1. We refer to the invitation from the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee ("the Committee") to submit the views of Glasgow Airport Limited on the general principles of the Bill and the adequacy of the accompanying documents. We thank the Committee for this opportunity to put forward our views of the Bill, which we have set out below.

2. Taking the policy objectives first, we acknowledge that the objectives support existing United Kingdom, Scottish and regional objectives and are generally broad in nature. As to whether the Glasgow Airport Rail Link (GARL) will meet the objectives expressed in the Promoter's Memorandum, we have, where appropriate, made a number of observations. The Committee will appreciate that we are not in a position to confirm that the policy objectives will be met either in whole or part.

3. We consider that GARL may meet the Promoter’s second objective to contribute to a sustainable basis for future growth of Glasgow International Airport (Glasgow Airport) in terms of regional and national Government objectives. It is important to note that this sustainable growth will rely on a wide package of ground transport measures including regional and national policies to manage the demand for surface access. This work will require recognition that all modes of transport have a part to play in the development of the airport, including the need to upgrade road capacity on a number of regional roads used to access Glasgow Airport. In this regard we note that paragraph 5.23 of the Government’s White Paper ‘The Future of Air Transport’ refers to a potential rail link to Glasgow Airport and notes that this could form one element of a potential package of surface access improvements that may be needed to cater for increased traffic volumes associated with Glasgow Airport’s future growth.

4. We acknowledge in respect of the Promoter’s third objective, that the GARL scheme will probably contribute to sustainable regeneration of the M8 corridor. However, Scottish transport policy does not discount the provision of additional road capacity and we suggest that the capacity of the M8 itself needs to be addressed as part of an holistic objective led policy.

5. As regards the fifth objective, we note that GARL intends to provide a high quality, high capacity, safe, frequent and relatively fast service between Glasgow Airport and central Glasgow. However, this will not be sufficient in itself to deliver the objective’s stated aim of attracting airline passengers out of their cars. With regards to airline passengers the provision of adequate facilities for securing baggage and the cost of travel (particularly where group travel is concerned) will be key to the service’s attractiveness. It is unclear whether the provision of space for baggage fits with other local objectives relating to providing high capacity on rail routes and Scottish objectives relating to the cost of operating the railway.

6. The explanatory notes to the Bill contain an estimate of expense of the capital costs of £160m which have been stated in fourth quarter 2004 prices. We
note that there is a contingency of 28% which seems to be on the low side given the current state of the development and design of the project. Experience elsewhere on other railway projects has resulted in adopting a higher level of contingency or optimism bias as it is sometimes referred to of approximately 60%, which is then reduced as the project becomes better defined and developed.

7. We would suggest that the Committee should scrutinise the capital cost estimate so that it may satisfy itself as to the adequacy of the estimate and in particular to inquire as to whether Network Rail has provided any of the estimates for items such as signalling, overhead line electrification and for works on their existing infrastructure or alternatively has endorsed the estimates prepared by the Promoter.

8. Paragraph 16 of the explanatory notes to the Bill states that the Bill will have the same effect as would a compulsory purchase order in other types of scheme e.g. for roads.

9. Further paragraph 17 states that compulsory purchase under the Bill must be on the same standardised basis as any other compulsory purchase in Scotland.

10. It has been long held that a compulsory purchase order should only be made where there is a compelling case in the public interest. A promoter should be sure that the purposes for which it is seeking statutory powers for compulsory acquisition of land and rights should sufficiently justify interfering with the property rights (including those protected by the European Convention on Human Rights) of those parties with an interest in the land affected. In essence there needs to be clear evidence that the public benefit will outweigh the private loss.

11. We would suggest that the Committee needs to scrutinise the economic and financial case for the scheme so that the Committee can be satisfied that there is a proper case to justify the granting of statutory powers of compulsory acquisition to the Promoter. This scrutiny is particularly important as the availability of funding for the project referred to in paragraphs 203 and 205 of the explanatory notes to the Bill is somewhat uncertain. Funding is stated as being anticipated and conditional upon the project financial business case being approved by key parties. The ability of landowners to plan future development should not be prejudiced by uncertainty as to whether compulsory purchase powers of long duration will ever be exercised for the purposes of this project.

12. Quite separately, the Committee will be aware that Glasgow Airport Limited has objected to the application of any powers of compulsory purchase to Glasgow Airport’s land and that objection will stand even if the Committee concludes that there is a case for compulsory purchase of land in relation to other parts of the route.