

SENRUG PRESS RELEASE 23rd January 2021

SENRUG DELIGHT AS ASHINGTON RE-OPENING FUNDING ANNOUNCED

SENRUG - The group that campaigns for better rail services in South and East Northumberland - has welcomed today's announcement of a government commitment of £34m for the next phase of the re-opening work for The Northumberland Line - the new name for the Ashington Blyth & Tyne freight line. SENRUG has been campaigning for the re-introduction of passenger rail services along the line since March 2005.

This significant funding package will allow for detailed design and land acquisition along with minor construction which can proceed in advance of the necessary planning permissions, and means Northumberland County Council remains on track with the timeline of seeing passenger trains in service by 2024.

Whilst a final funding package will need to be released by central government after the various planning consents have been obtained and the exact detail of the scheme and costs are known, today's news, releasing approximately just over 20% of the total estimated re-opening cost, is an overwhelmingly positive step forward, and indicates clear intention from central government to deliver the scheme in full.

SENRUG Chair Dennis Fancett, reacting to today's news, said "It has been a long campaign with many highs and lows during the 15 years thus far. We remember that when we first started, no-one would listen to us and everyone said it was impossible, or had been tried before. But, bit by bit, through diligent campaigning and lobbying, and particularly our special events such as our special charter train round the line in 2008, and schools' DVD competition in 2014, we have won support not just from the key stakeholders such as Northumberland County Council, but, we believe, from the community as a whole".

"There is still more work to be done, and we will keep a close eye on proceedings, but are obviously delighted by today's announcement and the tremendous effort from the Council and their delivery partners in pushing the plan forward and achieving today's funding commitment during this time of national crisis caused by the COVID pandemic."

SENUG has already achieved a significant increase in long-distance trains at Morpeth station and will continue to push hard for its other objectives such as the local service between Newcastle and Berwick, and a 30-minute train frequency at Cramlington. For details of all its campaigns or to join the group, go to www.senrug.co.uk.

Ends (390 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@senrug.co.uk. www.senrug.co.uk

The Ashington Blyth & Tyne re-opening - now called "The Northumberland Line" by Northumberland County Council, will deliver a new passenger railway between Newcastle and Ashington, running from Newcastle along the East Coast Main Line as far as Benton Junction, and then along an existing freight line as far as Ashington. It will include intermediate stations at Northumberland Park (Metro Connection), Seaton Delaval, Newsham, Bebside and Bedlington.

The lead Project Sponsor is Northumberland County Council: their press release is at: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/News/2021/Jan/Multi-million-pound-investment-in-Northumberland-L.aspx> and their press office phone number (for journalists only) is 01670 622428 or email is communications@northumberland.gov.uk

Attached photos (see following pages)

"Destination Blind" - suggested caption "SENUG's 2008 Charter Train bound for Ashington". Please credit John Brierley if using this photo.

"Bedlington Engineering" - suggested caption "Network Rail preparatory engineering works at Bedlington station". Please credit Dennis Fancett if using this photo.

"AB&T Core Route and Potential Further Extensions" Note: This map of the route also includes some sections not currently planned for re-opening. Please credit SENUG if using this map either the full pdf or in part.

Photo (below): Destination Blind



Photo (below): Bedlington Engineering Works



Photo (Below): AB&T Core Route and Potential Further Extensions

