

# **The Innocent Railway – St. Leonards to Brunstane - National Cycle Route**

## **1/Eurovelo 12**

### **Background**

Although a little tricky to find, St Leonard's Tunnel is the starting point for an extensive off-road cycle path along a disused railway that makes the hunt absolutely worth it!

The reason behind the naming of The Innocent Railway has many rumours surrounding it – some say it is because no one died during its construction, while others say no one died while using it! There is also a suggestion that it was because the transport was horse drawn and not steam so it was innocent in not contributing to pollution. The real reason may never be known but it is sure to be one of the above!

The Innocent Railway closed in 1969 but now large sections of the old line have been adapted into paths, allowing uninterrupted cycling or walking off road from the centre of Edinburgh towards the East.

Further off road developments linking the Innocent Railway with the Meadows via St Leonards are due for completion in 2015.

### **Heritage and History**

Originally established to allow the easy transport of coal from Dalkeith into the city of Edinburgh, The Innocent Railway opened in stages throughout 1831. Before long, an entrepreneurial businessman worked out that locals would also find it a valuable transport link and set up a lucrative passenger service. Fascinatingly, there were no official passenger stations and locals just climbed on and off the carriages when they reached their destination.

By the 1840's, railway technology was moving apace and the line was bought over by North British Railway to expand the passenger route to Carlisle. This became known as the Waverley Line.

In 2012, Transport Scotland confirmed that they would reuse sections of the track in the development of the Borders Railway to open in September 2015 but much of the disused track remains and cyclists can still enjoy much of its original glory.

Unfortunately, use began to decline as more routes in the central belt and access to transport from England appeared with greater technological advances and in 1969, the Waverley Line closed. In 1981, to the delight of the cycling community, the large sections of the old railway line reopened as an off-road cycle and pedestrian path.

### **The Route**

The route begins at the top of a tunnel which is over 500m long! To find the entrance to the tunnel, travel along Holyrood Park Road, turning left onto East Parkside, take the first right, then right again and walk under the pedestrian bridges leading to housing – the tunnel begins right in front of you.

The tunnel leads you out into Holyrood Park and into a stretch of disused railway line that was used from the 1830's to transport coal. Although a pioneering railway of its time, it fell increasingly into disuse before closing in 1969.

### **Why don't you?**

### **Visitor Information**

Join the tunnel by coming off Holyrood Park Road, turning onto East Parkside and looping around back on yourself. or further on to Brunstane.

### **Facilities**