

Borders Rail - Access Initiatives**Report by Ricky Moffat, Head of Commercial Operations****1 Purpose of Report**

This purpose of this report is to outline a potential bid for funds that will maximise opportunities for economic activity by developing Midlothian as a destination for walking and cycling through improved access opportunities to the area brought about by the Borders Railway.

2 Background

- 2.1** With around £98 million of tourism income brought into Midlothian annually, 38% of visitors are coming to Midlothian to visit the countryside and to walk and cycle.
- 2.2** Midlothian is beginning to realise, fully, the opportunity to become “*Edinburgh’s Countryside*” – taking advantage of the beautiful countryside and the existing off road facilities.
- 2.3** The Borders Railway Blueprint Fund offers a significant opportunity to attract many more visitors to cycle and walk in the area which will drive income to the local economy.
- 2.4** The Borders Rail also provides an impetus to build on the excellent opportunities for people to take day visits to Midlothian. Improved facilities and information regarding walking and cycling along with some smart but simple marketing will create the first steps to make this part of the tourism market more accessible to visitors.
- 2.5** There are three proposals contained in this report for which funding will be sought.
 - a)** *Gateway to Midlothian* - Create a gateway to explore Midlothian from Eskbank Station along Midlothian’s spinal Cycle Walkway
 - b)** *Station to Station* - Making the Most of Midlothian’s Stations to Walk and Cycle in the area
 - c)** *Connecting Gorebridge* – Creating links from the station to the Gore Glen Woodland Park and the wider countryside

Further details of these proposals are contained in Appendix 1.

3 Report Implications**3.1 Resource**

The estimated costs are contained within Appendix 1. The overall estimated cost of the works including manufacture, production and preparation of the various features is £109,500.

This is summarised in the following table;

	Total	Blueprint	Other external funding	Council Funding
Proposal 1	£76,500	£38,250	£32,500	£5,750
Proposal 2	0	0	0	0
Proposal 3	£33,000	£16,500	£15,000	£1,500
	£109,500	£54,750	£47,500	£7,250

It is anticipated that matched funding, which is a requirement of the Borders Rail Blueprint Fund, will be sourced from Leader, Forestry Commission, SITA (Landfill Tax) and the Land and Countryside budget.

3.2 Risk

The principle risk is the timescales linked to the various funding streams. The Leader fund is not yet established to receive applications but it is understood this will be in place by September 2016 which in itself is not a risk to the project.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☐ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☒ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

This project will support economic recovery and growth by contributing to *“visitors and residents benefitting from Midlothian’s quality of environment and attractions”* as well as increasing the number of people undertaking day-spend in the area.

The proposal will build on the opportunities presented by the Borders Rail for day visits using sustainable transport and active travel for recreation within the Midlothian area.

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The project will promote the area for active travel and for sustainable tourism through walking and cycling.

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Increased walking and cycling, using the railway as a gateway and/or a start point will support sustainable travel by visitors and support healthy living for residents in the Midlothian area.

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Local communities and key stakeholders will be consulted on key elements of the project.

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

An Equalities Assessment has been carried out for this project.

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

Sustainable tourism, through low carbon travel modes, is central to this project and should increase numbers of visitors to the Midlothian area. Additionally, the project will provide opportunities for local people to cycle and walk with confidence and with additional health benefits.

3.10 IT Issues

There are no IT issues resulting from this report other than additional web based information being provided.

4 Summary

This project uses the Borders Rail to make Midlothian a natural destination for walking and cycling - in particular for the Edinburgh market - through the three proposals described. The objective is to deliver more days-spend in the area to promote sustainable growth. The proposal will also provide further opportunities to Midlothian residents to live healthy lives through sustainable recreation and active travel.

5 Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to;

- 1) note the bid to the a range of funders including the Borders Rail Blueprint Fund to promote Midlothian as a destination for walking and cycling from the City Region in particular.
- 2) note that a further report will be provided once the outcome of the various bids is known.

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Background Papers:

APPENDIX 1

Borders Rail

A Gateway to Midlothian's Countryside and its Visitor Attractions

With around £98 million of tourism income brought into Midlothian annually, 38% of visitors are coming to Midlothian to visit the countryside and to walk and cycle.

Midlothian is beginning to realise, the opportunity to become "*Edinburgh's Countryside*" - taking advantage of the beautiful countryside and the existing off road facilities.

The Borders Railway Fund offers a significant opportunity to attract many more visitors to cycle and walk in the area which will drive income to the local economy.

The Borders Rail provides an impetus to build on the excellent opportunities for people to take day visits to Midlothian. Improved facilities and information about walking and cycling along with some smart but simple marketing will create the first steps to make this part of the tourism market more accessible to visitors.

PROPOSALS

Proposal 1

Create a gateway to explore Midlothian from Eskbank Station along Midlothian's spinal Cycle Walkway (See Image 1)

The Gateway

The Dalkeith to Penicuik Cycle Walkway is an 8 mile off-road spinal route connecting key settlements. It is used predominantly by local people and probably has over a million local visits each year making it one of Midlothian's most well used facilities.

For visitors, it provides a potential off-road gateway either as a destination in itself and/or as a means to explore the wider area and linking to key visitor attractions. It starts at Bonnyrigg less than 200m from Eskbank Station and is easily accessed on foot and by bicycle from the station. The proposed gateway will provide a starting point for using walking and cycle routes to explore Midlothian (see image 1).

This initiative will make Dalkeith Cycle/Walkway both a destination and starting point from which to cycle and walk in the wider countryside and to increase footfall at visitor attractions. This work will add value to the Smarter Choices initiative¹ being undertaken at the stations for walking and cycling in the area.

Improving What We Have

The following interpretative materials will be installed along the cycle walkway:

- orientation panels will provide information on the cultural and natural history of the route – these will replace the panels which are now redundant due to the changes caused by the Borders Rail (see image 4).

- a series of departure points from which to explore Midlothian on foot and/or by bicycle will be signed with small maps showing the routes (see image 2).
- totemic station signs will be installed at all the old stations to provide users with a historic context of the walkway and their journey along it (see image 7)
- promoting links to visitor attractions and key places of interest from departure points

Marketing

One of the main barriers to increasing visitor numbers is knowing how to get to Midlothian by bike, train, bus and car and linking this to a walk or cycle and of course the return journey .

To address this problem the redesigned web pages will categorise each route (see image 3) according to the different transport modes. The council web-pages will have phone friendly versions of the routes that can also be downloaded as a stand-alone leaflet.

Another important barrier to increasing visitor numbers is getting the message across to the right people i.e. the potential market. To achieve this, attractions will be promoted to both offline and online customers through word of mouth marketing.

Offline endorsement can often be the most powerful way of getting more people to use a particular product. To achieve this, a series of postcards will be distributed by staff and volunteers to key organisations and retail outlets such as outdoor and cycling shops over a 2-3 year period (see image 7).

An ongoing social media campaign will provide an online platform for using word of mouth recommendations.

These are low cost marketing options that, if properly executed over a 2-3 year period, should yield a much larger number of people using the area and its facilities.

Key Outputs of Proposal 1

- Design, manufacture and installation of a gateway facility to the Dalkeith-Penicuik Cycle Walkway near Eskbank Station (see image 1)
- Prepare and produce information and graphics for a series of 6 circular walks and cycles posted at departure points along the cycle/walkway and which link to Eskbank Station and which connect to Midlothian's key visitor attractions –(See Image 2 and 3)
- Up to date visitor information orientation panels along the walk/cycleway (See image 4)

- Redesign and update web pages incorporating graphics materials used above.
- Series of “totemic” station signs to mark the historic stations between Eskbank and Penicuik (See Image 5)
- Supply and install train related children play equipment at key points along the walkway (See Image 6)
- Preparation and printing of promotional postcards for distribution to key recreational organisations and retail outlets (see Image 7)
- Preparation of ongoing social media campaign.

PROPOSAL 1				
COSTS AND FUNDING CONTRIBUTIONS				
NO	ITEMS	EST. COST	BORDERS RAIL BLUEPRNT	MATCH FUNDING/CONTRIBUTORY RESOURCE
1	Temporary member of staff for 4 months to prepare routes and graphic information prior to production and installation of promotional materials	£10,000	£5,000	Contribution from Land & Countryside budget £5,000
	Proposal 1			
2	Supply and installation of a gateway facility to the Dalkeith- Penicuik-Cycle Walkway (near Eskbank Station)	£15,000	£7,500	Leader and/or SITA to match fund £7500
3	Prepare and produce information and graphics for a series of 6 circular walks and cycles from and to walkway/Eskbank Station (downloadable from web)	See item 1	See item 1	See item 1
4	Up to date visitor information orientation panels along the walk/cycleway	£8,000	£4,000	Leader and/or SITA to match fund £4,000
5	Prepare and produce information and graphics for departure points for maps for walks and cycles	See item 1	See item 1	See item 1
6	Supply and install departure point maps for walks and cycles	£6,000	£3,000	Leader and/or SITA to match fund £3000
7	Refresh update web pages using graphics materials used above (See image 4)	See item 1	See item 1	See item 1

8	Supply and install a series of “totemic” station signs to mark the historic stations between Eskbank and Penicuik (See Image 6)	£6000	£3,000	Leader and/or SITA to match fund £3000
9	Supply and install train related children play equipment at key points along the walkway (See Image 7)	£ 30,000	£15,000	Leader to match fund £15,000
10	Preparation and printing of promotional postcards for distribution to key retail outlets	£1,500	£750	Contribution from Land & Countryside budget £750
11	Preparation of ongoing social media campaign			Existing resource – Communications

PROPOSAL 2

Making Midlothian’s Stations Key Departure Points for Walking and Cycling in Midlothian

There are currently very few promoted countryside walks and cycles that connect directly to Midlothian’s new stations. It is proposed that information is prepared on a series of walks and cycles that starts and/or finish at these railway stations. If properly marketed, these routes will drive economic activity in the area

There has already been some work undertaken preparing web based walking and cycling routes throughout Midlothian by the Land and Countryside service along with volunteers which have been included in the Smarter Choices project. Around 20 maps are ready to be published on consoles at the stations and on the Council’s web page this year. (See Image 6)

Key Outputs of Proposal 2

- Preparation of walks and cycle routes from and to the stations at Shawfair, Eskbank, Newtongrange and Gorebridge (See Image 2).
- Promote linkages between the stations, Midlothian’s countryside and visitor attractions
- Preparation and printing of promotional post cards (See Image 8)
- Preparation of ongoing social media campaign

PROPOSAL 2			
COSTS AND FUNDING CONTRIBUTIONS			
ITEM	EST. COST	BORDERS RAIL BLUEPRINT	MATCH FUNDING/CONTRIBUTORY RESOURCE
No costs over and above Proposal 1 as included in work to be undertaken by temporary post	See item 1	See item 1	See item 1

PROPOSAL 3

Connecting Gorebridge and its station to the Gore Glen Woodland Park and the wider countryside

As a consequence of the railway, Gore Glen Woodland Park no longer has visitor information that reflects the significant physical changes that have been made to the site as a result of the railway. With major new housing development in the area, this 14 hectare open space comprising woodland walks will provide a key recreational space for local people. However it is not easily accessible on foot by local users or visitors to the area arriving by train. The Woodland Park also forms part of the Gorebridge Circular route that connects to Gorebridge station

The proposal is to improve the path network into the woodland park in conjunction with a bid to the Forestry Commission. The Woodland Park forms part of the Gorebridge Circular route that connects to Gorebridge station

Outline Proposal

- Upgrade and sign main path from Gorebridge to Gore Glen Woodland Park
- Renew interpretation for the Woodland Park to reflect changes caused by the railway
- Prepare walk leaflet from station to Gore Glen Woodland Park and beyond as part of Proposal 2

PROPOSAL 3		
COSTS AND FUNDING CONTRIBUTIONS		
Upgrade of path and steps to Gore Glen Woodland Park and wider countryside with potential link to future Gore Water path project.	£30,000	Forestry Commission £15,000
Preparation and installation of orientation panel for Gore Glen Woodland Park	£ 3,000	Existing resource replacement due to removal by Network Rail £1,500

4. ESTIMATED COSTS

Delivery of this project will require a member of staff to be externally funded for four months to undertake the preparation of information including drafting route maps, leaflets, postcards and redesign and populating the web pages. Internal staff will undertake the procurement of capital works once all the graphic information is completed. Internal staff will also prepare and co-ordinate the various funding bids required to match fund Borders Rail Blue Print funding.

As a consequence of the Borders Rail, visitor information at two of Midlothian's key visitor sites is now redundant due to an oversight by the project team.

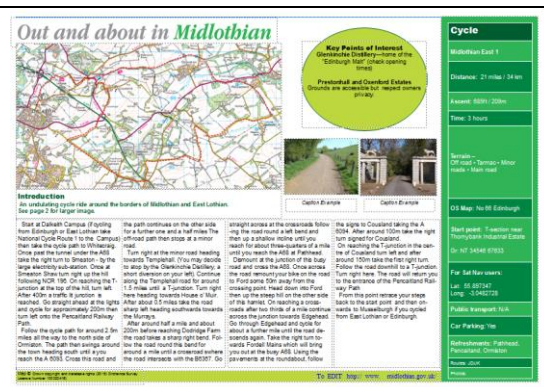
Smarter Choices is Scottish Government funded initiative to encourage modal shift in transport use away from use of the car to buses, trains, and bicycle and on foot.



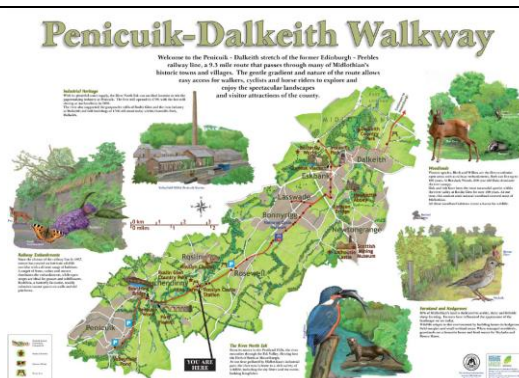
1. Gateway Feature



2. Example of Departure Points with maps



3. Actual example of cycle leaflet



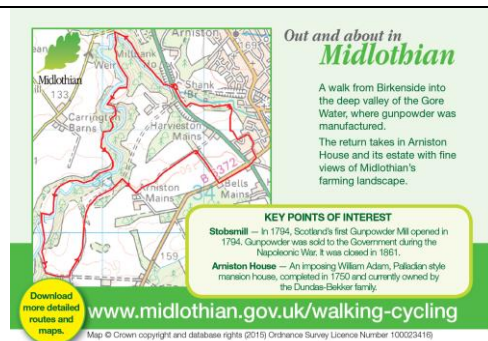
4. Orientation Panel



5. Example of totemic station sign



6. Example of train themed play equipment



7. Actual example of postcards