Press release from Campaign for Borders Rail – not for publication until 10.00 Wed 5th Sept 2015

**BORDERS RAILWAY – ‘NOW ON TO HAWICK & CARLISLE’, SAYS RAIL GROUP**

On the day of the Royal Opening of the Borders Railway [1] the Campaign for Borders Rail (CBR) [2] has called for a renewed push to extend the line southwards from Tweedbank to Hawick and Carlisle. With its new slogan, ‘building on success’, CBR anticipates that the popularity of the Borders Railway will boost the case for further rail reinstatement. CBR Chair Simon Walton commented:

‘Hawick is the Borders town which has suffered most from the loss of the old Waverley Route in 1969. And to meet its full potential, the Borders also needs a direct rail link to the South. The key benefits of southwards extension would include social inclusion, economic regeneration and tourism opportunities – and sustainable transport for timber from Kielder and the Borders forests, getting log lorries off the roads. And a reinstated railway through to Carlisle would provide a strategic diversionary route, relieving pressure on the busy West Coast Main Line.’

‘It’s very encouraging that Scottish Borders Council, led by Cllr David Parker, is already pushing strongly for a major feasibility study to examine all the opportunities for passenger and freight traffic that an extended railway would provide. And CBR will be delighted to provide informed input, ensuring that the mistakes made in the original Scottish Borders Railway Feasibility Study in 2000 are not repeated this time round. [3]

‘The physical obstacles to extending the line to Hawick initially are far fewer than had to be overcome in construction between Edinburgh and Tweedbank – such as the massive multi-million pound structure needed to burrow under the Edinburgh City Bypass.’

Today’s Royal Opening sees a steam-hauled special train reaching Tweedbank for the first time – arriving at platforms redesigned to accommodate 12-coach tourist charter trains [4], following years of lobbying by CBR, supported by Claudia Beamish MSP, who commented:

‘To be on the first steam train journey since the line re-opened is a real thrill as it brings home just what a huge achievement it is for all those who have campaigned for this moment. Often in the face of opposition from policy makers, the Campaign for Borders Rail stood firm in their belief that reopening this line would be good for the Borders but good for Scotland too.

‘I was very concerned that although the line would be suitable for commuter services, it was missing a trick in not having a long enough platform at Tweedbank to accommodate steam trains. Thus I was delighted to have helped to draw this issue to the Scottish Government’s attention, alongside the Campaign and to get agreement on this. There is enormous untapped potential to attract tourists to use the new line and experience the Borders like never before.

‘For the future, I am determined to continue to try to convince those in my own party and the Scottish Government of the importance of getting the line extended through Hawick to Carlisle and will be glad to work on this with CBR.’

**MORE INFO:**

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**NOTES FOR EDITORS:**

[1] When ScotRail train services began running on Sunday 6th September, the 30½ miles of newly constructed railway from Newcraighall in south-east Edinburgh to Tweedbank represented 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.

[2] The Campaign for Borders Rail (CBR), established in 1998, is one of Britain’s most successful grassroots rail campaigns. CBR’s initial aim was 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/) .

[3] *The Scottish Borders Railway Feasibility Study* by consultants Scott Wilson for the Scottish Office was published in February 2000. Amongst its key omissions were:

* failing to examine a two-tier rail service to cater for two different markets – an intensive suburban shuttle from Edinburgh to Gorebridge, calling at all stations, overlaid by a limited-stop express services from Edinburgh to Galashiels and Tweedbank – instead opting for a ‘one-size-fits-all’ timetable with all trains calling at all stations
* despite assessing 24 different ‘base options’ for different line termini and service frequencies, failing to analyse the option of terminating the railway at Melrose (the heart of Borders’ tourism) just two miles beyond Tweedbank
* largely dismissing the role of tourism:

‘Apart from Midlothian’s mining museum at Newtongrange, existing tourist attractions are not likely to benefit from the proposed rail service, primarily because the other current major attractions of the Midlothian and the Borders are not in the settlements that would be directly served by the line.

‘South of Gorebridge the line runs through moderately attractive scenery, and this could be exploited in promoting the line generally. However, the relatively short distance between Gorebridge and Galashiels and the presence of the A7 (allowing people to make the same trip by coach) is such that it seems unlikely (compared with the Highland routes or the Settle & Carlisle) that many people would travel it simply to see the scenery. Those who do will probably be those who are staying in the Borders anyhow. Some tourists will travel out from Edinburgh ‘for the ride’ on the line, but there is no reason to believe that they will spend significant amounts of money in the Borders.’

[4] In August 2012, CBR organised a delegation of Borders tourism interests – and Claudia Beamish MSP, a long-time advocate for the railway – to visit the Settle & Carlisle railway to assess the benefits of charter trains. Fired up by the visit, Beamish wrote to request a meeting with Scottish Transport Minister, Keith Brown, and in October Beamish and CBR representatives met Brown at the Scottish Parliament, to press the case for enhancing the Tweedbank terminus to handle charters of a commercially-viable length. CBR (and previously the Waverley Route Trust) had been arguing the commercial and wider economic case for charter trains for more than 10 years, and confirmation that their lobbying had finally borne fruit came on 6th November 2012. At a ceremony in the Scottish Mining Museum at Newtongrange, Keith Brown and David Simpson, Network Rail’s Route Managing Director, Scotland, signed the contract for construction of the Borders Railway, with train services scheduled to begin in 2015 – and Brown confirmed that Tweedbank station would be redesigned to accommodate 12-coach charters.

**END OF RELEASE**