AtkinsRéalis

Preliminary Design Report

The Borders Greenway Steering Group / Scottish Borders Council

April 2025
100112305-FINAL-V2

BORDERS GREENWAY
CHIRNSIDE TO RESTON



BORDERS GREENWAY

A Heart for Duns

Scottish Borders COUNCIL

Funded by UK Government

Executive Summary

The Borders Greenway project is a proposed active travel route which is allocated within the Scottish Borders *Active Travel Strategy*. It is therefore a key policy objective of the Scottish Borders Council to move towards decarbonising the transportation network and encouraging higher uptake of active travel for everyday journeys. Routing between Tweedbank and Eyemouth, the proposed 65km shared access path will enhance equity of movement and provide genuine alternatives to the private car for certain inter-community and recreational journeys across several localities in the Scottish Borders.

Chirnside to Reston is the first phase of the route to be developed and has now been taken to Preliminary Design stage by AtkinsRéalis. This Preliminary Design Report sets out the scope of works, emerging design proposals and recommendations / next steps for taking the project forward through the planning process, detailed design and, ultimately, construction.

The Chirnside to Reston section is circa **8.5km** in length and currently follows existing core path alignments numbered 88, 6, and 97 (Chirnside to Reston respectively), predominantly following the former Berwickshire Railway alignment. The emerging proposal is to deliver a 3.0m wide, high-specification, traffic-free path for people to use for walking, wheeling[1], cycling and horse-riding. A local riding for the disabled association (RDA) group operates out of Auchencrow Mains Farm and the new path will also serve this group with a direct link to a traffic-free environment, which is currently unavailable to the RDA in the area.

Landowner Engagement

The route alignment under consideration has been communicated to affected landowners through an initial letter issued on 14th November 2024; and follow up telephone calls and in-person meetings with all landowners between December 2024 and February 2025.

It has not been possible to gain unanimous landowner support at this stage, albeit that the designed alignment is fundamentally part of the core path network and thus Scottish Borders Council does have powers to maintain and upgrade the route. Notwithstanding this, it is recommended that engagement with landowners is continued throughout the project's development, including through the planning process, to ensure the scheme can integrate effectively with the needs and existing operations of landowners.

Community and Schools Engagement

Several community engagement activities have taken place during the project to enhance local awareness of the scheme, garner feedback and input from locals and provide benefits back to the community in the form of STEM events within Chirnside and Reston Primary Schools. The engagement outreach so far has totalled **678 participants** through a combination of in person events, meetings and an online survey, which received 440 responses. The engagement approach was supported by AtkinsRéalis through stakeholder mapping; attending events and a community walk of the route; and attending school STEM activities using staff's personal allocation of volunteering days.

[1] "*Wheeling*" refers to pedestrian use either with or supported by wheeled objects, for example: wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams and pushchairs.

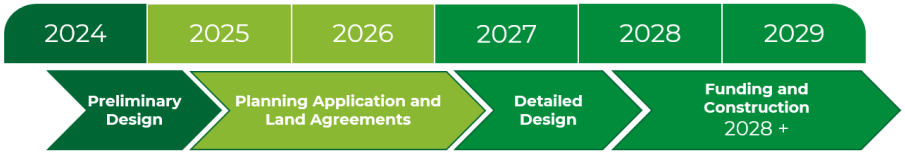
Design Funding and Estimated Construction Costs

The Borders Greenway Steering Group has been awarded **£112,000** of funding to progress the Preliminary Design stage for the Chirnside to Reston section. The project has been funded by the UK Government, through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The fund supports the levelling-up agenda via grants distributed to local communities in areas of need and to address inequalities. This includes travel and access inequalities, as are prevalent throughout the Scottish Borders.

Based on currently known information, it is estimated that the Chirnside to Reston section will cost approximately **£5.7M** to construct, including costs associated with repair / refurbishment of existing structures and a contingency allowance for optimism bias. There are several caveats associated with this cost estimate as set out within **Section 17**. The costs are derived from the General Arrangement package presented in **Appendix A**. It is noted that there may be some scope to 'value engineer' the scheme to bring the costs down at the next stage. However, any such value engineering works has the potential to reduce the quality and/or compliance of the scheme and should be carefully considered.

Next Steps and Recommendations

A **Delivery Action Pan** is provided at the end of this report and recommends that a planning application is progressed by Scottish Borders Council as the appropriate next step in the project's delivery. Should there be an ambition (and funding) to take the project forward during 2025, then the provisional timeline below indicates approximate timescales for construction of the route, following the planning application and detailed design stages.



Project Risks and Benefits

There are a number of risks, both technical and financial, which have the potential to jeopardise the project moving forward. A Project Risk Register and Design Hazards Register is provided in **Appendix G** to support the design. Key risks include funding availability to take the project forward; landowner consent; ecological / environmental risks associated with the impact of the scheme; and health and safety hazards during construction and when that path is in use. These risks have been assessed and, where possible, mitigations put in place or suggested. However, it is fundamental that a proactive approach to risk management is taken forward to ensure the intended outcomes for a high-quality, safe and inclusive active travel path are met.

Notwithstanding these risks, if the project is realised, it will provide significant benefits back into the community in the form of improved accessibility and inclusivity, better opportunities for active and sustainable travel, health benefits and a boost to the local economy in the region.

