

Opening of the Borders Railway offers much to celebrate



At the press launch of the Borders Railway held this morning many bodies were represented who have been involved with the development and building of the line, and others such as VisitScotland who will do their utmost to reap the benefits of it in the future for tourism in the area.

The main photograph courtesy of VisitScotland shows Braw Lad Cameron Pate and Braw Lass Abbie Franklin from Galashiels Borders Ridings who gathered at the soon-to-be-opened Tweedbank railway station to welcome a Borders Railway carriage.

Mike Cantlay, Chair of VisitScotland welcomed the press to the launch of the newest scenic railway, explaining it is the longest domestic railway to be built in the UK for 150 years. He explained that 3.4 million tourists come to Edinburgh and it is hoped that they will use the new visitor attraction to get to The Borders, but admitted it will also be of great benefit to those who live in the area as a commuter train.



He said to the assembled body of journalists: "I am delighted to welcome you to a very special day for Scottish tourism. What a coincidence it is if you look out of the window you will see the fine Scott monument. Of course Sir Walter Scott is the father of tourism. He wrote the poem Lady of the Lake back in 1810, and as a consequence thousands of tourists came to Scotland. How ironic that our new visitor attraction will leave from Waverley in the shadow of the Scott monument and

heading for Abbotsford in the Borders for so long Scott's home. Scotland has been leading the world ever since in tourism. 3.4m tourists come to Edinburgh each year and from this weekend they can take a steam train to the Scottish Borders.

Minister for Infrastructure and Cities explained that Mike Cantlay's background lies firmly in the Borders where his family was involved with a kilt and tartan business so it is no surprise when he waxes lyrical over Walter Scott.

But the Minister was also delighted to have had a hand in the building of the railway by driving in the last golden clasp at Tweedbank.



Mr Brown said: "The excitement is palpable all the way along this new line. It will help spread wealth and jobs across the regions that it passes through. Investment in our transport network is vital to provide faster and greener forms of travel. The very encouraging figures around our economy owe a great deal to investment in infrastructure in recent years by The Scottish Government.

"You do have the privilege today of experiencing the longest domestic railway built in the UK in over a century. There has been a campaign running for many years but we stand at the threshold of a new dawn of exciting opportunities both in Edinburgh and in the Borders at either end of the line. There will be significant investment opportunities in all these communities.

"I must mention Madge Elliott took a petition to Downing Street in the 1960s and she has run a fantastic campaign over the years instrumental in the new railway being built. A locomotive has been named after her which is testament to the long-running efforts to reintroduce the railway. Her Majesty the Queen is coming to open the railway next week on the day

that she becomes the longest reigning British monarch since Queen Victoria. The attendant public interest in the railway will rise to a new level as a result.

£353 million has been invested in the railway by the Scottish Government. Brown was involved in the reinstatement of the Stirling-Alloa line and knows the importance of public transport infrastructure.

Brown continued: "It will open up places in South East Scotland to new opportunities like housing, tourism and jobs and I was struck by the stunning scenery along the line.

"I look forward to hearing about all the benefits that this new line will bring. The Borders Railway is the latest symbol of the golden age of railway. We have experienced a 7% growth in passenger journeys across Scottish rail routes year on year and I am sure that the Borders Railway will be just as successful."



Phil Verster

Phil Verster Managing Director of Scotrail Alliance said: "In January 1969 the last train travelled along this line and it is true that Beeching's cuts affected the Borders towns more than anywhere else. This is therefore a very special day. It connects people with jobs, businesses with customers and tourists with destinations. This connectivity will allow people to move to the Borders. This is the beginning of the story for the Borders. Scotrail will be introducing longer, greener trains with more capacity and shorter journey times to Scotland over the next few years."



Danny Cusick

Danny Cusick Senior Director Food & Drink Tourism and Textiles at Scottish Enterprise has been chair of the Borders Railway

Blueprint Programme for the last twelve months. He said: "Not only can you visit Rosslyn Chapel but you can also visit the Roslin Institute by using this train route. Almost 7,000 people live in the area and 34% of those have been educated to degree standard. There are over 100 development sites along the route bringing houses and mixed development.

"So it is about business, colleges and universities and tourism, and this railway will be genuinely transformational not just today but for generations to come."