



A regional injustice put right

Presentation to RailFuture conference – 16th June 2012

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Today's presentation

1. Decline, closure & abandonment 1963-1972
2. Wilderness years, then the tide turns
3. Parliamentary progress 2000-2006
4. The abortive DBFM process
5. Network Rail takes over in 2011
6. Looking ahead to 2014/15 re-opening



1963 – the Beeching Report

- one of the longest lines threatened
- Hawick & Gala in highest revenue category
- passengers & freight in decline
- up to 5 hours between trains
- less uproar than in the Highlands
- Scottish Office / MoT skirmishes
- conflict with economic plans



1966 – closure proposal & hearing

- the whole route to go – 97 miles & 24 stations
- 508 objectors – but East Suffolk line 1,916!
- TUCC verdict – “substantial hardship”
- then 19 months in limbo
- small stations destaffed
- dieselisation, but few DMUs
- service pattern unchanged



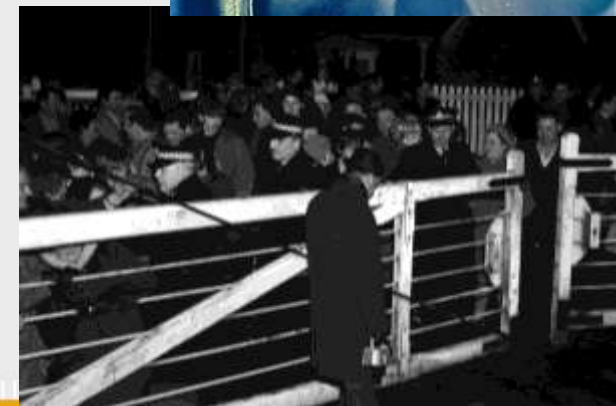
1968 – the final decision

- 2nd May – Barbara Castle backs closure
- 6th May – Marsh takes over from Castle
- 21st May Ministerial Committee meeting:
 - Willie Ross backs Edinburgh-Hawick retention
 - but a majority votes for complete closure
- 23rd May Ross memo to Harold Wilson:
 - “I would beg you to look at the...consequences”
- 5th June Wilson memo:
 - “I do not think it would be right to reopen the the decisions reached by the Committee.”



Closure: 6th January 1969

- last train: 21.56 Edinburgh-St Pancras
- David Steel MP on board
- Hawick delay while pilot runs ahead
- the Rev Brydon Maben and the the Newcastleton blockade
- David Steel's appeal to the crowd
- the train finally departs 2 hrs late
- the Anglo-Scottish route is dead



1969-72: a lingering death

- Hawick trip survives till 25th April
- the Border Union Railway Co:
 - breathtakingly ambitious
 - commuters / tourism / steam / timber
 - financial projections debatable
 - BR negotiations break down late 1969
- the last tracks lifted in 1972
- “by far the largest population grouping in Britain with no accessible railway services”



Why was the Waverley Route lost?

1. The Central Borders economic dev. plan:
 - lukewarm support for the railway / roads seen as the priority
2. BR management:
 - the culture of the time was closure = progress
 - no strategic decision 10 years earlier, to develop or rationalise
3. Government structures:
 - no rail powers at Scottish Office
4. 'Realpolitik':
 - financial symbolism of the route
 - no marginal constituencies!
5. The campaign:
 - too little / too late / Borders apathy



Wilderness years, then the tide turns

- 1975 – BR Edinburgh-Gala re-opening proposal
- route protection is abandoned
- Simon Longland's 1992 motor-bike survey
 - 24 breaches, in particular roads and buildings
 - 66% of rail overbridges extant
 - 74% of road overbridges extant
 - further development threats eg A7 road

“..it is clear that before this asset is irrevocably thrown away, a full comparative economic cost / benefit analysis of the rail investment option for the region which it represents should be carried out as a matter of urgency..”



Borders Transport Futures

- launched 1994 with aim of re-opening the railway
- Pre-feasibility Study for a N. Borders Rail Link (1994)
 - Edinburgh-Galashiels £28m
- Pre-feasibility Study for a S. Borders Rail Link (1995)
 - Longtown-Riccarton-Kielder £18m for timber traffic
- Border Rail Links Study (1995) by Oscar Faber
 - South Borders £20m / North Borders £18m!
 - Railtrack / EWS / First Eng. fund South Borders project development
- Railtrack pulls out of S. Borders project in 1997





Campaign for Borders Rail

- launched in early 1999
- three conferences & region-wide campaigning
- 17,200 signatures on petition to Parliament
- historic visit of Public Petitions Committee to Gala
- evidence to Bill Committee in 2004-5
- still campaigning strongly in 2012!



Rail re-opening goes mainstream

- 1998 – Borders factory closures
- Scottish Office picks up BTF North Borders Rail Link Study
- rail seen as agent of economic regeneration
- CBR leading the grassroots campaign
- 1999 – Scottish Office commissions Scott Wilson report on re-opening options
- 1999-2000 – Scott Wilson at work on the study, examining a ‘wide’ range of options



Scott Wilson report – 2000

- heavily ‘steered’ towards CrossRail extension?
- half-hourly all-stations to Tweedbank / 55 minutes
- estimated £73m capital cost
- report did not evaluate:
 - Melrose as the terminus
 - two-tier Regional Express / Inner Suburban service
 - the tourist charter train market
- 2000 SW report has remained the core spec



The Waverley Railway Partnership

- set up 2001 as Waverley Railway Project promoter
- led by Scottish Borders Council, with Edinburgh & Midlothian Councils & Sc Borders Enterprise
- Scottish Executive set up the Councils to be the 'fall guys' if the project went pear-shaped?
- faced many hurdles as the 'guinea pig' for rail re-openings under the Scottish Executive
- without WRP commitment and enthusiasm, might the project have foundered?



The Waverley Route Trust

- established 2002
- concerns about Waverley Railway Project:
 - escalating capital cost
 - one-size-fits-all timetable / slow journey time
 - lack of provision for charters and freight
 - social enterprise / community model not considered
- commissioned Corus to undertake the '*Delivering an Innovative Borders Railway*' study in 2004
- Corus endorsed WRT concerns and proposed alternative spec – but rejected by WRP



The Waverley Railway (Scotland) Act

- Waverley Railway Bill C'ttee deliberates for 2 years
- final report endorses project, with stations at Stow and Shawfair [but 61-minute journey]
- The Waverley Railway (Scotland) Act is passed in June 2006, with just one MSP dissenting
- estimated re-opening date 2011
- 2008 – Transport Scotland becomes promoter and switches from NR to DBFM model



2009 DBFM pre-qual. document

- maximum 55 mins journey time to Tweedbank
- encouragement for freight & charters
- new structures to accommodate W12 & RA10
- provision for future electrification
- passive provision for double track to Gorebridge
- allow for extension south from Tweedbank



Progress, but...

- 2009-11 – advance works
- 2010 – ‘Mastermind’ clause
- 2010 – three DBFM bidders drop to two
- 2011 – down to one DBFM bidder
- 2011 – Network Rail takes over
- 2012 – further advance works



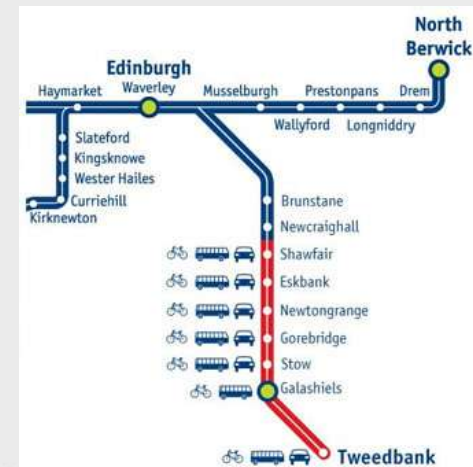
Where are we now?

- Transport Scotland and Network Rail completing due diligence for 'statutory undertaker'
- final deal expected in August – £235m-£295m
- Tweedbank station to be marginally relocated but no 'passive provision' for freight / extension south
- still no provision for charters:
 - Tweedbank platform tracks too short
 - no paths other than evenings / Sundays
- CBR pressing hard on charters and the community rail dimension



The overall verdict?

- a regional injustice put right after 45 years
- 31 miles – the longest British rail re-opening
- a step change in public transport – 50 minutes Edinburgh-Gala v. 86 minutes by bus
- well-located stations, but Melrose should have been the terminus
- better dialogue with campaigners would have produced a better scheme
- book your ticket for 2014!





Questions and discussion



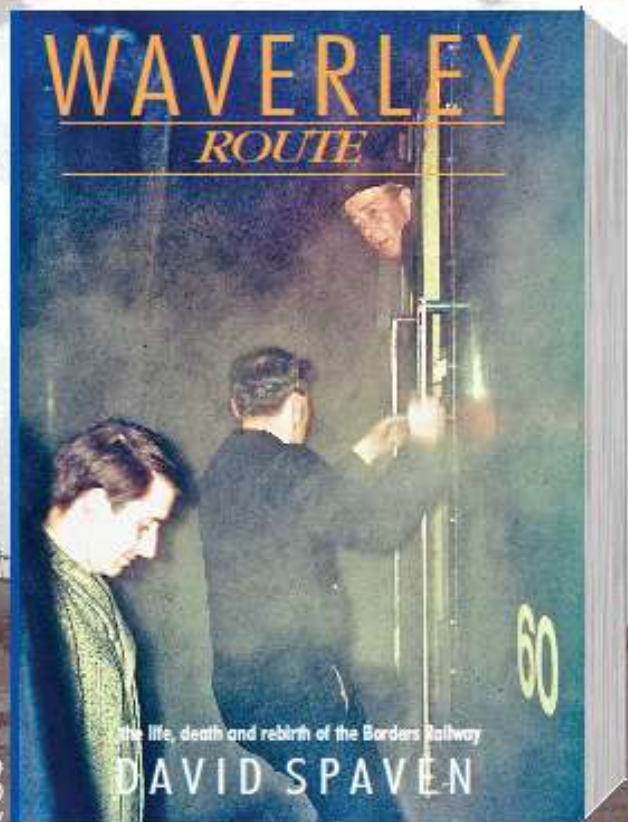
The night of 5th/6th January 1969 saw community protests at Newcastleton station deep in the Scottish Borders which blocked the passage of the very last train along the Waverley Route prior to its closure. What was so important about this railway that drove hundreds of citizens to break the law, led by a Church of Scotland minister? Why was the railway allowed to close? Who or what should we 'blame' for its loss? And more positively, how has it come about that, after an absence of 45 years, trains will once again serve the Scottish Borders in 2014/15?

These are questions that have never before been researched and answered in detail. **Waverley Route: the life, death and rebirth of the Borders Railway** sets out to tell a story that says much about Britain's railways in the late 1960s, and about the opportunities created by devolution of power in the last years of the twentieth century to right one of the great wrongs of the old model of London-based transport policy.

Even more than a transport story with wider implications, **Waverley Route** is a social history of the Scottish Borders.

Illustrated with numerous period and current photos never before published.

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Route knowledge



