

As the £300m Airdrie – Bathgate Rail Link project will have had an impact on a great number of people since the start of the Advance Works last year, the communications team at Network Rail were keen to hear your views.

Between November 2007 and February this year, we asked visitors to the website and attendees at our community forums to complete questionnaires about the project, the new website and the communication of our work.

In this document, you will be able to see the main findings from both types of research.

### **Community Forum Survey Results**

A short 10-question survey was handed out to all attendees of the November Community Forums (held in: Plains, Blackridge, Caldercruix, Armadale and Airdrie), and a total of 75 surveys were completed. Thank you to all who took the time to complete the surveys which provided valuable insight into how communities along the new line of route feel about our communication of the project.

- In Armadale and Airdrie, people found out about Community Forums mainly through the local newspaper, compared with Blackridge where 40% found out through the Community Council and Caldercruix where 40% found out about the Community Forums through word of mouth.

This tells us that people in different communities respond to different forms of advertising. We will consider different ways of advertising the Community Forums to encourage a greater number of attendees at future events.

- An interest in construction work was the main reason people attended the Community Forums in November 2007 (49%) followed by an interest in how the Rail Link would affect people personally (43%). The third most compelling reason for attending the forums was to gain a greater understanding of the benefits of the new Rail Link (39%).

The communications team organised and attended each of the Community Forums and brought members of the project team along to answer specific questions. What is interesting to us is that only 24% of total attendees were interested in meeting members of the project team and talking to them individually.

- The relevance of the Community Forums overall was deemed to be 8.07 out of 10. Residents in Armadale were most positive with 50% deeming the community forums to be very relevant, compared with Blackridge, where only 10% thought the forums were very relevant.

From discussion with attendees, the main reason for such a low score on 'relevance' of the meetings at Blackridge was due to the decision not having

yet been taken at that time as to whether or not to build a station at Blackridge. Unfortunately this was not a subject we were able to discuss in detail as the decision rests with Transport Scotland and West Lothian Council. We appreciate the frustrations people felt during that meeting, and hope that we have managed to communicate our role in the construction of the railway line.

- Across all respondents, the average for how well the Network Rail team answered questions at the Community Forums was 8.34 out of 10.

Members of the project team are invaluable at the Community Forums as they are able to answer specific questions very quickly and directly. We are delighted that respondents felt satisfied by the level of answers they were given and we will keep up this level of interaction at future events.

- Across all respondents, the communications team has been given 7.62 out of 10 for how well we are communicating project progress. Across all respondents, on average people thought the meetings scored 8.58 out of 10 for usefulness.

We use a variety of methods to communicate progress on the Airdrie – Bathgate Rail Link project such as the website with regular updates, newsletters and community forums. Now that we are moving towards the main works stage of the project, we will be able to update you on a more regular basis, and with a wider variety of news, which we hope will keep you interested and answer your questions.

- 91% of respondents said they would use the new Rail Link when it is up and running in 2010.
- The majority of respondents across all communities would use the new Rail Link for leisure purposes (79%), nearly half would visit friends and family (44%) and a fifth would use it to commute to work / education (21%)

### **Online web survey results**

The online survey was uploaded on 24 December 2007 to coincide with the new website launch. Over an 8-week period, 88 respondents completed the 15 question survey. Thank you to all who sent in their answers – again your feedback is invaluable to us.

- Over half of all respondents found out about the Airdrie – Bathgate website through general internet searches (52.3%) compared with project newsletters (20.45%) or through the council, MPs, MSPs (0%)

In order to publicise the website more widely, Network Rail will continue to advertise the address on our literature and to advise all local councils,

community councils, MPs and MSPs of the website address and our National Helpline.

- Most respondents (33%) visit the Airdrie-Bathgate site 'occasionally' although 3% visit on a daily basis. The main reason for browsing the site is because people are 'interested in how the new railway may benefit me when complete' (68.2%).

Looking at people's motivation for browsing our website, it is good to see that few people use it to complain about noise (1.14%) or due to concerns about compulsory purchase (6.8%). As the works progress it is likely that people's interests will change and we will maintain our efforts to always communicate the topics which are of most relevance to those interested or affected by the project.

- Nearly three quarters of all respondents (70.45%) said the new Airdrie-Bathgate site is clearer to navigate than the previous site and one third (31.9%) think the new site is 'fantastic'.
- A number of interesting suggestions for improvement of the website were submitted and we listed them below, alongside our response to them:

*A photo gallery to show progress of the project*

Now that advance works are well underway, we do have some great 'before and after' shots of works in the Livingston / Uphall area. These will soon be appearing on the Project page of our website.

*More frequent construction updates – once a fortnight*

We will endeavour to update our Project News on a fortnightly basis but particularly when there has been significant progress or where there is something of interest to note.

*A more detailed map of the replacement cycle path and protection of sensitive environmental areas*

The plans for the relocated cycle path are on the 'INFO' page of this site. Once our detailed designs are complete, which we expect to be August this year, the final maps of the relocated cycle path will also be made available on the website.

*More about compensation for those affected*

To assist those affected by Compulsory Purchase, Network Rail ran three surgeries in January, specifically inviting people whose land is affected. We have also produced a brief guide to the compulsory purchase process and compensation (visit YOUR page for details) and any enquiries can also be directed through our National Helpline on 08457 11 41 41.

*Overall general map of route and cycle path*

The Maps, Plans and Sections show the route in full and are available on the 'INFO' section of this site. However, we will also post the final designs once they are complete in the summer.

*Images of what the new stations / trains will look like*

We expect the final detailed designs for the stations to be complete in October 2008 and we will be able to give you a clearer impression of what to expect. We also have a very exciting virtual reality tool which is currently being designed and which will show the exact visual route between Airdrie and Bathgate including all the stations, the cycle path and the local topography/vegetation. This will be shown at future community forums as soon as the final model has been completed.

- Nearly half of all respondents had not been affected at all by the construction work (45%) and a third say they will not be affected as they do not live on the line of route (32%)
- Individual concerns for the impact the construction of the railway line include issues such as traffic congestion and inconvenience due to road closures.

Where we can, we are seeking to minimise road closures and traffic congestion by forward planning with West Lothian, North Lanarkshire and City of Edinburgh Councils and providing diversionary routes for traffic, where appropriate.

- Only 2.2% of respondents had contacted our National Helpline regarding the Airdrie – Bathgate Rail Link project, and both respondents described the service they received as 'unhelpful'.

The communications team briefs the National Helpline on a periodic basis to update the National Helpline team with construction news and areas where there may be a large number of queries and we will continue to do this. However, as our Helpline manages enquiries across the whole of Great Britain's rail network, there will be occasions when your enquiry cannot be answered directly and will be passed to our local Community Relations Team in Glasgow to respond.

- 64% of respondents agreed that the Rail Link will be more environmentally friendly, 92% agreed that it will give more options to travel, 53% agreed that it would be easier to access work / education and 53% said it would be easier to visit friends and family.
- Other benefits stated by respondents include: an extra choice of route; it will enable others to visit me; will boost property prices in the area; it will be more affordable to work in Glasgow / Edinburgh; through connections from Helensburgh to Edinburgh; better connections when

travelling through to England and rely less on car and decrease car running costs significantly.

- When asked to rate the methods of communication that we use to share information about the Airdrie-Bathgate project, 44% of you said the Community Forums were Good–Excellent and 44% also said the Newsletters were Good–Excellent.

If you are interested in attending a Community Forum, keep your eye out for adverts in the local papers, posters in your local area, and on the 'YOUR PAGE' of our website. We do also alert the community councils and local councillors and ask them to inform people about the meetings.

In terms of the newsletters, some people say they either haven't received one, or they are too infrequent. To get onto the mailing list for the newsletters, please click 'join our mailing list' on our home page. You will then receive each newsletter as it is published. In terms of frequency of publication, we write and distribute the newsletters when there is news to tell. Our Spring Newsletter will be published in April 2008.

- The main criticism people have of our communications is the lack of individually relevant information.

In relation to compulsory purchase and how this will affect you, Network Rail sent out formal correspondence to affected parties in January this year. If you received a notice we also provided a Frequently Asked Questions document and an invitation to attend our surgeries where you could talk directly to the project team about specific concerns. If you were unable to attend or have further questions, please feel free to call the National Helpline on 08457 11 41 41.

Regarding more frequent construction updates, we endeavour to notify residents in advance of works taking place in their area, and we also update people of progress on the Project News page of the website. Network Rail has also issued 'Construction Newsletters' which focus on specific area of activity – for an example, click 'here'. We will produce similar documents for other communities as we begin construction in those areas.

Finally, a 'Before and After' photo gallery is being planned for the website so a graphical story will be available to everyone. The best way of staying informed is through our website which is updated regularly, to subscribe to our newsletter or attend one of our community forums.