One year to go until completion

One of the biggest physical barriers to returning trains to Midlothian and the Scottish Borders has always been the A720 city bypass. On Sunday 8 June 2014, this significant obstacle was finally overcome, with the full commissioning of the road bridge carrying the dual carriageway over the railway.

Since September 2013, a temporary dual carriageway adjacent to the existing Edinburgh City Bypass has been in place. Underneath the bypass, the rail bridge has now been successfully constructed and the team has returned the A720 back to its former alignment. This complex procedure involved off-peak overnight lane closures on the A720 over two weekends at the start of June.

Work along the A7 is continuing to move at a fast pace with the new road bridge at Heriot now open. There has also been progress made at Fountainhall, where work to realign the road is also nearing completion. Meanwhile at Falahill, work to shift the road slightly to the west of its current alignment, in order to allow more space between the cottages and road, is well underway.

There has been a concentration of activity focused on Galashiels and Tweedbank over recent weeks. Following on from the successful installation of the new rail bridge above Wheatlands Road, the project has quickly moved onto other vital pieces of work.

In Gala, the new bridge on Plumtreehall Brae has also been installed. The 30 tonne bridge was lifted into place as a single structure by a 500 tonne crane. The team are able to work on completing the bridge without impacting on the local road network.

The installation of the bridge follows the recent work at Currie Road and on the Redbridge Viaduct. It is expected that the current pace of works in Galashiels is set to continue until autumn 2014. Please visit the website for further details about progress in these areas.

Website

The Borders Railway website has been refreshed. It contains all the information from the original site, including maps, plans, images and all the latest news.

There are also new features on the site, including a video section. New material includes aerial footage of key areas of construction along the key sections of the line and a traffic ticker to keep you up to date on how works could affect you. Visit **www.bordersrailway.co.uk**
Looking ahead in Galashiels

Since the start of 2014, the team in Galashiels have worked hard to install complex structures and carefully build the railway through the town.

Our recent work has included a new footbridge at Plumtreehall Brae, a new rail bridge over Wheatlands Road, an angled rail bridge over Currie Road and further structural repairs to the Redbridge Viaduct. After significant work on installing and re-routing utilities, the team are also rebuilding the Winston Road bridge and approach roads.

On completion of the project, Galashiels will benefit from a new railway station giving residents the opportunity to travel by train to Midlothian or all the way through to Edinburgh. Adjacent to the new station on Stirling Street there will be a Transport Interchange linking the new railway to a new bus station. Work to begin construction of the three-storey interchange began in early June. The new building will include retail outlets, a café and toilets.

New rail funds for youth and safety initiatives

Twenty community groups from across Edinburgh, Midlothian and the Scottish Borders are the latest to each receive a £250 boost thanks to the Borders Railway and Scottish Community Safety Network (SCSN) community fund.

Twenty six local community groups have benefited in the previous two rounds of funding, bringing the total to 46 beneficiaries.

This funding is distributed amongst the groups to help support community activities and safety initiatives local to the new railway.

The most recent beneficiaries include Galashiels Air Cadets, the Tweedbank Fair and Lasswade Rugby Club.

Spotlight on Shawfair – A new station for a new town

A key aim of the Borders Railway project is maximising opportunities for employment, business, tourism and leisure along the route and the surrounding areas. This is becoming evident at Shawfair.

Shawfair is the location of Scotland’s first ‘new town’ in decades and it will benefit from a brand new station linking the town to Edinburgh and the Scottish Borders.

The new station will have bus links and easy access to Midlothian’s extensive path and cycle network. It will have two platforms with sheltered areas for passengers, car parking for up to 59 vehicles and cycle storage for up to ten bikes.

Shawfair station will support a large community in the area. A £200 million development plan, recently unveiled by Shawfair LLP, sees the construction of up to 4,000 new homes, along with two primary schools and a secondary school. There will also be an estimated one million sq. ft of commercial and retail space available for businesses.

While work on the new town is expected to last 15 years, Shawfair station will be up and running in 2015 as one of seven new stations being built for the Borders Railway. Work in the Shawfair area is progressing well with mining remediation and utilities work already completed.

In April, a new access road to the Shawfair railway station which crosses the railway next to the old Monktonhall colliery site opened.
Redbridge Viaduct re-opens

The public path over Redbridge Viaduct which sits to the east of Galashiels was reopened in June following repair works to the Victorian era structure. The viaduct, which will carry the footpath and railway over the River Tweed between Gala and Tweedbank, was closed for restoration works. Additional work on the viaduct will continue, with short term closures of the path required. Notices will be posted in advance of these works to make the public aware of the timeframes involved.

HUGH WARK, project director, Network Rail said:

“We are committed to ensuring that iconic structures such as the Redbridge Viaduct are fit for purpose for years to come.”

Out and about with the Borders Railway

People living throughout the Scottish Borders and Midlothian have their chance to come and meet with the Borders Railway project team at a series of events throughout the summer. Local communities can drop-by and receive updates about the construction of the new railway, as well as view up to date plans and photos. The Borders Railway project has stalls at the following events:

Saturday 14 June
Saturday 21 June
Sunday 22 June
Saturday 12 July
Friday/Saturday 25-26 July
Saturday 16 August

Newtonrange Gala Day
Gorebridge Gala Day
Braw Lads Gathering Sports Day, Galashiels
Dalkeith Agricultural Show
Border Union Agricultural Show
Stowed Out Festival, Stow

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One year into the construction of the Borders Railway, the team has:

Moved 804,000 tonnes of earth
Ordered 90,000 railway sleepers
Been fuelled by 25,000 bacon rolls from local caterers
worked more than 2 million man hours
Testing the tracks

As more stone ballast and tracks arrive, the Borders Railway team is preparing to start laying the new track. In June, the team will test the track’s key components as well as some of the equipment which will be used. Materials to make up the track bed and a small section of sleepers and rails will be tested.

The track-laying process will gather pace in the coming months, preparing the ground and laying the ballast and sleepers prior to the track-laying machine arriving in the autumn.

Hugh Wark, project director, Network Rail, said: “The team is in full-swing and have reached an exciting point in the project. Whilst finishing major earthworks and continuing to make positive progress on structures up and down the route, we are looking ahead to the next stage - preparing for track-laying.”

Protecting wildlife along the route

The railway route is home to a variety of wildlife and, as part of Network Rail’s commitment to minimising environmental impact along the route, the team has continued its extensive monitoring and identified ways to enhance habitats.

In the spring and into the summer, the environmental team has been using its expertise to locate breeding birds, mindful that each species possesses an optimal breeding time and desired habitat. Where active nests were found, buffer zones were marked out. These zones prevent construction access until the young birds have flown the nest. The team have also used netting, plywood boards and steel mesh to exclude any potential nesting sites. Despite temporary displacement, these measures ensure birds do not raise young in areas likely to experience interference or disruption.

In July, the team will be undertaking various works in the water such as river embankment repair and bridge protection. The period of time working in the water is limited to minimise the level of disruption for fish and lamprey. As we progress through the project, species surveys for bats and otters will also continue along the route.

For more information about what’s going on in your area, and more regular updates you can visit our website at www.bordersrailway.co.uk

Or get in touch using one of the following methods:

- 0845 604 4146
- info@bordersrailway.co.uk
- @BordersRailway