



Press release from Campaign for Borders Rail – not for publication until Thursday 12 September

Campaign questions Transport Scotland on future proofing Borders Railway

The Campaign for Borders Rail has questioned government agency Transport Scotland's failure to ensure that the predominantly single-track Borders Railway is 'future proofed' to allow cost-effective double-tracking in the future. In its response to the controversial Network Rail planning application for a new road bridge to carry the A7 over the single-track railway at Falahill, the Campaign has advised Scottish Borders Council (SBC) that "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 for the railway."

The Campaign's submission to SBC states that its 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." CBR Chair, Simon Walton commented:

"Network Rail is showing great professionalism in its current construction task, but regrettably in the last two years Transport Scotland has shrunk back the infrastructure specification of the Borders Railway from 15½ miles of double track to just 9½ miles. Despite their assurances that a 2-minute punctuality margin will be sufficient for the initial planned train service starting in 2015, CBR remains to be convinced that it will be reliable enough. If greater capacity is needed to address this, or our case for extension beyond Tweedbank to Hawick and Carlisle were to be accepted, then it makes even greater economic sense for the Falahill road bridge – just two miles south of the currently planned end of double track at Tynehead – to be built to allow for a future double-track railway, rather than introduce an insurmountable obstacle to capacity enhancement. It would demonstrate that the same high standard applied to the scheme's road requirements is being observed for the Borders Railway itself."

MORE INFO: Simon Walton, CBR Chair, on 01578 760686 or chairman.bordersrail@uwclub.net

NOTES FOR EDITORS

[1] The Campaign for Borders Rail (CBR) is the grassroots group set up in 1999 to make the case for restoring rail to the Borders – the only region of Britain without passenger trains. 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 after an absence of more than 45 years. See <http://www.campaignforbordersrail.org/>

[2] The new Borders Railway will run from Newcraighall in south east Edinburgh to Tweedbank in the Borders. There will be four intermediate stations in Midlothian and two in the Borders. At 30½ miles length, this will be the longest rail re-opening in modern British history when services from Edinburgh Waverley to Tweedbank begin in mid-2015. See <http://www.bordersrailway.co.uk/>

[3] Scottish Borders Council (SBC) Planning 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. See <http://eplanning.scotborders.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=MR3I3FNT8M000>

[4] CBR letter of 5th September 2013 to SBC: <http://campaignforbordersrail.wordpress.com/2013/09/06/cbr-calls-for-double-track-width-bridge-at-falahill/>

END OF RELEASE

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