Rail installation nearing completion

Track due to arrive in Tweedbank

The rail installation machine is due to reach its final destination at Tweedbank station in early February, completing the next major phase of work on the project.

With less than eight months to go until the line is opened up to the public, there remains a significant amount of work to be undertaken. Residents who live close to the line will already be familiar with the engineering trains which have become a common occurrence along the route until construction is complete. These trains will lay the top ballast, compact it into place and then tidy up the ballast in order to complete the process.

Hugh Wark, project director, Network Rail, said:

“Once the final sections of rail are installed down the full length of the 30 mile route to Tweedbank we will then be into the final stages of getting the line ready for passengers in September.

“The end of the project is now in sight. However, there is still a significant amount of work to be undertaken, including completing the seven new stations before services begin operating in September 2015. Nevertheless, residents should see the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles and plant machinery on the roads reduce dramatically in the coming months.

“We are proud of our achievements so far and we are also grateful for the continued support of the local communities along the route.”
Vegetation works continue

With less than six months to go until construction of the Borders Railway is complete, the team are continuing to work hard to prepare the route.

An increasing focus of the work is on clearing vegetation. Line-side vegetation, which includes branches and leaves, can obscure signals, get blown onto the tracks or grow to the point where Network Rail maintenance staff do not have a safe place to wait whilst trains pass.

Work on vegetation along the line has been ongoing while we have been building the railway corridor. The team is now working on some specific areas where further work will be required. Trees and plants are only removed where they could pose a potential hazard to the operation of the railway.

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Fibre optic signals the future for Borders Railway

Whilst the main focus on the new Borders Railway project has been on the civil engineering and rail installation phases, critical work to deliver signalling systems along the route has been going relatively unnoticed.

The signalling and telecoms teams have been working to install vital infrastructure which will allow trains to operate on the line safely.

Signalling systems have developed considerably since the days of the former Waverley route, with modern systems now being installed along the route. Significantly, the Borders Railway line will use fibre optic cabling to connect their signals rather than traditional copper cables.

Fibre optic cables, which are also being used for the communications masts along the route, transmit information to the signals faster than copper cables and can often be more reliable and less susceptible to adverse weather. They also have no scrap value which should deter any would-be thieves from targeting the cables and disrupting the network.

Galashiels’ one-way system ends

The temporary one-way system, which was put in place in Galashiels town centre to allow the safe construction of the new railway station at Ladhope Vale, was lifted at the end of January.

The temporary traffic arrangements saw Ladhope Vale, Bridge Place and the junction of Stirling Street added to the existing one-way system in the town to maintain the flow of traffic whilst works were carried out.

The traffic arrangements were required to allow the track formation to be developed, a new retaining wall to be built and the station platform to be installed.

Hugh Wark, project director, Network Rail, said: “The works carried out whilst the one way system was in place were vital to allow us to deliver a railway station for the people of Galashiels. We’d like to thank local residents and businesses for their on-going patience and support whilst these works were underway.”
2014 ACHIEVEMENTS

HARDEGREEN ROUNDABOUT:
The longest new structure installed on the Borders Railway project. A 1,200 tonne crane was used to hoist the bridge’s four beams into place, with each beam weighing 107 tonnes.

SHAWFAIR STATION:
Shawfair station is the first new station on the Borders Railway. It will eventually be at the heart of the new town centre planned for the south east of Edinburgh. It will provide excellent interchange facilities with buses and links to an extensive path and cycle network.

BOWSHANK TUNNEL:
The 200m long Bowshank Tunnel will play a vital role in connecting the new railway and is one of two historic tunnels being refurbished along the route. The 165-year-old Victorian structure has been refurbished up to modern standards.

EDINBURGH CITY BYPASS:
One of the most noticeable aspects of the Borders Railway project was the temporary diversion of the A720 Edinburgh City Bypass to allow the construction of a bridge so the railway could run underneath the bypass.
Communication masts installed

A programme of work to install a network of communications masts, which will allow the train drivers to talk to signallers, controllers and other railway managers, is now underway along the new Borders Railway route.

The hi-tech communications equipment is a very important part of a modern, safe railway, improving the speed at which important information can be relayed to railway staff. This communications system builds upon the other safety measures being implemented as part of the project.

Commenting on the installation, Hugh Wark, project director, Network Rail, said: “The technology behind the system is called GSM-R and provides a digitally secure method for our train drivers to talk to signallers and controllers so that future passengers can travel safely along the new Borders Railway. The installation of the equipment is another sign that we are moving closer to a fully operational railway.”

The GSM-R network for the Borders Railway will be implemented using dedicated masts, or ‘base stations’, close to the railway. Masts are being installed at 15 locations along the route. The positioning of the masts has been determined by the best location for operational effectiveness following detailed signal strength testing, a visual assessment and in conjunction with the relevant local authorities.

New community funding

The final round of funding offering £4,000 to local community projects from the Borders Railway Community Fund has launched.

The community fund is run by the Borders Railway project and the Scottish Community Safety Network (SCSN). The aim of the fund is to support local organisations and activities which relate to community safety and encourage community engagement. The fund is available to any public sector, voluntary organisation, third sector or established club/organization working within the area.

The community fund has distributed £7,500 amongst forty-four groups across Edinburgh, Midlothian and the Scottish Borders since it launched in 2013.

More information about the Community Fund is available on the Borders Railway website.

Planning for railway opening

With construction now entering its final six months, Network Rail has been working with a range of agencies and organisations to plan for the opening of the line to passengers.

VisitScotland has been raising the profile of the line among national and global media outlets while Scottish Borders Council and Midlothian Councils have been hard at work helping local businesses understand and make the most of the potential economic benefits.

Importantly, we’ve also been working with Transport Scotland, ScotRail, the local authorities and a range of other partners to help plan the opening activities in September 2015. More details to follow soon.

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