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# **The Forth Bridges** Making a Journey a Destination

FORTH BRIDGES AREA TOURISM STRATEGY 2018-2028

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## About this document

This document has been developed by the Forth Bridges Forum and informed by private and public consultation and original work by GL Hearn and Elspeth Wills.

**Front cover image:** Craig Allardyce/Transport Scotland. **Back cover image:** Centre for Digital Documentation and Visualisation (CDDV), a partnership between The Glasgow School of Art's School of Simulation and Visualisation and Historic Environment Scotland.



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**Top:** View of the three Forth Bridges at sunrise (Transport Scotland) **Above:** Cruise ship beside the iconic Forth Bridge (Peter Devlin/Alamy Stock Photo)



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The three Forth Bridges (L-R) Queensferry Crossing,  
Forth Road Bridge, Forth Bridge (Alamy Stock Photo)



## Foreword

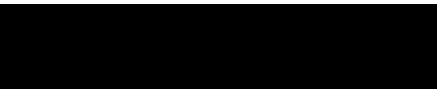


The three bridges that span the Firth of Forth link the past, present and future of Scotland's heritage and culture. They are a lasting tribute not only to engineering innovation over the past three centuries but also to the thousands of workers who made their mark as skilled bridge builders.

They are much more than a means of travel. The Forth Bridge has taken its place alongside the Pyramids of Giza and Spain's Alhambra as one of the world's most iconic monuments and has been inscribed on to UNESCO's World Heritage list. Its two magnificent neighbours are themselves great, engineering achievements.

On behalf of the Scottish Government, I am delighted to endorse the plans by the Forth Bridges Forum, set out in this document, to tell the story of the three bridges for the first time and to let visitors experience the bridges for themselves as well as marvel at their majesty. Not only will they set out how we may capitalise on the three bridges, with communities, businesses and the public sector working together, but also how we can use the bridges as a catalyst for developing the tourism offerings of the surrounding towns and villages.

Creating a new visitor destination fits with regional and national tourism strategies to provide year-round, high quality attractions. Giving travellers and visitors a reason to stop and explore will benefit the visitor economy and local communities alike.



**Fiona Hyslop MSP, The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs**



Forth Road Bridge 50th Anniversary Celebrations (*Lloyd Smith Photography/Amey*)



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Fireworks at Forth Bridge (*Grant Ritchie*)

# Introduction

The Forth bridges are a unique national asset. Nowhere else in the world can boast three major bridges that span three centuries of engineering innovation on such a scale and in such close proximity. Each has been a world record holder in its own right. All three reflect the future as well as the past, carrying millions of travellers and goods across the Firth of Forth every year by train, bus, lorry, cycle, car or on foot. The historic communities of North and South Queensferry, the crossing point since Queen Margaret paid for a ferry to carry pilgrims in the 11th century, lie in the shadow of these bridges.

A starting point for realising the tourism benefits of this asset was UNESCO's inscription of the Forth Bridge on to the World Heritage list on 5th July, 2015. The Forth Bridge became Scotland's sixth World Heritage Site with the same status as the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall of China. This prestigious cultural accolade was a fitting way to celebrate the 125th anniversary of a Scottish industrial icon. A year earlier, the 50th anniversary of the completion of the Forth Road Bridge in 1964 had further established an engineering continuum, a primary factor linking the two bridges being the legendary contracting engineers, Sir William Arrol of Glasgow.

The Queensferry Crossing, when it opened in 2017, reinforced the importance of the bridges as well as opening up new views of the estuary. The people of Scotland embraced it from the start. Proof of their passion was demonstrated as early as 2013 when over 40,000 people participated in naming the new bridge. The Queensferry Crossing was the resounding winner. The public followed every step of its construction and celebrated its opening with pride.

The stories behind the bridges are about much more than engineering statistics. They tell of workers battling with wind and tides to fit together the pieces of some of the world's largest jigsaws. The Forth Bridge has experienced the drama of two World Wars and inspired the creativity of writers, artists and film makers. They have featured on banknotes, coins, a multitude of souvenirs and even in computer games played worldwide. The bridges are already the backdrop for local sports and charity events as well as the inspiration for writing and photographic competitions.

## A world-class attraction demands a world-class experience.

There is an aspiration that visitors will be able to step on to a dramatic, 21st century viewing platform at the south end of the Forth Road Bridge to engage their senses with unparalleled views. They will learn the headlines of the bridges' story in the landscape as they move towards the Forth Bridges Welcome Hub where the chapters unfold through creative exhibitions. Here visitors may also plan their journey of exploration in a relaxed and informal setting. The adventurous may soon be able to walk in the sky, travelling up the Forth Bridge to a viewing platform 100 metres above the river, in a 90 minute, experience of a lifetime.





**“Awesome – you have to see it to believe it.”**

is just one of the thousands of recent reactions to the bridges from all over the world.

## The Forth Bridges

Visitors have been drawn to the Forth Bridge since construction began in 1884. Over the decades their numbers have swelled to today's annual footfall of 117,000 visitors at the current viewpoint and many more attracted to the vantage points of North and South Queensferry. This has been achieved without any visitor signage, facilities or marketing, suggesting that the potential to grow the market is significant. People come for reasons as varied as the visitors themselves, from civil engineering professionals to families looking for a different day out and tourists wanting to tick off another sight on their bucket list and share on social media.

The location of the bridges is one of their strengths. It sits within the growing visitor market of Edinburgh and Lothians which attracts around 4.25 million staying visitor trips a year, 38% of which are taken by overseas visitors. To the north Fife generates over 650,000 such trips with over 20% of visitors coming from overseas.

The bridges benefit from their sheer visibility creating drama, excitement and anticipation as well as subtly signposting what is to come. Each bridge offers a distinctive experience. The Queensferry Crossing is a contemporary expression of a long

engineering heritage. It is constantly changing with the weather and the light. The Forth Road Bridge, the most accessible of the bridges, provides real time experiences for walkers and cyclists.

**The Forth Bridge's status as an icon is more than assured as a 'must see'.**

Collectively the bridges and the new Welcome Hub provide the anchor for a wider visitor offering which encourages exploration. By extending visitor stay through delivering choice, from the country houses around South Queensferry to Deep Sea World in North Queensferry and the varied attractions within the historic town of Dunfermline, the surrounding area benefits too. The opening of major new experiences such as the V&A in Dundee adds another dimension to the growing visitor market.

**Left:** North Queensferry at the Forth Bridge  
(VisitScotland)



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**“It will last for ever if  
you look after it.”**

Sir William Arrol of his  
masterpiece, the Forth Bridge

The Forth Bridge, UNESCO World Heritage Site  
(*Historic Environment Scotland*)



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## VISION AND STRATEGY

**The Forth Bridges Forum's vision for the bridges is that:**

By 2030 The Forth Bridges area will be recognised as a sustainable, high quality visitor destination, offering great customer service underpinned by an emotionally valued global brand.

This ambitious but deliverable vision underpins the specific strategic goals and activities identified to achieve it. The following three strategic outcomes – **Creating a Visitor Destination**; **Offering a Warm Welcome to All**; and **Marketing the Destination** are designed to achieve the vision along with the supporting theme of **Looking After the Forth Bridges** which encompasses the UNESCO requirements for the Forth Bridge World Heritage Site.

Suggested actions have been identified (page 19) and these will form the basis of a five-year delivery plan to be developed to take the strategy forward.

Forth Road Bridge and Queensferry Crossing  
at night (Ian RW McCracken/Fife Council)



STRATEGIC  
OUTCOME

## 01

## Creating a visitor destination

Effective visitor management is crucial in creating a sense of place. The visitor journey starts with planning their trip and continues through clear wayfinding; dealing with comfort factors like parking and catering; building a sense of arrival and anticipation that is outperformed by the experience; and ends by guiding the visitor to explore further. By encouraging visitors to stay longer, return and recommend the area to others will lead to further opportunities for businesses to capitalise on visitor growth across the wider area.

Based on research and consultation we have gained an understanding of the issues that we need to address to deliver an outstanding visitor experience while respecting the needs of people who live and work in the area. To do this we will need to address issues as varied as traffic management and arrival points and telling the Forth Bridges story through visitor engagement and marketing.

### Priority activities

- Encouraging the creation of new attractions and viewpoints of the bridges to capture visitors especially from the tourist hub of the capital Edinburgh, which also hosts a World Heritage Site
- Exploiting niche markets such as heritage, railway and bridge enthusiasts
- Using the theatrical backdrop of the bridges for events which appeal both to participants and spectators
- Ensuring that communities are kept informed of and are consulted on significant developments
- Developing ways of benefiting local communities and visitors through orientation signage, interpretation and walking trails as well as improvements to the public realm
- Encouraging local tourism businesses to grow and create employment opportunities through their proximity to the bridges
- Supporting tourism related activity on the Forth around the bridges, building on 2020's Year of Coast and Waters.

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Sunset on the River Forth from  
Port Edgar (Alamy Stock Photo)



STRATEGIC  
OUTCOME

## 02

## offering a warm welcome to all

A first class visitor experience is essential for all aspects of a visit to the area. A strong customer focus should be at the forefront of all activities with every business that engages visitors taking responsibility for providing a warm welcome to all. One bad experience could negatively influence others from visiting the area such is the power of social media.



**Left:** Ferry Fair, South Queensferry  
(Roger Gaisford/Alamy Stock Photo)

## Priority activities

- Making visitors welcome by engaging fully with everyone involved with delivering the experiences, from staff at the Visitor Hub and local residents to accommodation providers and volunteer tour guides
- Encouraging communities themselves to take a sense of ownership and be effective and proud ambassadors for the attractions in their areas
- Creating memorable experiences so that visitors to the area will want to tell others and return time and time again
- Delivering appropriate programmes in leadership and the role of the ambassador
- Encouraging businesses to sign up to World Host Customer Care Programme
- Providing skills training to enhance the job prospects of individuals and to grow businesses sustainably through increased productivity.



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Forth Bridges Festival, South  
Queensferry (Jane Barlow/Amey)



STRATEGIC  
OUTCOME

## 03

## Marketing the destination

The new Queensferry Crossing and the creation of new visitor experiences presents the opportunity to tell the world about the bridges. They have the right ingredients – compelling stories, a global audience, the opportunity to build on the established icon of the Forth Bridge, the opportunity for cross-promotion with other World Heritage Sites and links to communities with stories of their own.

The key challenge for marketing is in building understanding and loyalty to ensure longer and repeat visits and referrals by using the spectrum of communications.

## Priority activities

- Ensuring that visitors are aware of the ease of reaching and exploring the area by car, public transport, cycle, on foot or by boat, while avoiding traffic pressures on North and South Queensferry
- Implementing the Orientation and Signage Strategy in North and South Queensferry
- Promoting the Forth Bridges brand as the symbol of a quality visitor destination
- Encouraging the use of the brand by businesses, communities, transport operators and attractions, in promotional material and merchandising
- Protecting the use of the brand to ensure its integrity
- Making effective use of digital media to provide instant access to the latest information and widen the marketing reach
- Applying technology innovatively to enhance the visitor experience through webcam links, access to laser-scan 3D digital models of the Forth Bridge and augmented and virtual reality
- Providing free Wi-Fi throughout the area
- Working with other attractions to promote the wider offering with the bridges at its core
- Creating and promoting a strong events calendar across the area.

## SUPPORTING THEME

# Looking after the Forth Bridges

Recognising that Sir William Arrol's claim *"It will last for ever if you look after it"* holds true a century later, the Scottish Government set up the Forth Bridges Forum in November, 2011. It brings together organisations with an interest in the bridges as partners to fulfil the aims of:

- Adopting a strategic approach to the operation and maintenance of the Forth bridges
- Engaging with local communities
- Promoting the bridges as a unique tourist destination
- Supporting the World Heritage Site
- Encouraging ways of increasing cross-Forth active travel and sustainable public transport.

**Managing and conserving the Forth Bridge brings responsibility for the protection and promotion of its World Heritage status.**

The delivery of high-quality visitor interpretation and access, both physical and virtual, is fundamental if the presentation of the Forth Bridge to the world is to be successful. The creation of sensitive, new visitor attractions, therefore, fits well with UNESCO's World Heritage Site guidance, ensuring a sustainable and positive impact on host communities.



**(L-R):** Cyclists crossing Forth Road Bridge (Porridge Picture Library/Alamy Stock Photo), Queensferry Crossing and Forth Road Bridge (Richard Newton, Transport Scotland), Steam engine on Forth Bridge (Peter Devlin/Alamy Stock Photo), Forth Road Bridge public event (Tony Marsh, Amey)







## Delivering the strategy

The people of Scotland have inherited a remarkable asset in the three bridges. Already visitors have voted them to be the country's top landmark. This provides the perfect opportunity to realise their value to communities and businesses by delivering top quality experiences that surpass visitor expectations and to spread the word across the globe.

**“The Queensferry Crossing is a symbol of a confident, forward-looking Scotland. It is a truly iconic structure and a feat of modern engineering.”**



Ensuring that the bridges provide a world class visitor experience demands leadership, partnership, planning and investment.

Suggested actions to take forward the strategy are listed below and will form the basis of a five-year delivery plan which is to be developed. Some activities are already underway and being delivered:

- Development of Network Rail's Forth Bridge Experience
- A strategy for orientation and interpretation signage in North and South Queensferry
- A dedicated Forth Bridges Website which has already achieved first place in web search rankings, and a fast-growing following for its associated social media channels
- A turn-key merchandise proposal
- Brand registration in the UK, Europe and the USA
- Scotland-wide learning programmes for schools, colleges and Universities
- A group of Forth Bridge Ambassadors, which has already been established.



## DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

# Environmental investigations to date

We have undertaken consultations with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) team at the Scottish Government, seeking their comments and feedback to the Draft Tourism Strategy.

All consultees have provided us with positive comments, offering their support to the plans and ambitions outlined in the strategy. In particular, feedback for the need for an SEA and Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) were sought.

The feedback received has recommended that although an SEA/HRA may not be required at this stage, it has been advised that we undertake both an SEA and HRA pre-screening to determine if they should be screened out at this stage to allow Transport Scotland to make a formal record of our decision making process.

However, guidance has been requested advising how and when the need for both will be revisited. This has been explained under the 'Next Stage' section in the column to the right.



**Top:** St Margaret's Marsh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (*Transport Scotland*) **Above:** The Forth Bridge from North Queensferry (*Historic Environment Scotland*)

## The next stage

Following the launch of the Forth Bridges Area Tourism Strategy, the next stage will be to form a delivery team to take forward the actions within this strategy.

The group will create a comprehensive delivery plan which identifies key parties responsible for the delivery of each action(s) and associated time frames, as well as identify where cross-party collaboration is required to deliver specific actions, which in turn will inform the group of the need to consider cumulative environmental impacts when more than one action is being considered at any given time.



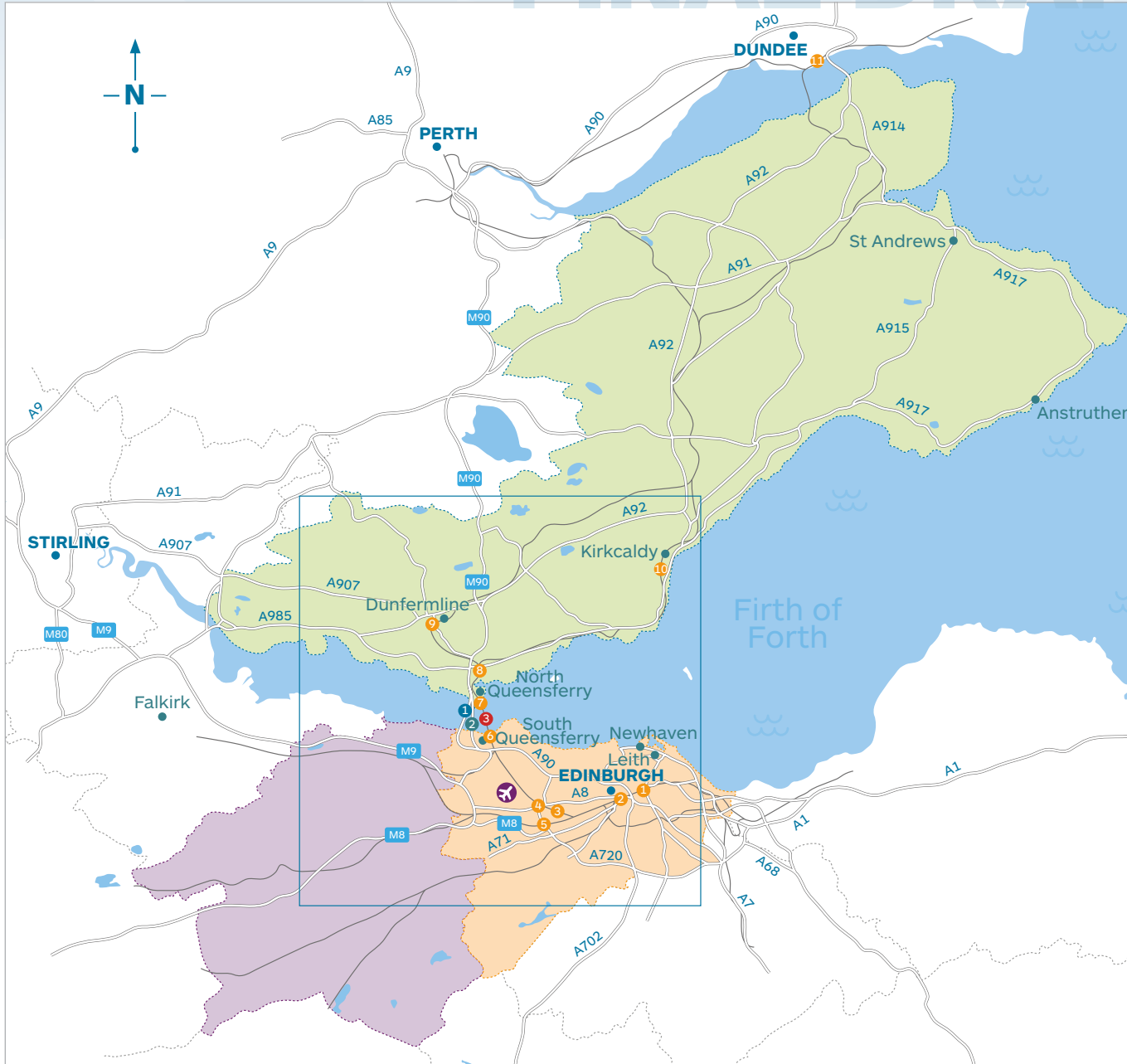
**SUGGESTED ACTIONS:** The following suggested activities have been identified through extensive consultation with stakeholders, communities, businesses and potential visitors. A new delivery organisation will be established and will identify the most appropriate leads and timescales to deliver the suggested activities as part of the development of a delivery plan to implement the strategy.

STRATEGIC THEME/ AREA OF ACTIVITY	ACTION
<b>Organisational management</b>	Form new organisation to implement the strategy
	Recruit and manage project manager to take forward the action plan
	Project manager to focus on delivery of actions deemed achievable within first 12 months post launch as a priority
	Establish baseline for tourism activity monitoring
	Conduct annual visitor volume and value research
	Conduct annual visitor experience survey including impact on North and South Queensferry
<b>Creating a visitor destination</b>	Support the development of the Network Rail Forth Bridge Experience
	Improve cycling infrastructure
	Extend Edinburgh Days Out Travel Pass to the area
	Persuade local tour bus operators to add Forth Bridges to their destinations
	Provide visitor information at Park & Rides
	Rename Dalmeny Station Forth Bridge Station. Improved signage on trains and at stations
	Work with local marinas and harbours to encourage boat traffic in the area
	Connect local path networks to major walking routes with involvement of Scottish Natural Heritage
	Upgrading the cruise liner experience
	Implement orientation and interpretation of North and South Queensferry and the routes to the bridges
	Encourage the development of activity based tourism products, including extreme sports in the form of abseiling, zip lines and virtual reality experience of a similar nature
	Consider the development of a Visitor Welcome Hub and viewpoint
	Introduce improvements to berthing efficiency at South Queensferry that enhance the experience for cruise passengers, visitors and other pier users
	Ensuring visitor facilities such as public toilets and digital visitor information are available particularly in North Queensferry
	Discussion with Forth Ports to realise the potential for more cruise ships to the north side of the Forth Bridges area



STRATEGIC THEME/ AREA OF ACTIVITY	ACTION
<b>Offering a warm welcome to all</b>	Trial a closure of Forth Road Bridge for a family cycling event
	Develop marketing plan including community communication
	Develop a range of merchandising
	Work with Business Gateway to support businesses to grow and prosper, and with training providers to help them find recruits with the appropriate skills
	Create programme aligned to the Scottish Government's Themed Years
	Establish self-guided and accompanied walking and cycling tours, including tours of the Forth Road Bridge
	Develop joint marketing strategies with other Scottish and global World Heritage Sites
	Promote the area at major tourist travel destinations e.g. Edinburgh Airport and Waverley and Haymarket railway stations
	Use empty shops to promote the area
	Place articles in in-flight and other travel magazines
<b>Marketing the destination</b>	Develop digital suite of content and imagery for use by tourism agencies
	Distribute promotional material at key railway stations
	Promote the area to cyclists in association with relevant organisations
	Partner tourism agencies and businesses to include the Forth Bridge in existing offerings
	Ensure appropriate use of Forth Bridges branding
	Promote the destination to cruise line passengers
	Develop pop-up food and drink outlets
	Launch Destination Leadership Programme
	Achieve World Host destination status for the Forth Bridges area
	Attract high profile, international events e.g. cycling, athletics, triathlons, yachting, using the bridges as a backdrop
	Sustainable, public and low-emission transport options to be promoted to encourage visitors to the area
	Regular surveys to undertake sustainable travel baseline monitoring and frequent surveys of how visitors travel to the area





### Key to map

- Fife
- City of Edinburgh
- West Lothian
- Other boundaries
- Roads
- Railway
- 1 The Queensferry Crossing
- 2 The Forth Road Bridge
- 3 The Forth Bridge








### Railway stations

1. Waverley
2. Haymarket
3. South Gyle
4. Edinburgh Gateway
5. Edinburgh Park
6. Dalmeny
7. North Queensferry
8. Inverkeithing
9. Dunfermline
10. Kirkcaldy
11. Dundee



## The Forth Bridges – Making a Journey a Destination

### Key to map

-  Boundaries
-  Roads
-  Railway
-  1 The Queensferry Crossing
-  2 The Forth Road Bridge
-  3 The Forth Bridge
-  Park & Ride

### Railway stations

1. Waverley
2. Haymarket
3. South Gyle
4. Edinburgh Gateway
5. Edinburgh Park
6. Dalmeny
7. North Queensferry
8. Inverkeithing
9. Dunfermline
10. Kirkcaldy



Cyclists in South Queensferry (*VisitScotland*)





## The Forth Bridges Forum

The Forth Bridges Forum is managed by Transport Scotland on behalf of Scottish Ministers. Core members are:

- City of Edinburgh Council
- Fife Council
- Forth Bridges Operating Company
- Historic Environment Scotland
- Network Rail
- Transport Scotland
- VisitScotland
- West Lothian Council

For further information visit [www.theforthbridges.org](http://www.theforthbridges.org) or contact:

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Queensferry Crossing (Richard Newton,  
Transport Scotland)



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