

UNION CONNECTIVITY REVIEW

Submission on behalf of The Campaign for Borders Rail

About us

Campaign for Borders Rail (CBR) is an independent community-based association operating in the cross-border region of Scotland and England. We work to promote the benefits of modern train services for communities across the Borderlands as a means of social, economic and environmental renewal.

Founded in 1999, our successful grass-roots campaign secured its initial goal with the 2015 re-opening of the Borders Railway between Edinburgh and Tweedbank, connecting the Scottish Borders to the national rail network for the first time since the closure of the 'Waverley Route' in 1969. We are now lobbying to re-establish the region's links with The South by extending the route through to Hawick and Carlisle.

CBR is run by a committee and office-bearers elected by the membership at the annual general meeting. We are supported by over 1,000 members from across the Borderlands, the UK and beyond. We are independent of any political party or commercial interest but seek to work with all bona-fide individuals and organisations who share our aims.

For more information about CBR please see <https://campaignforbordersrail.org>

This submission has been prepared on behalf of the officers and committee of Campaign for Borders Rail by:

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The submission reflects the views and policy of CBR which has evolved through discussion and debate within the organisation over recent years.

Our 2017 publication *Summary Case for a New Cross-Border Rail Link* contains further detailed information about our proposals https://campaignforbordersrail.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CBR_SummaryCase.pdf

Proposal Summary

CBR's aim is the economic and social regeneration of the Borderlands through the creation of a new cross-border rail link. This exciting project would complete the Edinburgh – Scottish Borders – Carlisle railway, delivering significant strategic benefits central to the Union Connectivity Review's objectives.

The proposal would involve extending the existing Borders Railway from its present terminus at Tweedbank through Hawick to a connection with the West Coast Main Line (WCML) near Carlisle.

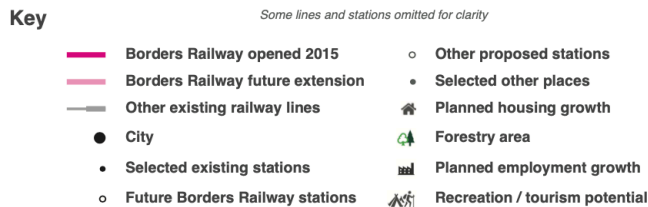
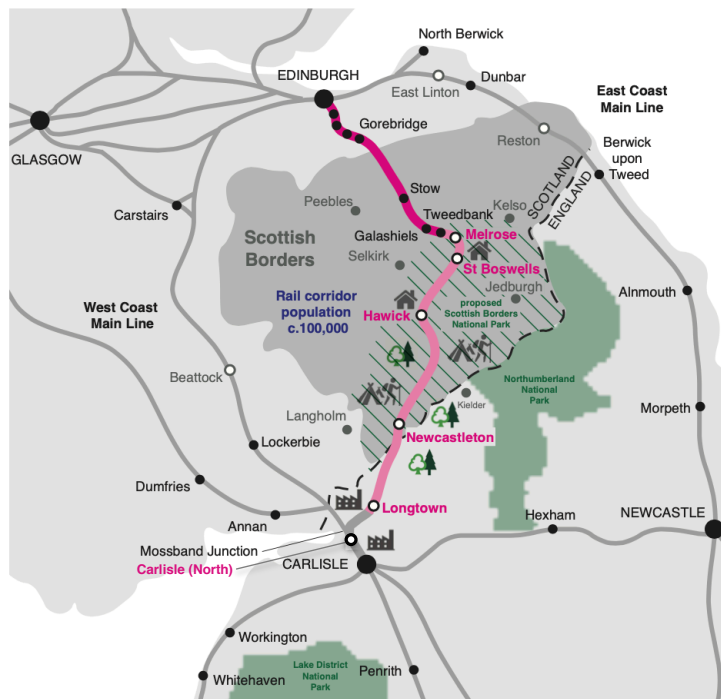
A key strategic driver for the extension is the planned introduction of HS2 services to Scotland via the WCML, requiring an additional freight route between Scotland and England to provide the necessary capacity on the WCML and meet growing demand for cross-border rail freight.

An important additional driver is the need to strengthen transport links within the cross-border region in support of the Borderlands economic regeneration and regional growth agenda.

The popularity of the existing Borders Railway, with passenger numbers far exceeding expectations, provides 'proof of concept' that new railways are an effective driver for regional economic regeneration. Building on this success with a new Scotland - England through route will help the region fulfil its economic potential whilst simultaneously strengthening UK-wide transport networks and supporting cross-border integration.

Key Benefits

- Releasing capacity on the WCML for long-distance high-speed passenger services by provision of a reliable electrified freight route between Carlisle and the central, east and north-east Scotland freight terminals.
- Maximising the return on investment and potential benefits of HS2 services by providing direct onward rail connectivity from the HS2 hub at Carlisle into the Borders region. With Carlisle – London journey times reduced to around 2½ hours, travel times from the Borders towns to London and other major cities in England will be dramatically improved.
- Increasing network resilience through provision of a diversionary route between Carlisle and Edinburgh for the WCML. This would be of benefit during emergency disruption or when extended engineering possessions may be required, for example to carry out climate-change mitigation work and re-engineering.
- Reinforcing the role and increasing the zone of economic influence of Carlisle as the regional centre of the English and Scottish Borderlands by improving access from the Scottish Borders area. The railway will also support the further development of employment and industrial zones on the northern side of Carlisle.
- Regenerating 'left behind' communities across the region, currently limited by slow and unreliable bus services, for example by providing access to employment and educational opportunities in the Carlisle area and encouraging the development of tourism and inward investment.
- Placing the transport of timber from the extensive cross-border forestry plantations on a sustainable basis by providing direct rail access to the logging areas and removing dangerous and polluting HGV movements from local roads.
- Supporting wider modal shift from road to rail through the extension of train services into areas of high car-dependency and poor public transport provision. The railway will become the spine of an integrated public transport network for the region through the provision of rail-bus interchange facilities, park and ride sites, and linkages with walking and cycling routes.



Project Details

To enable its use as part of an extended through-route the capacity of the existing c.30-mile Borders Railway would be enhanced through the provision of additional double track and signalling.

The c.56-mile extension from Tweedbank to Carlisle would largely utilise the available formation of the closed 'Waverley Route' with deviations where necessary, such as the connection to the WCML. The railway would be double track or passive provision shall be made for double track.

In line with Transport Scotland's electrification programme and the wider decarbonisation agenda, the railway should be electrified. It is also assumed that the Edinburgh South Suburban Railway would be electrified to provide onward connectivity for freight trains towards the central Scotland terminals.

The proposed traffic specification considered for each direction is:

- 6 trains per hour, Edinburgh to Gorebridge
- 4 trains per hour, Gorebridge to Hawick
- 3 trains per hour, Hawick to Carlisle

This assumes capacity for up to two freight trains per hour between Carlisle and Edinburgh.

There would be a new half-hourly all-stations service between Edinburgh and Gorebridge serving the large and growing population in Midlothian.

The existing half-hourly Edinburgh – Tweedbank service would be extended to Hawick and accelerated by omitting some of the stops at intermediate Midlothian stations.

Every second Hawick service would be extended to provide an hourly service through to Carlisle.

New stations would be constructed at Melrose, Newtown St Boswells, Hawick, Newcastleton, Longtown and Carlisle (North).

Carlisle (North) is a concept for a new station which could be located on the WCML (slow lines) close to the Kingstown industrial area and the Carlisle Northern Relief Road and would be served by Borders and Dumfries Line services.

Freight facilities could include trackside loading points and/or a dedicated terminal for timber between Hawick and Newcastleton; direct access to Kingmoor Yard in Carlisle; a central Borders freight terminal capable of handling intermodal traffic and bulk loads e.g., aggregates.

Based on our initial assessments, we would expect total project costs of £1.5-2bn including construction of the new line and stations, upgrading of the existing Borders Railway, and electrification throughout.

Assessing the Need for Cross-Border Connectivity

Question 1. If you represent a place, what is your current strategy for growing the economy and improving the quality of life there? What is necessary to achieve this strategy and what evidence do you have that improved connectivity is needed in this instance?

Question 2. Please provide any information you hold about current multi-nation journeys within the United Kingdom.

Question 3. In general terms, is there a need for new or improved transport links between the nations of the United Kingdom?

The new cross-border rail link that we proposed would address significant connectivity needs at national, regional and local levels. Although CBR's primary focus is a prosperous and sustainable future for the Borderlands area, we recognise that a project on the scale of the proposed railway must demonstrate wider strategic benefits in order to attract support and investment.

National connectivity needs

The project would meet a strategic need for increased England – Scotland rail capacity as a result of several long-term factors.

The planned introduction of HS2 services to Scotland via the WCML which will require intensive utilisation of the line, particularly north of Carlisle where services for Glasgow and Edinburgh will divide. Demand for HS2 Long Distance High-Speed services (LDHS) can be expected to increase significantly as journey time improvements and carbon reduction policies result in the majority of the London – Scotland travel market shifting from air to rail. This in turn will require additional paths on the WCML to be allocated for LDHS services.

The WCML also carries a large and increasing volume of all types of freight. Cross-border rail freight has seen strong growth, particularly in the intermodal (containers) sector with traffic between English deep-sea ports and inland terminals and the freight distributions centres in the Scottish Central Belt. This growth trend is expected to continue, driven by financial and environmental factors. Consequently, demand for freight paths on the WCML, which is already high, will soon exceed supply, especially when demand for additional passenger services is taken into account.

There is also demand for improved local services north of the border on both the West and East Coast Main Lines. On the ECML plans are well advanced for new stations at East Linton and Reston, while on the WCML there is a strong campaign to reopen a station at Beattock and calls for extra services at Lockerbie.

It is well understood that mixing LDHS services with others that have very different speed and stopping characteristics results in very inefficient utilisation of the theoretically available line

capacity. Maximising capacity in such circumstances is operationally very challenging and it can be difficult to deliver the reliability and punctuality required by both passenger and freight customers.

A further consideration is network resilience. Extreme weather exacerbated by climate-change will have an increasing impact on cross-border routes, particularly given the nature of the terrain. In response it will be necessary to re-engineer existing lines to better withstand prevailing conditions and this will be more efficiently delivered by temporarily closing routes for several weeks or months at a time. That is only possible if there are suitable diversionary routes available to ensure that both freight and passenger services can continue to operate in a near-normal fashion. The need for an alternative route was demonstrated in late 2015 during the lengthy closure of the Lamington Viaduct on the WCML following storm damage. Whilst an alternative route for Glasgow services was available via Dumfries, Edinburgh services required bus replacement for several months which would have been avoided had an alternative through route via the Borders been available.

Taken together, these factors show that the likely future demand for rail services of all types on the existing cross-border main lines is such that additional capacity will be required. Electrification, capacity enhancements and gauge clearance on the existing Glasgow & South Western (GSW) route via Dumfries and Kilmarnock, together with additional and extended freight loops on the WCML, offer a partial remedy. However, the potential of these interventions would not on its own provide all the capacity needed and would require significant disruption to existing services to deliver. A reinstated and electrified route between Carlisle the Central Belt via the Borders and Edinburgh offers a significant increase in capacity, resilience and reliability for cross-border services, whilst simultaneously delivering substantial regional and local benefits.

Regional connectivity needs

The Scottish Borders has very poor transport links to surrounding regions, especially into England. The closure of the Waverley Route main line and its numerous branches in the 1960s left the entire region without any railway stations. The main cross-border rail and road corridors – the ECML/A1 and the WCML/M74 – bypass the region and most of its population of over 100,000. The region's A7 and A68 trunk roads – connecting with Carlisle and Newcastle – are single carriageway, relatively slow and vulnerable to bad weather. Bus services on cross-border routes, particularly those towards Carlisle, are sparse and offer considerably extended journey times compared with the train services they replaced over 50 years ago. Consequently, the region suffers from a considerable deficit in through-transport connectivity when compared to other strategic corridors in the Scottish context. For example, the Aberdeen – Inverness and Perth – Inverness corridors both have through rail-routes and parallel dual-carriageway roads, despite serving smaller intermediate populations and end points.

The consequence of this connectivity deficit has been the marginalisation and decline of the Borders over many decades. The region has been unable to attract sufficient inward investment and tourism to offset the loss of jobs from traditional industries such as textiles, while the population of its towns has declined as young people leave to pursue education, employment and lifestyle opportunities elsewhere.

Opening the Borders Railway between Edinburgh and Tweedbank in 2015 has been a first step towards addressing these problems. The restoration a northward rail connection from the Central Borders has considerably improved the region's fortunes. New investment has been attracted to the Galashiels and Tweedbank areas, creating jobs. Supported by a strong marketing campaign, the region's tourism industry has successfully exploited its newfound accessibility from Edinburgh. The same accessibility has enabled the renowned Heriot-Watt School of Textiles and Design in Galashiels to attract more applicants, while further- and higher-education students from the Central Borders can access colleges and universities in Midlothian and Edinburgh without the need to move away from home. The rail link has attracted new residents to the area seeking an improved quality of life and more affordable housing whilst maintaining access to employment in Edinburgh.

Despite these successes it is clear that for the region to fulfil its economic potential and achieve equality of opportunity with other comparable areas it will also require a direct rail link to the South. Considerable economic and social problems remain beyond the immediate catchment of the existing Borders Railway. The region's largest town, Hawick remains isolated and in decline, being 17 miles from the railhead at Tweedbank. The southern part of the region, including Hawick, is closer to Carlisle than to Edinburgh but access to its jobs market, educational facilities, services and transport connections is severely constrained by poor quality cross-border links.

As with the Borders Railway connection to Edinburgh, a southern link with the North West of England would attract new residents to the area and enable new housing development, attract inward investment and tap into the substantial Cumbrian tourism market centred around the Lake District, Hadrian's Wall and Carlisle.

Local connectivity needs

A new Borders through-route would deliver much needed local connectivity improvements along its entire length. Of relevance to this consultation are the cross-border transport needs of communities in the southern Borders, for example the village of Newcastleton, located just three miles from the border and twenty-five miles from Carlisle. Dependent on Cumbria for many of its services and employment opportunities, the village also serves as a local centre for outlying communities on the English side of the border, for example Kielder and Roadhead.

Further evidence of the beneficial impacts of the restoration of the rail route at a local level can be found in the submissions made to you by Hawick Community Council and Newcastleton & District Community Council/ Newcastleton & District Community Trust/ Newcastleton Business Forum.

Implementation

Question 4. What are the main obstacles and challenges in improving transport connectivity between the nations of the UK?

Question 5. What evidence exists to demonstrate the potential impacts of improved transport connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom?

Question 6. When making transport investment decisions that aim to improve connectivity between the different nations of the UK, does the current appraisal framework capture all the potential impacts?

The border areas of Southern Scotland and Northern England – the Borderlands, as they have become known – share a rich and, at times, turbulent history and culture. It has often been commented that communities on both sides of the border have more in common with each other than they do with the rest of either England or Scotland. It is certainly the case that the border itself does not impinge significantly on normal life. People cross it daily to work, attend school, access medical care, to socialise and for a whole host of other reasons.

It is also the case that communities on both sides of the border face many of the same challenges and this is particularly so in relation to economic development and transport infrastructure. Lying at the extremities of separate jurisdictions in London and Edinburgh, it can be difficult to achieve the alignment of policy, resources and organisation required to solve joint problems. If the solutions to these problems require investment in new cross-border infrastructure, it is often unclear where commissioning responsibility belongs.

It was a recognition of these issues that led Westminster's Scottish Affairs Committee to hold an inquiry which resulted in the "Our Borderland - Our Future" report in 2014. Amongst its many recommendations it urged "the UK Government to work with the Scottish Government and with

key agencies on both sides of the border to extend the Borders Railway southwards from Galashiels, to Hawick and onwards to Carlisle” (para. 41).

The publication of the report was influential in the establishment of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, which includes local authorities on both sides of the border and is jointly funded by the UK and Scottish Governments. It aims to strengthen the shared identity of the Borderlands region through cross-border cooperation and investment. The programme has been allocated £10m funding for feasibility work on the Borders Railway extension, completion of which would do more than any other initiative to deliver the Deal’s objectives.

CBR is keen to see the project be taken forward through the existing Borderlands partnership arrangements that have been put in place, believing these to provide a sound-basis for cross-border, multi-agency working. Given the project’s wider benefits, its recognition as an objective of strategic importance at a UK level would be extremely valuable and we would welcome its adoption as a UK Government policy objective. The provision of funding and legal powers will require close cooperation between the UK and Scottish governments.

Implementation will also require close cooperation between the UK Department for Transport and Transport Scotland, so that the project can be coordinated with the latter’s Strategic Transport Projects Review process. This will build on the evidence base provided by Transport Scotland’s Border Transport Corridors Study. The evidence base for the project should also be supported by the analysis, policies and initiatives of the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership and the newly formed agency, South of Scotland Enterprise.

Current appraisal methodologies for transport investment decisions appear inadequate for assessing projects intended to bring about wide-ranging socio-economic benefits, particularly out with metropolitan areas. Traditional benefit-to-cost-ratio methods allow for a basic return-on-investment comparison between alternative proposals but lack qualitative discrimination based on other measures of value. Appraisal methods also need to provide greater weighting for hard-to-quantify benefits such as inequality reduction, increased public transport accessibility levels, and other objectives of the ‘levelling-up’ agenda. We note that the need for an alternative approach is acknowledged in recent Department for Transport policy concerning rail reopening schemes. We also note HM Treasury’s recent reassessment of the ‘Green Book’ which seeks to reform the tendency of cost-benefit-analysis methods to prioritise investment in areas that already enjoy high levels of productivity and investment. Both of these developments would suggest greater potential to prioritise cross-border infrastructure projects with complex business-cases, such as extension of the Borders Railway.

Impact of Covid

We do not expect the impact of the Covid pandemic to have any significant long term impact on the strategic drivers for this project. In the short term there has been a significant reduction in demand for passenger rail travel due to infection control regulations. Demand may remain at lower levels for some time after the pandemic ends, partly due to the increase in home working. However, in the medium to longer term we would expect growth to return. Whilst many people may reduce their commute to 3 or 4 days a week, there may well be a compensating increase in overall commuter numbers as the ability to work from home for some of the week increases the viability and appeal of longer-distance commuting. Demand for leisure, shopping and tourism travel is likely to return to previous levels while growth in the intermodal freight sector will also continue. Most significantly of all, the imperative to decarbonise the transport system will require a substantial modal shift from road and air to rail, driving significant expansion of rail capacity even in the event of lower overall travel demand.

Journey Case Studies

Question 7. Which specific journeys would benefit from new or improved transport links?

Example One. Hawick to London

This journey is chosen to illustrate the difficulties faced by people living in the Scottish Borders to carry out straightforward journeys.

This journey can currently be undertaken as follows.

Option A – via Berwick

Travel by car to Berwick upon Tweed Station 1 hrs 10 mins

Allow parking and transfer time at Berwick 30 mins

Travel by train to London Kings Cross. 4 hrs

Total journey time = c. 5½ hours

The above assumes access to a car and if travelling for more than one day, the issue of secure overnight parking.

There is no direct bus service to Berwick upon Tweed unless a change is made at Galashiels thus resulting in a 3-hour journey time for that leg. Thus, without access to a car this is not a realistic option.

Option B – via Carlisle

Travel to Carlisle can be achieved by bus in 1 hrs 30 mins or by car in about 1 hr.

Allow parking and transfer time at Carlisle 30 mins

Travel by train from Carlisle to London Euston takes approx. 3 hrs 30 mins

Total journey time = c. 5½ hours

Unless there is access to a car a journey there and back in one day is not feasible.

Other Options

Travel by bus or car to Galashiels/ Tweedbank 40 mins. Then Train to Edinburgh 55 mins and Edinburgh to London Kings Cross 5 hrs. Very convoluted and no time saving.

The only practical way to make this journey within the day would be to make the outward or return journey using the Caledonian Sleeper Service from Edinburgh or Carlisle.

It can be seen that communication from this community of c.15,000 is highly restrictive.

With Hawick – Carlisle Rail Link

Travel to Carlisle by train - 45 mins.

Allow interchange time at Carlisle - 15 mins

Onward connections using HS2 to London Euston 2 hrs 36 mins (projected)

Total joinery time = c. 3½ hours

Example Two. Local Journey Newcastleton to Carlisle.

Carlisle is the largest shopping and employment hub in the area and the distance is 25 miles. This journey can be undertaken by bus at very limited times throughout the day, Mondays to Fridays, and takes up to 1hr. Early morning and late afternoon services provide a basic commuting option for factory workers in the Kingstown industrial area on the north side of Carlisle. On Saturdays, journeys to Carlisle require a change of bus at Canonbie. There are no early morning commuter services on Saturdays. There are no evening or Sunday services.

With a re-opened rail link this would become a straightforward journey taking approximately 30 mins to the centre of Carlisle. A new station on the WCML at Carlisle (North), served by Borders and Dumfries services, would allow commuting from Newcastleton to Kingstown in around 25 mins. Together with higher frequencies, evening and weekend rail services, this would assist the expansion of the community and have a positive impact upon its economic viability.

Example Three. Melrose to Manchester Airport

Melrose is a historic town which is the tourism hub of the Scottish Borders, also home to the internationally renowned Borders Book Festival and Melrose Rugby Sevens events. Manchester Airport is a major arrival point for overseas visitors to the UK.

This journey would currently involve:

Travel north to Tweedbank (10 mins by car or taxi) or Galashiels by bus (approx. 20 mins)

Allow parking/transfer time 15 mins

Travel by train to Edinburgh takes approx. 55 mins.

Allow interchange time at Edinburgh 20 mins

Travel by train to Manchester Airport 3 hrs 30 mins (direct service)

Total journey time = c. 5 hrs 15 mins

An alternative would be a lengthy (1hr 45 min) bus journey to Berwick upon Tweed and thence to Manchester, most likely with a further change at Newcastle or York. Both options are circuitous.

An extended Borders railway would provide the opportunity of boarding a train in Melrose heading directly south to Carlisle in approx. 1 hr. The journey time from there to Manchester Airport being approx. 2hrs (direct service/ no use of HS2 assumed). Thus, a total journey time with a good connection at Carlisle of around 3 hrs 15 mins from Melrose to Manchester Airport would be achievable.

National Strategic Transport Network

Question 8. Is there a need for the development of a national strategic transport network to replace the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) following the end of the UK-EU transition period?

In principle we would agree that there is a need for a UK-wide strategic transport network to replace the TEN-T designations since the responsibility for cross-border transport infrastructure between England and Scotland is fragmented at present. We would like to emphasise the potential role a reinstated Borders Railway through route between Carlisle and Edinburgh can play as part of UK-wide strategic passenger and freight networks.

Northern Ireland

Questions 9 and 10 (Connections to Northern Ireland)

We have not addressed these questions on the basis they are beyond the remit our Campaign's aims. We would only note that were the upgrading of links to Northern Ireland to require an expansion or reopening of rail links west of Dumfries, it would further enhance the role of Carlisle as a major hub for rail services. One consequence would be additional capacity demand on the existing network through the Carlisle area including the section of the WCML from there to Gretna.

Campaign for Borders Rail

29th December 2020