



Nicola Sturgeon MSP

Minister for Health

The Scottish Parliament

30th January 2009

(hard copy follows)

Dear Minister

REQUEST FOR FUNDING

1. Context

Further to our letter of 21st January in respect of your valued contribution to the SCARF Study launch of 19th January (*Healthy Living and the Impact of Closure*) and our meetings at your surgery in November and December 2008, there are funding matters the Trust would now wish to raise. We do so in the context of, as you know, the Glasgow City Council's current deliberations about the Business Plan we submitted on 8th December 2008 which was forwarded to you. In that respect we have to thank you for your written support of 5th December 2008 that we were able to publish in the Business Plan. We noted that you wrote similarly and directly to Steve Inch, Director of DRS Glasgow.

In those letters we particularly noted that you, *"were sure many of your Govan constituents would make use of the facility, your belief that the baths would deliver better health, housing and regeneration outcomes in Govanhill as well contributing to a reduction in inequalities and would promote social cohesion, and that a local authority contribution would make an important contribution to the ongoing regeneration of the area"*.

The first of these points is most important because it chimes exactly with the considerable evidence we have gathered over the years and of course as you also pointed out, the *"outstanding success of Doors Open Day recently revealed the Baths to be landmark"*. The latter indicating quite clearly the interest in the baths citywide further confirmed by the many calls in the visitors book that day for the baths to be restored. At the Business Plan meeting it was clearly acknowledged

that there was no effective way in which the use of such a facility could be pre-determined or estimated.

Amongst a range of other critical issues, at the launch of our SCARF research study on January 19th we were also most interested to note your stress on the need for Local Authority and Government to find ways of working together over shared priorities so that solutions might be found to the various needs of deprived communities.

2. The Concordat – ‘Developing a mature relationship’

With reference to our meetings at your surgeries in November and December 2008 you will remember that we raised the issues of funding directly from the Scottish Government. You explained that funding for capital projects of the sort described in our Business Plan, outside that which was raised from various Charities such as the Big Lottery, was devolved normally to the Local Authorities within the Concordat agreement. You also said that there were and had been exceptions to this in special cases and that you would look into precedents from the past (and present) in order to consider the Govanhill Baths case in respect of the Business Plan and its suggestion that Government might contribute some £2M.

We are aware that special arrangements in the past have been made for Government to fund housing and regeneration development in Govanhill. We agree with you, *“that the baths would deliver better health, housing and regeneration outcomes in Govanhill”*. Our Business Plan stresses the holistic nature of the overall Project and all the research makes clear that issues of health, fitness, social cohesion and regeneration are not just about good housing, they depend on many other provisions. Dr Ellaway (from MRC) made this clear in her SCARF launch presentation, evidence presented in our Business Plan and the SCARF study as well as historical evidence about the flawedness of only providing housing also makes this plain. There is a sense in which, as one local community member recently put it, the new facility will in fact be “a community house”!

Our hope would be, as you indicated, that this could be a case where local and national concerns should be brought together with the best interests of the people of Glasgow and Govanhill in mind. In this regard we have noted what the Concordat states;

*“It is recognised that, in some instances, whether through the development of new policy initiatives or for other reasons, **there may be exceptional funding pressures which local authorities are unable to meet. It is clearly impossible to anticipate all the pressures at the start of the process. In such cases, both sides agree that any difficulties will be addressed jointly between the Scottish Government and local government, as part of a developing mature relationship.** That process will include a review of both finance available and of pressures. It will take into account, where appropriate, reviewing the pressures and/or released efficiencies in light of other ongoing initiatives such as in the work being taken forward to simplify the landscape” (our emphasis).*

3. Government Action Plan, Diet and Physical Activity Plan (2008 -11) and Equally Well a Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities

Against the foregoing background it seems to us that the present deliberations and special requests from Govanhill and GCC in respect of housing regeneration are apposite and must be considered under the Health Policy Initiatives set out by Shona Robison the Community Health Minister and yourself. For example, the Government's Action Plan to improve the NHS and health care in Scotland recognises the significant health inequalities that exist between poor and more affluent communities. It also acknowledges a lack of local health services and leisure facilities as one of the factors that contribute to this inequality. Therefore the Action Plan aims to:

“focus our actions across the Government on the needs of people in poorer areas so that we can reduce the health gap, and lessen health inequalities”.

The Plan identifies the need to deliver holistic health and wellbeing services in the community and:

“More generally, services in the community, often delivered jointly by the NHS and local authorities, aim to help all people to enjoy healthy, productive lives and increase their sense of well-being”.

Also the Scottish Government's Diet and Physical Activity Action Plan for 2008 - 2011 aims to reverse the trend through stimulating healthier diets and increases in physical activity and;

“Create, improve and maintain the supply of natural and built environments encouraging more active lifestyles”.

Consistent with this objective, the proposed Wellbeing Centre will play an instrumental role in providing access to physical activity, healthy eating, and related services to the population of Govanhill and surrounding areas.

Earlier in 2008 the Government published the Equally Well Report that states:

“health inequalities remain a significant challenge in Scotland; the poorest in our society die earlier and have higher rates of disease, including mental illness; that individual factors such as age and race interact with socio-economic status and low income to create health inequalities; and radical action is needed to address these inequalities”.

Among the key principles for addressing health inequalities set out in the report are:

- “improving the whole range of circumstances and environments that offer opportunities to improve people's life circumstances and hence their health;
- engaging individuals, families and communities most at risk of poor health in services and decisions relevant to their health; and

- delivering health and other public services that are ... targeted and tailored to meet the needs of those most at risk of poor health”.

Fundamental to addressing health inequalities, the report recommends the establishment of a small number of local test sites within communities most at risk, which will demonstrate new ways of reshaping services and promoting better health outcomes.

The Govanhill neighbourhood has now been identified as one of eight test sites in Scotland. Connected to this, the proposed Wellbeing Centre will provide a catalyst for addressing health inequalities locally and a model of practice that is consistent with Government priorities and which might be replicated elsewhere in Scotland.

4. The Commonwealth Games

We would also want to draw attention to the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014 and the fact that the proposed facility is a stone's throw from Hampden Park – the main venue. We believe that this Project has the potential to really demonstrate how committed the Government and the Local Authority are to health, sport, fitness, social cohesion and regeneration in deprived urban “diverse” communities. Indeed such an Edwardian iconic building so close to the baths could be a marketing feature for visitors closer to the time and indeed a facility for visitors since it is on the main thoroughfare to and from the city. The Trust would certainly be pleased to collaborate and co-operate with the Games organisers should this Project be realised as laid out.

With all of the foregoing in mind we look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience and are circulating this letter to those indicated for their information.

Our good wishes, and again our thanks for your contribution to the launch and your letter of support.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Johnson

Director and Chairperson

GBCT Trust

c.c. Steve Inch, Chief Executive Officer, DRS Glasgow, Lewis MacSween DRS, Glasgow, Cllr Danny Alderslowe, Cllr Ann-Marie Millar, Cllr Jahinger Hanif, Frank McAveety MSP, Cllr James Scanlon, Anne Lear, Chief Executive Govanhill Housing Association, Ken MacDougall Director, Govanhill Development Trust, Cathy Cowan, Chief Executive Community Health and Care Partnership Glasgow SE, Fraser Kelly,

Chief Executive, GSERA, Professor Alan Pert NORD Architecture, Shona Robison,
Minister for Public Health.