



Cobalt More Information & Management Centre

Cobalt Central, 4 Sliver Fox Way

Cobalt Business Park

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Secretary of State for Transport
c/o Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London, SW1P 4DR
e-mail: transportinfrastructure@dft.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

The Proposed Northumberland Line Order

I am writing to express support for the application by Northumberland County Council for the above-mentioned Order.

As developers of Cobalt, we support this scheme as we believe the measures proposed would provide an important link between several local communities in Northumberland and Cobalt Business Park, North Tyneside.

During the 20 years since the first members of staff started work on the park, we have built over 1.6 million square feet of Grade A office space, three state of the art Data Centres, a 144-bed hotel, spa and pub and parade of shops. Employment at Cobalt has grown steadily to approximately 14,000, these staff are employed by major companies such as Proctor and Gamble, EE, Santander and public bodies Northumbria NHS and North Tyneside Council who have demonstrated their commitment to the park by signing 15-year leases without break. Two companies have purchased their building which demonstrates confidence and commitment to the park and the region. 10 major employers have since leased a second building or additional space on Cobalt Park.



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Accenture who moved on site in 2012 with initially 200 staff now employ 1,200 across three buildings on Cobalt. Sage are in the process of relocating 2,000 staff over two buildings for their global headquarter. Newcastle Building Society are also in the process of decamping out of their site in Newcastle City Centre and ramping up their operation on Cobalt.

This growth of employment has been achieved through a combination of the provision of high-quality office space, the availability of suitably qualified staff in the area and the effort that Northumberland County Council, North Tyneside Council, Liftshare, Nexus, the bus companies and Highbridge Business Park Ltd have put in to enhance both the public transport network and other sustainable means of travelling to work. These initiatives, including the introduction and active promotion of convenient new cycling facilities locally and several new bus routes, such as the flagship 19 and 309/310 services, have helped to make the jobs available at Cobalt accessible to the many people in the surrounding areas who do not have access to a car.

As Cobalt continues to develop it is expected the number of staff working there will increase to over 18,000. We are in regular discussions with both existing and potential new occupiers who are looking for additional space. However, this increase in employment will only be achieved if current and potential occupiers continue to be able to attract staff to fill vacancies as they occur, and potential recruits can access the park easily. Providing the proposed new rail route and possible metro expansion, the enhanced transport options between Ashington and Cobalt will:

- Help to increase the number of jobs available at Cobalt.
- Improve access to employment for staff based in a number of local communities.
- Assist with recruiting and retaining staff



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- Increase the mode share of public transport (and thus reduce congestion) by providing more staff currently working at Cobalt with an improved journey time service. This will prove to be an effective and popular alternative to single car use for several commuters.
- Wider recruitment area due to reduced journey time and affordable travel costs.

We are convinced of the importance of providing potential employees from key Northumberland communities with easy access to employment.

The highly successful annual jobs fair held on site now in its fourth year in partnership with North Tyneside Council offers Cobalt occupiers the opportunity to showcase the range of opportunities including apprenticeships, graduate, full and part time positions.

Further HR support is also offered with school work experience, Army leavers and Get into Cobalt/Get into Digital schemes.

We are also willing to continue to support the service through our on-site MoreCobalt team and would promote through the *CobaltSmartMovers* and www.morecobalt.co.uk channels to actively market and promote throughout the park.



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The proposed Northumberland Line Order is vital to secure the delivery of the scheme and we hope the Secretary of State will make the Order to enable the scheme to go ahead as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

For and on behalf of Highbridge Business Park Ltd

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "G. Marsden" with a stylized flourish.

Guy Marsden
Director



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