

Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities
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Mr Colin Howden
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Our ref: 2015/0043212
5 January 2016

Dear Mr Howden,

Thank you for your letter dated 9 December 2015 regarding follow up points from our meeting of 28 March 2013 and subsequent separate communications with Transport Scotland.

I am delighted that since our meeting in March 2013, Network Rail has delivered the Borders Railway on time and within budget. The opening ceremony in September highlighted this achievement and in conjunction with the steam train taster experience, we have seen unprecedented patronage with over 370,000 journeys in the first three months.

ScotRail continue to monitor daily performance which is delivering the half hourly time table service and which was part of the original specification agreed with Network Rail. Early resilience issues and the impact of the steam train taster experience have seen a PPM of 81% compared with 87.6% for the Scottish Network for the first three months of Borders Railway services. A further assessment of overall performance and patronage will be undertaken in March 2016.

Through the Borders Railway Blueprint this Government is determined to see the communities of Midlothian and Scottish Borders fully exploit the economic, tourism and social opportunities which the railway will facilitate.

Regarding proposed links between Scottish cities, I can confirm that as part of the A9 dualling works, Transport Scotland is consulting with Network Rail to ensure the dualling takes appropriate account of rail infrastructure requirements.

With respect to passenger projections, a recent review of Station Usage and Demand Forecasts for Newly Opened Railway Lines and Stations by Transport Scotland confirmed that there is no systematic under or over-forecasting of demand. Borders Railway passenger numbers have to date far exceeded initial projections with such a positive introduction. These will continue to be monitored and will be assessed against the final business case as part of the full year review. Transport Scotland can confirm that their appraisal and demand forecasting methodologies are kept under constant review.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Kind regards



KEITH BROWN