1,000 workers on site as construction peaks

Around 1,000 people are now at work on the construction of the Borders Railway as this project approaches its peak period. Work is evident right along the route, from Tweedbank Station to the excavation works at the Edinburgh City Bypass.

Earthworks are now 85% complete in the northern section of the railway. Mining remediation work, which stabilises the ground in areas with a history of mining activity, is now complete in the area north of the City Bypass.

Commuters travelling through Hardengreen Roundabout will have seen piling work commencing in preparation for the arrival of the new bridge over the roundabout.

At Gore Glen, new bridge supports have been built on either side of the A7, with a weekend road closure required in early November to crane in the bridge beams and deck.

In Heriot and Fountainhall new access roads are progressing well, with material excavated from Falahill used in their construction.

In Galashiels, the project team has begun work to excavate tonnes of material which has lain under Winston Road for over 40 years. This will allow the new railway bed to be constructed at the right level and for a new road bridge to then be built over the railway.
Spotlight on Stow

Construction work at Stow continues apace. Earth moving started three months ahead of schedule in August, and so far 20,000 tonnes of earth have been excavated. It is expected that these works will continue until the end of this year.

The last few months have also seen the start of drainage and utility works in Stow. Construction of the station is expected to begin in August 2014.

Stow Primary School sits directly beside where the new railway will operate. As a result the project team has worked with school staff to erect a robust sound barrier to help minimise disruption during term time. A number of class projects are also in the pipeline. These include an art project to decorate the sound barrier, as well as teaching pupils about the engineering and construction of bridges.

Local stonemasons crack on

A Midlothian stonemasonry company is undertaking the restoration of the 19th century Lothianbridge Viaduct before it takes centre stage once again to service the new Borders Railway line.

Forth Stone, based in Bonnyrigg, have replaced defective masonry dressings, repaired brickwork arches and repointed the stonework. Given the structure’s historic significance, they employed a number of traditional masonry repair techniques.

In recent months the viaduct has also been used to transport construction materials to help reduce construction traffic on the busy A7.

‘The Lothianbridge Viaduct is one of the largest structures we are working on along the new route. Although the structure has been in existence for over 160 years, transported many tonnes of passengers and freight, then lay dormant for almost 50 years, it is still surprisingly sound and requires very little restoration for its age. It really goes to show how well built it is!’

CAROL DEVENEY SENIOR PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, NETWORK RAIL

Landslips a thing of the past

The team is using tried and tested railway engineering techniques to ensure that future passenger services are not disrupted by landslips along the route. Wet and marshy ground around the Tynehead area has historically been subject to landslips due to the springs in the area. Evidence on the ground demonstrates that many repairs were made to protect the old Waverley Line.

As well as new drainage channels along the railway, the team are taking out the failed embankments and reconstructing them in order to meet higher safety standards. The new embankments will be treated with rock-fill drains and covered with a rock blanket.

Partners on the airwaves

Borders Railway has recently teamed up with Radio Borders to bring you ‘On Track’, a monthly update on their Drivetime show. The show gives listeners the latest news about what is happening on the ground. Please visit our website for more information, including details about how to submit your questions to the project team.
Community engagement

Over the summer, the Borders Railway team were out in the local communities along the route, attending gala days, community events and agricultural shows. We want to thank everyone who spoke to us about the project.

Local community projects share £2,500 Borders Railway grant

A range of projects across the Scottish Borders, Midlothian and Edinburgh have benefited from a share of a £2,500 community grant to promote community safety thanks to Borders Railway and the Scottish Community Safety Network (SCSN).

One of the projects benefiting is Newtongrange Primary School, which has plans to use the money to enhance their playground cycleway and improve cycling proficiency. All ten projects will also help promote community or rail safety in the run up to the first journey being made.

The application period for the next community bursary has now closed, with grants to be announced soon. Another phase of applications will be promoted early next year. For more information on the grant get in touch at info@scsn.org.uk

City bypass excavation

Network Rail and BAM have begun to excavate through the A720 City Bypass near the Sheriffhall roundabout. Once the excavation has finished a bridge will then be built so that the railway can run underneath the dual carriageway.

While this work goes ahead motorists are being diverted onto a temporary carriageway on the A720 Edinburgh City Bypass to the east of the Sheriffhall roundabout. The new dual carriageway, which sits adjacent to the existing road, has been designed to provide four lanes of traffic, maintaining the existing capacity of the A720.

It is expected that the temporary road will be removed in May 2014, when bridge work under the bypass is completed.

“"The construction of a bridge under the bypass will allow the new railway to be up and running in summer 2015. We thank motorists for their patience over the last few weeks while temporary lane closures have been in place to allow us to open the new road.

HUGH WARK
PROJECT DIRECTOR, NETWORK RAIL

The restoration project continues

Much of the old track-bed is in good shape and we are reusing many of the existing bridges and tunnels. Here the Borders Railway project team are lifting new prefabricated support spans into place as part of the restoration of Bridge 92, a feature of the old Waverley Line, over Ryehaugh Water.
Bowshank bats find new place to hang

Borders Railway ecology experts have helped protect a small group of bats residing in a Victorian rail tunnel close to Galashiels ahead of renovation works on the 165 year-old structure.

The work has seen the team install one-way ‘bat flaps’ and ‘bat pipes’ to cavities in the tunnel to allow the bats to leave ahead of works starting in the tunnel, to prevent any harm to the species. The work was performed under licence from Scottish Natural Heritage.

Although no breeding or hibernation roosts were discovered in the tunnel, some Soprano pipistrelle and Myotis bats were found to be temporarily residing in spaces, such as those once used by railway workers who sought safety from passing trains.

To ensure the safety of the bats, following the removal of the exclusion devices after two weeks, entrances to the tunnel were fitted with secure doors to allow works to continue for the duration of the project. Alternative roost sites in the form of bat boxes have been provided in nearby trees, which are already being used by a small number of bats.

FAQs

The Borders Railway team receives a considerable number of emails and other correspondence from local residents asking a variety of questions about the project. We have selected a number of the most common questions which have been raised over the last ten months.

Q: What are the journey times for each individual station?
A: The total journey time between Edinburgh Waverley and Tweedbank will be less than one hour. Journey times between stations have not yet been confirmed.

Q: Will the train go directly into Edinburgh Waverley Station?
A: Yes. There will be no requirement for passengers to change trains to get into Edinburgh city centre.

Q: Will the railway line be single track or double track?
A: There will be three sections on double track along the route. These are called passing loops and allow trains going in different directions to progress safely down the track.

Q: When will work be completed?
A: Construction of the Borders Railway is scheduled for completion in summer 2015.

Q: How frequent will the train services be?
A: The train services will run half hourly from Edinburgh and Tweedbank. A full time-table will be developed by the train operator closer to project completion.

Q: Will there be disability access along the route?
A: All stations, trains and car parks will comply with modern accessibility legislation. Step free access will be available at all stations.

Major excavation at Winston Road, Galashiels

The Borders Railway team are excavating tonnes of material which has lain under Winston Road for over 40 years. The new railway will run at approximately the same level as the historic line, so they need to dig down to construct the new rail bed in the correct position. The team can then build a new bridge over the railway and reconnect the existing road. They will be using specialist machinery to remove large amounts of material, including the old bridge abutments that were buried in the early 1970s.

“It is a major and time consuming engineering challenge, which is why Winston Road will be closed for up to a year. We are very grateful to the local community for their patience as we work to see Galashiels once again served by rail for the first time in over 40 years.”

NISSAR MOHAMMED PROJECT DIRECTOR, BAM

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:

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