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SENRUG DELIGHT AS TICKET OFFICE CLOSURE PLANS SCRAPPED

SENRUG - The group that campaigns for better rail services in South East and East Northumberland, has reacted with delight to today's announcement that plans to close train station ticket offices and significantly reduce the hours that stations are staffed have been scrapped.

Dennis Fancett, Chair of the South East Northumberland Rail User Group commented: "the proposals that have been scrapped today had involved reducing the hours per week during which Morpeth and Alnmouth stations are staffed by 46% and 38% respectively. These are inter-city stations serving destinations such as London, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Aberdeen and Penzance. It's not just about buying tickets - choosing from the bewildering array of different options, and protecting people that can't use cards or apps - important though that is. Stations need to be staffed. The disruption we are seeing right now at Morpeth due to the Plessey viaduct works, with many services cancelled or not stopping and a bus replacement programme in place, provides the evidence that we need uniformed, staffed presence at designated points at railway stations to tell customers what to do."

"It's not as if things never go wrong on the railway. They do, and staff are needed to help, advise, and most importantly report back to their management what is happening on the ground. We are glad to see the back of these ill-considered proposals, but look forward to working constructively with rail company management to explore opportunities arising from the growth of online ticket purchasing for multi-skilling staff, that do not involve reduction in their physical presence at the station or the ability to sell tickets in-person."

"Like many others, we feel certain these proposals did not come from the rail companies themselves, but from central government, which incidentally owns 3 of the 5 companies serving Northumberland stations. They were hugely unpopular and were never going to work. Someone, somewhere should have listened to feedback from those that understand the needs of railway passengers before they ever hit the light of day."

SENRUG's full response to the consultation is available on its website. The group believes it needs to remain vigilant in case there is a further attempt at re-introducing similar proposals under different branding at a later date. It is also encouraging people who support SENRUG's campaign objectives to join the group at <https://www.senrug.co.uk/join>.

Ends (385 words)

Notes for Editors

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

SENRUG's full response to the Ticket Office Closure Consultations can be found on its website at: <https://www.senrug.co.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/23-07-22-SENRUG-Response-to-Transport-Focus-Ticket-Office-Closure-Consultations.pdf> plus an addendum to the main consultation at <https://www.senrug.co.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/23-08-31-Email-to-Transport-Focus-Addendum-to-Response-on-Ticket-Office-Closure-Consultation.pdf>

Attached Photo: Suggested Caption: Why stations need staff. How can passengers work out if the 14:50 from Morpeth to Edinburgh is cancelled completely, or just a minute late? Only staff can tell you. Credit SENRUG.

