Press release from Campaign for Borders Rail – not for publication until Monday 10th Aug.

**CAMPAIGNERS URGE OTHERS TO LEARN BORDERS RAILWAY LESSONS**

The Campaign for Borders Rail (CBR) [1] has urged campaigners lobbying for the re-opening of other rail lines in Scotland to learn the lessons of the 17-year Borders campaign culminating in the return of trains on 6th September 2015 [2] – which CBR describes as ‘one of the greatest achievements of grassroots rail campaigning in British history’. And acknowledgment of CBR’s pioneering work has come from two campaigns in Fife which are hoping to be the next to put new routes on the Scottish railway map.

CBR’s UK Parliamentary Officer, Nick Bethune, commented:

‘If you look at the history of CBR, stretching back to 1998, it’s quite clear that the campaign has had to be consistently willing to challenge the establishment, to rock the boat with well-informed and innovative ideas – sometimes against implacable official opposition. The other secret of CBR’s success has been the way it galvanised public opinion, helping to convince Borderers that they really could get their railway back.’

CBR founder member and its first Chair from 1998 until 2002, Petra Biberbach, reflected:

‘For me the lessons are: first, campaign groups are not elected, so you have to seek a mandate and get the people on side, which means working in partnership with other groups who share your aims, and avoiding an attitude of “them and us”; second, you need to be politically savvy and know when to work with the system, and when to challenge it; and third, passion, persuasion and tenacity are required. And in CBR’s case, well-informed and constructive criticism eventually brought some significant improvements to the Borders Railway specification [3].’

Allen Armstrong of the LevenMouth Rail Campaign (LMRC) [4], which is seeking re-opening of the six-mile branch line from Thornton to the town of Leven (which together with adjoining Methil and Buckhaven is the largest conurbation in Scotland without a rail service) said:

‘LMRC has been inspired by the recent wave of rail re-openings, especially the Borders campaign, and the reimagining of a more rational and inclusive transport network. If we are now in "a new age of rail", as a recent Scottish Transport Minister claimed, we are very hopeful the 45,000 residents of Levenmouth and the East Neuk will soon be reconnected.  The Borders Railway must not be the last. Despite feasibility studies here concluding a very strong case for reinstating the Thornton-Leven line, we also appreciate from the Borders example that ultimately it is politics that exerts greatest sway in these decisions.’

Jane Ann Liston, Convenor of the STARlink campaign [5] which has led a 26-year fight for reinstatement of five miles of track between the East Coast Main Line and St Andrews – closed on the same day as the Waverley Route through the Borders – said:

‘The sheer dogged persistence of the campaigners in the Borders and their refusal to give up for nearly 50 years shows that tenacity pays off in the end. We in St Andrews salute their achievement and hope that it will pave the way for the reconnection to our town, an incredibly important destination and economic hub, through being a top tourist destination and the home of Scotland’s oldest university. Enabling direct rail services from the Home of Golf to Scotland’s capital as well as to Dundee would be a great boost for the whole area.’

**MORE INFO:**

Nick Bethune on 07974-825673

Petra Biberbach on 07812-103967

Allen Armstrong on 01592-713078

Jane Ann Liston on 01334-472546

**NOTES FOR EDITORS:**

[1] The Campaign for Borders Rail (CBR), established in 1998, is one of Britain’s most successful grassroots rail campaigns. CBR’s initial aim will be realised on 6th September when ScotRail services begin running over the new Borders Railway from Tweedbank and Galashiels to Edinburgh – bringing trains back after an absence of more than 45 years. CBR’s next objective is to see the railway extended to Hawick and Carlisle, completing the return of the Waverley Route closed in 1969 as part of the ‘Beeching cuts’ – which saw the Borders become the only region of Britain without a rail service, and left Galashiels and Hawick further from the rail network than any other towns of their size in Britain. [www.campaignforbordersrail.org](http://www.campaignforbordersrail.org/) .

[2] When ScotRail train services begin running on 6th September, the 30½ miles of newly constructed railway from Newcraighall in south-east Edinburgh to Tweedbank will represent the longest line to open in Scotland since the Fort William-Mallaig railway in 1901.

[3] As well as the core strategic achievement of the return of a railway from Edinburgh through Midlothian to Tweedbank, local rail campaigners – notably CBR, Stow Station Supporters Group and the Waverley Route Trust – can take credit for some important supporting successes, a number of them achieved in the face of official resistance:

* first coining the ‘Borders Railway’ name (in 2003)
* persuading Parliament to include a station stop at Stow when none was to be provided *(the Scottish Parliament passed the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Act in 2006)*
* saving of the original 1849 station building at Stow from demolition (2011), with the potential for beneficial community re-use
* Tweedbank station track layout redesigned to take 12-coach tourist trains, providing the basic infrastructure needed to bring additional tourist spend to the Borders (2012)
* a requirement for the new ScotRail train operator to accommodate ‘paths’ for tourist charter trains to fit in with the regular service timetable (2013)
* cutting the maximum waiting time at the A7 pedestrian crossing from bus to rail stations in Gala from 90 to 30 seconds, improving convenience and safety for rail passengers (2013)
* the first train of the day to Edinburgh retimed to provide a robust connection into the 06.25 service to London (2014)
* persuading Transport Scotland that the Borders Railway Class 158 trains should be refurbished to provide better window/seat matching and enhanced luggage/cycle space (2014).

[4] The Thornton-Leven line was closed to passengers in October 1969 (but was not one of the ‘Beeching cuts’). For more details of the LevenMouth Rail Campaign see: [www.LMRC-action.org.uk](http://www.LMRC-action.org.uk)

[5] The Leuchars Junction-St Andrews line closed – like the Waverley Route – on 6th January 1969 (but was not one of the ‘Beeching cuts’). For more details of the STARlink campaign see <http://www.starlink-campaign.org.uk>

**END OF RELEASE**