



NEWSLETTER – CHRISTMAS 2007

SUNDAY SPECIALS TO RUN AGAIN!

Northern Rail has announced they will again be running a Sunday service in the run up to Christmas, for the benefit of those Christmas shopping at Newcastle or MetroCentre. Don't forget parking at Morpeth and Cramlington is free and there is plenty of space on Sundays. There have been recent reports of all the car parks at MetroCentre being full, and long queues sometimes up to 40 minutes just to get out of the car park at busy times. So, why not park at the station and let the train take the strain? Trains leave Morpeth at 10.30, 12.30 and 16.38, call at Cramlington 8 minutes later and return from MetroCentre at 11.25, 15.20 and 17.20.

You can also use these trains if going to Newcastle or connecting with an inter-city service there.

MORE GOOD NEWS FROM NORTHERN

There will also be a new evening train to Cramlington and Morpeth from 8th December – again provided by Northern Rail. This is on an indefinite basis, not just for Christmas. The times (subject to confirmation) are as follows:

Northbound	Mon - Fri	Sat
Newcastle dep	21.05	20.24
Cramlington dep	21.17	20.36
Morpeth arr	21.24	20.43

Southbound	Mon - Fri	Sat
Morpeth dep	21.34	21.15
Cramlington dep	21.42	21.23
Newcastle arr	21.56 **	21.37 **

** The southbound trains continue on via Chester-Le-Street, Durham, Darlington, Allens West, Eaglescliffe and Thornaby to Middlesborough (NB: not via Sunderland as suggested at an earlier SENRUG meeting).

CROSSCOUNTRY CUTS THREATENED

Every silver lining has a cloud, and despite the new services delivered by Northern, the news from CrossCountry is not so good. Arriva, who took over the Cross Country franchise a few weeks ago, are planning to reduce the number of trains that stop at Morpeth from 4 each way per weekday to 3, from December 2008 (12 months time). Moreover, they plan to retime the trains and some of them will run only a few minutes behind the Northern service, thus reducing choice for Morpeth passengers yet further. However Sunday service will be improved. SENRUG has written a robust letter of objection about the cuts in Monday to Friday trains and you can see the full text of this on our website www.senrug.co.uk. The borough council and county council

have similarly objected. We very much hope Arriva will listen to reason and reverse the decision. Our case is based on the argument there is neither technical nor commercial advantage for Arriva in withdrawing the Morpeth calls.

RULES REFRESH

Members with email have already been sent a copy of our letter to Arriva electronically. One or two have commented on the incident quoted of a passenger who purchased two separate tickets (Morpeth – Newcastle and Newcastle - York) as it was cheaper than a through ticket, even when travelling on a direct service. We are grateful to JP Buckley who has pointed out that under rule 19 of the national conditions of carriage, it is not necessary to step off the train and get back on again if using two tickets. The only requirement is the train must actually stop at the station where one ticket stops and the next starts. PS: Don't forget, always check: 2 singles may be cheaper than a return.

ASHINGTON BLYTH & TYNE LINE RE-OPENING

This remains a key campaign objective for SENRUG. If you didn't hear our update on the current status of the re-opening plans following Alan Fendley's excellent talk on the line's history at our 15th November meeting; the situation is as follows.

The North East Assembly along with other funding partners commissioned a full feasibility report on re-opening the Morpeth – Choppington – Bedlington section. This has stated this section of the line could be re-opened for a capital cost of £4.1m and an annual subsidy of £50,000 for timetable option A or £100,000 for Option B. Option B gives a train every 30 minutes and provides service up to midnight on Monday to Saturdays, so benefits not just Choppington and Bedlington but Cramlington and Morpeth as well, and is therefore the option SENRUG favours.

But meanwhile, NEXUS (the organisation responsible for public transport in Newcastle) commissioned a 2nd report from the same consultants on the technical feasibility of re-opening the Ashington to Northumberland Park Metro Station section of the line. This reported the plan is technically feasible and could deliver an hourly service even allowing for the current level of freight traffic. However, this was not a commercial study, so no costings were put on the plan.

Faced with these two reports, Northumberland County Council has now instigated a 3rd study on the full technical and commercial feasibility of re-opening the whole line from MetroCentre to Ashington via Newsham and Bedlington. This should report in Spring of 2008. After that it's decision time. SENRUG's role will be to make sure the

topic is kept at the top of the agenda and not lost in the confusion of the forthcoming move to a single unitary authority. Secondly, if the MetroCentre to Ashington section does prove too costly to re-open at the present time or is rejected for any other reason, then we at least want to make sure we revert back to the Morpeth – Bedlington plan, which we consider realistic, achievable and value for money.

Our exhibition on the ABT re-opening proposals is currently in the Ticket Office at Morpeth Station, courtesy of Northern Rail. We have a brand new map display board, which has been printed for us free of charge by 247 Graphics. Do pop in and have a look. And invite anyone else you see who is interested in the exhibition to join SENRUG. There should be plenty of our ABT Re-opening leaflets in the Ticket Office. If supplies are running low, please contact Dennis Fancett or John Earl so we can leave some more there.

The last two batches of our ABT leaflets have been photocopied for us free of charge by Wansbeck District Council, with permission of the Chief Executive Bob Stephenson. Wansbeck acknowledge that re-opening the line would deliver massive regenerative benefits to the area, and have been happy to support our campaign. We appreciate their support.

RE-OPENING PETITION WILL CLOSE SOON

Our petition to 10 Downing Street will only until the end of March 2008. We now have 750 signatories but would like at least 1000. If you haven't yet signed the link is at <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/ABTreopening>. If you don't have internet access, this is available free from local libraries, and library staff will help you log on to the website.

SENRUG AT WOODHORN CLIMATE CHANGE EXHIBITION

We will be taking our ABT RE-opening exhibiting to Woodhorn's Climate Change exhibition on the 13th January. Our intention is to make the case that re-opening the line will reduce cars on the road, cut carbon emissions and help save the planet. We do need help to man the stand. If you can give half a day to help us over this weekend, please contact John Earl.

ENGINEERING WORKS

We are aware of engineering works on 29th and 30th of December and the 4 weekends in January between Newcastle and Darlington. All operators' trains are replaced by road coach. Most operators also have special timetables in operation over the Christmas and New Year periods so don't forget to check before travelling.

GRAND CENTRAL START IMMINENT

Latest from Grand Central is that they will start a one-train service from Sunderland to London in mid December. Full service will commence once all their train fleets are ready. It's a pity this will, it seems, be too late to cover the New Year engineering works (see above). But check their website www.grandcentralrail.co.uk as once their full service is introduced, a direct train from Sunderland, easily

reached by Metro, will be a better alternative to an hour in a road coach. Indeed, we hope next time the main line closes, Grand Central might even be allowed to pick up passengers from Newcastle as their trains are serviced at Heaton Depot. Because Grand Central trains run via Middlesborough they are not affected by the engineering works between Newcastle and Darlington.

CRAMLINGTON PASSENGERS

We'd love to increase our membership from passengers who use Cramlington. Recently, we've got the Help Point there fixed (is it still working?), got Northern to introduce an early morning northbound service and of course Cramlington also benefits from the new evening service, and Christmas Sunday trains (but why aren't Northern advertising these at Cramlington?) We'd like to see the walking route from the station to the excellent Manor Walks shopping centre signposted, as well as directions from the station to the nearest bus stops. Indeed, the bus that goes round Nelson Village could easily call in to the station turning circle.

KINGS CROSS ST PANCRAS NEWS

Most readers will already be aware the new St Pancras International station has opened, adjacent to Kings Cross. This makes it much easier to get from the North East to France and Belgium by train, and through tickets are available from some companies, including Eurostar.

A less publicised fact is that the awful to use Kings Cross Thameslink station is closing to be replaced by new underground platforms with step free access at St Pancras. The new platforms will be much nearer, and easier to access from Kings Cross Main Line than the old Thameslink station. So connections from the North East to First Capital Connect locations such as Brighton, Gatwick and Luton Airports, East Croydon, Wimbledon and St Albans are now much easier.

WELCOME NATIONAL EXPRESS

National Express will have taken over from GNER by the time you receive this newsletter. Already, some of the trains have had their GNER strips painted out. At present, we haven't yet established dialogue with any of their senior managers but hope to do so soon.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

We wish all SENRUG members and other readers of our newsletter the very best for Christmas and the New Year. Our next Committee meeting (to which all members are invited) is on 7th January 2008 and a public meeting with a speaker will be arranged for around March or April 2008.

DON'T FORGET

A year's membership of SENRUG still only costs £5, or £2.50 for the unwaged. New members are always welcome – just send a cheque payable to SENRUG to John Earl at 28 Bracken Ridge, Morpeth, NE61 3SY. If you forgot to renew your 2007/08 subscription please also send John a cheque.

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