



By Email

Rail North
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21st October 2013

Dear Sir or Madam,

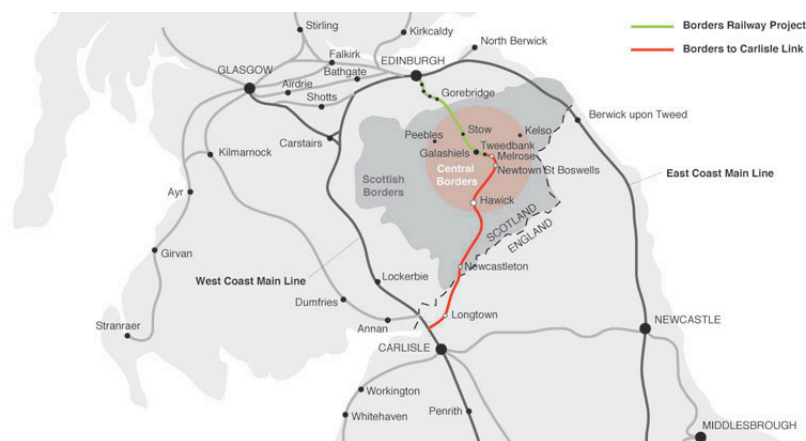
RAIL NORTH STRATEGY CONSULTATION RESPONSE

I am writing to you on behalf of the Campaign for Borders Rail with our response to your long-term rail strategy consultation.

About the Campaign for Borders Rail

We are a community grass-roots organisation with a wide membership base, concentrated in the Scottish Borders, but extending throughout the country. Our primary objective is the full reinstatement of the entire 98-mile 'Waverley Route' between Edinburgh and Carlisle, via Hawick. After the controversial closure of this important main line in 1969, the Scottish Borders was left as the only region in Great Britain without a single railway station. The towns of Hawick and Galashiels (pop. c.15,000 each) were left 35 and 45 miles, respectively, from the nearest railhead. The catchment area around these towns contains numerous other towns and villages, while much new housing development has taken place since the railway closed and more is planned. The total population of the central Borders, which would gain access to the rail network as a result of reopening is in the region of 75,000, while the region as a whole has a population of about 120,000.

The current Transport Scotland / Network Rail project to reinstate the northern 35-mile section between the central Borders and Edinburgh represents a welcome partial fulfilment of our aims. However, for the region to truly prosper, it needs a direct rail connection to the south as well as the north and, ideally, through services from Edinburgh, calling at the main Borders towns en route to cities in northern England and the Midlands. For further information about who we are and what we do, please visit our website www.campaignforbordersrail.org.



Nick Bethune, London Officer
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The Campaign for Borders Rail
one of the most successful grassroots rail campaigns in Great Britain
www.campaignforbordersrail.org

Our response to the Rail North consultation

The Campaign for Borders Rail welcomes the Rail North consultation and broadly agrees with the vision, analysis, proposed outputs and implementation for an improved rail network across the North of England. We particularly agree with the emphasis on improving connectivity from within the region to major centres in other regions such as Edinburgh and Glasgow.

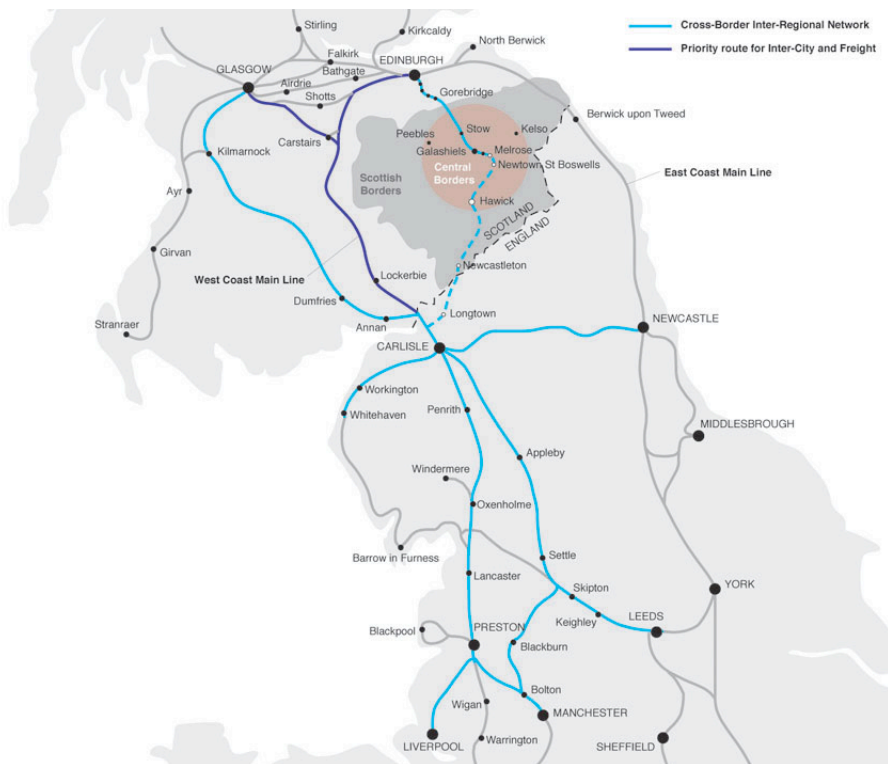
We have three principal comments on the proposed strategy:

1 – The Rail North consortium should be expanded to include representation from local authorities in the South of Scotland as well as the Scottish Transport Agency, Transport Scotland.

In geographical and economic terms, the part of Scotland between the Edinburgh – Glasgow axis and the Border, including both those cities, already has strong ties with the cities, towns and communities of Northern England. However, the transport links between them are currently under-developed, with the Border acting as a barrier to joined-up strategic planning. We believe the scope of the Rail North Strategy should be expanded to consider the potential for increased rail connectivity with Southern Scotland to boost economic activity on both sides of the Border.

2 – Rail North should also consider the development of a cross-Border inter-regional rail network with a central hub at Carlisle.

To some extent Carlisle already performs a hub role as the junction of 6 separate routes, but the potential for more through services between these routes could be much better exploited. Our vision, as illustrated below and including a reinstated Waverley Route through the central Borders, would link major cities such as Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle, Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool at its extremities, as well as towns and larger communities on both sides of the Border in between.



3 – We call on Rail North to support the case for a link from Carlisle to the Borders Railway terminus at Tweedbank, thus reinstating the former ‘Waverley Route’ as a through line from Carlisle to Edinburgh.

We note the emphasis in the Rail North strategy on the enhancement of existing routes, rather than the creation of new ones. However, we believe that the strategic importance of the Waverley Route makes it an exception for which there is a strong economic justification, benefiting both the Scottish Borders and also the North of England. The principal benefit will be to relieve pressure on the close-to-capacity West Coast Main Line. If combined with better utilisation of the Settle and Carlisle line the result would be a substantial increase in freight and inter-regional passenger capacity between the main northern cities and central Scotland. The core WCML route would then have more capacity for long-distance inter-city services, while overall, the network would also gain greater resilience through the creation of a viable diversionary route. Although an extension of HS2 to Scotland has been spoken of as a long-term aspiration that could address some of these issues, the section north of Leeds or Manchester is not expected to open until at least 2040. The

reinstatement of the Carlisle – Borders – Edinburgh route would deliver similar benefits on a much shorter timescale – perhaps 10 years – at much lower financial and environmental cost by making use of a substantial legacy of high quality disused existing infrastructure.

Rail North leadership required for new broad-based feasibility study

Reinstating the Waverley Route as a new Anglo-Scottish main line will necessarily be a multi-partner endeavour, but as over 20 miles of the former c.100-mile long route lies within the North of England and many of the strategic benefits will accrue there, we strongly urge Rail North to take a lead on the issue. Our view is that a cross-border coalition of local authorities and transport agencies should be formed to define and commission a comprehensive feasibility study, examining all aspects of the proposal: from the strategic to the local; for both passengers and freight. However, rather than creating an entirely new body to oversee the process, it would be logical and expedient to carry it forward under Rail North’s leadership, at least initially, with additional funding and co-direction delivered in partnership with the relevant Scottish authorities and agencies.

We hope that Rail North will give serious consideration to the issues raised in this response and would be very happy to provide any further information if required. We look forward to seeing the results of the consultation process in due course and wish the consortium well in its work to improve the rail network across Northern England.

Yours faithfully,

Nick Bethune

cc Simon Walton CBR Chairman