

# Union connectivity review: call for evidence

## Consultation questions

### Assessing the need for cross-border connectivity

#### 1. If you represent a place, what is your current strategy for growing the economy and improving the quality of life there?

Please provide a summary, but you are welcome to append or link to published strategies.

#### Answer

##### Scottish Borders Context

The Scottish Borders comprises 4,732 square kilometres, and is home to 115,270 people, making it the 6th largest and 7th most sparsely populated council area in Scotland (at 24 people per square km). Using the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2016, the Scottish Borders is characterised as a rural area, having only 5 settlements with a population in excess of 5,000.

The rural nature of the Scottish Borders is one of our biggest assets with the quality of our natural environment and the quality of our landscape being key drivers behind people choosing to live and work in the area. This is augmented by excellent access to open space, from lochs to sweeping valleys, rolling hills and dramatic coast.

Yet, the area suffers from a significant out-migration of young people and shrinking workforce – between 2008 and 2018, the percentage of 16 to 64 years olds fell by 4%, and the proportion of the population defined as “working age” decreased from 63% in 2007 to 59% in 2018. By contrast, the number of older people continues to grow with the number of over 65s having grown by 25% over the same period; worsening the region’s dependency ratio which at 69.21 is significantly higher than the Scottish level of 55.71 (2018).

GVA in the Scottish Borders for 2018 was £1.6 billion or £13,604 per head of population, the 2nd lowest of the 21 NUTS3 areas in Scotland. Weekly wages for full-time workers are significantly below the national median of £542.9. (2018). The median weekly wage for all full-time workers in the Scottish Borders was £462.7, making it 31st out of Scotland’s Local Authorities.

With regards to tenure: 62% of households in the Borders are of owner occupation, 14% are living in the private rented sector and 24% in the social housing sector. These figures are similar to that of Scotland

with approximately the same proportion of owner occupation. However, the Borders has a lower percentage of social rented households and a higher proportion of privately rented properties.

The degree of inequality in rural areas like the Scottish Borders can be overlooked: with the sparsely populated nature of our region, obscuring the extent of deprivation. Although SIMD is urban focused it does show that the Borders does have areas of particular challenge: 6% of SIMD data-zones in the Borders are in the 20% most deprived data-zones in Scotland (typically concentrated in the larger towns), while almost a quarter of the Borders data-zones are part of the 40% most deprived in Scotland. A recent Scottish Government report entitled 'Children in families with limited resources 2014 - 2016' showed that 24% of children in the Scottish Borders live in families with limited resources. In other words, a much greater proportion of families is at risk of deprivation than for comparable rural areas.

For our observations about the national transport network, please see our answer to question 3. Transport has been highlighted as a key challenge by communities across the Scottish Borders. The Borders has a number of trunk roads and arterial routes, which are entirely single carriageway. Indeed, there are only a few miles of dual carriageway in the whole region in a part of the A1 in Berwickshire. Rail services were restored to the Scottish Borders in 2015, when the Borders Railway was completed to Tweedbank, and reopening of Reston Station on the East Coast Mainline is being taken forward. We refer you to the [Borders Transport Corridor Study](#) and the [South West Corridor Study](#) which detail a series of specific projects that would materially improve the connectivity for the south of Scotland.

Public Transport is a particular challenge in the Borders. With a weak internal transport market, increasing operating costs, and pressures on public sector budgets, more and more services have been reduced or cut altogether. This has affected journeys between key towns and throughout the region. As a result, car usage in the Borders has remained high, and the energy consumption for transport grew faster than the national average from 2005-2017. Travel to work by car is higher in the Borders than Scotland as a whole, while travelling to work by bus is 1/3 of the national level.

The rurality of the Scottish Borders has been a challenge also for Digital Connectivity, where provision of Broadband and Mobile Phone Coverage has lagged behind more urban areas.

Key investments in Broadband Infrastructure have made important strides in the provision of Superfast Broadband, with 85% of households in the Borders now able to access superfast broadband speeds. This, however, remains behind the Scottish level of 92% of households.

In relation to Mobile Phone Coverage there is a similar disparity in provision. 83% of the geographic area of the Borders has 4G coverage from at least one operator, and only 52% has 4G coverage from all operators. Indeed 8% of the geographic area in the Borders has no mobile coverage at all. It is unclear when any 5G coverage will be available. There is a need to ensure the UK Government's Shared Rural Network proposals with mobile network operators (MNOs) develops comprehensive coverage for the Scottish Borders. There is provision in the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal to tackling gaps in provision but there will be a need for close working between government and MNOs on this.

Lastly, the Oxford Economics Vulnerability Index considers a local authority's economic diversity, business environment and digital connectivity to consider how able, or not, an area is to withstand and respond to the economic shock resulting from COVID-19. According to this measure, the Scottish Borders is the 3rd most vulnerable local authority in the country, reflecting in particular the

comparatively higher share of small firms and self-employment in the region and its lower levels of digital connectivity.

## **Strategy for Growing the Economy**

### **The establishment of South of Scotland Enterprise and a Team South of Scotland approach**

Set against these challenges, the Scottish Borders has real economic strengths and opportunities. It has particular strengths in food and drink production, manufacturing and tourism and cultural services, while its size and outlook enable strong public sector partnerships and strategic links with its nearest neighbours in Scotland and in the north of England in areas like tourism, energy, digital connectivity and natural capital. The region's physical geography means it is particularly well placed to benefit from national transition to a net zero economy both in respect of renewable energy production and carbon storage, and from the development of future farming, and land management practice following the UK's departure from the EU. An active further and higher education sector provides a strong base from which to develop the skilled workers of the future.

The unique opportunities and challenges facing the south were key drivers for the creation of **South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)** which assumed its legal responsibilities across the Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders Council areas (which make up the South of Scotland) on 1 April 2020. The overarching aims of SOSE are to drive inclusive growth and ensure the South of Scotland benefits from a new approach that supports a diverse and resilient economy, sustains and grows communities, and harnesses the potential of people and resources.

Led by the two councils and the SOSE, partners have recently established **the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP)**, which brings together stakeholders, including the wider public sector and representatives from business, higher and further education and the third sector. The REP's key purpose is shaping regional agenda for the South of Scotland and a future **Regional Economic Strategy (RES)**. The RES will set out agreed goals for all partners to work towards, providing the direction needed to enable national and local agencies to align and coordinate their efforts, in direct response to the needs of the area, to create jobs and to pursue a Just Transition through investment-led sustainable, green growth.

At the same time, **the Convention of the South of Scotland**, a forum composed of all public sector partners, and Scottish Government, seeks to ensure effective public sector partnership working and delivery, assessing and planning for existing and future challenges, and driving inclusive growth and regional priorities.

The two South of Scotland local authorities have developed an **Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy (IRSS)** seeking to align spatial strategy with a number of initiatives and strategies including the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal and Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, the Strategic Transport Projects Review and the emerging Regional Economic Strategy.

With a focus on ways to make the area more attractive to investors, visitors and those who may wish to come and live here, the **Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal (BIG Deal)** brings together the five cross-border local authorities of Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Northumberland County Council and Scottish Borders Council to promote the inclusive economic growth of the area that straddles the Scotland-England border.

**Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal** – comprising the local authority authorities of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife and Scottish Borders, together with regional universities, colleges and the private sector, is a mechanism for accelerating growth by pulling in significant government investment.

The following strategies and plans provide additional vital context with particular reference to connectivity:

- **National Transport Strategy 2** <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/national-transport-strategy-2/>
- **National Transport Strategy 2 – Delivery Plan – 2020 to 2022**  
<https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/national-transport-strategy-nts2-delivery-plan-2020-to-2022/>
- **SEStran Regional Transport Strategy - Main Issues Report 2020**  
<https://sestran.gov.uk/publications/sestran-rts-main-issues-report/>
- **Infrastructure Commission Key Findings Report – January 2020**  
<https://infrastructurecommission.scot/page/key-findings-report>
- **Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2)**
  - **Borders Transport Corridor Study** <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/41887/borders-stag-pre-appraisal-draft-v30.pdf>
  - **Edinburgh & South East - STPR2 Initial Appraisal: Case for Change Report**  
<https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/initial-appraisal-case-for-change-edinburgh-and-south-east-scotland-stpr2/>
  - **Draft report - Initial appraisal: Case for change - South West Scotland Transport Study**  
<https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/draft-report-initial-appraisal-case-for-change-south-west-scotland-transport-study/>
- **South of Scotland – Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy – September 2020**  
<https://scottishborders.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s45978/Item%20No.%2011%20-%20IRSS%20Report%20-%20South%20of%20Scotland.pdf>

**a) What is necessary to achieve this strategy and what evidence do you have that improved connectivity is needed in this instance?**

We expect that transport is not the only factor necessary to achieve regional strategies and would like to understand what else might need to be in place to see benefits from improvements in connectivity.

**Answer**

If the Scottish Borders and wider South of Scotland are to enjoy the economic, social and sustainability benefits experienced by others, then the region must be more effectively integrated into national and regional infrastructure.

Strategic planning must recognise and respond to the lack of connectivity and affordable public transport options within the Scottish Borders and across the region's boundaries, leaving communities disconnected from places of work and opportunity. In response, we must prioritise digital and physical connectivity, delivering a level of service and connectivity which is industry leading and internationally competitive. Radical improvement in public and low carbon transport options is also needed. Strategic public transport hubs are essential but we need to consider how people get to those hubs and plan for that. This will require installation of thousands of electric vehicle chargers across domestic, commercial and public settings. It will require an integrated and properly resourced public transport system, unachievable without significant central government support.

The Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy developed by the two South of Scotland Authorities highlights and sets out a framework to respond to these issues, while presaging future collaboration between the South of Scotland Local Authorities. As noted, there are also synergies between the IRSS and the developing Regional Economic Strategy.

The National Transport Strategy 2, the Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2) and the Borders Transport Corridors Study will provide enhancements to the key strategic corridors in the south of Scotland, but do not address the fragmented quality of the local transport networks and the poor connectivity to the national strategic networks. The 21 proposals within the Transport Corridor Study report will be assessed as part of the STPR2 process, measured against priorities across the country. The full picture of transport poverty in the Scottish Borders and across the SEStran region is clearly documented in the [SEStran-Main-Issues-Report 2020](#) and in particular sections:

- 4.2 – Inclusiveness - that demonstrates that the majority of the region is in Medium and High Transport Poverty;
- 4.4 – Bus use – that identifies the majority of the population has access to between 0-5 buses per hour (Scottish Bus Accessibility Indicator) the lowest in the SEStran region, compared with some parts of Edinburgh at 160+ services per hour (in each direction).
- 4.11 – Transport Expenditure – identifies the Scottish Borders average spend on transport per annum is between 13-20% of income compared to 9% in the centre of Edinburgh.

Extension of the Borders railway has an essential role to play in reducing the number of car journeys between the Borders, other parts of Scotland, Northern England and beyond. We have had sight of the submission of the Campaign for Borders Rail on this issue, and support their comprehensive representations on the matter. The connection of all points, including Hawick, between Edinburgh and Carlisle will be transformative in terms of access and will, together with the opening of a new railway station at Reston on the East Coast mainline, mean that the Scottish Borders is directly connected into cross regional rail infrastructures for the first time in many decades. Wider issues and opportunities are provided in [SBC Local Access and Transport Strategy 2015](#).

In the Scottish Borders (as in other places) progress depends on balancing a number of issues where inherent tensions exist. On the one hand, this means promoting economic growth and vitality in the region using the 'growth corridors' which link prime economic hubs within the Scottish Borders to national infrastructure. These corridors run along our key infrastructural routes: Borders Railway, East Coast Mainline, A1, A7, and A68. Extension of the railway to Carlisle promises to leverage opportunities all along the line throughout the Borders, providing new opportunities to Tweedbank, and offering to

open up new growth in Hawick and throughout Teviot and Liddesdale to the English Border. This would enable easier access to Carlisle airport and Carlisle railway station and future H2 connections. Similarly, the opening of Reston Railway Station will present new opportunities in Berwickshire.

All such initiatives must reflect compliance with the principles of sustainable development, inclusive economic growth and the Place Principle. This means that growth is facilitated and supported in ways which are sustainable and that planning fully and explicitly supports this. In the Scottish, it means ensuring that developments enhance rather than detract from those very things, which people so value about the Scottish Borders: its natural environment, its rural character, its function as open air sporting arena (e.g. cycling, fishing or walking). The aim should be to enhance access to these attributes both for residents of the region and people beyond it.

Active travel has a vital role to play in future providing better safer connections between settlements and within settlements, using the sustainable travel hierarchy. Rural areas provide some significant challenges, but design of networks which promote dedicated cycle routes, and use of electric bikes with appropriate charging opportunities can play an important role.

With the appropriate infrastructure in place, appropriately managed and financially supported it will allow the Scottish Borders to seek to improve the distribution of key sectors and jobs and assets - building on the region's core sectoral strengths which include tourism, creative industries, food & drink, and manufacturing. But there is also a very strong need to attract in new businesses with high skills demands and commensurate pay levels, such as life sciences, data science, tech, finance, fintech. This will have the knock-on benefit of supporting affordable housing building that generates significant benefits for the economy. Each new home built in Scotland supports four jobs across the economy. In addition, the cumulative impact of new affordable homes will raise additional council tax revenue. Investment in housing, and ensuring this investment can be realised in rural areas and support local employment and skills development is critical.

In common with other rural areas, digital connectivity in the Scottish Borders has typically developed more slowly than in Scotland's more urban areas. If our region is to enjoy the economic, social and sustainability benefits experienced by others, it is essential that connectivity here does not perpetually trail that delivered in other parts of the country and in other countries. There have been developments through the R100 programme and there is a programme of work to reduce the gaps and provide access to superfast, this needs to be delivered in parallel with a commitment to develop mobile phone coverage in the region to deliver the reduction of 'not-spots' through the delivery of 4G and potentially 5G in selected hubs within the South of Scotland.

It is essential that the energy networks in the region have the capacity and resilience not merely to respond to demand but to enable the region to secure opportunity and innovation across the energy/renewables sector. This requires working with and influencing and suppliers and other partners at both the national and regional level.

The Scottish Borders needs to leverage its linkages to developments in neighbouring areas – Edinburgh and South East Scotland, South of Scotland and Northern England. This means taking a strategic view of the connections between regions, and the need for plans which facilitate more equitable distribution of the benefits of growth. This will play a vital role in promoting an approach which is focused not only on traditional economic hubs, but, again, on spreading opportunities, and improving the contribution that

Scottish Borders makes to national economic wealth and wellbeing in a sustainable way. Growth corridors based on the concepts of connectivity and sustainability provide a means of linking hubs of economic activity and generating stronger outputs and improved outcomes for the Scottish Borders.

The Council is of the view that government, national agencies, public and private utilities need to recalibrate their understanding of what infrastructure means in a rural context. Infrastructure is overwhelmingly conceived as something which extends 'out' from cities, and it is assumed that networks exist predominantly to serve the interests of cities. While this perspective is understandable in terms of critical mass and cost efficiency, it tends to obscure an understanding of the strategic infrastructure requirements of rural and less densely populated areas. If rural areas are to maximise their contribution to Scotland's National Ambition for Inclusive Economic Growth, then we must take a new approach to national transport infrastructure. The question becomes one of how you integrate the economy of the Scottish Borders and, more broadly, the South of Scotland more effectively into the national and economic infrastructure? This means thinking about the infrastructure requirements across rural areas with low population densities punctuated by small settlements. It implies, for example, that consideration should be given not only to improving the North-South transport links within the South of Scotland, such as the A1, A68 and A7 Trunk Road networks, but also East-West links which require significant investment.

A new mind-set is needed which recognises that if rural and less urbanised parts of Scotland are to make the economic and societal contributions that we and Governments aspire to, then strategic infrastructure must also address their needs and unlock the potential of these regions. Thus, to extend the benefits of an inclusive economy beyond existing urban centres to smaller towns and rural areas requires a bipartite approach which develops and enhances 'locally' functioning hubs, and, at the same time, ensures effective and low carbon infrastructural connections between places, creating conduits for entrepreneurship, workers, skills, training, goods and services.

A well-defined and strongly supported national infrastructure is essential, but it must integrate with regional transport arrangements if outcomes are to be maximised.

## **2. Please provide any information you hold about current multi-nation journeys within the United Kingdom.**

In your answer, please provide information relating to:

- current journey volumes or levels
- assessments of future demand
- journey reliability
- locations or corridors of particular strategic importance
- the reasons for importance

**Answer**

A summary of the main corridors through the Scottish Borders can be found at:  
<https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/borders-transport-corridors-pre-appraisal/>

It should be added that there are many more local routes that cross the border to the North of England and support the rural economy.

The government, national agencies, public and private utilities need to recalibrate their understanding of what infrastructure means in a rural context. Infrastructure is overwhelmingly conceived as something which extends 'out' from cities, and it is assumed that networks exist predominantly to serve the interests of cities. While this perspective is understandable in terms of critical mass and cost efficiency, it tends to obscure an understanding of the strategic infrastructure requirements of rural and less densely populated areas. If rural areas are to maximise their contribution to Scotland's National Ambition for Inclusive Economic Growth, then we must take a new approach to national transport infrastructure. The question becomes one of how you integrate the economy of the Scottish Borders and, more broadly, the South of Scotland more effectively into the national and economic infrastructure? This means thinking about the infrastructure requirements across rural areas with low population densities punctuated by small settlements. It implies, for example, that consideration should be given not only to improving the North-South transport links within the South of Scotland, such as the railways, A1, A68 and A7 Trunk Road networks, but also East-West links which require significant investment.

### **3. In general terms, is there a need for new or improved transport links between the nations of the United Kingdom?**

If so, please:

- explain why and provide evidence to support your view
- ensure that your response relates specifically to multi-nation transport links and not to improvements in connectivity in general

#### **Answer**

##### **National Network**

The Scottish Borders location on the Anglo-Scottish Border means that the scope of the present Review is of considerable importance to our region. However, the Council recognises that the issue of 'new or improved transport links between the nations of the UK' is not simply a question of how Borderers or Northumbrians cross the national boundary.

At issue is a more fundamental question of how Scotland/the UK develop and improve connectivity to optimise sustainable and inclusive economic growth and a 'wellbeing economy'. There are two aspects to this, which should be a focus of the current Review. The first is clearly the sustainable and inclusive economic growth itself. The second is the national imperative of net zero greenhouse gas emissions (by

2045 in Scotland), which is widely recognised as a critical element of that growth in delivering a green recovery.

In the different regions of the UK, we see the issue of connectivity very much through the prism of our regional requirements. That is right and proper. But a well-defined and supported national infrastructure has an essential role in creating the platform on which effective regional connectivity, prosperity and sustainability are built.

In the South of Scotland, but more broadly across the country, this requires understanding and maximising the return on investment and potential benefits of HS2 services by providing direct onward rail connectivity – from a Scottish Borders perspective, particularly from the HS2 hub at Carlisle linked to an extension of the Borders Railway. In terms of road, this means addressing constraints such as those on the A75 to Stranraer as well as on the A1.

For the Scottish Borders, there is a very practical aspect to ‘new or improved transport links between the nations of the United Kingdom’. When EDF Renewables UK selected Eyemouth Harbour as preferred location for its Operations & Maintenance base to support Neart na Gaoithe Offshore Wind Farm, Eyemouth’s connectivity to national infrastructure and its geographic positioning within that infrastructure were vital considerations. Eyemouth is barely 5 minutes from the A1. Edinburgh to the North is around an hour away, while Newcastle-upon-Tyne is a little more than an hour away. The large populations and hinterlands which surround those cities are readily accessible. What is true for Eyemouth should also be true for the wider Scottish Borders with the central belt in the case of Scotland’s capital, the wider North-East conurbation in the case of Newcastle, their airports and onward connections, and access to their skills and markets all within ready reach.

There is a need for new (e.g. extension of the Borders Railway) and improved (dualling of the A1) to improve the transport links between Scotland and England to build inclusive economic and sustainable ‘green’ growth already referred to. Developing these points a little further:

- a) The Scottish Borders is one of those places where this needs to happen. It is the place where Scotland and England meet. Yet, the potential benefits of more effectively connecting the central belt and Northern England have not been optimised.
- b) As noted in answer to question in this response, the Scottish Borders must garner benefit from new and improved connectivity. Currently, our region underperforms against most traditional economic measures. To maximise the Scottish Borders’ contribution to National Ambition for Inclusive Economic Growth, it must be more effectively integrated into national and economic infrastructure.

### **Borders Railway**

The Borders Railway has an essential role to play in strengthening rail continuity and resilience particularly between the north of England and southern Scotland, as well as helping to deliver Net Zero aspirations by reducing the number of car journeys between the Borders, other parts of Scotland and Northern England. The connection of all points, including Hawick, between Edinburgh and Carlisle will be transformative in terms of connectivity, reducing inequalities and creating economic opportunities.

Both the UK and Scottish Governments have committed to an appraisal to progress the extension of the Borders Railway through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. Under the terms of the BIG Deal Heads of Terms, £5m of funding is due to be provided by each of the UK Government and Scottish Government to support the feasibility work. The appraisal report is due to be delivered in 2021 and should look to build on the unprecedented success of the patronage figures of the line from Tweedbank to Edinburgh, which vastly exceeded the original business case estimates as highlighted in the Evaluation Reports referred to in our answer to question 5.

#### **Rail - General**

There are rail carriage capacity issues on the east coast mainline that limit the patronage on the line and limits the stations that can be served on the route. This creates a negative effect on local communities that would benefit from more regular services or even the provision of a station in their community. This is evidenced in the STPR2 Delivery Plan for the South of Scotland (yet to be published).

#### **Roads**

Road linkages into the north of England are hindered by the lack of overtaking, tortuous geometry and high HGV numbers that make the routes inefficient for the transfer of people and goods across the border.

#### **Bus**

Cross border services typically serve remote rural communities and in some instances are the only connection to jobs and services in the region like healthcare and shopping. There is poor infrastructure and limited service provision in place to serve the passengers and with nearly a third of the adult population of Scotland living with a long-term limiting illness (4 Scottish health survey: results for local areas 2014 to 2017 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-health-survey-results-local-areas2014-2015-2016-2017/pages/4/>) it creates accessibility problems across the region. This is exacerbated with the fragmented approach to information, ticketing and high cost of rural travel, thus increasing inequalities between urban and rural communities. A clear approach to Mobility as a Service, real-time information and a national investment programme in local infrastructure would create a coordinated service that is fit for the future, attracts more patronage, becomes more financially sustainable, helps deliver Net Zero and strengthens inclusive growth. This is supported by the finding in [SEStran-Main-Issues-Report 2020](#). Overall this has can only be successful with investment in digital connectivity. Please see our response to Question 12.

### **4. What are the main obstacles and challenges in improving transport connectivity between the nations of the UK?**

Please provide evidence relating to any specific challenges that prevent or hinder the development of additional or improved transport links. Please consider socio-economic, political, organisational and practical issues

#### **Answer**

[SEStran-Main-Issues-Report 2020](#) highlights the principal obstacles that hinder development of additional or improved transport links. The approach across regions is fragmented, inconsistent and lacks positive investment, resulting in a negative spiral of infrastructure condition and service provision to meet the future needs of the region as a key route between Scotland and England.

When delivering cross border projects, multiple sets of permissions may be required from/for neighbouring authorities.

## **5. What evidence exists to demonstrate the potential impacts of improved transport connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom?**

Please ensure that your answer:

- relates directly to transport connectivity between the nations of the UK and not to transport connectivity in general
- considers economic, social and cultural impacts
- provides documents or links
- highlights specific potential growth areas such as housing or wages

### **Answer**

The most persuasive evidence lies in patronage figures from use of the Borders Railway from Edinburgh to Tweedbank. The data overwhelmed all planning predictions, setting new parameters for usage levels and the distances passengers were prepared to travel to access the service in the Scottish Borders.

### **Year 1 Evaluation report**

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/39335/sct04173824741.pdf>

Figure 2.2 shows clearly that the Borders stations exceeded the business case between 300-500%

### **Year 2 Evaluation report**

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/41659/sct02189915561.pdf>

This report confirms that there was continued growth in Year 2.

The potential around extension of the Borders Railway is obvious.

We have had sight of SEStran's response to the review, which touches on matters of national connectivity between the nations of the UK. As a member of SEStran, Scottish Borders Council is happy to align itself with that response.

Transport connectivity is a fundamental element of The Borderlands (Dumfries & Galloway, Scottish Borders, Northumberland, Carlisle and Cumbria) Growth Deal and the indicative Regional Spatial

Strategy (iRSS) for the South of Scotland. Full information is available at <https://www.borderlandsgrowth.com/> and

<https://dumfriesgallowayintranet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s23664/South%20of%20Scotland%20Regional%20Spatial%20Strategy%20-%20Appendix.pdf>

The combined investments of the UK and Scottish Governments will commit up to £350 million to the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. Local authority partners will contribute up to £44.5 million towards the deal. Taken together this will result in a significant overall growth deal package worth up to £394.5 million for the region

The Growth Deal recognises the following key points in relation to transport:

- Transport Connectivity is vital for joining up the communities and maximising the economic potential of the Borderlands region.
- The UK and Scottish Governments will work together through the deal to consider the potential to extend the Borders Railway.
- Up to £5 million of funding will be made available by each Government through the deal to progress the evidence base, options appraisal and feasibility work on Carlisle to Tweedbank rail options.
- The Scottish Government will progress the evidence base through the Strategic Transport Project Review process already under way through Transport Scotland. The UK Government Department for Transport will progress complementary feasibility work on these options with a wider UK perspective.
- The two Governments will work together to align their work, enabling a shared understanding of the cross border benefits and challenges of these options.

## **6. When making transport investment decisions that aim to improve connectivity between the different nations of the UK, does the current appraisal framework capture all the potential impacts?**

Please provide evidence such as links to existing reviews or analysis that may have already considered this.

### **Answer**

Please see the recommendations of the [Infrastructure Commission for Scotland - Phase2: Delivery Findings Report](#) which promote:

- Prioritising an Inclusive Net Zero Carbon Economy
- Enabling Sustainable Places
- Delivering a Thriving Construction Sector

This independent review acknowledges the need for a significantly different method of prioritising, planning and delivering infrastructure investment if current biases in methodological outcomes are not to be perpetuated.

This also requires a fundamentally different approach to the Treasury Green Book, Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Scottish Transport Analysis Guide, Governance for Railway Investment Projects and Department for Transport – Transport Business Case assessment process. There must be a focus on ensuring the wider development needs and requirements of rural areas and regions are fully recognised in government investment appraisals of projects and programmes and decentralising the benefits of investment during the construction process, and the wider socio/economic/environmental consequences of improvement.

We highlight the particular salience of the National Transport Strategy 2 (February 2020). This promotes a whole transport approach system (people and freight) underpinned by four Priorities:

- Reducing inequalities
- Taking Climate Action
- Helping to deliver inclusive economic growth
- Improving Health and Wellbeing

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/47052/national-transport-strategy.pdf>

It is fundamentally important that the delivery phase of Infrastructure investment reflects the principles of the original business case at every decision point in the development of the solution. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that the outcome and client based approach to infrastructure delivery is supported by the Institution of Civil Engineers 'Empowerment' model approach to infrastructure project, published in December 2020, and proposes delivery based on 8 fundamental principles to put the user and client at the heart of every decision. Further information can be found here

<https://ice.org.uk/news-and-insight/latest-ice-news/ice-report-calls-for-technological-focus>

## **Opportunities for improved transport connectivity between the nations of the UK**

### **7. Which specific journeys would benefit from new or improved transport links?**

In your answer, please:

- identify 2 or more specific points within the UK for each journey
- provide details as to why each journey has been identified
- list these journeys in order of priority
- ensure that these journeys traverse 2 or more nations of the UK.

If none then please go to [question 8](#).

**Answer**

Please see our response to question 3.

**a) What would be the benefits of improvements to these specific journeys?**

In your answer, please:

- provide evidence of the benefit that these proposed improvements would deliver
- consider wider economic, social and cultural benefits
- consider specific areas such as potential improvements in housing and productivity

**Answer**

**Borders Railway – Edinburgh to Carlisle**

- Supporting wider modal shift from road to rail through the extension of train services into areas of high car-dependency and poor public transport provision.
- Increasing the social and economic integration of the Scottish Borders into wider national transport networks, notably the West Coast Main Line (WCML).
- Releasing capacity on the WCML for long-distance high-speed passenger services by provision of a reliable electrified freight route between Carlisle and the central, east and north-east Scotland freight terminals.
- Regenerating communities across the region, currently constrained by limited public transport services; for example by facilitating access to employment and educational opportunities and encouraging the development of tourism and inward investment.
- Maximising the return on investment and potential benefits of HS2 services by providing direct onward rail connectivity from the HS2 hub at Carlisle into the Borders region.
- Increasing network resilience through provision of a diversionary route between Carlisle and Edinburgh for the WCML.
- Potential for placing the transport of timber from the extensive cross-border forestry plantations on a sustainable basis by providing direct rail access to the logging areas and removing dangerous and polluting HGV movements from local roads.

**East Coast Main Line**

We draw to your attention Invest East Coast Rail's latest research 'The case for investment in the East Coast Main Line', which can be found at <https://investineastcoast.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ECMA-Research-doc.pdf>

**Bus – Edinburgh to Central Borders to North of England**

Strong supporting evidence is contained in the [SEStran-Main-Issues-Report 2020](#).

**b) Are you aware of any work that has been done to assess the need or feasibility of improvements to all or part of these specific journeys?**

Please provide evidence.

**Answer**

Please refer to our answer to 7.a) and 1 above.

**c) How would the costs and benefits of the identified improvements be distributed?**

Please consider the economic, social and geographic distribution of these costs and benefits, and provide evidence to support this.

**Answer**

Please refer to our answer to our answer to 6. above.

Scottish Borders Council support the four core principles for distributing benefits in the [National Transport Strategy 2](#):

- Reduces Inequalities
- Takes climate Action
- Helps Deliver Inclusive Economic Growth
- Improves our Health and Wellbeing

**d) How will demand for these journeys change in the future?**

In your answer, please consider the:

- next 20 to 30 years in your response and set out the reasons why demand will change
- potential impact of COVID-19
- potential impact of the UK's departure from the EU

**Answer**

The 'new normal' created by COVID 19 will see a more blended approach to work and education. There are already capacity issues on the East Coast Mainline and Borders Railway that may be mitigated temporarily, but as a region, the Scottish Borders continues to suffer significant levels of access deprivation ([SEStran-Main-Issues-Report 2020](#) ) and there is 9% of the population (10,000 people) that have no access to public transport. Prioritising the creation of improved and effective linkages to the main corridors of transport will increase the viability of the local networks and provide continued potential to grow the national strategic corridors. An approach from bottom up will help reduce inequalities, address inclusive growth and create a modal shift to help deliver Net Zero.

**e) In your opinion, what is the preferred means by which to improve these journeys?**

In your answer, please consider:

- specific transport modes such as rail, road, air and maritime
- details of any new infrastructure requirements
- whether there is an opportunity to promote active travel, such as walking or cycling, or environmentally friendly modes of transport

**Answer**

Please refer to our answer to 7. d).

Scottish Borders Council support the transport hierarchy in the [National Transport Strategy 2](#).

For the Scottish Borders the extension to the Borders Railway, improved capacity on the East Coast Mainline and investment in the A1, A68 and A7 will deliver enhanced inclusive growth benefits to the region if dovetailed with local network improvements to promote the hierarchy of integration in [National Transport Strategy 2](#).

**f) What would be the environmental impact of improving these journeys in the way that you have identified?**

In your answer, please provide evidence and consider:

- positive and negative impacts
- possible mitigations of these
- the context of the UK's domestic and international targets for greenhouse gas and carbon emissions

**Answer**

Extension of the Borders railway has an essential role to play in wider modal shift from road to rail in an area with high car-dependency and limited public transport provision. Connecting all points between Edinburgh and Carlisle will be transformative in terms of access and will, together with the opening of a new railway station at Reston on the East Coast mainline, mean that the Scottish Borders is directly connected into cross regional rail infrastructures for the first time in many decades.

These improvements in parallel with the full electrification of train lines and the potential development of hydrogen rolling stock would remove thousands of car miles per year and contribute toward net-zero.

**g) Are there any interdependencies with other policies that may impact the deliverability of the identified improvements?**

In your answer, please:

- consider all relevant national and regional policies, and those set by devolved administrations
- provide your assessment as to how these policies may need to change to facilitate delivery of the identified improvements

**Answer**

Please refer to our answer to Question 1 and the list of legislation and policies.

**8. Is there a need for the development of a national strategic transport network to replace the [European Trans-European Transport \(TEN-T\) network](#) following the end of the UK-EU transition period?**

Please consider the specific strategic benefits of a replacement national network, which would connect strategically important regions and places in the UK in order to support economic growth and quality of life. View maps of the existing TEN-T [inland waterways and ports](#) and [railways and airports](#) network within the UK.

**a) How should such a network be defined?**

In your answer, please consider:

- which criteria should be considered when identifying transport links for inclusion
- how these criteria should be assessed
- which specific transport modes should be included

**b) What would be the potential impact of such a network?**

In your answer, please consider possible economic, social and environmental impacts.

**c) How should a network of this nature be managed or financed?**

In your answer, please consider the role of:

- UK government
- devolved administrations
- local transport authorities

**d) Do you have any further comments on the development of a national strategic transport network?**

**Answer**

SEStran and Transport Scotland's respective strategies are seeking to improve connections between sea and air ports, urban and industrial areas, and creating multimodal platforms to improve logistics; principles that are core to TEN-T.

The freight sector tends to lead on new freight sector innovation, with a need for the public sector to provide supportive infrastructure / investment in sustainable links to / from freight and commerce locations.

It is important that any 'replacement' to TEN-T extends to cover all of Scotland and therefore links the whole country to the broader UK-wide network, and that it covers all modes, including ports within the SEStran region.

## **Connections to Northern Ireland**

**9. With reference to the unique geographical position of Northern Ireland, please set out how best to improve cross-border transport connectivity with other UK nations**

In your answer, please:

- consider all possible transport options, including maritime, air and rail or road via a fixed link
- provide evidence as to the cost, benefits and environmental impact of these options

**Answer**

There should be good road/rail/freight connections between the SEStran region and Northern Ireland to link into broader national network. In this regard, improvements to the A75 would improve connections from the region to Cairnryan and beyond to Northern Ireland.

## **10. Other than geographic, are there any other specific restrictions to improving connectivity between Northern Ireland and other UK nations?**

In your answer, please consider:

- legal, policy and practical restrictions
- set these out and provide evidence as to how they may limit opportunities for improved transport connectivity
- the above in the context of the UK's departure from the EU

## **Final questions**

### **11. What else can be done to support greater transport connectivity between the nations of the UK?**

Please consider legal, political, structural and economic factors in your response, as well as other opportunities for the UK government to directly support improvements to transport connectivity.

#### **Answer**

Close working and co-operation between the UK and Scottish Governments will be vital to delivery of greater transport connectivity highlighted in this response and (we anticipate) in the responses of others.

As a Scottish local authority, geographically located on the boundary between Scotland and England, we are mindful of the division of responsibilities between the UK and Scottish Governments as defined in the current devolution settlement. Proposals or actions that emerge as outcomes from the Union Connectivity Review will need to be sensitive to the division of devolution responsibilities, and the responsibilities and authority of the Scottish Parliament.

### **12. Do you have any further comments?**

#### **Answer**

We endorse the response of SEStrans to this question, highlighting the vital relationship between future physical transport connectivity, and digital (and mobile) connectivity.

While it may seem counter-intuitive to draw any positives from experience of COVID, the pandemic has highlighted both the need and potentiality of digital connectivity, as well as reinforcing the necessity and opportunity for progress on net zero greenhouse gas ambitions.

We particularly share SEStrans' view on the following:

1. 'Digital infrastructure requires to be built into major transport infrastructure investment, with consideration of sensor and Internet of Things based opportunities for more productive use of existing infrastructure, and provision of real-time data on usage, asset condition and traffic status to both reduce inspection revenue costs and information decision making on maintenance and investment.'
2. Public Transport with rail and bus in particular has been hit hardest with the pandemic and it is likely operators will need to change business models significantly to return to some degree of normality. The role of national and local government may also be required to radically change its relationship with the private sector. Greater flexibility of services, increases in demand responsive services and more effective contractual arrangements mitigating risks will all likely have to play a part in the new normal for operators

We would add that planning of future connectivity must take a broader holistic perspective which includes digital connectivity. Progress on net zero requires such a perspective.