



Press Release - dated 29 April 2014, immediate release

Campaigners call for reliability and faster journey times on Borders Railway

In a letter [1] to Transport Scotland's chief executive, David Middleton, the Campaign for Borders Rail [2] has called for urgent action if services on the new Borders Railway suffer reliability problems, as a result of a cutback in the length of double track, when trains start running in 2015.

CBR first raised concerns over a year ago after it emerged that plans for double track on the new railway had been reduced from almost 16 miles to just over 9½ miles [3]. CBR Chair Simon Walton commented:

‘We were worried that with shorter double track stretches for trains to pass in, even a few minutes’ lateness would cause knock-on delays to trains traveling in the opposite direction. We’ve been granted several meetings with Transport Scotland officials who have repeatedly assured us that the line will be fit-for-purpose. We retain some doubts, which is why we’re asking Transport Scotland to publish the contingency plans for dealing with late running and asking for an assurance that any underlying problem will be quickly put right if our fears are justified.’

Mr Walton also urged Transport Scotland to work towards faster journey times on the Borders Railway in future by encouraging industry partners such as Network Rail and ScotRail to bring forward capacity and speed enhancements to the existing section of line between Waverley Station, Portobello and Newcraighall as soon as possible [4]. These upgrades could also be the key to delivering greater reliability and may partially compensate for the reduced capacity on the newly re-built Borders Railway itself.

‘When Transport Scotland published its Borders Railway specification in 2009 it promised a maximum journey time of 55 minutes between Tweedbank and Waverley [5]. That maximum has now become a minimum, except for a few northbound journeys each day, with most journeys planned to take longer [6]. Competitive journey times and reliable services are essential if commuters are to switch from their cars to the train in large numbers and ensure that the Borders Railway is the success it deserves to be.’

More information:

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Notes for editors

[1] The letter sent to Transport Scotland can be downloaded at [this link](#)

[2] The Campaign for Borders Rail (CBR), launched in 1999, is one of Britain's most successful grassroots rail campaigns. CBR's key aim was realised on 6th November 2012 when the Scottish Government's Transport Minister Keith Brown announced that Transport Scotland and Network Rail had concluded a deal to construct the new Borders Railway – bringing trains back in 2015 after an absence of more than 45 years. CBR lobbying was also crucial to securing key enhancements to the original official railway specification – namely (i) inclusion of a station at Stow, and (ii) redesign of Tweedbank station to accommodate long tourist charter trains, bringing in visitors from across Britain. See <http://www.campaignforbordersrail.org/>.

[3] The Borders Railway Prequalification Document for DBFM Contract issued by Transport Scotland in December 2009 set out the following infrastructure requirements:
“49.4 km [30.7 miles] of single bi-directional track with three dynamic passing loops from the point of connection to Great Britain's national rail network at Millerhill to Tweedbank station; Track layout consists of 23.6 km [14.7 miles] of single plain line track and 25.8 km [16 miles] of double plain line track”
Transport Scotland has since cut back the double-track provision from 16 miles to just over 9½ miles.

[4] The Borders Railway connects with the existing network just south of Newcraighall station. From here north the existing line is single track through Newcraighall and Brunstane stations before joining the East Coast Main Line at Portobello Junction. Portobello Junction is also single track and has a 15mph speed restriction, and beyond here Borders trains must share the track with East Coast, Cross-Country and other ScotRail service. There are already congestion problems on this stretch and these will get worse if a planned new depot for electric trains opens at Millerhill (near Newcraighall) and with the possible introduction of a local train service from Edinburgh to East Linton, Reston and Berwick. Track capacity on the final approach to Waverley was cut from 4 lines to 2 in the early 1990s when the East Coast Main Line was electrified and there is a shortage of platforms at the east end of the station. Network Rail has identified some of these problems and has begun preparing a business case for enhancement works. However, the scheme was not included in the latest High Level Output Specification for Scotland and so a source of funds has yet to be identified for these vital improvements.

[5] The Borders Railway Prequalification Document for DBFM Contract issued by Transport Scotland in December 2009 stated that:
“The railway and station infrastructure must be capable of accommodating a maximum fifty five minute timetabled passenger train service of two trains per hour in each direction between Edinburgh Waverley and Tweedbank for around a nineteen hour, seven day timetable calling at all stations. Minimising journey time is a key requirement of this DBFM Contract and the track alignment should optimise curvature and line speed. The final configuration of any dynamic passing loops should facilitate future improvement and expansion, as well as providing any necessary passenger train timetable flexibility.”

[6] In the draft timetable issued by ScotRail in November 2013, 26 out of 33 daily (Monday to Friday) trains from Edinburgh to Tweedbank were scheduled to take longer than 55 minutes, with the remaining 7 taking 55 mins. In the reverse direction, journey times would vary from 54 to 60 minutes, with 9 out of 33 trains taking 54 minutes and 13 out of 33 trains taking longer than 55 minutes.