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MORPETH TRAIN BOOST BONZANNA STARTS THIS WEEKEND

SENUG – The group that campaigns for better rail services in South East Northumberland – is reminding residents and businesses in the Morpeth area that a significant number of additional inter-city train services are being introduced at Morpeth station from this weekend.

Starting 11th December, Virgin Trains are providing two new weekday services leaving London at 09:30 and 13:30 and arriving at Morpeth at 12:57 and 16:57 before proceeding to Edinburgh. In the southbound direction, new trains leave Edinburgh at 14:00 and 18:30, and arrive at Morpeth 15:14 and 19:54, before continuing on to London.

There are also new weekend services, with later departures from Edinburgh to Morpeth on Friday and Saturday nights, and two extra services each way on Sundays, including a morning departure from Morpeth at 09:00 to the Scottish capital.

Dennis Fancett, Chair of SENUG commented “We are delighted to welcome these new services. It will now be possible to catch a direct train from London to Morpeth on weekday mornings, and additionally we will have off-peak Virgin trains between Morpeth and both London and Edinburgh. We have been in negotiations with Virgin for some time, articulating the business case of Morpeth, and are pleased our arguments have been listened to.”

Claire Ansley, General Manager for Virgin Trains on its East Coast route, said: "We're really pleased to launch extra services for Morpeth, with no fewer than 26 new departures from Morpeth per week, which we think is great news for customers.

"While developing our new timetable, we've listened very carefully to customers and communities across Northumberland, and this has included the reinstatement of a popular weekday service which will depart from Edinburgh at 18.30, as well as the introduction of later departures from Edinburgh on Friday and Saturday evenings.

"SENUG has very much helped to shape many of our improvements for Morpeth and I would like to thank them for their continued support and commitment to working with Virgin Trains.

"These additional services are being introduced just over eighteen months before we launch our new Virgin Azuma trains, which will significantly improve the speed, comfort and frequency of services on the route."

SENUG are also hosting a public meeting on Monday 12th December at Morpeth Town Hall with guest speaker Neal Smith from Virgin Trains. As well as outlining Virgin's future plans, there will be an opportunity to put questions or give feedback to Neil about any aspect of the company's operation. The meeting starts at 19:30 with refreshments prior to this, and all are welcome.

SENUG continues to lobby for better train services in South East Northumberland and urges those who support its campaigns to join the group. "The more people we speak for, the louder our voice is heard" said Dennis. Details are available at www.senug.co.uk.

Ends (460 Words)

Notes for Editors

SENUG – The South East Northumberland Rail User Group - is a voluntary pro rail campaign group: contact Dennis Fancett Chair, tel 01670 825500 or 07810 353651, e: chair@senug.co.uk www.senug.co.uk

Virgin Trains East Coast: contact Neal Smith Communications Manager Yorkshire/NE, tel 0116 366 3217 or 07500 447 624 e: Neal.Smith@virgintrainseastcoast.com. Out of hours press office 0800 000 3333, www.virgintrainseastcoast.com

Suggested photo caption: "More Virgin Trains will be arriving at Morpeth". Please credit Geoff Stainthorpe.

