



**GREAT IDEAS AND INITIATIVES FOR
THE BORDERS RAILWAY....**

**SERVING AND INVOLVING COMMUNITIES
BOOSTING LOCAL BUSINESSES
PROMOTING TOURISM
MODEL FOR OTHERS!**

**GREAT IDEAS AND INITIATIVES FOR
THE BORDERS RAILWAY....**

**SERVING AND INVOLVING COMMUNITIES
BOOSTING LOCAL BUSINESSES
PROMOTING TOURISM
MODEL FOR OTHERS!**

RE-ENERGISING SUPPORT FOR THE BORDERS RAILWAY...

ONE FINAL PUSH!

All political parties in the Scottish Parliament say they are committed to the Borders Railway project from Edinburgh to Tweedbank, now due to be completed in 2014. But the current recession and public spending cutbacks have brought real fears that it might be delayed again. It has been criticised in some quarters as likely to be uneconomic, with insufficient usage. This new package of information shows such criticisms to be both parochial and inaccurate.

It was the energy and leadership of enthusiastic MSPs, MPs, councillors, business and enterprise people, the local media and most of all the communities themselves in Midlothian and Borders which achieved the Borders Railway in the first place. A sense of local "ownership" and optimism, and the drive and enthusiasm of these key people need harnessing again. It is really important now for people to unite in a time of recession, along with Transport Scotland, to give one final "push" and demonstrate the many practicable ideas to make it more than viable - and to increase usage among local people and visitors.

One way to do this is to copy some imaginative initiatives which have transformed lines in other parts of the UK. You can read about these in part 1 of this article. This host of successful schemes from Community Rail Partnerships are particularly energising because often the planning, design and recruiting of support can start NOW. There's no need to wait for the first train to Tweedbank.

These partnerships offer a blueprint for Transport Scotland, rail companies, local authorities, VisitScotland, Chambers of Commerce, the National Trust for Scotland, Historic Scotland, and communities in Midlothian, Borders and beyond who want to offer their support, expertise and funding.

Across Britain and Ireland, in other parts of the "Celtic fringe", many railways run through less populated or more rural areas than the planned Borders Railway route, and had appeared economically less promising. Part 2 of this article features some reopened lines, in Ireland, Wales and Scotland, which overwhelmingly have done far better than predicted. They have often overcome very similar opposition and pessimistic claims to those we have seen from sceptics of the Borders Railway. They demonstrate how all supporters can be confident and assertive in face of criticism or negative projections about usage.

Part 1.

THE BORDERS RAILWAY; A WEALTH OF IDEAS TO ADOPT OR ADAPT!

Ideas successful for Community Rail Partnerships: How might they work for the Borders Railway?

Community Rail Partnerships across Britain have produced imaginative, award-winning initiatives. There are more than 60 CRPs, which exist to serve their communities, using railways to deliver other objectives for education, health, jobs and the environment.

CRPs have revived and sustained unfashionable, thinly-populated and rural railways across Britain - many had less going for them than the Borders Railway. Funders and sponsors include Network Rail, the Association of Train Operating Companies, Arriva and Northern Rail, economic partnerships, the Welsh Assembly Government, the Railway Heritage Trust and local authorities. These work committedly together to bring change and development.

Below are just some successful CRP ideas the Borders Railway could adapt, to reconnect with and serve its local communities; to create real local ownership; to increase usage and generate valuable income; and to attract visitors. These partnerships offer a blueprint for Transport Scotland, rail companies, local authorities, VisitScotland, Chambers of Commerce, the National Trust for Scotland, Historic Scotland, and communities in Midlothian, Borders and beyond who want to offer their own support, expertise and funding.

This article will consider

A) The Borders Railway- the line as a whole

- Capacity & public transport integration
- Meeting the needs of local people-using consultation and marketing
- Promoting attractions in Midlothian & Borders
- Themed trains
- Walking, cycling, outdoor pursuits
- Use for filming
- Promoting local food and drink
- Educational and schools projects
- Waverley Route history and anniversary events

B) Projects for individual stations en route

- Design your own station
- Eco-friendly stations

- Local businesses and food outlets at stations
- Use of local volunteers
- Use of schools and colleges for artwork
- Libraries at stations
- Children's play areas at stations
- Drop-in and advice centres
- Edwardian and Victorian restoration
- Gardens and allotments for rent
- Safety and crime reduction schemes
- Links with, and through-tickets to, local museums and attractions

A) The Borders Railway- the line as a whole

How capable will the Borders Railway be of adapting these schemes? A couple of points to begin with:

Capacity

The Borders Railway will be part-dualled and part-singled. Transport Scotland has already required companies bidding to design, build, finance and maintain the line to take account of secondary revenue from tourist traffic. CBR in turn has already asked that the Tweedbank terminus be able to handle charter trains and luxury land cruises like the *Royal Scotsman*. CBR says a rounding loop would be only a modest add-on to the 2-platform terminus. Coaches would also need some capacity to carry cycles.

Integrating the rail line with bus and cycle transport

Integrating rail with bus services and other transport is key, because it opens many possibilities to promote attractions and activities - suggested below - beyond the limited length of the Borders Railway itself. Integration with bus services was a condition of building the Borders Railway. This is also needed to involve and enthuse people who live a bit away from the line itself, especially given legendary local rivalries in Borders.

One inspiration is The Cotswold Line Railbus. This started as a taxibus; since 2004, Oxfordshire County Council has funded several dedicated rail feeder buses to serve rural villages. Services are timetabled to connect with trains, and offer easy interchange with guaranteed evening connections. This has become a well thought-out, popular, integrated bus/rail service, with marketing materials describing all facilities in the villages. It integrates with, and adds to, existing bus services. The successful Dalesrail (see below) also has coach links (for instance to Hadrian's Wall) which extend rail journeys to places the train can't reach.

Similar schemes could reconnect rail travellers with many towns and villages in Midlothian and the central Borders which haven't seen a railway for decades.

Also relevant in this era of encouraging people from cars into sustainable transport: many CRPs demonstrate the big potential for cycle hire and cycle facilities at stations, and interconnection with popular cycle routes.

Meeting the diverse needs of local people

Accommodating people imaginatively who live in the area will be the first priority of the Borders railway. Without this priority, understandably they won't be very enamoured of schemes to attract outsiders. Concessionary fares can be introduced for Midlothian and Borders people, for some trips below. CRP lines do so: e.g. the Cumbrian coast line operates a "first class day out" and Day Ranger ticket, linking with Lancashire and South-west Scotland. There is free passholder travel for some local passengers on the Conwy Valley line in Snowdonia.

- Commuters working in or near Edinburgh are a key aspect- but not the only one. The line can also valuably be marketed to:
- University/college students and pupils who travel daily to Edinburgh's private schools;
- Senior citizens and others with traditionally low car ownership;
- Sports fans, particularly rugby fans, who can once again travel in comfort to big rugby games at Murrayfield, and when Borders teams are playing in Edinburgh or Midlothian;
- People travelling up to Edinburgh Festival events, Edinburgh theatres and the Royal Highland Show;
- People using "shopping special" day trips in the festive season and other occasions.

Marketing and local consultation: All these possibilities for meeting local needs must be positively promoted and publicised, and extra trains would at times need to be laid on. Imaginative liaison will also be vital with City of Edinburgh Council and other bodies promoting major Edinburgh events which will be of interest to Midlothian and Borders people. Local authorities and community councils in Midlothian and Borders should also consult people living accessibly to the line on their own ideas for promoting local use and meeting local needs. This could include a competition publicised by local media. That would be a positive use of consultation, to engage people's enthusiasm and imagination – instead of the negativity generated by the likes of the Borders Party.

Promoting attractions and festivals for visitors and tourists

“Combination” rail travel with local attractions and historic tours has been a big part of CRP initiatives across Britain, with considerable success. For instance, the Wensleydale Railway has developed tours in the footsteps of the artist Turner who visited in 1816.

The Cotehele estate project saw Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership working with the National Trust to increase visitors to the waymarked estate, using a bus link from Calstock station. Station posters and adverts, leaflets and interpretation boards were displayed. The National Trust improved signage to aid visitors walking to Cotehele. There are also plans on the Cumbrian coast route to run guided walks to a Roman archaeological site near Maryport station.

Adapting to the Borders Railway: A train could be run, in collaboration with tourism agencies and NTS, and with bus /minibus connections, (e.g. from Tweedbank) to a range of attractions and festivals or events. For instance Common Ridings, the Braw Lads festival, St Boswells Gypsy Fair, Traquair Mediaeval Fayre, a Traquair and the Jacobites tour, a Selkirk & Flodden tour, Rosslyn Chapel, (from Eskbank) a round of the Borders Abbeys, or “in the steps of Walter Scott/ James Hogg” weekends. Walks to Abbotsford or the Roman camp of Trimontium near Melrose could be organised from Tweedbank. During 2010 Melrose Abbey has seen a 10% increase in visitors to 42000. How many more people would be attracted to the town if there was a well promoted train/bus day out from Edinburgh and other locations?

There could be Gardens tours, e.g. Mertoun house Gardens at St Boswells, Priorwood garden, or Kailzie gardens. In sport, there are the Melrose Sevens which have been attracting more than 16,000 visitors.

These initiatives could include reduced entry prices for train travellers, and brochures, sold on particular trains.

Themed Trains : music

This is a brilliant idea. The Penistone Line, Yorkshire hold very popular Music Trains monthly, e.g. the “Spring Jazz Train”. The Esk Valley Railway held a Goth Weekend Music Train from Whitby to Middlesborough. Rock bands, jazz bands, classical quartets, and traditional musicians in Edinburgh, Borders and Midlothian might all be interested in doing a stint and promoting their work, especially on evening and weekend trains?

Guided walks, cycling, outdoor:

Promoting access to the countryside by rail is essential for the continuing success of many community rail lines. Among the most successful of all CRP schemes have been numerous initiatives to attract walkers and cyclists of different ages and abilities to use the line. The Settle to Carlisle became the true walkers' railway and perhaps the best known. From it you see numerous walkers setting out and arriving at particular stations, and guided walks using a large number of volunteer leaders in the valleys below.

The central Borders is particularly rich in walking and cycling opportunities, and could learn from the following examples:

DalesRail, a leisure service for walkers in North-west England, is an integrated package providing full days out and on-coach refreshment services. In 2009 more than half their Sunday traffic were walkers. They have more than 170 leafletted walks planned for this year. They use the Settle to Carlisle and other lines. Their guided walks include tours in the steps of local famous people of the past, and visits to archaeological sites. DalesRail welcomes cyclists on board.

The Tarka Line initiative features town walks, e.g. round Barnstaple, and the longer TarkaTrail and Exe Valley Way. The Association's award-winning walks booklet actively promotes this rural railway to a growing leisure market. The guide is backed by a poster and leaflet campaign across the region. There are cycle hire facilities at some stations, with discounts for people arriving by train.

The Devon & Cornwall railway partnership publish an Introduction to self-guided walks from stations on the Great Scenic (branch) Railways of Devon & Cornwall. Walks all start and end at rural stations, so people can leave their cars. They feature attractions like Pendennis Castle and The National Maritime Museum.

Walking and cycling from the Borders Railway

The Borders Railway area is particularly rich in its scope for self-guided walks, guided walks and cycle routes, which could be added to existing brochures, posters and other information. Guides versed in local history might volunteer to take some walks. If the CRP model (such as Dalesrail) is adopted where buses or minibuses are used from Borders Railway stations to deliver walkers, or to

create round car-less trips - particularly from Stow, Galashiels or Tweedbank - the scope instantly becomes much greater.

Not only weekend opportunities exist. Ramblers' groups are thriving and contain many retired people. Midweek initiatives would also be possible if marketed imaginatively. Cycle hire at stations could offer reduced rates for rail passengers.

Here are some of the many opportunities to exploit:

- St Cuthbert's Way, 64 mile/100km walk to Lindisfarne, starts near Melrose.
- The Southern Upland Way passes close to Selkirk and Melrose.
- The Borders Abbeys Way (Melrose-Dryburgh- Jedburgh-Kelso) is already billed as a circular route. Connecting to a start or finish at Melrose would be simple. It is also a cycleway.
- Trains could be geared to annual walking festivals in the Borders at different times of year – for instance the April one in Selkirk.
- For gentler walks there are, e.g. the famed Eildons Walk, the Thornilee forest walks near Walkerburn and walks by the Tweed.

Cycling: Glentress Forest, east of Peebles is now a major setting for mountain biking. There are time trials, cycling weekends and mountain biking hubs. There is a nearby national cycle route. This gives scope to cater for more ambitious, skilled mountain bikers and their events, as well as for families.

Use for filming: This is another money-making possibility, particularly if steam trains are able to use the route. There is history here. When British Rail closed the Waverley Line in 1969 amid much protest, and schemes were drawn up to save parts of it, plans for a Border Union Railway included the active possibility of film contracts. Reservations were made for old stock including coaches and locomotives. At one point six-figure film contracts were under discussion. Since the project was abandoned, many of its ideas and proposals have been practised elsewhere, and their value proved.

Promoting local food and drink on train services

Several CRPs have developed popular food and drink initiatives. The Settle-Carlisle Railway Development Company operate the trolley service on Settle-Carlisle Line trains. They aim source most products locally, for instance from local food firms. Imagine the scope to market Selkirk bannocks, Gala soor plooms or Hawick Balls.

The Settle & Carlisle have Dent Ale from a brewery in Dent village. The Penistone Line Partnership developed a real ale (the Penistone Line Rail Ale!) to celebrate the Huddersfield-Sheffield line. It's from a local Yorkshire brewery and is available on trains and in pubs along the route. ***The Borders Railway***

could similarly be an ideal opportunity to market ale from the Traquair House Brewery, such as Traquair Jacobite and Traquair House Ale.

Educational and schools projects using the Borders Railway

Rail lines can be used for many educational reasons and can teach children about the curriculum, from geography and history to physics. For instance, the educational “Explore the Ribble Valley Line” DVD and teachers’ pack was developed by Clitheroe Line CRP working with a Lancashire primary. The DVD takes pupils on a train journey between Blackburn and Clitheroe introducing them to the structures, history and geography, all linked to the school curriculum.

Sussex CRP, Southern & Rye Primary Schools created Focus on the Marshlink Line as a teaching resource. Primary children visited the line over five weeks period to work on curriculum areas such as geography, the sciences and ICT. They learned about safety, planned a journey, then took it.

Given that the Scottish Qualifications Authority headquarters is itself based in Dalkeith, would active collaboration be possible on imaginative uses of the railway in the curriculum? Local colleges could also be involved, such as Borders College, which has campuses in several Borders towns.

Current or former major industries can also be featured, such as (in the Borders Railway case) the mining or wool industry.

Railway histories: The Waverley Route’s own history as an attraction

This was one of Britain’s most famous, scenic and in the cliché, iconic lines, along which A1, A3 and A4 Pacifics once proudly steamed to Carlisle. Many Midlothian and Borders people will still have strong memories and may have worked for it. Here are some ideas from CRPs which could stimulate enthusiasm, and preserve important historical information.

A number of CRPs host railway museums, for instance imaginative ones at Betws y Coed, Glenfinnan or Settle. While there was briefly a small Waverley Line museum sited in the former Melrose Station, there could now be a big “push” through local media for memorabilia, photographs, old cine and stories for a more extensive museum, with collection of published books, magazines and audio/video/DVD material. This would also generate income.

Local businesses might sponsor a museum and money might be raised for housing it beside one of the reopened stations or, if possible, again at the former Melrose Station: a fine historic building which needs some reconnection with the Borders Railway. Former rail workers might act as volunteers or part time staff,

just as former miners have taken visitors on tours round, e.g. Lady Victoria Colliery. They could make a new DVD of living memories with assistance from a local college. The history of Waverley Line campaigning could itself be a subject for commemoration.

Equally important, people from other parts of Midlothian and Borders could be enthused if the museum also collected memorabilia and photos from the Waverley Line's branch routes, such as the Lauder light branch from Fountainhall, branches to Penicuik and Polton, and Edinburgh-Galashiels via Peebles. This museum would be a draw for railway enthusiasts from across Britain and Ireland.

Postcard packs

These would also sell well and could be marketed in many locations including Edinburgh Waverley, the museum as above, and commercial facilities opened at stations on the line (see below). New sets of postcards are available, e.g. for the West Highland Line, selling well at Glenfinnan and from catering trolleys on West Highland trains. It could raise local enthusiasm further if community groups from a single town, e.g. Galashiels, were asked to collect suitable old photographs, and to take new photographs of the Edinburgh-Tweedbank line.

Promotion: Anniversary celebrations for a line

CRP lines have held very successful celebrations to commemorate anniversaries of lines opening or extending. For example when the Lymington - Brockenhurst Line held 150 year celebrations, via South West Trains and local partners, the day was a tremendous success with more than 5000 people travelling and activities at all stations, including Victorian costume events. While there appear no major time-landmarks in the next decade for the Borders Railway (except the depressing one in 2019 of 50 years since Waverley Line closure!) the reopening could feature many historical aspects. It could re-create for instance costume events from the Waverley Route's original openings to Hawick and Carlisle.

(B) Initiatives to make individual stations more locally-connected and more viable

There's time to plan in advance for these. None of your soulless bus shelters!

Here is a range of ideas already happening on CRP stations across Britain which could be adapted on the Borders Railway to generate income, increase business, promote local sense of "ownership", increase local facilities and advertise what the area has to offer. This is followed by some ideas for particular Borders Railway stations, utilising local history or attractions.

General ideas, adopted at many CRP stations:

Design your own station (or part of it at least!) Lancashire CRPs were involved in designing an “eco station” at Accrington.

Many **eco-friendly and mobility- friendly initiatives** have been established. Cycle hire as sustainable businesses have been set up and lockers established, especially near existing cycle routes. Stations have been made into **integrating points with rural or small-town bus services**. **Local businesses** have been encouraged to locate around stations . **Friends / Adopters’ Groups** have adopted, looked after and provided initiatives at many stations including, in Scotland, Annan, Girvan and Altnabreac. **Volunteers** have been widely used to promote train services, host trains for special events and lead guided walks. **Local pupils and college students** have designed artwork, information boards and posters for the stations. **Driver experience days** have proved very popular.

Drop-in and advice centres: Burscough Bridge on the Wigan to Southport line has a drop-in centre for local residents, with advice and support services including Age Concern, and the local council of voluntary service.

Gift shops have been created at Betws y Coed on the Conwy valley line. This is part of the Conwy Valley Initiative, a partnership of Arriva Trains Wales with Gwynedd and Conwy councils.

Restoration of Victorian or Edwardian stations: Bexhill was restored by the Sussex CRP, with Network Rail, the Southern and the Railway Heritage Trust. Dalston on the Cumbrian line is also being restored as an old-time station. Sadly most of the Borders Railway has lost its former stations - but might something be re-created at Eskbank & Dalkeith?

There is a **Community café** on Burscough Bridge station and Betws y Coed, while **Chu Chus Restaurant**, West Kilbride is a successful stylish restaurant in a listed station building, on the line to Largs, which has won awards. It showcases local fresh produce, reflecting the seasonal variety of locally sourced foods. A café or restaurant at or beside a Borders Railway station would improve business and could also source local produce. Borders towns are full of small independent shops, with local delicacies, arts and crafts, cashmere tweed and wool, all of which could be sold at or near stations to boost both their own trade and that of the railway.

A children’s play area has been created at Crowborough in Sussex.

Library: At Holmes Chapel station customers can browse a vast array of literature, which has brought a noticeable increase in passengers. A book exchange scheme operates on Arun Valley line stations in Sussex - and in the waiting room of reopened Laurencekirk on the main east coast line to Aberdeen.

Gardens and allotments: Lymstone Village Station Gardens were created for the local community. These include patches and allotments which villagers who don't have a garden can use. Given the legendary shortage of allotments and long waiting lists, this might prove a real hit locally.

Using local young offenders: Severnside Community Rail Partnership worked with local young offenders on community payback, along with local schools for the adoption of Weston Milton station near Weston Super Mare. They created flower beds and community art, and did environmental clean-ups.

Improving safety at unstaffed stations. The South Croydon Station project by South East London Transport Strategy and Southern Railway has radically improved the environment around the station. The project cleared overgrown footpaths, improved footpaths, added lighting, CCTV and cycle parking.

Discounts for local attractions: At Aberystwyth the Cambrian Railways Partnership promoted free or discounted entry to train travellers for local attractions.

School artwork competition to decorate station: At Oxted, local A' level school students produced five displayed paintings. Station users could vote for their favourite; the winning painting now hangs in the booking hall.

Adapting to the Borders Railway:

Stations on the Borders railway could, in addition to these ideas, specifically feature aspects of the history of their town or area. For instance:

Eskbank & Dalkeith could link with attractions such as Butterfly and Insect World; and has the possibility, already mentioned, of re-creating a Victorian station.

Newtongrange could feature the history of the huge viaduct and its scientific features. It could also feature the area's mining history, as could Gorebridge and Eskbank. Newtongrange could combine with Lady Victoria Colliery for joint rail tickets and tours. These stations might draw on the experience of the Tamar Valley Line CRP, which already has a number of initiatives to explore the mining heritage of the Devon and Cornwall border.

Galashiels could do similarly with its history as the historic centre of the wool industry, with tours to e.g. the Peter Anderson Woollen Mill in Galashiels. There is also School of Textiles & Design (Heriot-Watt University) in Galashiels whose students could be actively involved and promote their own creations. Galashiels could feature boards/ artwork on the Braw Lads Festival.

Tweedbank has many possibilities because of all the attractions it is near, and because spare space will be easier to create and plan. See suggestions above about bus tours. It could advertise many of these attractions and have a link with the old Melrose Station and the railway museum (There would be obvious links to be made with Scott's View and Abbotsford.)

***Add your ideas for other stations....
Then please promote our whole package of ideas!***

Part 2

Examples of other lines reopening in UK and Ireland: inspiration for the Borders Railway

Here we feature some reopened lines in Ireland, Wales and Scotland, which overwhelmingly have done far better than predicted. Some run through less populated or more rural areas than the Borders Railway route, and had appeared economically less promising. They have often overcome very similar opposition and pessimistic claims to those we have seen from sceptics of the Borders Railway, and they demonstrate how all its supporters can be confident and assertive in the face of criticism or negative projections about usage.

One key ingredient has been strong support and firm resolve from the very top (especially the Irish Government and Welsh Assembly Government) and through local authorities and development agencies, along with integration of reopened lines into coherent, longterm transport and structure plans. This demonstrates to our own Scottish Government and Parliament, to regional authorities and other bodies just what can be achieved with political will and forward-looking, integrated transport planning.

The boldest, biggest venture has been in the Irish Republic: and determined lobbying groups similar to CBR and other communities played a major role.

IRELAND: Reopening of the Western Rail Corridor, Irish Republic

Background: The Western Rail Corridor in the heavily rural west – a part of Ireland which has seen little of the so-called “Celtic Tiger” of economic expansion - forms a long, south-north line from Limerick up to Sligo. This former route crosses the present Dublin-Galway line and the present Dublin-Westport line; and joins the present Dublin-Sligo line.

Passenger services between Limerick and Claremorris had ended in 1976. A full passenger service between Limerick and Ennis was restored in 2003. Limerick through to Galway was restored in March 2010 with imminent plans for the next sections up to Tuam and Claremorris. A link further north to Collooney is subject to feasibility studies.

Phased re-opening: Government & council backing: part of structure planning

In 2005 an Expert Working Group report recommended reopening the Western Rail Corridor in three phases. The Transport 21 plan committed Government expenditure of 34 billion euro from 2006 - 2015 on road and rail. Reopening of WRC was part of the National Development Plan. WRC is also a key objective in the County Development Plans of Clare, Galway, Mayo and Sligo, and in regional planning.

Debate on need for the Corridor

The reopening of the Western Rail Corridor saw debate and divided opinion about its benefits, on very similar lines to the debate on the Borders Railway. It was supported by all the main political parties and by the local and regional authorities of counties through which it passes. Supporters predicted strong passenger numbers and environmental and economic benefits from increased tourism, industry and economic development. Sceptics claimed the population was too dispersed and it would need a big annual subsidy- the cost/benefit wouldn't be viable.

...But Government still takes the risk

But the Irish Government stayed firm and later that year approved funding for reopening of Ennis-Athenry. Iarnród Éireann proceeded with detailed planning and design.

Triumphant re-opening of Phase 1 on budget...campaigners vindicated

After more than 30 years, train services between the cities of Galway and Limerick started in March 2010, with five trains a day. **Rebuilding of the line came in on budget, at a cost of €106.5m.** It will feed into expanded intercity services between Limerick and Dublin, and Galway and Dublin.

Students, hurling and rugby fans, and senior citizens will all be able to use the route in addition to commuters, business people and tourists. A spokesperson for West on Track said: "This has come about through the voluntary work of the people of this region, supported by our public representatives, our national Government (with the support of the Opposition) and our national rail company. **"Since the West on Track campaign began there has been much ill-informed and disparaging comment from Dublin-based economic commentators and consultants. These people should be ashamed of themselves. The truth is that the Western Rail Corridor is being delivered for a tiny fraction of the cost of other road and rail projects at less than €2m a mile, making it the best value for money, mile for mile, of any project in Transport 21."**

Numbers prove higher than predicted

There were more than 30,000 journeys in the first month of the new Limerick-Galway service (from March 2010). That comes in spite of a previous Iarnród Éireann business case **anticipating losses of €2.4 million per annum** in the new service. Exceptional numbers were on peak-time commuter services out of Galway. Iarnród Éireann responded by doubling train sizes.

A West on Track spokesman said it gave "a clear and unequivocal answer to those who predicted that this project would not be supported.... people have answered those questions emphatically so let us not hear any more nonsense of that nature from now on. The large numbers of people waiting to avail of similar services from Tuam and Claremorris now expect the Government will take encouragement from the success of Phase 1, and announce its intention to proceed to Tuam and Claremorris without any further delay."

EXAMPLES FROM WALES

Lord Beeching viewed South Wales, in particular, as a declining industrial region. As a result, it lost the majority of its network. It has however experienced a major rail revival, with 32 new stations and four lines reopened: **Abercynon-Aberdare, Barry-Bridgend, Bridgend-Maesteg and Ebbw Valley**. This reflects the coherent transport planning in Wales and the benefits of devolution. It has a Rail Forward programme, a Wales Transport Strategy and One Wales objectives. Wales has also reopened long-abandoned narrow gauge lines, mainly for tourist traffic, such as the Welsh Highland in Snowdonia.

The Welsh Assembly invested more than 40 million to reopen the 18-mile **Ebbw Valley line**, closed in 1962. It shows, as so often, how demand for rail is often hugely underestimated. 18 months after reopening, this line was carrying a million passengers, against an original estimate of 400,000 by 2012.

Vale of Glamorgan:

In June 2005 a passenger rail service returned to the Vale of Glamorgan for the first time in 41 years. Regular services run between Bridgend and Barry and along existing track into Cardiff. 18 miles of this line is now reopened to passengers. Arriva Trains Wales serve two reopened stations — Rhoose, for Cardiff International Airport, and Llantwit Major. The Welsh Assembly supported the £17million project. The reopening was described by Assembly Ministers as “ a major milestone in the delivery of an efficient and integrated transport infrastructure for Wales.”

EXAMPLES FROM SCOTLAND

Stirling-Alloa (reopened in May 2008): The reopened railway from Stirling to Alloa provided a passenger (and freight on to Kincardine) route once again, after a 40 year gap. Around 400,000 passengers per annum now use this service, compared to the theoretical forecast of just 155,000 passengers p.a. before the line was built.

Larkhall-Hamilton (reopened 2005): BY 2008, trains were carrying about 40% more passengers than originally predicted.

Edinburgh-Bathgate (reopened 1986): Trains are now carrying four times as many passengers as the original projections estimated. The huge success has spurred reconstruction of the 14-mile “missing link” (to complete a through route from Edinburgh to Glasgow) between Airdrie and Bathgate, due to reopen in 2011, and electrification of the whole rail corridor. Bathgate was the first success of a new policy introduced by British Rail of experimental reopenings, which would become permanent only if well-used. It was –and did become permanent.

The example of **Laurencekirk station** shows once again the value of partnerships and integrated transport planning: Shut in 1967, but reopened 2009, almost 64,000 passenger journeys were made in its first year, greatly above predicted usage of 36,000. Again, clear commitment from government and a range of important partners, along with integrated transport planning, enabled this reopening. The small wayside station at Beaully, reopened 2002, now generates more than 50,000 trips annually, four times its original estimate.

Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson said : “These figures are a clear sign that the local community has welcomed these new services which are also improving access to jobs, education and leisure.” The listed station was transformed through £3.5 million investment, with funding by Transport Scotland and Regional Transport partnership NESTRANS; support from Aberdeenshire Council and a Railway Heritage Trust grant.

The almost universal increases in passenger usage of reopened lines and stations give genuine ammunition to supporters of the Borders Railway against those who make pessimistic predictions; and demonstrate both how the doubters elsewhere were confounded, and how political will and unswerving commitment, which looked to some like “a gamble”, were key ingredients in being able to prove these doubters wrong.

Text by Sarah Nelson, Campaign for Borders Rail

Front cover, music on a Poacher Line train, Nottingham - Skegness

