

LUMO arrives at Morpeth

Lumo, a new 100% electric rail service owned by FirstGroup, have started their new service on the East Coast Main Line.

Their aim is to provide low-carbon, affordable long-distance travel for over 1 million passengers each year. Rail travel generates six times fewer carbon emissions than travelling by plane and Lumo aims to provide a comfortable, and convenient, city centre to city centre alternative to flying with fares that are affordable for all.

Lumo also aims to reset standards for the passenger experience. The interior of the rolling stock, five brand new state-of-the-art Hitachi AT300 intercity electric trains – also known as Class 803, has been ergonomically designed for comfort and ease. Passengers will be able to work or play at their custom-designed seats, which all come with adjustable tray table, privacy wings and personal lighting. Lumo also offers a new at-seat catering service from high street brands called LumoEats, free Wi-Fi, paperless ticketing, a new entertainment system and a single class of quality service for all passengers. Fares have been simplified with a single between London and Edinburgh costing as little as £14.90 with 60% of all single fares available at a cost of £30 or less. All Lumo services will stop at Newcastle and Morpeth, and

some at Stevenage. Service frequencies are planned to increase to a maximum of 5 trains in each direction each day by early next year.



Lumo arrives in Morpeth. Photo: Geoff Stainthorpe

Helen Wyld, Managing Director of Lumo says “The reasons people choose different modes of travel are changing. People are now considering their impact on the environment very carefully. They also expect better service and catering. Lumo is a new rail travel

experience that is kinder to the planet and better value for passengers, whilst never compromising on service.” As an additional part of their environmental responsibilities Lumo tell us that over 50% of the on-board catering menu is plant-based; staff uniforms are responsibly sourced and can be entirely recycled; and that paper waste has been dramatically reduced by being a digital-first business.

To ensure high quality customer service Lumo has invested £2 million in a Training Academy with the aim of ensuring that their staff are focused on passenger wellbeing and on-board customer service including caring for vulnerable passengers. Not only that but their traincrew and head office are all based in the North East. SENRUG offers a warm welcome to Lumo

For our first impressions of a journey on the LUMO service - see page 6

WELCOME BACK, TPE – We’ve Missed You!

Some years ago, SENRUG proposed that TPE trains, rather than sitting idly at Newcastle for 55 minutes, should be extended to Cramlington and Morpeth. The agreement reached between the operator and the DfT, enshrined into the franchise

commitment, was that the service should serve Morpeth and then go on to Edinburgh, though sadly missing out Cramlington.

New, longer, bi-mode trains were procured for the entire route, and service finally started in December 2019.

But no sooner had it reached its full-service level of 1 train each way per hour when TPE, along with all operators, were forced to significantly curtail services during the COVID lockdown.

In the meantime, the way train operators are managed by government has changed. The old franchise agreements are no more, operators are now running under service contracts and this will become the norm under the new Great British Railways. And DfT, initially at least, did not want to see TPE trains running through Northumberland, presumably believing capacity had to be left for more LNER services as per the strongly opposed draft ECML timetable for May 2022 (see article page 4). TPE trains were not reinstated between Newcastle and Edinburgh in the May 2021 timetable uplift.

But TPE trains are maintained at Craigentiny depot in Edinburgh. At least 2 units have to run there each day and are returned on the next day. Working with The Rail North Partnership and Transport Scotland (who need an operator to serve their new station at Reston) a proposal was quickly put forward and negotiations

concluded for 5 trains each way per day, between Newcastle and Edinburgh calling at principal Northumberland stations, starting 12th December 2021. The industry is to be thanked for introducing the new service so quickly. It

normally takes 2-3 years to develop and then implement such a service.

SENRUG is delighted to welcome back TransPennine Express services to Morpeth and also some other key stations, from 12th December 2021.

This new service is welcome and

our thanks are due to TransPennine, The Rail North Partnership, and Transport Scotland. However, it is not a perfect solution. It will not be running hourly. It does not connect the principal Northumberland towns with stations south of Newcastle or provide a direct connection to Manchester. Not all the trains can call at Cramlington. Pegswood, Widdrington, Acklington and Chathill are still left out in the cold and timetabling constraints means there would appear little opportunity for this service to call at a re-opened Belford station.

It does however provide daytime connectivity between Morpeth, Alnmouth and Berwick which SENRUG has long campaigned for. SENRUG sees it as a most useful and welcome improvement but our campaign aspiration remains that the TPE service should run hourly each way extending beyond Newcastle to Leeds and Manchester or Liverpool. We also want to see a local service, also hourly, stopping at all stations on the route. SENRUG has written to Chris Heaton-Harris, Minister of State for Rail setting out these concerns and aspirations, and you can see a copy of our letter on our website (or by clicking on this [link](#)).



TPE at Wooden Farm Crossing. Photo: Dave Shaw

The Northumberland Line – an update

Following the news of an initial allocation to the project of £34m by the Government, work started on the Northumberland Line. Drilling rigs and a range of Network Rail Track machines have been hard at work. Special trains have explored the line. So, what comes next? The initial grant paid for some track renewals, design



Class 158 'Special Train' at Newsham. Photo: Geoff Stainthorpe

work on the new stations, and the many legal processes that must be completed on a complex project like this. SENRUG has been assured that work will continue over the next few months until the final permissions are in place and Government is able to release the balance of the money required to complete the works and enable passenger services to begin.

Two important legal processes have now started. Firstly, the hearing under the Transport and Works Act. There have been several objections lodged and these will be heard in detail at the enquiry. They include objections that some individuals and organisations may be adversely affected either during the construction process, by changes of land use in the longer term or because they say that too much land is required for the line. Two of the large landowners have raised a number of issues about payments they say should be made in respect of the 'wayleaves' granted at the time that the line was originally built on land that they still own. The TWA inspector will produce his report early in 2022 and, so long as this doesn't present any insurmountable difficulties, we can expect to see

services starting with the introduction of the December 2023 timetable. The second set of legal processes relate to the various planning applications that have been lodged to get permission to build new stations and other structures. Some of these may be contentious.

SENRUG has always argued that the new line needs to be properly integrated with both local bus services and the Metro. We have argued that buses should call all stations, and that the station entrances should be within easy walking distance of the bus stop. We were originally told that this would be the case and that, where necessary, buses would be diverted into station car parks to minimise walking distances. It now seems unlikely that this will happen because of the costs involved in adding extra vehicles to the schedules. This means that the walk to Ashington Station from the nearest bus stop will be between 120 and 325 metres and to Bebside 450 or 580

metres. Seaton Delaval will be 160 metres from the bus stop and Newsham about 280 metres. At both Bedlington and Northumberland Park buses will stop within easy walking distance of the station entrance. On the other integration issue the news is much better. Proposals are being developed to integrate fares between the Northumberland Line, Metro, and local buses. The original proposal was to add an additional zone to the current Metro zones to take in Ashington. This may still happen but the latest proposal is different. The Bus Services Improvement Plan includes a proposal for a cap on the total fares paid in any one day when using bus and/or rail and/or metro anywhere in the North East. The levels of the cap in different areas are yet to be determined and implementation of the scheme will depend on funding from Government.

Finally, we have been assured that the timetable will include a 30-minute service but there are some issues in relation to stops at Manors, and it may be that only one train each hour is able to stop here.

We've come a long way but the journey isn't over.

The recent debacle of the proposed East Coast Main Line Timetable, that SENRUG strongly opposed, has made us realise it is time to reiterate our vision, which we believe to be both technically possible and commercially achievable, for how the available rail resources in South East and East Northumberland should be utilised and developed.

LNER want to reduce the number of calls between Newcastle and Edinburgh on the East Coast Main Line. SENRUG has no difficulties with this proposal so long as this doesn't mean that Morpeth, Alnmouth and Berwick lose their direct services to London and the Midlands. If one of LNER's 2 trains per hour ran non-stop between Newcastle and Edinburgh then the 2nd LNER train each hour, along with the hourly CrossCountry service, should be used to ensure that each of Morpeth, Alnmouth, Berwick and Dunbar have a minimum of one LNER or CrossCountry train per hour, alternating between London and Birmingham with each train calling at 2 of these stops.

We also want to see TPE service running hourly and calling at Cramlington, Morpeth, Alnmouth, Berwick and one station in the Scottish borders, providing connectivity between these stations. This service also needs to be extended southwards to provide a crucial, direct, hourly link to Leeds and Manchester.

A new, local, electric service should also be introduced between Newcastle and Berwick, once again hourly each way, stopping at every single station, so that Pegswood, Widdrington, Acklington and Chathill get a regular hourly service. This new service should have capacity to call at additional re-opened or new stations such as Belford, for which a Feasibility Study has already been completed. The service could also be extended south of Newcastle to a new station at Team Valley (Low Fell), linking this area to Newcastle by rail, and providing access to jobs from Northumberland.

Our final "ask" on the East Coast Mail Line is that the existing hourly Carlisle – Morpeth service should be retained but extended beyond Morpeth via the freight line to a new station at Choppington, and then on to Bedlington and a

connection with the re-opened Northumberland Line.

One great advantage of this service pattern is that Cramlington, the largest town in Northumberland, would see a greatly improved service that would open up many job opportunities to local people.

SENRUG welcomes the new LUMO service between London and Edinburgh and it's calls at both Morpeth and Newcastle. However, this doesn't mean Morpeth no longer needs intercity services throughout the day. LNER and CrossCountry offer a whole range of destinations that LUMO cannot provide. These include places such as York and Aberdeen. We should also remember that LUMO will not be offering first class carriages and that the government will not step in to replace open access operators' services should they fail or be withdrawn.

Once the Northumberland Line opens in early 2024, SENRUG then wants to see it developed to include:

- A new service between Ashington – Woodhorn – Newbiggin. This could use the existing freight lines plus a 1.2 km extension from the Spine Road bridge to Newbiggin on the existing alignment.
- An extension of the current service from the Tyne Valley to Morpeth to Choppington and Bedlington using the existing freight line.
- A station at Seghill.
- Newsham to Blyth Town centre. SENRUG believes this should be part of a new Metro route from Airport to Blyth, utilising Metro's service line through its depot between Regent Centre to Longbenton and running under battery power between Northumberland Park and Newsham.
- Ashington – Butterwell, with a new east to north facing junction at Butterwell. This would be primarily for freight and emergency diversions but it would also enable regular passenger services to run between Ashington, Alnmouth and Berwick.
- Ashington – Cambois – North Blyth. A shuttle using the existing freight line, and the new bay platform at Ashington.

SENRUG proposal for Northumberland Rail Service Network and connections to Metro

Edinburgh to Newcastle (and then stations to Liverpool) - Hourly - limited stop.

Berwick to Team Valley - Hourly - stopping at all stations.

The Northumberland Line - Newbiggin-by-the-Sea to Metro Centre - half hourly.

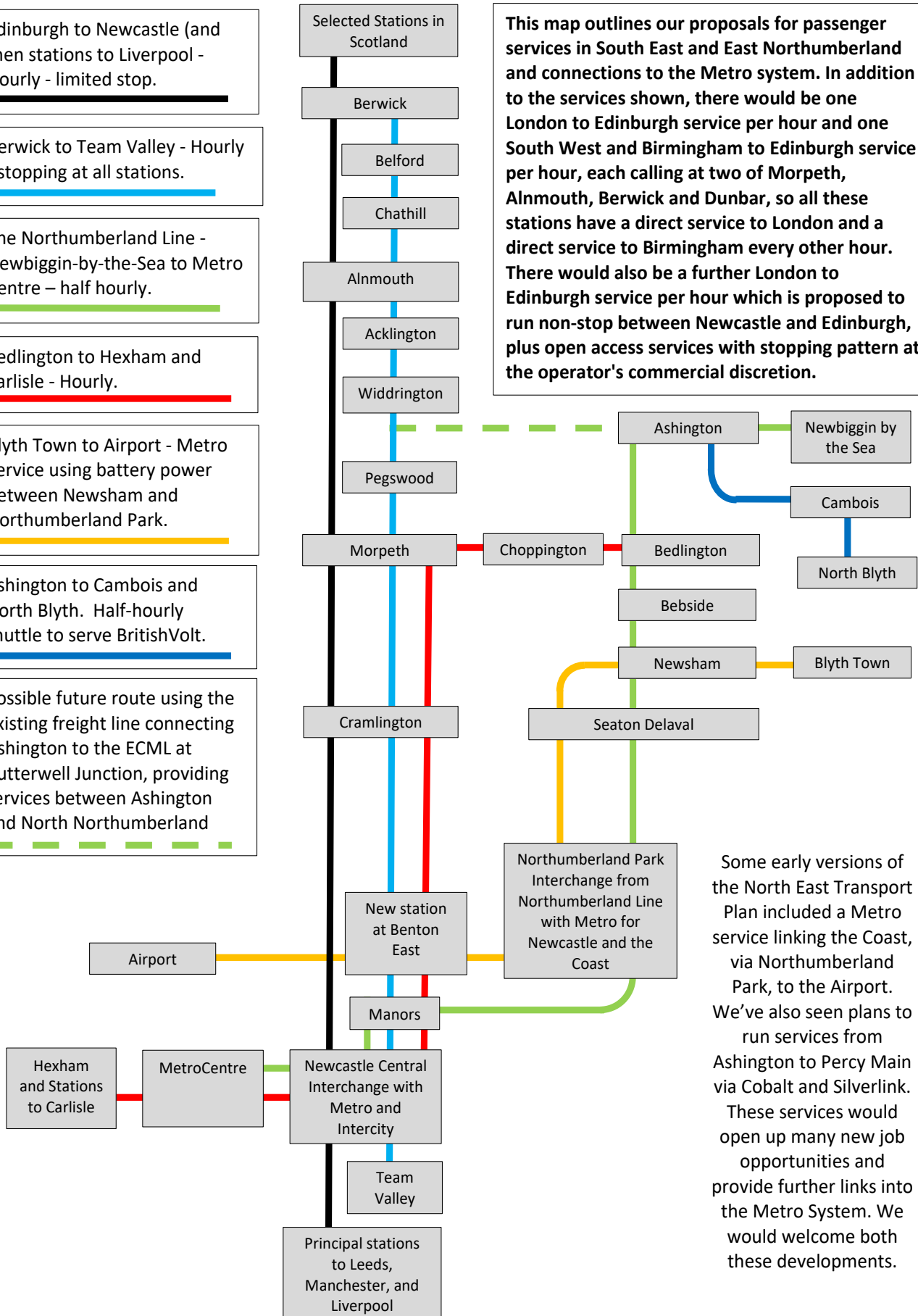
Bedlington to Hexham and Carlisle - Hourly.

Blyth Town to Airport - Metro Service using battery power between Newsham and Northumberland Park.

Ashington to Cambois and North Blyth. Half-hourly shuttle to serve BritishVolt.

Possible future route using the existing freight line connecting Ashington to the ECML at Butterwell Junction, providing services between Ashington and North Northumberland

This map outlines our proposals for passenger services in South East and East Northumberland and connections to the Metro system. In addition to the services shown, there would be one London to Edinburgh service per hour and one South West and Birmingham to Edinburgh service per hour, each calling at two of Morpeth, Alnmouth, Berwick and Dunbar, so all these stations have a direct service to London and a direct service to Birmingham every other hour. There would also be a further London to Edinburgh service per hour which is proposed to run non-stop between Newcastle and Edinburgh, plus open access services with stopping pattern at the operator's commercial discretion.



Some early versions of the North East Transport Plan included a Metro service linking the Coast, via Northumberland Park, to the Airport. We've also seen plans to run services from Ashington to Percy Main via Cobalt and Silverlink. These services would open up many new job opportunities and provide further links into the Metro System. We would welcome both these developments.

Community Rail Partnership – the next steps

SENUG is proceeding with plans to form a Community Rail Partnership (CRP) covering both Newcastle – Berwick and the Northumberland Line.

CRPs seek to promote and increase patronage on their lines working within their local community. A CRP might organise special events such as real ale or jazz trains, or create leaflets on leisure options near the line such as walks and bike trails, or promote art or gardening projects at local stations. A CRP facilitates greater community ownership of its routes and stations.

SENUG believes that a single CRP is needed for both lines because of the high degree of connectivity between them. Manors station for instance is served by both routes and we are campaigning to link the two lines through links between Bedlington and Morpeth. In addition, walking or cycling routes could be promoted between the two lines such as Morpeth to Ashington and Newbiggin along the Wansbeck, or Bedlington to Cramlington via the Humford Mill stepping stones.

The rail industry has a requirement to formally consult CRPs on timetable changes (surprisingly there is no such requirement to consult with pro-rail campaign groups such as SENUG), but a CRP, unlike SENUG, may not involve itself with campaigning activities. This is why both organisations are needed: they would be legally separate but committed to work closely with each other, in much the same way as happens on the Tyne Valley.

SENUG is looking for volunteers to help form the new CRP which would most likely be a not-for-profit company. As Directors they would have responsibilities similar to those of Trustees of a small to medium charity.

SENUG is particularly keen to hear from businesses, educational organisations, tourist or leisure attractions or parish / town councils close to either line. Those interested in getting involved should contact chair@senrug.co.uk.

LUMO Reviewed

LUMO ran a special promotional train from London Kings Cross to Edinburgh on 21st October. Trevor Watson was a guest on the train from Morpeth to Edinburgh and return. This was his experience of the new service.

“The dark blue electric powered LUMO 5 coach train arrived on time at Morpeth on Thursday afternoon. I had a reserved seat number 88 out of 96 in total in coach C. The onboard team known as train ambassadors welcomed me on board and directed me to my seat.



Crossing the Royal Border Bridge. Photo: Lumo

Most of the seats are arranged airline style in pairs with 2 sets of 4 grouped round a table per carriage. The seats have a lot more padding than those of similar new train builds and the seat pitch is slightly reclined and they are taller with head side supports, altogether more comfortable in my opinion. The leg room is generous and there is a table on the adjacent seat back that folds down and can extend towards you allowing you to secure drinking receptacles. There is also an individual reading light on the seat back and electrical charging points at a lower level.

A trolley service provided me with tea and biscuits with a smile from the staff as we sped over the Royal Border Bridge at Berwick. The return journey from Edinburgh included an announcement on the tannoy from the train driver briefly describing the route and the weather conditions in London. The train driver also explained why we came to an abrupt stop at Morpeth North level crossing, starting again to arrive at Morpeth station on time. This was a pleasant and comfortable journey experience.”

Why do the words ‘Integration’ and a ‘Transport Network’ matter?

We spend a lot of time talking about transport integration and networks – but what do these words really mean?

Many car users point to fact that they can go directly from home to work or home to the shops in one seamless journey. What they don’t usually talk about are the problems of congestion and pollution that cars create – problems that impact on the rest of us. They also don’t talk about the problems of finding places to park and the impact on residents. Finally, not everyone can drive or afford to run a car.

Public Transport is part of the alternative but it needs to be properly planned and funded. It has many advantages for the whole community It is much less polluting and can be much less stressful to use. It will never offer the door-to-door convenience of a car but it can be made much more user friendly with some thought.

We need to think carefully about making the best use of the infrastructure we’ve got and the connections that can be made with other modes of transport. In this context it is vital that all local rail services don’t just terminate at Newcastle. It makes no sense to have to change trains on local services with an inevitable increase in journey time. Where we do have to change trains, we should make sure that timetables are co-

ordinated and changing trains just means crossing a single platform. Buses, cars, walking and cycling need to be properly integrated into a wider network with easy connections that don’t require a long walk from the bus stop or car park. We need to make sure that tickets are affordable and can be used on any type of local public transport with no barriers to using a single type of ticket on buses, train, or Metro.

Stations and interchanges should be places that are safe and secure, and where a cup of coffee is available and the staff can help passengers. At a more local level we need to see bus stops with good quality shelters and live information systems to tell us when our bus will be arriving.

The environment around stations or interchanges is important for walkers and cyclists. It must be safe and easy to find your way around and this isn’t always the case. If you are on a bike you need to be certain that it will still be there when you come home from work or a shopping trip.

An integrated network can make journeys much easier for us all, including car drivers, and help to tackle the challenge of global warming. Finally, if we walk or cycle for at least part of our journey we’ll all be much fitter and less of a drain on the NHS.

Ticket Office Closures

SENRUG would be the first to complain if train companies didn’t accept credit cards and we can’t deny more and more tickets are being bought online. We campaigned for Ticket Vending Machines at Morpeth allowing passengers to collect pre-purchased tickets at the station. The problem is that these developments reduce demand for the station Ticket Office and often lead to full station de-staffing bringing with it closure of station toilets and waiting rooms, a general feeling of neglect, and anxieties about personal safety. An unstaffed station is a real problem for disabled or vulnerable passengers particularly in times of service disruption. So, whilst we should allow train companies to be more innovative with how

they deploy their staff at stations, they need to retain enough staff to despatch trains safely, offer proper assistance to customers including those who might find ticket machines confusing, and be mindful of our needs for secure and safe stations. Without high quality staff who are available to the passengers the railways just won’t work. LNER are planning to cut booking office hours at Berwick but their plans don’t explain if other staff would be available to help.

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campaign for
better rail
services

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A Day Out – Today We Head North to Berwick

It is about to become a lot easier to make the journey from many parts of the North East to Berwick and the Borders. From December TPE will be running five return journeys a day - enough to allow you to use their trains for both parts of the journey and know that your ticket will be valid on your return journey.

We leave Newcastle and accelerate through the suburbs out into open country. Rail enthusiasts will be looking to see what stock is currently stabled at Heaton Depot. The rest will be keeping an eye out for the magnificent art deco former Wills factory as you cross the Coast Road.

On the new TPE service we will stop to pick up at Cramlington and Morpeth. Beautiful countryside lies on either side of the line and it gets better as we reach Alnmouth. One day we will be able to connect with the Aln Valley Railway that will take us to Alnwick. From here until Berwick the line offers great views into the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We'll see castles and islands as well as a beautiful rural landscape. When our campaign for a local rail service succeeds, we will be able break our journey at Chathill or Belford and connect with local buses to the seaside resorts and the inland hills. The final excitement comes as we cross the Royal Border Bridge. The views on either side are amazing, and you'll see more of the bridge from ground level as you stroll around Berwick.

Berwick Castle was built in 1120 by David 1st of Scotland. With the ebb and flow of the border between England and Scotland it changed hands several times before 1482 – since when it has been in English hands. Are the people of Berwick English or Scottish? They've solved the problem locally with many describing themselves as 'Berwickers'. Elizabeth 1st built ramparts around Berwick and the castle began its steady decline. Parts of it collapsed and the rest was used as a quarry to supply building stone for Holy Trinity

Church. And then the railways came. As you left Newcastle you will have noted that the railway line runs between the Castle Keep and the Gatehouse. In Berwick the line also runs through the castle but here the builders had to demolish the Great Hall to make way for the station building. Initially the station only served stations

in Scotland and it was 18 months before a temporary bridge connected it to the rest of England and three years before the Royal Border Bridge opened in 1850. The station is well worth a look around having won an award for its many heritage features.



The Berwick Bridges. Photo: Dave Shaw

What else is there to see in Berwick? Start with a walk around the ramparts. You'll see Georgian splendour in the buildings, long views out to sea and into the countryside, as well as glimpses into the narrow streets of the town below you. Looking upstream from the old town quays you'll see 3 elegant river crossings, including the Royal Border Bridge that you have recently crossed by train. After this you need to wander around the streets within the ramparts. Here you'll find a warm welcome in the many small shops and places to eat. You can explore the delights of the Maltings Arts Centre with their range of films, plays, concerts and exhibitions. Finally, you should follow the Lowry Trail across the bridges to Spittal and Tweedmouth to explore some more of the hidden gems, which the great 'matchstick men' painter discovered on his many holidays in Berwick.

There is almost too much to see in one day. So come back again soon to spend more time in Berwick and the Borders.

Next time we'll take a trip over the border to the new station at Reston, only a few miles on from Berwick, and handy for visiting the wonders of Coldingham Bay and St Abbs.