

PROPOSED CROSSCOUNTRY TIMETABLE CHANGES FOR MORPETH

Submitted by: SENRUG – The South East Northumberland Rail User Group

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1. Background

Morpeth is a growing market town in South East Northumberland which serves as the municipal centre for the County. Yet it currently has an inadequate inter-city type rail services and SENRUG believes this is suppressing demand for rail travel

Casual observations from SENRUG volunteers note increasing patronage of the few inter-city type services that already stop at the station, with some trains being observed to have approx 50 passengers getting on or off. Many passengers are noted to be carrying luggage indicating these are not short distance journeys. There is additionally believed to be considerable leisure traffic to both York and Edinburgh particularly in summer months. The potential for both commuting and tourist traffic between Morpeth and Berwick is particularly unexploited because of the “skip-stop” pattern favoured by operators. Yet, inter-city type services north of Newcastle are often lighter loaded than the central and southern sections of the route, and better serving the Morpeth – Edinburgh and Morpeth – Berwick markets is a viable way of increasing revenue using genuine service capacity.

The argument that passengers requiring inter-city type services can take a local connecting service and change eg at Newcastle is unappealing because the local service itself is only hourly during the daytime, limited during evenings and non-existent on Sundays. Furthermore, passengers do not wish to travel south to Newcastle in order to travel to Berwick or Edinburgh. Driving to Newcastle is equally problematic with insufficient parking facilities at Newcastle station, and the Newcastle station redevelopment will make vehicular access there even worse. Additionally, there is no direct bus service from Northumberland locations to Newcastle Central station. Therefore, the only logical way to exploit the demand for longer distance passengers at Morpeth is for more inter-city type trains to serve the station directly.

The recent installation of a ticket vending machine (from which advance purchased tickets can be collected prior to travel), a significant station car park extension, CIS Screens and level access to both platforms via lifts both indicate the increased patronage of Morpeth station and additionally can be expected to increase is appeal yet further.

2. Objectives of Proposed Changes

- Progress towards an inter-city type train at Morpeth (either EC or XC) every 2 hours in each direction
- Provide a selection of inter-city type services (either EC or XC) between the morning and evening peaks, on which cheaper “advance” tickets are more likely to be available, and in particular plugging the following long gaps:
 - northbound between 08.56 (EC) and 14.50 (XC) – 6 hours

- northbound between the 14.50 (XC) and 20.00 (EC) – 5 hours
- southbound between the 11.21 (XC) and 17.18 (XC) – 6 hours
- Provide a Morpeth - Berwick service for both commuting and leisure / tourism, eliminating current gap between 08.56 (EC) and 20.59 (XC) Mon-Fri northbound, and between 10.50 (XC) 19.15 (EC) (*southbound times are from Berwick*)
- Provide a Sunday service every 2 hours in each direction, with a southbound service significantly earlier than the current first service which is the 11.19 (XC)

3. Proposals

SENRUG proposes the following existing XC services additionally call at Morpeth. We believe this would be commercially viable in terms of increased revenue and patronage, and we seek to demonstrate as far as is possible with the information available to us that the proposals are technically feasible within railway operational requirements.

(Note: Newcastle arrival times are not given in the December 13 timetable from CrossCountry and are taken from the current published timetables.)

3.1 Monday – Friday southbound

| Train Code | Eh Wav | Berwick | Alnmouth | Proposed Morpeth time (approx) | Newcastle arr | Newcastle dep | Newcastle Wait mins |
|------------|--------|---------|----------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 1V62 | 12.08 | 12.47 | | 13.20 | 13.33 | 13.42 | 9 |
| 1V66 | 14.08 | 14.49 | | 15.20 | 15.33 | 15.41 | 8 |

3.2 Saturday southbound

| Train Code | Eh Wav | Berwick | Alnmouth | Proposed Morpeth time (approx) | Newcastle arr | Newcastle dep | Newcastle Wait mins |
|------------|--------|---------|----------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 1V62 | 12.05 | 12.47 | | 13.20 | 13.32 | 13.44 | 12 |
| 1V66 | 14.05 | 14.49 | | 15.20 | 15.32 | 15.41 | 9 |

3.3 Sunday southbound

| Train Code | Eh Wav | Berwick | Alnmouth | Proposed Morpeth time (approx) | Newcastle arr | Newcastle dep | Newcastle Wait mins |
|------------|---------|---------|----------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 1V56 | 09.08 | 09.49 | | 10.20 | 10.36 | 10.39 | 3 |
| 1V66 | 14.10 * | 14.47 | | 15.20 | 15.33 | 15.40 | 7 |

** This train is from Aberdeen and arrives at Edinburgh at 13.42, then waits at Edinburgh **28 minutes** before proceeding south. Passengers would find it quicker to change at Edinburgh to the 13.55 XC departure for earlier arrivals at stations between Newcastle and Birmingham. Therefore, achieving the best possible journey times between Edinburgh and Newcastle can not logically be cited as a reason for this train not stopping at Morpeth.*

3.4 Monday – Friday northbound

| Train Code | Newcastle arr (note 1) | Newcastle dep | Newcastle Wait mins | Proposed Morpeth time (approx) | Alnmouth | Berwick | EH Wav |
|------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------|---------|--------|
| 1S31 | 09.26 | 09.35 | 9 | 09.45 * | 10.00 | 10.21 | 11.06 |
| 1S35 | 11.29 | 11.40 | 11 | 11.45 | | 12.22 | 13.05 |
| 1S43 | 15.29 | 15.37 | 8 | 15.45 | 16.02 | 16.22 | 17.05 |
| 1S47 | 17.30 | 17.37 | 7 | 17.45 | 18.02 | 18.22 | 19.05 |

** This CrossCountry service used to call at Morpeth and was well used*

3.5 Saturday northbound

| Train Code | Newcastle arr (note 1) | Newcastle dep | Newcastle Wait mins | Proposed Morpeth time (approx) | Alnmouth | Berwick | EH Wav |
|------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------|---------|--------|
| 1S31 | 09.26 | 09.35 | 9 | 09.45 | 09.59 | 10.20 | 11.03 |
| 1S35 | 11.29 | 11.36 | 7 | 11.45 | | 12.20 | 13.04 |
| 1S43 | 15.29 | 15.35 | 6 | 15.45 | 16.00 | 16.20 | 17.07 |
| 1S47 | 17.29 | 17.35 | 6 | 17.45 | 18.00 | 18.20 | 19.07 |

3.6 Sunday northbound

| Train Code | Newcastle arr (note 1) | Newcastle dep | Newcastle Wait mins | Proposed Morpeth time (approx) | Alnmouth | Berwick | EH Wav |
|------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------|---------|--------|
| 1S47 | 17.25 | 17.28 | 3 * | 17.45 | 17.53 | 18.13 | 18.56 |

** Train additionally waits 22 mins at Edinburgh before proceeding on to Glasgow Central*

End