

**SENUG Press Release: 12<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

## **SENUG Delighted At Ashington Blyth & Tyne Rail Re-Opening Progress**

SENUG, the group that campaigns for better rail services in South East Northumberland, said it was delighted at the news that Northumberland County Council has committed to the next stage in the process for introducing a new passenger train service between Newcastle and Ashington.



SENUG has been campaigning for the re-instatement of passenger services on the line, which is a fully maintained freight route, since 2005. SENUG Chair Dennis Fancett said: “The tracks are there and working. It won’t take much to re-open the line. This should be the easiest rail re-opening in the country to deliver”.

Nevertheless, the Council still has to go through Network Rail’s 8 stage process. Stage 1 was completed in March 2014. The step announced today is stage 2. Only at stage 4 do Network Rail determine the full re-

opening costs of the scheme, allowing the Council and other stakeholders to make the final decision.

Dennis said he was concerned at the amount of time it was taking to move through the various stages. “We need to speed up” he said. “We are of course delighted the Council is now fully committed, but we need more momentum”.

In 2008, SENRUG organised a charter train round the line to Ashington to demonstrate how easy re-opening it would be, and last year the group organised a schools competition in which teams from 5 schools created a DVD setting out their business case for re-opening the line.

SENRUG are currently in the process of holding a series of community meetings in which they set out all their campaign objectives, including the Ashington Blyth & Tyne re-opening. The next will be at Seghill Community Centre on Monday 26th October at 7:30 pm

## **Ends (264 words)**

### **Notes For Editors**

SENRUG is The South East Northumberland Rail User Group, a pro-rail campaign group that campaigns for better rail services for existing and potential passengers in South East Northumberland.

The Ashington Blyth & Tyne line is a working freight railway which last carried passenger trains in 1964. SENRUG wants to re-introduce passenger services between Newcastle and Ashington with trains then running on to a new station at Woodhorn, alongside Woodhorn Visitor Centre.

Network Rail's 8 stage process for Rail projects is known as GRIP (“Guide for Rail Investment Projects”) and details are at <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/asp/4171.aspx>

Photo Caption: SENRUG's 2008 Charter train to Ashington waits at Newcastle Station for the green light. Could such trains now run regularly? Acknowledgements SENRUG

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