

Borders Railway will be for tourists and locals alike

The Borders Railway is now well underway and according to The First Minister who visited Melrose today it will bolster business and tourism plans in Midlothian and Borders, but more importantly for Edinburgh it will accommodate a commuter link for people who wish to work or live in Edinburgh and the Borders.

Alex Salmond announced in a paper published today an ambition to realise the full economic benefits of the new Borders Railway, transform tourism opportunities and open up communities in South-East Scotland as new places to live, work, visit, learn, play and grow.

In addition to the 600,000 journeys expected to take place, the First Minister declared that Midlothian and the Borders should aim over time at attracting 1 million travellers down the new railway line.

The First Minister was joined by local business and tourism representatives at Borders tourist attraction, Abbotsford House, to publish Maximising the Impact: a Blueprint for the Future.

The blueprint has been produced by Scottish Borders, Midlothian and City of Edinburgh Councils, Team Scotland (Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise, Transport Scotland and VisitScotland), in order to highlight the vision, aspiration and economic potential throughout the entire region. The project will revitalise the Midlothian and Scottish Borders economies and deliver prosperity to those areas by providing opportunities all along the line both for existing and new businesses, ensuring that the economy in the region will thrive.

The new Borders Railway is expected to generate tens of millions of pounds for the economy by providing a public transport route from Edinburgh to Tweedbank in the Borders.

Plans include:

Shawfair, a 4,000 new home community with local amenities and a school build around the rail way in Midlothian due to open in September 2016

A pilot scenic steam train experience

An iconic home for the Great Tapestry of Scotland

A modern Central Borders Business Park

Making existing attractions, such as the National Mining Museum Scotland at Newtongrange, more accessible as a result of new, faster public transport links

Here is a link to the blueprint produced by all the partner organisations involved in the scheme:

[Borders Railway Blueprint – FINAL](#)

Speaking from Abbotsford House, former home of Sir Walter Scott, the First Minister said:

“When it opens next September, the Borders Railway offers a once in a generation opportunity to deliver major economic and social benefits to Midlothian and the Scottish Borders. By working together, we will achieve this vision and today’s plan sets out a bold commitment to making it happen.

“This is a vision which demonstrates that the region is more than the sum of its parts. It will help local businesses and tourist attractions along the railway grow by opening the area up to both commuters and visitors. Tweedbank also has potential to be turned into a Central Borders Business Park, with greener, high quality business and manufacturing

facilities to attract new businesses and capitalise on the Borders' outstanding reputation in textiles.

"We can expect the Scottish economy to benefit by tens of millions of pounds from the train line. By September 2017, the area around the railway line will be an exceptional tourist destination, with a steam railway service, National Mining Museum Scotland, world-class exhibition spaces, and the Great Tapestry of Scotland displayed in Tweedbank.

"Today I want to set a big target for the Borders. Edinburgh Castle attracts 1.4 million tourists each year. I see no reason why the Borders' tourist potential shouldn't take the number of journeys beyond the 1 million mark going down the line to see the magnificence of Midlothian and the Borders. That would be consistent with making this the greatest steam railway in Europe by 2020.

"There will be few, if any, railway journeys anywhere in Europe to match the outstanding scenery along the route of the new Borders Railway. I have no doubt that Borders Railway will be hugely successful, both in enhancing Scotland's infrastructure and transforming business opportunities along the line. I look forward to being on the first train running in September next year."

Jeff Hoogesteger CEO of Abellio Group who are to take over running Scotrail said:

"All of us across the Abellio family are thrilled at this unique opportunity to launch services for passengers using the first new railway in Britain for over 100 years. We will bring every ounce of our expertise to the delivery of exceptional services that will exploit the full tourism and business potential of this iconic new line. Celebrating the new route with steam services is an exciting and inspired decision that will give the Borders railway an unforgettable launch and drive its long term success as part of Scotland's national

railway”

Lena Wilson, chief executive of Scottish Enterprise said: “The new Borders Railway is a welcome addition to Scotland’s overall infrastructure. This blueprint will help chart how we and our partners ensure that this route stimulates even more business growth, generates new high value employment opportunities and boosts visitor numbers across the wider city region for decades to come.

Andrew Burns Leader of The City of Edinburgh Council, said: “The City of Edinburgh Council welcomes the Borders Railway and recognises its potential for generating significant economic benefits for Borders, Midlothian, Edinburgh and beyond. We have a responsibility to ensure the line’s economic and social benefits are fully maximised and look forward to working with all the project’s partners to make this happen.”