

**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**  
**27 MAY 2021**  
**APPENDIX I**

**OPEN QUESTIONS**

Question from Councillor Ramage

To the Executive Member for Economic Regeneration & Finance

With the return of the Border Rail to Galashiels, we now need to be proactive with the second phase. Hawick, being the town furthest south in the Scottish Borders, is suffering because of the lack of infrastructure. Yes, we are currently building business units but these have to be easily accessible. During the first phase of the Borders Railway to Galashiels, a project office was set up by SBC and an officer was seconded. We need to be setting out an economic and business case for the extension of this railway now. Why are SBC not allocating resources to support the extension comparable to the resources committed to support the first phase of the Borders Railway to Tweedbank?

Reply from Councillor Rowley

Extension of the Borders Railway from Tweedbank to Carlisle via Hawick and Newcastleton is a long held ambition of this Council and a high priority within The Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. Extending the Borders Railway is supported wholeheartedly by all five of the Borderlands Councils.

The Deal provides an allocation of £10 million, £5million on the Scottish side from the Scottish Government and £5 million on the English side from the UK Government. The Deal Document is explicit that the funding will be utilised to include, and I quote, “the undertaking of feasibility work to further develop the business case for the reinstatement of the railway.”

The Council has already committed almost £200k of its own funds to the resourcing of the Programme Management Office that is dedicated to delivering The Borderlands Programme. Additionally the Leader and I have committed considerable time to meetings with stakeholders and officers regularly attend Programme Board meetings for the project as well contributing to discussions with partner authorities, Transport Scotland and Scottish Government. The Council is therefore clearly allocating resources to support the extension of the Borders Railway and I am confident there will be further announcements on how this programme will be progressed very shortly.

Supplementary

Councillor Ramage advised she was disappointed by the response and asked that Councillors be kept informed. Did Councillor Rowley not agree that a dedicated project officer was needed? Councillor Rowley advised that there was a project office driving this project forward. Resources were being put in and there would be an update on the project shortly.

Urgent Question from Councillor Robson

Given the alarming rumours now circulating regarding the Scottish Ambulance Service’s ‘Demand and Capacity’ review being carried out by private sector consultants, which is said to cover ambulance stations across the Borders and, in the case of Kelso, is alleged to include the loss of a nightshift, will the Council request that the Scottish Ambulance Service clarifies its intentions by briefing Elected Members and consults the general public before making major changes in its provision in the Borders?

Reply from Executive Director Corporate Improvement and Economy

Thank you Cllr Robson; I have been able to obtain an update from the Scottish Ambulance Service.

There has been a Scottish Government led demand analysis review of the Scottish Ambulance service throughout Scotland.

Following the review a successful business case was submitted resulting in an uplift of staffing for the Ambulance service across Scotland.

The Scottish Borders is one of the area that are receiving additional staff who will be phased in over the next 12 months.

The deployment model in the Borders may be amended slightly in response to the demand analysis to better use the available resource at the highest times of demand, but the main message is this will result in an up lift of staffing for the ambulance service in the Borders NOT a reduction.

The work has not reached a consultation phase but the Scottish Ambulance Service is happy to discuss this in person with any councillor who has concerns.