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MSPs clash over the axed Glasgow Airport rail link

THE Scottish Government has been accused of incompetence over the sale of land that was previously bought for the Glasgow Airport Rail Link.



The decision to scrap the Glasgow Airport Rail Link plan has sparked heated debate in the Scottish Parliament

 **Stewart Paterson**
Political Correspondent

Thursday 07/11/2013

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Labour and SNP MSPs clashed in a heated and bitter debate in the Scottish Parliament over the link, four years after Finance Secretary John Swinney axed the project.

James Kelly, Labour's infrastructure spokesman, called for a full independent audit of all transactions relating to the project.

The Transport Minister Keith Brown said cancellation was the right decision and the land sales since had been transparent.

He said it was cancelled at a time of mounting capital expenditure and costs needed to be cut.

Labour however, criticised an amendment from the minister which said GARL was "ill conceived".

Patricia Ferguson, Maryhill and Springburn MSP said she was "taken aback" by the language of the amendment.

She said: "The decision to cancel GARL was wrong. I can recall no occasion in the past when it was described in this way.

"John Swinney said it was desirable."

She said the government at the time was cancelling it with regret, but said it was forced into it by economic circumstances.

Mr Kelly said: "The SNP seems to have short memories. They voted in favour of GARL in 2006, yet now it calls the project ill-conceived, despite the fact that its own agency is looking at the scope of bringing it back to improve public transport options."

Mr Brown said Transport Scotland was looking at various options for improved access to the airport, but stated the Government would not be building a rail link, but would be open to the private sector funding a scheme if possible.

He said it was known the costs of cancellation would be around £30million but the savings were

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£176m.

Paisley SNP MSP George Adam said he was hearing "bile from the Labour Party". He said the debate was brought about by "paranoia, political mischief and desperation".

He said: "This is not about scrutinising government but creating something that is not there."

Others said links to the airport were good but - supported the decision to cancel the project.

Alex Johnstone, Conservative infrastructure spokesman, said he didn't want to get involved

in an "unsightly spat" between Labour and the SNP.

He challenged Labour to bring any evidence if it believes there is "impropriety" .

He said: "The scheme seemed very reasonable, every party supported it. A simple way to provide a valuable service."

However, he said that costs began to rise and said "alarm bells should have been ringing".

He said: "That was why the government was right to cancel, but we still have no link to the airport."

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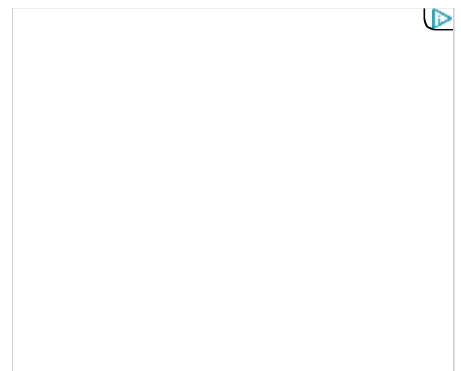


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eric reynolds · 14 hours ago

Either way a form of garl/crossrail should be built,the infrastructure is already in place,

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tom kent, glasgow · 13 hours ago

It was sacrificed to continue to fund the obscene and corrupt Edinburgh tram project in the eastern SNP / LibDem heartland. They will starve the west & especially Glasgow of funds as much as possible. Mind you would-be King Eck may not get his crown if the west votes 'no' and rejects his party of Tartan Tories at the next MSP election. What then? Another referendum?

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