# Borders Railway opens with steam specials

**As if the opening of the Borders Railway wasn't exciting enough, plans have been announced for a celebratory steam service pulled by a veteran locomotive.**

The Borders railway is the longest new domestic railway in Britain for over 100 years, running from Tweedbank to Edinburgh Waverley. Services start on this over 50km long line on Sunday 6 September. To celebrate its opening, ScotRail are laying on special steam services this Autumn – hauled by 60009 Union of South Africa. This imposing locomotive was built in Doncaster in 1937 and is one of only six remaining LNER Class A4 steam locomotives in the UK.

## Tweedbank to Edinburgh

Taking the new train service looks like becoming one of the most beautiful ways to begin a day trip to Edinburgh. Although Tweedbank is worth a visit in its own right – not least Abbotsford, the home of Sir Walter Scott.

Through the day there are trains every half hour, with the journey up to the centre of Edinburgh taking a little less than an hour (Borders Railway timetable [PDF]). For those up at the crack of dawn, trains start at 5.20am on weekdays with the last train back from Edinburgh at 11.54pm. So there's plenty of opportunity to make a day (and a night!) of it. As with all ScotRail services, you can take your bike for free and disabled assistance can be arranged.

The route follows the old Waverley Route which linked Edinburgh and Carlisle before its closure in 1969. A campaign continues to extend the new Borders Railway along more of the

length of this old route on to Hawick and Carlisle.

## Catch a steam train

The special steam journeys will run on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday between 10 September and 18 October 2015. The steam leg of the journey departs from Edinburgh shortly before 11am. Each special service will feature both first (£75) and standard class (£40/20) carriages and will be steam hauled on the journey from Edinburgh to Tweedbank only. It is diesel hauled to return to Edinburgh. The service arrives at Tweedbank at quarter past twelve, so there's a great opportunity to greet the train watching this steam classic pull in before lunch.

Jacqueline Taggart of ScotRail said: "These steam journeys will give people a chance to appreciate the new Borders Railway from the wonderful setting of a vintage steam train. This is a fabulous opportunity to showcase the country's newest railway line, and in such a romantic style."

To get a taste of what's in store, here is some footage of the steam locomotive 60009 Union of South Africa in action:

Scottish Transport Minister, Derek Mackay, said: "There can be few railway journeys which match the outstanding scenery on this new route, and I look forward to it being extremely successful. Steam services running on the reopened Borders Railway really will recapture the golden age of Scottish rail travel."

The last word should go to Madge Elliot, who campaigned against the local railway's original closure in 1968 and has since pushed for reinstatement. She told BBC Scotland: "This is wonderful. Mind you, I never had any doubt it would come back again. It was such a daft thing to do, to close our railway. The scenery is absolutely beautiful. We can attract

visitors from all over the world to this part of the country.”

*Tweedbank station is just under an hour’s drive from Homildon Cottage [Google map], and has free car parking facilities. The regular train services take 55 minutes into Edinburgh Waverley.*

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