**Press release from Campaign for Borders Rail – not for publication until Monday 31st August 2015**

**‘BORDERS RAILWAY MUST HIT THE GROUND RUNNING’ SAYS RAIL GROUP**

Train operator ScotRail needs to pull out all the stops to ensure that travellers new to rail get the best possible experience in the first weeks of the Borders Railway, says the Campaign for Borders Rail (CBR) [1]. The lobby group last week met Phil Verster, Managing Director of the ScotRail / Network Rail Alliance, to press the case for extra coaches to be added to trains for several weeks after trains begin running on 6th September, and for additional staff to be deployed on station platforms to help out passengers unfamiliar with rail travel.

CBR’s Scottish Parliamentary Officer, Allan McLean, commented:

‘There is unprecedented national and international interest in travelling on what will be the longest railway to open in Scotland since 1901 [2], and we’re pleased that Phil Verster took close note of our intelligence on potential levels of demand from not just people in the Borders, Midlothian and Edinburgh, but also rail enthusiasts and supporters from very much further afield. The first public trains run on Sunday 6th September, when the standard service is hourly, rather than the half-hourly frequency on Mondays to Fridays – but there will be literally thousands of people queuing up to travel, so it’s vital that as many as possible get a seat on what will be highly popular trains. Many trains in the first few weeks will need to be strengthened beyond the typical two-coach capacity.

‘It’s very encouraging that Scottish Borders Council are deploying “ambassadors” at stations – which will normally be unstaffed – for the first few weeks, but this needs to be supported by the presence of rail staff who can provide expert advice about all aspects of rail travel.

‘First impressions will be critical for folk who are new to rail, so the rail industry really has to get this right in terms of clear guidance on train travel, enough seats for comfortable journeys, and of course the reliability of the service.’

**MORE INFO:**

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**NOTES FOR EDITORS:**

[1] The Campaign for Borders Rail (CBR), launched 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 – 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.  See [www.campaignforbordersrail.org](http://www.campaignforbordersrail.org/) .

[2] When ScotRail train services begin running over the Borders Railway on 6th September, the 30½ miles of newly constructed railway from Newcraighall in south-east Edinburgh to Tweedbank will be the longest line to open in Scotland since the Fort William-Mallaig railway in 1901. Edinburgh-Tweedbank trains will cover 35 route miles between Waverley Station and the line’s terminus.

**END OF RELEASE**