

Borders Railway

Boosting tourism and rural accessibility through railway improvements.



LOCATION: The Borders

STATUS: Complete



ASSET AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE



PRIORITISING PLACE

Summary

The Borders Railway is undergoing significant enhancements to revive a historic rail link between Edinburgh and the Scottish Borders, with aims to improve tourism, housing and business investment in the Borders and Midlothian.

Background

The Borders Railway, also known as 'the Waverley Route', once connected Edinburgh, the textile towns of the Borders – along with Carlisle and West Yorkshire. It was closed in 1969, when it was identified by the Beeching Report as unsuitable for retention.

In 2000, following a locally based campaign, the three local authorities of Edinburgh, Midlothian and Scottish Borders began developing a business case for the reopening of the Borders Railway and through their efforts managed to secure support from Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise and the rail industry.

Delivery

Responsibility for delivery and funding transferred to Transport Scotland in 2008. The project was delivered by Transport Scotland, Network Rail and BAM Nutall as lead contractor. With over 100 planning and prior approval applications, Network Rail and BAM Nutall worked closely with the three councils and construction began in 2013. The project was delivered on time and within budget, with extensive reuse of historic viaducts and tunnels.



Strategy

Scottish Borders Council published its blueprint for the railway in 2014, in which it set out how the route will attract workers, businesses and visitors to the region. Scottish Government reported that in the first full year of operation, the line carried 1,419,000 passengers, compared to 353,000 passengers before the borders extension came into service.

More recently, the extension of the line to Carlisle has been brought under consideration and funding from UK and Scottish Governments from the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal has been sought. In 2025, the Scottish Transport Secretary announced plans to electrify the Borders Railway would go ahead. Scotrail has also been authorised to initiate a procurement exercise for new electric trains that will operate on the route.

Investment

The project involved approximately £300m of investment and delivered 30 miles of new railway. Seven stations were constructed, four in Midlothian (Shawfair, Eskbank, Newtongrange and Gorebridge) and three in the Borders (Stow, Galashiels and Tweedbank).

CASE STUDY