



Aberdeen and Grampian
Chamber of **Commerce**

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Closing Submission

Proposal for Menie Development

Balmedie

Aberdeenshire

Geoff Runcie
Chief Executive, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce
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Conclusions

As Chief Executive of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce I represent more than 1,250 companies who employ more than 90,000 people in the private sector across the region.

My earlier precognition set out the considered and collective views of the wider business community as represented by The Chamber on behalf of Scottish Council for Development and Industry, Aberdeen City and Shire Hotels Association, Aberdeen City Centre Association, Aberdeen Convention Bureau, the Federation of Small Businesses, VisitScotland and the Dean of Guild in relation to the proposed development. Between them these organisations have a local membership of more than 2,500 businesses, representing many thousands of influential business people who have been consulted on the proposals.

The resultant support for the project from the overwhelming majority of our members across all sectors of business is clear. This was evident, when the information dissemination and engagement with our members, helped generate the 1,850 letters of support for the proposals which were submitted to Aberdeenshire Council by November 2007. Letters of support for the project continue to be

submitted to the Scottish Government and Mr Trump himself has received around 3,000 letters supporting his proposals. The sum total is indicative of the unprecedented expression of business opinion on such matters.

But despite the passion with which the local business community welcomed the development proposals, it is the wider economic relevance and impact that has captured their imagination. They can see the implications locally yet the opportunities across the wider region and the whole of Scotland to put Aberdeen City and Shire on the world golf and leisure map. Many in the Business and Tourism community beyond the region share this view.

The draft City and Shire Structure Plan published just this week envisages strong population growth and related developments along three key corridors – one of which encompasses the Menie Estate. One of the economic cornerstones of this and the Aberdeen City & Shire Economic Future (ACSEF) plans is also the Energetica corridor to the north of the city which will set out to attract worldwide company investment from businesses conscious of their energy efficiency yet keen to differentiate themselves and align with a globally recognised region.

The Government must weigh up the arguments but must not miss the point that this project fits well with our region's economic diversification strategy.

Business Tourism is worth in the region of £960 million to Scotland, with approximately £150 million being spent on business tourism in Aberdeen City and Shire. The Scottish Government's stated target to increase tourism revenue by 50% by 2015 demands investment and innovation. How are we going to do that against a backdrop of higher travel costs and less disposable income? Equally, we can no longer lose out on hosting a number of major conferences with a total economic value of £11.5million due to a lack of suitable hotel accommodation.

We must have a high quality, compelling tourism offering with sufficient capacity that can draw and accommodate visitors from near and far. The Trump International proposals and investment fits extremely well with our ambition.

The crux of the argument

The economic analysis of the development impact has been based on collective experience of other developments of this scale and type, by those accomplished in such work. The facts though are that they are best estimates but the likely outcome will be positive.

The same might be said of the analysis of the environmental impact with expert and well intended estimations of what nature will do in reaction to the project. The facts though are that they do not know what will actually happen.

The business community see a development that will enhance the economy and reputation of the region and yet one that will not significantly reduce the region's heritage, culture or environmental attractiveness.

This development opportunity came to us because of the many attributes that the region has, not least of which is our location and access to this unique site. This is not a car plant or a nuclear power station - it is a world class golf and leisure resort with much needed

hotel and conference capacity, quality and affordable housing, which will be readily connected to new transport infrastructure.

It will create a 'must visit' proposition unrivalled in Scotland and will allow the region to attract and capture visitors who would otherwise not come here.

So is the economic prize large enough to compensate for the environmental impact – the business community are clear in their considered view – YES.

End.