



*By post and email*

Carlos Clarke  
Planning and Building Standards  
Development Management  
Scottish Borders Council  
HQ – Main Building  
Newtown St Boswells TD6 0SA

5th September 2013

Dear Mr Clarke,

Application Ref: 13/00913/FUL: Re-instatement of railway along former corridor, including construction of a new structure to facilitate the crossing of the A7 and diversion of A7 road to accommodate re-instated railway

I am writing on behalf of the Campaign for Borders Rail (CBR) to register our comments on the above application.

You will no doubt be well aware of CBR and the key role it played in lobbying for the reintroduction of rail services to the Borders. With construction of the Borders Railway now underway, CBR has been concentrating its efforts on supporting the project to ensure its success from the outset. Our immediate goal is now “the best possible Borders Railway by 2015”, while our longer-term objective remains the extension of the railway to Hawick and Carlisle, for which we continue to campaign vigorously.

In January 2011, CBR gave its qualified support to the previous ‘double-roundabout’ proposal (ref. 10/01544/FUL) on the basis that it allowed a double-track width bridge to be constructed more cheaply than it would have been had the skew bridge contained in the Parliamentary plans been pursued. In the event, and much to CBR’s disappointment, although that application was approved, the suggestion to ‘future proof’ the structure for a double-track railway was not adopted.

Although the Borders Railway scheme has been designed to be single-track at Falahill, consistent with our aim to see a through route to Carlisle reinstated, CBR has always argued that all new bridges, and certainly those over the railway, should be built to accommodate double-track, regardless of whether that is required by the initial track configuration. Our long-term vision is of a largely double-track, mixed traffic railway (local and long-distance passenger trains, as well as freight) with some short sections of single-track, rather than the single-track, single purpose railway with some short sections of double-track currently being built.

The principle of extending the railway enjoys widespread support, not only in the community, but also from the Borders Chamber of Commerce, prominent elected members of Scottish Borders Council, and MPs/MSPs representing the region. The disused trackbed is protected by local planning policies and reinstatement is an objective of the *South East Scotland Strategic Development Plan*. Therefore, it would seem prudent to avoid creating additional obstacles to double-tracking on the Edinburgh to Tweedbank section so that capacity can be increased in the future with the minimum of expense and effort.

Our position in relation to the latest proposals for Falahill is that we cannot offer our support unless the A7 road bridge is redesigned to provide double-track clearances.

The long skewed structure will effectively become a permanent barrier to future double-tracking at this location as the disruption and cost of replacement would be enormous. Our own research, based on Scottish Local Authorities’ asset valuation data, suggests that the costs of rebuilding over a ‘live’ railway may be ten times as much as the additional cost of building a wider bridge at the outset.

As a compromise, we would ask whether a slight adjustment of the proposed road alignment is possible to reduce the skew angle of the bridge, allowing a double-track width rail formation to be provided within the same (or even a slightly reduced) overall length of structure. Reducing the length would help to off-set the additional cost of increasing the span to double-track clearances, which was one of Network Rail’s chief concerns when we raised this issue with them directly.

Yours sincerely,

*Simon Walton*

Simon Walton, chairman

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**The Campaign for Borders Rail**  
one of the most successful grassroots rail campaigns in Great Britain  
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