrimental impression of Paisley to new arrivals at Glasgow Airport which will cause economic damage to Paisley
6 unacceptable traffic disruption to the local area and
7 additional areas of concern.
1 LOSS OF VALUABLE LOCAL AMENITIES

The GARL option will destroy the ethos of an open recreational grass area which is the largest in Scotland, the second largest in the UK and is constantly in use by the local population.

In direct contradiction to independent health directives the loss of such a great percentage of football pitches will inevitably lead to the healthy habit of exercise being lost with the subsequent increase in childhood obesity.

Full use of the pitches in the Park will not be resumed until 2012. This means that for a whole football generation the fitness habit will be lost before the pitches are fully usable again and this can only be detrimental to the bid by the City of Glasgow to hold the Commonwealth Games in 2014.

During construction there will be less than the stated 11 pitches retained for use and this figure will probably be as low as 5 given the current proposed layout.

This is due to the need for access to both sides of the viaduct which crosses the park by a temporary road from the A726 - refer to the section on construction, page 82 – 9.2.7.

(Refer to Appendix A Drawing No 39055/ASH/G501 Rev C for the pitches layout.)

2 DAMAGE TO OUR LOCAL WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AREA

On Page 8 of the ‘where next’ document there is the comment that Option A would have an environmental risk on the Paisley Moss Nature Reserve. In spite of this remark it is now planned to relocate and rebuild the existing Fuel Farm to within 15 metres of the reserve boundary, totally ignoring the hazards caused by seepage and/or leaks from the Fuel Farm into the Paisley Moss.

3 IRREPARABLE DAMAGE TO PAISLEY’S HISTORICAL HERITAGE

St James Park was GIFTED to the people of Paisley in perpetuity for Leisure and Recreation.

The people of Paisley therefore see the chosen option as legalised theft and feel that they are being sacrificed at the alter of SPT’s vanity especially when there are other options available which would benefit more people and cost ALL taxpayers less. It could even be a profitable exercise.
4 SAFETY FACTOR OF VIADUCT STRUCTURE

The location of boreholes undertaken by the SPT along the route, did not encroach on any area within the park where they might have encountered the honeycomb of fire clay mine workings therein. The depth of 47 metres to bedrock does not instil confidence that any piling across the Park will be stable given the range of depth and scope at which the workings are to be found.

5 DETRIMENTAL IMPRESSION OF PAISLEY

There will be no material benefit to Paisley in terms of transport as it already has a 10 minute rail service to/from Glasgow, which both serves the intermediate stations along the route and offers a direct service.

No measurable decrease in the congestion on the M8 has been demonstrated or quantified thus implying no decrease in traffic on Paisley’s A726.

On Page 12 of the ‘where next’ document there are listed potential benefits. In spite of the statement about goods, there will be NO goods moved on the link to or from the airport given the difficulty of accessing the rail station. That is, unless the SPT are proposing to change the route to access Braehead Shopping Centre, which is a benefit they have chosen to ignore.

The access facilities that will be available to disabled passengers are far from satisfactory and will create a poor impression of Paisley on arrival at the Airport.

No baggage trolleys are to be allowed on the travelators which will cause problems for disabled passengers.

An access route which is 130 metres long, inclined up 5 metres from the terminal building, is considered to be “an acceptable and calculated level of service” again causing problems for the mobility disabled.

The drawing of the proposed airport station shows the travelators stopping short of the airport terminal building, creating more problems for passengers, especially disabled passengers, with luggage.

6 UNACCEPTABLE TRAFFIC DISRUPTION

There has been no information on or investigation of the probable social, economic and traffic disruption that will be caused whilst erecting the rail bridge over the M8 which will require to be closed for this operation. Even using the very optimistic but questionable timetable claimed by SPT the chaos will be considerable.

There will be major disruption on 2 of the main access routes into the west end of Paisley, namely the A726 and the M8. The rail link also crosses the motorway at the widest point in its 62 miles of length.
7 ADDITIONAL AREAS OF CONCERN

A proposed timetable over 18 hours a day will produce an intolerable noise nuisance to residents local to the viaduct. It will be even worse if/when overnight trips are contemplated.

There is to be surface water drains alongside the viaduct. The Scottish Office has attempted on 2 occasions to alleviate the flooding of the pitches by use of Field Drains but to no avail.

Also, the Scottish Water plans for the area only indicate one 300 mm diameter waste water main, running the length of Greenock Road to service the 23 houses alongside the Park.

There may be flooding of the Park as a result of this lack of foresight.

Using the passenger numbers generated by the SPT means that the patronage will be at best, poor and at the other end of the spectrum, negligible, thus leaving Paisley with an environmental scar across the main open area in the north end, to be viewed by all incoming air travellers and also be a burden on the taxpayers of Scotland.

According to a SPT representative, minuted at a meeting on 20 January 2005, should the passenger numbers fail to meet expectations and cause a massive increase in the subsidy there is no budget for the removal of the viaduct over the park. This means, in reality, it could become a derelict environmental scar on the ‘green’ landscape.

He also stated “…the cost was definitely not being capped…” (see Appendix B) and this attitude could cost the people of Paisley and, indeed, the people of Scotland dearly.

The link is to be a spur and not a loop, which would be more beneficial to the local conurbation and population. If this development goes ahead there will still be no rail connection to the largest remaining town in Scotland without such a connection, ie Renfrew.

On the above grounds we as taxpayers object to any project being submitted whose overall content is full of contradictions and cost omissions which give a misleading total cost. We urge the Scottish Executive to heed the historical warning of ever escalating costs from an ill defined base.

It seems that nothing has been learned from the mess at Holyrood.

The GARL does not and will not offer any service to the surrounding areas of the Airport, namely Renfrew, Houston, Kilmacolm, Kilbarchan. It also fails to make any improvement or assistance in co-ordinating travel to/from Glasgow and will alleviate very little of the present congestion on the M8.

A light rail transit system (LRT) such as has been proposed as an alternative option, routed around the west of St James’ Park, would answer all our concerns, save the playing fields as they are and also be environmentally friendly. It would be economical, even profitable and benefit more potential passengers. Most importantly it would cost a great deal less. Likewise a rail link which included Braehead and Renfrew would bring even more benefits to the population of Strathclyde in general.
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