
BORDERS RAILWAY – ESTABLISHMENT OF A CROSS-PARTY WORKING GROUP

Report by Director of Resilient Communities

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

26 October 2023

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 To summarise progress with the development of the business case for the reinstatement of the Borders Railway between Tweedbank and Carlisle.
- 1.2 To agree the establishment of a Cross-party Working Group to oversee this work in line with the £10m funding commitment detailed in the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that Council:

(a) Notes the progress made by the Borderlands Partnership to agree the process for developing the business case for the Borders Railway extension project;

(b) Notes the agreement made with UK and Scottish Governments to draw down the £10m commitment at key stages to fund this business case development work via the Borderlands deal;

(c) Approves the membership and remit of a Cross-party Working Group to oversee this work, based on the previous governance model which successfully oversaw the Borders Railway Edinburgh to Tweedbank business case development, as outlined in paragraph 4.4 and 4.5.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal signed in 2021 committed £10 million (£5m each from the UK and Scottish Governments) for the development of proposals for the extension of the Borders Railway from Tweedbank to Carlisle. This proposal has the full support of the five Borderlands Partner Local Authorities.
- 3.2 The Deal brings £450m of fresh investment into the Borderlands region, with an integrated programme to help the region, people, places, and businesses fulfil their potential. Improving connectivity, both across the Borderlands region and into the region is vital for the success of the Deal and our rural communities.
- 3.3 In October 2021 the Borderlands Partnership produced a prospectus setting out further supporting evidence to support the strategic and economic case for the initiation of the rail feasibility work ([Summary - Appendix 1](#)), set against six strategic objectives as noted below:

Objective		
SO1	Economic Development	To help enable and/or accelerate planned economic investment in the Borderlands Growth Deal
SO2	Access to Opportunity	Enhance access to current and future services and opportunities, particularly those at risk of rural isolation
SO3	Levelling Up	Address and reverse the recent adverse economic and social outcomes experienced in the main centres
SO4	User Experience	Provide a step change in the connectivity available to residents, businesses, and visitors
SO5	Place-making	Promote the Borderlands as a place to live, work, and visit, maximising the opportunities from complementary investment in the main centres
SO6	Environmental Protection & Enhancement	Reduce adverse environmental and social impacts of transportation, positively contributing to net zero targets, and the protection of natural and built environmental assets

- 3.4 Given the cross-border scheme, the drawdown of funding to progress the Business Case work was dependent on the agreement of both the UK and Scottish Governments with specific reference to the Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport Scotland (TS).

4 MOVING FORWARD

- 4.1 Agreement has been reached with both Governments, DfT and TS that the next step is to progress the Strategic Business Case for the project, and that the £10 million Deal commitment can be used to fully fund this work. Agreement has also been reached that the £10 million can be used to fund a Senior Project Manager, appointed by Scottish Borders Council on behalf of the Borderlands Partnership as Lead

Partner for the project, to oversee the development of the business case and coordinate the team of internal and external professionals who will deliver this work. This will include initially preparing a full project plan for completing the Full Business Case for the project, including associated feasibility studies, drawing on the £10 million Growth Deal investment. Key elements of this work will include:

- Data Survey and Analysis
- Market Demand
- Base Option Identification
- Socio-Economic Impacts
- Option Development and Appraisal
- Impact Assessment

- 4.2 A Job Description and request for an initial drawdown of £200k to fund the Senior Project Manager role was submitted to UK and Scottish Governments in August 2023. Once approved, the appointment process will start immediately.
- 4.3 In parallel, agreement was reached to set up a Reference Group of key stakeholders to support the Business Case development process, chaired by the Leader of Scottish Borders Council, with representatives from Cumberland County Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Transport Scotland, Department for Transport, Scottish Government, UK Government, MPs, MSPs, local Councillors and the Campaign for Borders Rail. The key purpose of the Reference Group is to ensure open and transparent information sharing and communication. The Reference Group had its first meeting in August 2023, and will meet initially on a six-monthly basis.
- 4.4 To support this work moving forward, and based on the previous governance model which oversaw the first phase of the Borders Railway feasibility work and business case development to successful completion, it is proposed to set up an internal Cross-party Working Group to oversee this work. It is proposed that the membership of this working group includes representatives of each of the political groups of the Council, to ensure there is full visibility and oversight of this complex and high-profile project.
- 4.5 It is proposed that the Cross-party Working Group is made up of 4 members of the Administration and 3 members of the Opposition (2 SNP and 1 Liberal Democrat). The Group will be chaired by the Executive Member for Community and Business Development. The Cross-party Working Group will feed into the Reference Group, and the Borderlands Partnership Board.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

The costs attached to the recommendations contained in this report are covered by the £10 million commitment detailed within the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, which is fully funded by the UK and Scottish Governments (£5 million each).

Agreement has been reached to fund a Senior Project Manager from the £10m funding commitment to oversee the development of the business case for the extension of the Borders Railway and coordinate the team of internal and external professionals who will deliver this work. This Senior Project Manager will be appointed by Scottish Borders Council as Lead Partner for the project on behalf of the Borderlands Partnership. A Job Description and funding request of £200k has been submitted to UK and Scottish Governments for this role. As soon as this funding is approved, the appointment will be made.

It is suggested that the next step following the appointment of the Senior Project Manager will be the establishment of a dedicated Project Support Team, cash flowed upfront by the Council and the costs fully recovered from the £10m funding provided by UK and Scottish Governments via the Borderlands Deal.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The establishment of a Cross-party Working Group to oversee the delivery of the business case for the extension of the Borders Railway from Tweedbank to Carlisle aims to de-risk the project by ensuring there is full visibility and oversight of this complex and high-profile project.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

A full Integrated Impact Assessment will be completed at the appropriate stage in the business case process, which will follow UK Government HM Treasury Green Book guidance and Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport Scotland (TS) Transport Appraisal guidance.

5.4 Sustainable Development Goals

The business case for the extension of the Borders Railway will demonstrate the wide ranging expected benefits of the project aligned to the UN SDGs, particularly including Goal 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, Goal 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, Goal 10 – Reducing Inequalities, Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities, and Goal 13 – Climate Action.

5.5 Climate Change

A full Climate Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the business case.

5.6 **Rural Proofing**

This report does not relate to new or amended policy or strategy proposals so Rural Proofing is not required, but the Borders Railway extension from Tweedbank to Carlisle would improve transport connectivity and create transformational economic, social and environmental impacts for a significant rural area of the south of Scotland and north of England.

5.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

5.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

The setting up of the Cross-party Working Group will require Council approval.

6 **CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and comments incorporated into this report.

Approved by

Name

Title

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Sam Smith	Chief Officer – Economic Development, 01835 825612

Background Papers:

Executive Committee – Economic Development Briefing Note – 12th September 2023;

Executive Committee – Update on the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal – 18th April 2023.

Previous Minute Reference: n/a

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Sam Smith can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at: Sam Smith – Samantha.Smith1@scotborders.gov.uk, 01835 825612.