



TransPennine is Here!



TransPennine NOVA 1 at Newcastle Central Station
Photo: Dave Shaw

Sunday 15th December sees a transformational uplift in the number of intercity trains calling at Morpeth station, with the introduction of hourly services each way on the TransPennine Express Liverpool - Edinburgh route. Morpeth now has at least one train per hour to Edinburgh, Durham, York and Leeds, making commuting by rail to destinations such as Edinburgh so much easier.

In addition the new TPE service provides an hourly direct rail link between Morpeth and Huddersfield, Manchester and Liverpool, with one morning train running direct to Manchester Airport.

When SENRUG was first established in 2004, Morpeth had just 3 intercity trains each way per weekday. But SENRUG set itself the ambitious target of securing an intercity train in each direction at least every 2 hours. Now, this objective is achieved, with Morpeth having 28 intercity services each way per weekday, including to CrossCountry destinations such as Sheffield, Birmingham, Bristol, Exeter, and Penzance.

And that's not all. Because in just 2 years' time, the new open access service from FirstGroup will start, adding 5 more trains per weekday to both London and Edinburgh.

None of this has come about by chance. Behind the scenes, SENRUG has been lobbying, responding to consultations, meeting with train company representatives putting the case for Morpeth and proving itself to be a highly effective and well-respected campaign group.

A Welcome from TransPennine Express.

Graham Meiklejohn, TransPennine Express, writes:



In the early part of 2015 I arranged to meet Dennis Fancett as part of the engagement work FirstGroup was doing for its bid for the TransPennine Express franchise. It was the first of several trips I would make to Northumberland to meet with a range of stakeholders as the case for calling at Morpeth was made.

The input made by Dennis on behalf of SENRUG and those other stakeholders mattered, as they underpinned the TransPennine Express service that FirstGroup wanted to propose to the Department for Transport and Transport for the North. Our proposition was for hourly East Coast services from Edinburgh via the East Coast Main Line and then across the Pennines to Liverpool, with a call at Morpeth. We are delighted that that this service is now a reality.

.....contd on page two.

**Direct Services
from Morpeth
from 16th
December 2019**

[All Operators]

Aberdeen
Berwick
Birmingham
Bristol
Carlisle
Darlington
Derby
Didcot
Doncaster
Dundee
Durham
Edinburgh
Exeter
Glasgow
Hexham
Huddersfield
Leeds
Liverpool
London
Manchester
Motherwell
Newcastle
Newton le Willows
Oxford
Penzance
Peterborough
Plymouth
Reading
Sheffield
York

A welcome from TransPennine Express

....contd from page one Gone are the waits at Newcastle to connect with services heading south to York and then across the Pennines to Leeds, Huddersfield, Manchester and Liverpool Lime Street. In comes direct TransPennine Express services in both directions, with our hourly trains to Edinburgh Waverley as well as those to the south.

By joining the TransPennine Express network, Morpeth benefits from a range of great value led TPE-only fares which are available now. Please visit www.tpexpress.co.uk or use our App to book ahead and secure a low value fare on one of our trains to any of the towns and cities now available direct every hour with TransPennine Express from Morpeth.

We appreciate that there was demand for additional station calls to be added to this new service. The 19:30 departure from Edinburgh will call additionally at Alnmouth at 20:29, while the 06:08 to Edinburgh also calls at Alnmouth and Berwick-upon-Tweed.

We believe that these new services, operated by our new Nova 1 trains, the most technologically advanced trains anywhere on the UK network, will transform journeys made to/from Morpeth for work, business, education and leisure while also providing a significant economic boost to the economy of Northumberland. We look forward to welcoming you on board!

Morpeth will have many more intercity services from December 2019. However, there is still more work to be done as we await the completion of the station building redevelopment and the much needed car park extension. The good news is that there is a firm agreement to extend the ticket office opening times to include afternoons. Rotas are being prepared and staff recruited. Northumberland County Council will, once the contractors are off site, be converting the redundant land opposite the station building to extra car parking, additionally they are looking at options for further car park improvements. Until all of this work is completed Morpeth is, in effect, a major intercity station with only country halt facilities.

Update: Progress on the Ashington Blyth and Tyne.

By the time you read this article the North East Joint Transport Committee should have submitted their bid to the Transforming Cities Fund. Included in the bid is the re-opening of the Ashington Blyth & Tyne Line, now christened the "Northumberland Line" by the County Council. SENRUG has supported the decision to miss out a couple of stations in phase 1 as a pragmatic way of at least getting something running after 15 years of campaigning. Our campaign to open these remaining stations as soon as possible thereafter will continue. A decision from DfT is expected in March 2020 with passenger services possibly included in the May 2023 timetable.



Newsham in Miniature

Peter Maddison and Ray Knott, both born in Blyth, have spent the past 4 years building a scale model of the Ashington Blyth and Tyne, not the whole line but the section between Newsham South and Plessey Road. They have



recreated, using photographs and painstaking research involving visits to the various sites, both the railway itself and many of the buildings that have since been demolished.

Their encyclopaedic knowledge of the traffic that used the line will be reflected in the locomotives, carriages and wagons used on the completed layout. Current work is centred on modelling Newsham Station with its station buildings, underpass and water tank. The water for the tank was piped to the station from a railway owned reservoir. The nearby River could not be used because it was tidal and the salt it contained would damage steam engine boilers.

It is this sort of detail that makes models like this so important. Photographs can tell us a lot, but a living and breathing 3 dimensional representation of the past offers us much more. The layout lives in the North Shields Clubroom of the Blyth and District Model Rail Society but in 2020 the model will be on show at the annual 'RailEx', held at John Spence School in North Shields on 18/19 July.

Other Campaigns

Cramlington. With virtually all the train service objectives for Morpeth fulfilled our focus now turns to Cramlington (population 27,000). It is a scandal that the earliest southbound departure from Cramlington isn't until 08:05 making it difficult for many people to get to work in Newcastle by train, and insult is added to injury by the fact that the station only has an hourly rail service. Compare this service with the 3 trains each hour, and first train at 06:10, enjoyed by Hexham (population 11,000). Cramlington needs a half hourly service to and from Newcastle and an earlier morning southbound service departing Cramlington around 07:00. SENRUG also wants to see Cramlington Station moved to a new site beside the shopping centre, with integrated new bus station, taxi rank and ample parking.

North of Morpeth. SENRUG also wants to see a real improvement in services north of Morpeth with an hourly service stopping at all stations between Newcastle and Berwick – including new stations at Belford and Beal. A feasibility study jointly funded by Northern and Northumberland County Council, with a small

contribution from SENRUG (funded by Railfuture, the national pro-rail campaign group), is currently underway and should report its findings early in 2020.

Solutions. SENRUG's long term aim is for 2 separate hourly local services: the first from Carlisle, via MetroCentre and Newcastle to Morpeth (as exists today) but then extended to a new station at Choppington and Bedlington, connecting with the re-opened Ashington Blyth & Tyne Line. The second service would run from Newcastle to Berwick calling at all stations with Belford and Beal eventually re-opened and could be operated by electric trains.

These services would double train frequency at Cramlington to half-hourly, provide an hourly service to north of Morpeth stations throughout the day, improve connectivity between Morpeth, Alnmouth and Berwick, as well as re-introducing passenger rail services at Choppington, Belford & Beal.

Keep up to date with SENRUG . Our website is www.senrug.co.uk or follow us on www.facebook.com/SENRUG/

We are off to see the Sea

Dave Shaw explores Saltburn

“You’re mad. Nobody goes to Saltburn – at least not until July” said a fellow traveller leaving the train at Redcar. He was wrong. I had a great autumnal day in Saltburn. From Darlington to Redcar it’s a journey through industrial Teesside with panoramic views and some great sights. From Redcar we follow the sea to Saltburn.



Victorian splendour in the stained glass windows of the Tramway

The Pease family, Quakers from Darlington, both developed Middlesbrough and owned many of the railways in the area. In 1858 Henry Pease, while walking along the coast path towards Old Saltburn, had a “prophetic vision of a town arising on the cliff and the quiet, unfrequented and sheltered glen turned into a lovely garden”. This worthy vision also fitted well with his ambition to increase traffic on his railways. Land was purchased and plans made for a town based on a gridiron street layout, with as many houses as possible having sea views. Bricks were transported from Darlington by his own railway and the town rose on the cliff top. The jewel in the crown was the Zetland Hotel, one of the world’s earliest railway hotels, with its own private platform. Saltburn is still a railway town with the remains of a once substantial station, a miniature railway and the

famous Saltburn Tramway – our first stop. This water balanced funicular railway takes us down the cliff to the beach and pier. This beach was used by Sir Malcolm Campbell who set his first speed record, an ‘unofficial’ 138.08 mph, driving Bluebird on 17 June 1922. The coastline is popular with surfers, and national surfing events are held during the autumn and winter, attracting competitors from all corners of the world.

Lots of places to eat beside the sea – all of them with great views over the beach and pier. Keep an eye out for ‘Hendrix the Coastal Cat’ who spends much of his time in the area and loves attention and a stroke.

After a short walk to the end of the oldest surviving iron pier in Britain, and visiting the ‘amusements’ on our return, we move on to the Valley Gardens and our next railway experience. The Saltburn Miniature

Railway runs on a 15” gauge track during the summer. It starts from Cat Nab Station, close to the beach, and runs for about ½ mile inland to Forest Halt. From here we can continue on foot through the woodlands and on to the Italian Gardens, with the opportunity to stop for tea at a (summer only) café. A little further down the road to Whitby you’ll find the woodland nature reserve at Saltburn Gill. The reserve is said to be one of the best examples of an ancient woodland in England and makes a great walk for nature lovers, but for more active walkers the Cleveland Way and the England Coastal path both pass through the town.

If time allows you could spend an hour on the scenic X4 bus journey to Whitby, and return home via the Esk Valley Line using the 16:00 (Sundays at 15:46) direct train to Newcastle.

Many of the voluntary groups responsible for some of the great things in Saltburn use Facebook as their shop window. Look out for these pages, and you don’t need a Facebook account to look at them:

- www.facebook.com/Saltburn-cliff-lift-news-171490859869152/
- www.facebook.com/Hendrixthecoastalcat/
- www.facebook.com/friendsofthevalleysaltburn/

For more general information see: www.saltburnbysea.com

**The SENRUG Committee
wish a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year
to all our readers.**