
BORDERS RAILWAY BLUEPRINT – DELIVERY OF ACTION PLAN

Report by Corporate Transformation & Services Director

Executive Committee

19 April 2016

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **This report provides an update on the delivery of the Borders Railway Blueprint and the Council's current financial contribution to key projects.**
- 1.2 'Borders Railway Maximising the Impact: A Blueprint for the Future' was launched in November 2014 by the First Minister. It aims to maximise the economic benefits of the new Borders Railway connection by helping to stimulate business growth, generate employment and boost visitor numbers. The Borders Railway provides a once in a generation opportunity to support economic growth and development in the region, making the Scottish Borders a more accessible and more attractive place to do business, to visit, to live and to work.
- 1.3 The development of the Blueprint was led by Scottish Enterprise in partnership with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, VisitScotland, Abellio ScoRail, and the City of Edinburgh, Midlothian and Scottish Borders Councils. The project is an exemplar of partnership working across the public sector in the city-region area and at a national level.
- 1.4 Since the launch, work has focused on developing the Action Plan to deliver the key investments and commitments made by partners in the Blueprint. The Action Plan (Annex 1) outlines project delivery across three strategic themes: *Great Places for Working and Investing, Great Communities for Living and Learning, and Great Destinations to Visit*. The Financial Summary (Annex 2a PRIVATE) outlines the project costs and partner budget contributions across the Programme.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Executive:-**
 - (a) **Notes the significant progress made in developing the Borders Railway Blueprint Action Plan.**
 - (b) **Agrees that further reports on implementation of the Borders Railway Blueprint Action Plan will form part of the Executive Committee's regular quarterly monitoring of the Council's Corporate Transformation Plan.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Borders Railway opened in September 2015. The £294 million investment delivered the longest new UK domestic railway for more than 100 years. It provides a modern, sustainable transport connection between Edinburgh, Midlothian and the Scottish Borders, offering a unique economic development opportunity for Scotland. In the first five months of operation, over 500,000 passengers used the Borders Railway, significantly exceeding initial targets.
- 3.2 'Borders Railway Maximising the Impact: A Blueprint for the Future' was launched in November 2014 by the First Minister. The Blueprint recognises the potential of the Borders Railway to provide a once in a generation opportunity to support economic growth and development in the region. It aims to maximise the economic benefits of the new Borders Railway connection, capitalising on the transformational impact of the new line in creating new places to 'live, work, visit, learn, play and grow'.
- 3.3 The development of the Blueprint was led by Scottish Enterprise in partnership with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, VisitScotland, Abellio ScotRail and City of Edinburgh, Midlothian and Scottish Borders Councils. Since the launch, work has focused on developing an Action Plan to deliver the key investments and commitments made by partners in the Blueprint. The Blueprint outlines key investments across three strategic themes: *Great Places for Working and Investing*, *Great Communities for Living and Learning*, and *Great Destinations to Visit*.
- 3.4 The investment proposals published in the Blueprint together form a national plan for collaborating on delivery. They secure a commitment from partners to jointly plan, prioritise and agree resources to deliver these priorities. The proposals build on work already done by the Council and other partners, and challenge the partners to 'raise the bar' in maximising the impact of the Railway.
- 3.5 The Programme is managed by a Leadership Group made up of senior representatives of the partner organisations, and is supported by a Champions Group who support day to day operational delivery of activities. The project is an exemplar of partnership working across the public sector in the city-region area and at a national level.
- 3.6 The Borders Railway Blueprint can be downloaded at: www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/8379/borders_railway-a_blueprint_for_the_future

4 DELIVERY OF THE ACTION PLAN

- 4.1 The Blueprint sets out a number of investments across the three themes of *Great Places for Working and Investing*, *Great Communities for Living and Learning*, and *Great Destinations to Visit*. Within each theme the key projects are detailed in the Action Plan (Annex 1).

Programme highlights delivered in 2015/16 are outlined below:

4.2 **Great Places for Working and Investing**

- Launch of new inward investment website and interactive map of 100 development sites in the railway corridor by the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities in December 2016 – www.bordersrailwayprospectus.com
- Recruitment of an Inward Investment Project Manager starting in April 2016.
- Commitment from partners to deliver Simplified Planning Zones and Business Improvement Districts in the Borders Railway Corridor.
- Commitment from Scottish Enterprise to fund the design plan in 2016 for Phase 1 of the Central Borders Business Park at Tweedbank, delivering 1000 square meters of prime business space and 1.9 hectares of serviced land.
- Recruitment of a Borders Railway Development Executive by ScotRail starting in March 2016.

4.3 **Great Places for Living and Learning**

- Investment by Scottish Borders Council in improved bus connections to and from stations in September 2015.
- Improvements in path/ cycle connections and signage to stations at Galashiels, Tweedbank and Stow.
- Commitment from Skills Development Scotland to carry out a Borders Railway future skills needs assessment in 2016.
- Agreement with Transport Scotland to deliver scoping work on the feasibility of the extension of Borders Railway towards Hawick and Carlisle.

4.4 **Great Destinations to Visit**

- Launch of Train Wrap promoting Borders Railway between seven Scottish cities in 2015.
- Completion of Tourism Destination Audit and Tourism Train Market Assessment.
- Recruitment of Borders Railway Tourism Business Adviser by Business Gateway, and launch of Business Opportunities Guide in August 2015.
- Launch of VisitScotland 3 year International and UK Marketing Campaign in August 2015 (see Annex 3) www.visitscotland.com/blog/scotland/borders-railway/
- Development of pilot 'Hop on Hop off' tourist bus services in Scottish Borders and Midlothian.
- Development of ScotRail 'Beautiful Borders' visitor experience pilot.
- Borders Railway presence at VisitScotland EXPO in 2016 to develop new travel trade market opportunities.
- Delivery of Steam Train Experience in 2015 bringing 5,500 visitors to Scottish Borders. Agreement to deliver 2016 experience.

- 4.5 A Blueprint partnership Communications Group has been set up to oversee a new communications plan for 2016, which includes the re-development of www.bordersrailway.co.uk with 'Invest', 'Live & Work', and 'Visit' themes. Similarly, a Blueprint Monitoring & Evaluation Group has been established to develop a framework for monitoring and reporting programme outputs regularly to the Leadership Group and other stakeholders.

5 THE FINANCIAL DEAL

- 5.1 A commitment has been made by the partners to jointly deliver this programme of projects and develop a corresponding 'Financial Deal' that sets out the funding commitments to each project.
- 5.2 The principle of the Blueprint is that the Action Plan investments are funded across the partners using other funding sources where appropriate (e.g. Skills Development Scotland, Abellio as Train Operator and/ or other private sector sources). The amount of £10 million has been committed in principle from the Scottish Government to fund the financial gap in the delivery of the Action Plan projects. The Leadership Group are working closely with Scottish Government to manage the phasing of projects and to allocate the funds appropriately.
- 5.3 The current costs of Blueprint projects are outlined in Annex 2a, totalling £17,115,800 (this Annex is PRIVATE due to information relating to the financial or business affairs of external partners). The Council has committed £7,007,600 of capital and revenue budget towards these project costs (Annex 2b).

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

Costs associated with these proposals are being met from existing capital and revenue budgets reflected in the 2015/16 – 2019/20 Financial Plan, including resources identified from an earmarked balance approved at the 24th February 2015 Executive meeting, which ring-fenced resources to 'support Economic Development activity and infrastructure, the Borders Railway blueprint and associated action plan and the development of locality planning during 2015/16'.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

The Borders Railway Blueprint was launched in November 2014, and contained a promise by the partners to jointly plan, prioritise and agree resources across our organisations to deliver the ambition to maximise the economic benefits of the Borders Railway. Scottish Borders Council's commitment to the delivery of the Blueprint programme was approved by Council in April 2015. Without this commitment, there is a risk that the Blueprint ambition and the associated economic and community benefits will not be realised.

6.3 Equalities

An initial Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and it is anticipated that the Blueprint will assist the Council to meet the Equality Duty. The Blueprint investments are expected to deliver a number of positive impacts for equalities groups, particularly as a result of enhanced connectivity to and from stations, and from new employment, skills training and business opportunities. We will continue the impact assessment process as we progress this work.

