KIDS GET ON BOARD WITH RAILWAY SAFETY WORKSHOPS

The Borders Railway project has launched an ambitious programme of safety workshops aimed at reaching every primary school pupil living along the new route in advance of trains returning to the region in 2015.

The Network Rail initiative, run by Scottish Youth Theatre, was launched at Gorebridge Primary School today with the support of Minister for Children and Young People, Aileen Campbell MSP.

Running throughout May and June this year, the programme will reach over 1,000 children attending over 70 workshops in 16 different schools.

The engaging workshops, which promote role play and active learning, have been developed to encourage young people in Midlothian and the Scottish Borders to become more aware of the opportunities and risks that the railway will bring.

Carol Deveney, Network Rail’s Senior Programme Development Manager for the Borders Railway Project said: “For many children in the area, the completion of the Borders Railway in 2015 will represent the first regular interface with railways. The workshops have been specifically designed by Scottish Youth Theatre to discourage trespass while encouraging responsible use of the railway.

“It has been great to spend some time with the kids at Gorebridge Primary this morning. Their enthusiasm for the railway and the opportunities it will bring is a real reminder of why we are building this vital new link.

Aileen Campbell, Minister for Children and Young People said: "The re-introduction of the Borders Railway train services next year is great news for local communities, however it is essential we do all we can to educate our children about the dangers associated with playing near railways.

"The Scottish Youth Theatre’s Rail Respect workshops are packed with great ideas and will play a big role in helping local children learn about responsible use of the railway. It is great to see the Scottish Youth Theatre working closely with Network Rail on such an important initiative aimed at keeping our children safe."

Mary McCluskey, Chief Executive and Artistic Director, Scottish Youth Theatre said: “We have worked with Network Rail across Scotland for several years now and have identified the best ways to engage with young people to encourage understanding and respect for the railway environment. This new programme has been developed specifically for Borders Railway to demystify the railway for children who are not familiar with railways and help them to understand what to expect from day one.”

Gillian Grant, Head Teacher of Gorebridge Primary School, commented: “It was great to see the children enjoying themselves whilst learning the serious messages behind staying safe on the railway.

“The workshops were an innovative and active way for the children to learn.”

The safety and familiarisation workshops delivery by Scottish Youth Theatre will form just one element of the Borders Railway education programme. This month also sees principal contractor BAM beginning the delivery of the maths and engineering focussed ‘Bridges to Schools’ workshops in schools along the route.
The project has also opened its doors to over 300 university students who have travelled from across Europe to study the practical delivery of a major civil engineering project.

Finally, British Transport Police will also begin rolling out ‘Rail Reps’ an ongoing safety initiative aimed at encouraging peer to peer railway safety advise among primary school children.