

# Progress report since November 2023

## 1. Borders Greenway Partnership with A Heart for Duns

In November 2023, the Steering Group (SG) formed a strategic partnership with [A Heart for Duns](#) (AHFD), a formally registered Scottish Charity. This was necessary to meet eligibility criteria required by potential funding bodies. AHFD provides the SG with financial and administrative services to progress the project.



## 2. Active Travel (AT)

[Active travel](#) is a priority for Transport Scotland, and all Councils are eligible for funds dedicated to develop AT infrastructure, subject to certain conditions. These include the requirement for Councils to establish an AT team and develop an AT strategy. Scottish Borders Council (SBC) has been working towards this, and the BG project is listed as a priority in SBC's [draft AT strategy](#), due out for consultation in May 2025. This improves the prospects of securing future funds to progress phased development of the BG project. Other sources of funding will continue to be explored.

## 3. Local Place Plans

SBC has made it clear that Local Place Plans (LPPs) will play an important part in advancing local priorities in SBC's [Local Development Plan](#). Project proposals in LPPs will have their profiles raised, and funding prospects improved. The BG project features in the Duns and Eyemouth LPPs. There are no other LPPs along the route to date (April 2025).

## 4. UK Shared Prosperity Fund

In November 2023, SBC decided that the Chirside to Reston section (about 6 miles) of the BG project was a priority for development. This section connects Chirside with Reston railway station (opened in May 2022), comprises mostly core paths, and presents no significant design obstacles. On advice from SBC, AHFD applied in June 2024 for a grant of £112k from the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#), which was awarded in September 2024.



## 5. Chirside to Reston - Preliminary Design

### a) Design Contract

In October 2024, SBC engaged AtkinsRéalis, the same engineering consultants that undertook the feasibility study, to carry out preliminary design of the Chirside to Reston section. The contract had a duration of five months, and was completed in March 2025. The **preliminary design report** is available [here](#). and an **executive summary** [here](#). Further funds will be needed to complete detailed design.

Activities included:

- **Landowner engagement**

Proposed route options impact seven landowners, and the majority are in favour, but significant concerns remain. These concerns will need to be addressed at the planning stage (see 6a below)

- **Final route alignment**

Links to the former railway track at Chirside and Reston will require resolution at the planning stage

- **Preliminary design and costs**

The path will have a 3m paved surface, with a 2m soft verge for horses, where space allows. A flexible 'rubber crumb' surface is an alternative option to conventional asphalt (see 5c below)

The total estimated cost to construct this section of about 6 miles is £5.68 million

The cost for detailed design will depend on information gathered during the planning process

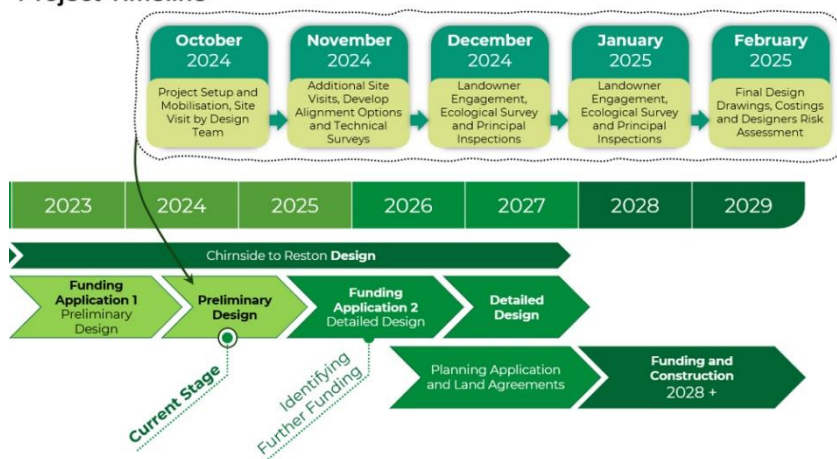
- **Topographical survey**

This survey is needed mainly to determine earthwork volumes and space requirements, especially for equestrian users and agricultural machinery

- **Utilities search**

A utilities search is needed to locate buried services (pipes, drains, cables, etc) and other infrastructure, which may impact path development. The search has revealed sewage, electricity, and telecommunications infrastructure which do not affect the path

Project Timeline



- **Inspection of structures**

The structures along this section comprise four bridges, with the parapet on one bridge being a safety hazard. The bridges will be inspected during detailed design for a decision on whether they should be replaced, restored, or demolished. Land owners should be asked if any of the bridges will be used by farm machinery



*Collapsing parapet*

- **Ecological appraisal**

There are a number of badger setts near the route which will require mitigation measures. This issue will need to be addressed at the planning stage

- **Drainage report**

The drainage strategy aims to manage the extra runoff from sections of the path with an impervious asphalt surface. This will require drainage and flood mitigation measures to discharge runoff safely

**b) Publicity**

Printed [leaflets](#) were used to publicise the design work, community meetings, and the online survey. These leaflets were hand delivered to about 1,000 properties in Chirside and Reston, and distributed to libraries, schools and elsewhere. Social media was viewed by over 7,000 people, reflecting significant interest in the project.

The BG storymap received over 2,100 views during the design period (5 months).

Two stands were purchased with banners to publicise the project. The banners are on display in local high schools, and will be used at future events.



*Leaflet delivery in Reston*

**c) Engagement Activities**

SG members and the consultants also carried out the following engagement activities:

- **Community meetings**

In November 2024, SG members attended meetings with the Reston Community Council and Chirside Common Good to explain the project

Two public meetings were held in February 2025, one in Chirside and the other in Reston. Both meetings were well attended, with a total of 113 people excluding the organisers. The SG and consultants gave presentations on the overall project and ongoing design work ([here](#)). Detailed maps and information boards gave people the opportunity to talk with project volunteers and the consultants



*Chirside meeting*

- **Equestrian users**

In November 2024, the consultants hosted a virtual meeting with around 15 equestrian users, including representation from a local Riding for the Disabled Association group. Topics raised included access points, parking, path dimensions, surface options, and maintenance

- **Group walk**

In November 2024, a group of 13 people walked the proposed route. Participants included local residents, project volunteers, and the consultants. The walk provided an opportunity to appreciate site conditions and discuss design considerations



*Group walk*

- **Local schools**

In February and March 2025, SG members and the consultants held successful workshop sessions to introduce the project to 43 primary school children at Reston and Chirside, aged 8-11 years

SG members also met staff at the Berwickshire High School in Duns, and agreed on a project presentation, jointly with the consultants, to final year students at a careers event in October 2025. A BG publicity banner will be put on semi-permanent display at the school

- **Flexible Path Surface**

In February 2025, two SG members and the consultant's team leader visited a path in Midlothian recently surfaced with a layer comprising a flexible 'rubber crumb' component. The path was clearly popular with walkers, runners, cyclists, and parents with children in buggies. The flexible surface is more comfortable to use than asphalt. SG members will visit a path laid with the same flexible surface several years ago to gauge its longevity and maintenance requirements

- **Other engagements**

In March 2025, three SG members met with Rachael Hamilton, MSP for Etrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire, to brief her on the project. She offered to inform the Cabinet Secretary about the economic and active travel benefits the project would bring to the eastern Borders

Also in March 2025, the consultants and SG members met virtually with senior officials from [South of Scotland Enterprise](#) (SOSE) and SBC to brief them on the project. The Borders Greenway is a key strategic project in SBC's

Active Travel Strategy due for public consultation in May 2025. SBC's Active Travel team will be the main partner with SOSE to help identify future funding. Planning approval would facilitate funding prospects

**d) Online Survey**

In December 2024, an online survey was conducted by the SG, which ran for eleven weeks to the end of February 2025. There were 440 responses, with 78% agreeing that the route will improve active travel opportunities for everyone. Only 3% disagree (remainder 'don't know'). The survey report is available [here](#).

**6. Chirnside to Reston - Next Steps**

**a) Planning Application**

The consultants recommend SBC seek formal planning permission to develop the Chirnside to Reston section. This will require approval from relevant consultees including land, property and business owners (mainly farmers), and agencies responsible for environment, ecology, infrastructure, utilities, etc. Planning approval will improve prospects for SBC to secure funds to complete detailed design, and subsequent construction.

**b) Design and Construction**

Once funds have been secured for detailed design, SBC will need to engage engineering consultants to carry out this work. Deliverables will include an estimate of the construction cost, and documents to procure a contractor to construct the path to design specifications. Of course, sufficient funds for construction will need to be secured before SBC initiates procurement of a contractor on [Public Contracts Scotland](#). The current construction cost estimate (£5.68m) will be updated and refined during detailed design.

**7. Steering Group and SBC**

The SG will continue to work with SBC as the lead organisation over the long-term to develop the whole BG route in stages. The SG will keep local people informed, encourage community engagement, promote public awareness, and maintain contact with relevant groups, agencies and businesses.

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Drop us an email if you would like to join our **Community Collaboration Group** to be kept informed about activities and progress, or if you have any queries.  
email: [info@gavinton.net](mailto:info@gavinton.net)