

SENRUG PRESS RELEASE 25th APRIL 2016

“PAY MORE – GET LESS” AS VIRGIN CUTS KEY MORETH TRAIN.

SENRUG – The group that campaigns for better rail services in South East Northumberland – has reacted with dismay to the confirmation that a key evening train service at Morpeth is being cut from the May 2016 timetable change.

Morpeth to Edinburgh passengers will find their return service, operated by Virgin Trains East Coast, which currently leaves Edinburgh at 18:30 and arrives at Morpeth at 19:55, is being retimed to leave an hour later – making it too late for commuters, business people with day meetings in Edinburgh, and day trippers.

Instead, passengers will have to depart Edinburgh 25 minutes earlier at 18:05 then change at Alnmouth onto the Chathill Chugger (the Northern service), for which dubious privilege they will find the advanced ticket price some 3 times more expensive as the journey will involve more than one operator.

Evening passengers from Morpeth to London currently have a direct train at 19:57 which arrives in London at 23:37. The replacement service at 20:57 won't get to London until 01:05 - “way too late to check in to a hotel or turn up at a friends house with any decency” said SENRUG Chair Dennis Fancett. “Those wishing to arrive in London before midnight will now need to leave an hour earlier at 18:54 and change at both Newcastle and Doncaster – a complicated journey and again unlikely to have cheaper advanced tickets available as it will involve 3 separate train companies”.

The train that currently leaves Edinburgh at 18:30 will now leave 12 minutes later but will cut out the stops at Alnmouth and Morpeth as a result. “This is all in the name of achieving faster journey times from Edinburgh to London, but it is a classic case of not fully stress-testing the impact at Morpeth. The train doesn't actually get

Edinburgh passengers into London any quicker, it just leaves Edinburgh later in order to achieve that faster 'overall journey time' statistic" continued Dennis.

SENUG says it has complained furiously to Virgin about the change, and now believes the company has got the point. But it is apparently too late for VTEC to reverse the May change, though they are saying this will be looked at again, along with other possible improvements for Morpeth, from December 2016.

Ends (373 Words)

Notes for Editors

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Virgin Trains East Coast press office tel 0845 000 3333 or email press.desk@virgintrains.co.uk

The "Chathill Chugger" is the local slang name for the one morning peak and one evening peak Northern service which travels north of Morpeth to Chathill via Alnmouth.