

Borders Rail – Hop on Hop off Bus**Report by John Blair, Director, Resources****1 Purpose of Report**

At its meeting of 15 December 2015 members were advised of the substantial activity that had been carried out to date in relation to Borders Rail and were provided with information pertaining to future planned work.

Within that report reference was made to the imminent return of tenders for a Hop on Hop off bus service which would allow visitors to use the railway and to access the various attractions across the Midlothian Council area.

The purpose of this report is to provide details of the proposed service and seek Council support to underwrite any shortfall in funding.

2 Background**2.1** As part of the Borders Rail Blueprint programme it had been identified that the provision of a Hop on Hop off bus linked to the railway could potentially provide a boost to the various visitor attractions in Midlothian.

On this basis, tenders were invited for the provision of a regular service during the peak months of the year. Tenders were returned at the end of December 2015 with Prentice Coach Hire having the most advantageous tender.

An integral part of this new route will be appropriate marketing and this will include the provision of bespoke signs at the various stopping points as well as dedicated leaflets and advertising.

2.2 Service Details

The service would operate from an anticipated start date in April 2016 to October 2016 on a seven day (Monday to Sunday) basis.

Due to the need to pre-register the service to allow services to begin in April 2016, the contract has been accepted following the appropriate application being made to the Traffic Commissioner.

The bus service will connect Newtongrange with a selected range of locations around Midlothian. This follows the introduction of rail services in September 2015.

The bus will operate on a 'limited stop' one way circular loop with the start and end point being the National Mining Museum of Scotland in Newtongrange.

The proposed timetable is designed to meet the arrival and departure times of trains to and from Edinburgh. A copy of the timetable is appended to this report. This is subject to discussions with the various tourist attractions.

Passengers will use the service on a "hop on hop off basis" and one ticket will provide unlimited journeys on the day of issue.

The operator has to take into account the following requirements:-

- a) The contract offered is on a "Cost Based" basis, under which all fares and concessionary scheme income is credited to the Council.
- b) The contract offered shall be based on a flat adult fare basis of £5.00 and child £3.00 per day. Concessions will apply on the service.
- c) A summary of passenger usage and revenue, lost and late/early mileage, complaints, incidents and accidents etc will be submitted to the Council on a regular frequency.
- d) The operator will be a member of Traveline Scotland.
- e) Destination display wording must be agreed with the Council's Travel Team.
- f) The Council will pay for the vehicle(s) to be liveried or 'wrapped' to reflect the service provided.

The actual timetable and stopping points are detailed in Appendix 1.

2.3 Funding Position

The tender submitted by Prentice Coach Hire amounts to £54,100. This covers all costs associated with the provision of this service as set out above. In addition marketing costs have been estimated at £15,000.

It is anticipated that the cost of this service will be met as follows;

Funders	Contribution	Notes
Potential Blueprint funding	£34,500	(i)
Visitor Attraction contributions	£12,000	(ii)
Fares income	£22,600	(iii)
Total	£69,100	

- (i) The bid to the Borders Blue Print group is yet to be confirmed but there is a strong indication that this bid will be successful.
- (ii) Similarly discussions are ongoing with the various visitor attractions and again this figure may vary dependant on the final outcome of these discussions.
- (iii) The fares income is based on 150 passengers per week on average using the service. However, as this is a new service this figure is difficult to predict the actual as the income from fares may vary.

It is proposed that the bus will be wrapped with a livery which will be unique to the service. Discussions are currently being held with Scotrail with a view to them funding the wrap.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

The cost of providing the Hop on Hop off bus service is £54,100 for the period 4 April to 2 October 2016. The projected marketing costs are £15,000.

Whilst every effort will be made to secure funding to meet these costs including the promotion of the service widely to attract users there is the potential for the full cost not being met. The significant element being the number of projected customers.

Council is therefore asked to underwrite any shortfall to allow the service to begin operation.

3.2 Risk

The most significant risk is financial if the efforts to attract funding and fare income are unsuccessful. This is particularly pertinent given the current budget position facing the Council. In the event if the funding bids to partners, and contributions from visitor attractions fail, together with lower than anticipated patronage this may result in the Council having to bear the full cost of the service.

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 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

It is anticipated that the provision of this Hop on Hop off service will attract visitors to use the various attractions across Midlothian. In this regard not only is it anticipated that will the service attract further visitors on the railway it will assist in safe guarding jobs at the various attractions. This will further develop Midlothian as a tourist visitor destination.

3.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach

By increasing visitor numbers the various attractions in Midlothian will benefit and allow these facilities to flourish and offer their services to a wider market, whilst attracting visitors to the Council area.

3.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Discussions are ongoing with the various visitor attractions to both partly fund the new service but to consider creative ways in which the service can be offered.

3.7 Ensuring Equalities

Equality issues have been considered and the findings detailed in the equality impact assessment attached.

3.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

By attracting increased visitor numbers the various attractions will have an opportunity to increase the footfall and potential additional income streams.

3.9 IT Issues

There are no direct IT issues as a result of this report.

4.0 Summary

This report provides Council with details of the proposed Hop on Hop off bus directly linked to the opening of the Borders rail service. It will provide rail users the opportunity to visit a number of attractions in Midlothian without having to rely on private cars.

The Council are being asked to underwrite any potential shortfall in funding for the new service.

5.0 Recommendations

Council is requested to:-

- Note the outcome of the tender process for a new Hop on Hop off bus service linked directly to the Borders Rail line;
- Agree that Council underwrites any shortfall up to £69,100 and that this is funded by a supplementary estimate in 2016/17 if required;

- Request the Director Resources to come forward with a report in due course at the conclusion of the service provision;

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Background Papers

Stops

1	Newtongrange National Mining Museum of Scotland	0930	1100	1330	1500
2	Crawlees Road [for Ryze]	0935	1105	1335	1505
3	Newbattle Road [for Newbattle Abbey College]	0940	1110	1340	1510
4	Dalkeith, Lothian Road	0945	1115	1345	1515
5	Dalkeith High Street [for Dalkeith Country Park east]	0950	1120	1350	1520
6	Dalkeith County Hotel on High Street	0952	1122	1352	1522
7	Melville Gate Road [for Dalkeith Country Park west]	0955	1125	1355	1525
8	Gilmerton Road [for Melville Castle Hotel]	0957	1127	1357	1527
9	Butterfly World and Dobbies [main road]	1000	1130	1400	1530
10	Hillend Snowsports Centre [top of hill]	1015	1145	1415	1545
11	Boghall Farm Visitor Centre [main road]	1020	1150	1420	1550
12	Roslin [for Rosslyn Chapel, Roslin Glen C/Park]	1030	1200	1430	1600
13	Loanhead Linden Court [for Mavisbank House]	1037	1207	1437	1607
14	Lasswade Village [opp Laird & Dog]	1040	1210	1440	1610
15	Melville Dykes Road [opp Premier Inn, Table Table]	1045	1215	1445	1615
16	Newtongrange National Mining Museum of Scotland	1055	1225	1455	1625

Includes 65 minute break for the driver to allow one driver to work full timetable

