

Borders Railway Blueprint: Programme Update – May 2015

(From Leadership Group Report, 29 May 2015)

Purpose

To provide an update on the work on the Borders Railway Blueprint in the period since 17 April 2015, updating on project progress under each key theme.

Great Places for Working & Investing – Progress

- Central Borders Business Park – Phase 1 & 2

The 'Development Framework' and design vision, led by Scottish Borders Council and funded by SBC and Scottish Enterprise, was completed in April 2015. Phase 1 of the development, led by SE, got outline business case approval on 13th May. Further work is now underway by SE and SBC on:

- Consultation with land/property owners
- Impact on development site of reservation of space for additional station car parking
- Confirmation of extent of road adoption on station access route
- Confirmation of boundaries of Network Rail ownership following contract completion
- Impact of route safeguarding south of Tweedbank station on Phase 1 development site.

Project approval for the Phase 1 investment in new business space is expected in September 2015.

- Borders Railway Prospectus

Web designers are on course to complete the Prospectus website together with an interactive map of development sites by the end of June 2015. This is funded by Scottish Borders, Midlothian and Edinburgh City Councils. A hard copy version will also be produced by that date. A launch of the Prospectus, which will include a short video being developed by the web designers, is anticipated to take place in Edinburgh in July.

- Borders Railway Inward Investment Response

Discussions have taken place with Edinburgh City Council's Invest Edinburgh team on the resources needed to proactively promote investment in the Railway corridor. Advice and support has been offered, along with support for the organisation of the Prospectus launch event. SDI input has also been offered facilitated by SE. The next step is to agree a single point of contact and dedicated staff resource needed in time for the Prospectus launch.

- Borders Railway Investment Fund

Assets are being transferred from regional loan funds to the new 'Scottish Local Authorities Business Loan Fund' which will deliver a planned £1million finance mechanism to support the Borders Railway Blueprint, leveraging in ERDF and a contribution from the Scottish Government. This is expected to be available in October 2015, and interim options for business loans and grants are available.

Great Places for Living & Learning – Progress

- Housing Land/ Development

Scottish Government facilitated a meeting with senior planners in March 2015 to discuss the strategic role of the railway in creating a new 'development corridor' for Scotland, and the role of the Borders Railway in stimulating housing development in Midlothian and Scottish Borders. Local Authorities have since done some detailed work on the development status of housing sites along the corridor, with a view to working in partnership with SG on the housing/ planning/ place agenda in due course.

- **Integrated Transport at Station Hubs**
A meeting has been held with key transport contacts in Scottish Borders, Midlothian and Edinburgh City Councils to discuss integration of bus and rail scheduling, the physical connections from stations, and the planned provision for taxis, car hire, and bike hire facilities. Key gaps and opportunities have identified to be progressed in time for opening in September.
- **Develop walk/ cycle paths into wider network**
Plans are being progressed between Councils to jointly deliver 'active travel projects' and touch screen visitor information and signage at key stations. TS has confirmed Smarter Choices funding can be matched via the Railway Blueprint (Financial Deal).
- **Scope out Potential Feasibility Work for Extending the Line**
Scottish Borders Council and Transport Scotland are currently finalising the scope of the work required which will be based on Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) principles. A working group is being established to help take the project forward.

Great Destinations to Visit - Progress

- **Great Tapestry of Scotland – Pre-opening**
Meetings have been held with the GTS team and plans are being progress to showcase the Tapestry at five locations along the Railway corridor in time for the opening celebrations in September.
- **Great Tapestry of Scotland – Permanent Home**
Following completion of the Feasibility Stage Proposals, Scottish Borders Council has commenced with the next stage of the design process. The Council has engaged a number of design consultants including:
 - Architectural Services: Page & Park
 - Civil & Structural Services: Goodson Associates
 - Landscape Architectural Services: Harrison Stevens
 Site surveys are underway including topographical, ecology, geophysical, site investigation and ground investigation.
- **Tourism Train Market Assessment**
A Tourism Train Market Assessment has been commissioned by Scottish Enterprise, working with Transport Scotland and VisitScotland. This work aims to identify lessons for the Borders Railway tourism train experience from elsewhere, and to review opportunities for the Borders route and how economic impact can be maximised. The work is being carried out by BTS, who are consulting with Abellio/Scotrail, tour operators, private sector and key stakeholders. An interim report will be produced by 19th June.
- **Tourism Destination Audit**
The Tourism Destination Audit for Scottish Borders and Midlothian has now been completed and both LAs are in receipt of the final document. The Audit findings were presented at a Borders Railway tourism event held in Midlothian on 28th May, attended by tourism businesses from Scottish Borders and Midlothian. It identifies almost 30 themed tourism business development opportunities linked to the Borders Railway. The audit findings will form the basis for the Business Opportunities Guide to be developed by Business Gateway.
- **Borders Railway Tourism Development Programme**
Using the findings of the Destination Audit, Business Gateway with support from Scottish Enterprise, is working up a plan for the development of a 'Business Opportunities Guide'. This would then linked to innovation workshops, 1:1 and cluster business support to help support the private sector to develop new products and services. It is expected this will require investment from partners and Blueprint Funding.

- **Hop on/ Hop off Bus Services**

Plans in progress to deliver a hop on/ hop off bus in Scottish Borders in time for the opening weekend, to coincide with the six week Steam Train Experience pilot.

- **Marketing Programme**

Following commitment of Blueprint Funding by Scottish Government and Local Authorities, a news release announcing the VisitScotland led Marketing Programme was issued on 28th May. Landing Pages for Visitscotland.com/bordersrailway will be live from the July 2015. Other progress:

- A 'Borders Railway Industry Toolkit' was launched on the 28th May 2015 at Newbattle Abbey - this offers marketing and branding guidance, and suggested itineraries for 1 day, 4 day and 6 day food and drinks trails using the railway as main source of transport.
- 700 French Travel trade briefed last week on new Borders Railway.
- Creative brief being crafted for media agency using iconic images for Midlothian, Scottish Borders and Edinburgh as backdrop.
- Activity on Outdoor advertising, press and radio will start in August 2015.
- Accommodation Partners and Food & Drink partners have been sourced for the media fam trip in and around the opening weekend.
- Scotlanders group press visit to Borders will take place 11th- 14th June.
- Working with Borders Book Festival on maximising media opportunities with accredited media-interviews/ media hosting etc.

- **Train Wrap**

The Train Wrap was launched in March at a Ministerial event in Waverley Station, to 'communicate to rail travellers the key leisure and tourism assets of each of the three Council areas – the attraction, the appeal, the coming together and the increased connectivity and accessibility of the new Borders Railway line.' The wrapped train has generated significant interest on social media, and is currently travelling between the seven Scottish cities. Marketing Edinburgh on behalf of the three Local Authorities is developing a PR plan to build media activity and interest in the lead up to the opening celebrations.

- **Borders Railway Expo**

Plans are taking shape for Borders Railway 'Expo' activities to increase the impact of the two day opening celebrations. This is moving away from a single 'showcase' event towards a programme of activity in different locations at different times, including:

- VisitScotland led FAM visits and press trips
- A Local Authority led 'showcase' of local food & drink and products at Waverley Station
- Attendance at VisitScotland Expo in Aberdeen in April, with an aim to have a significant Borders Railway presence in Edinburgh in 2016
- A mini-launch event for potential investors and agents linked to the launch of the Borders Railway Prospectus
- SCDI event.