

## Christmas Shopping Specials

Northern Rail have announced they will once again be running local trains on Sundays in the run-up to Christmas.



PICTURED: Northern Rail DMUs Nos. 156448 and 142020 at Morpeth Station

**CITY CENTRE** parking and long queues to leave the MetroCentre are one less thing to worry about during the stressful run-up to Christmas, thanks to additional Sunday rail services run by Northern Rail.

The services can even be used to connect to long-dis-

ance trains from Newcastle.

New for 2008 is that two of the trains are extended to Alnmouth, providing a daytime rail service to Pegswood, Widdrington and Acklington for the first time in many years.

Onward travel to Edinburgh is also possible by changing

at Alnmouth, thus avoiding travelling into Newcastle.

For the first time, the extra trains will run the Sunday after Christmas too, so that you can make the most of the New Year sales. ◆

See [www.northernrail.co.uk](http://www.northernrail.co.uk).  
» timetable changes, **PAGE 2**

## CrossCountry Cutbacks

The winter timetable change will see Arriva CrossCountry cut weekday services to Morpeth by twenty-five percent, reports Dennis Fancett

**D-DAY FOR** intercity passengers at Morpeth is 14th December 2008 when the new timetable comes in. Despite a full year of protest and campaign, SENRUG has been unable to persuade CrossCountry not to cut the number of their services calling at Morpeth from four to three each way per day (the franchise commitment requires only two stops).

Northbound, the 11.50 is withdrawn and that all-

important last train is an hour earlier at 21.03. Southbound, both the 13.19 and 15.20 are withdrawn, though there is a new early train at 08.02. The Northern Rail service will now run at the earlier time of 07.49—see "Timetable Changes" overleaf.

Particularly frustrating is that the new CrossCountry times put their trains very close

*"Arriva promises to 'look again' at Morpeth"*

to those of National Express. There are southbound services at 07.19, 07.49 and 08.02, but no intercity trains between 11.20 and 17.24. The last three northbound trains of the day are now within half an hour of each other—times from Newcastle are 20.29 (NX), 20.58 (XC) and 21.05 (Northern).

» continued, **PAGE 2**

## Don't forget DUO!

Save on Northern Rail tickets when two adults travel together!

**IF YOU** are travelling off-peak on Northern Rail services, don't forget to ask for a DUO ticket, allowing the second adult to travel half-price.

Unfortunately weekends in December are excluded in from the deal, so DUO can not be used on the Christmas specials (opposite)—hardly encouraging to tempt car users off our congested roads and out of crowded MetroCentre car parks.

### ON THE WEB

Find out how SENRUG Chairman Dennis Fancett travelled from Newcastle to Nîmes by rail for just £60

» [www.senrug.co.uk](http://www.senrug.co.uk)

## Level Access for Morpeth

**FOLLOWING THE** Department For Transport announcement of "Access For All" funding for Morpeth (and Alnmouth), Network Rail have organised an initial meeting to look at the project.

This will be primarily with the rail companies and local authorities, but SENRUG has been invited to participate in view of its tireless campaigning for the scheme. ◆

# Ashington, Blyth & Tyne: Report Due

**A significant government study into the feasibility of re-opening the Ashington, Blyth & Tyne Line is due to be published in December. But will it give the green light?**

**PRIOR TO** SENRUG's highly successful charter train trip around the ABT line in June 2008, Northumberland County Council had commissioned a full study into the re-opening of the main section of the ABT line (a service from MetroCentre to Ashington via Newsham).

The report is to Network Rail's "GRIP 3" standard, an internal stage within their full re-opening appraisal process, meaning that if the go-ahead is given, there is less work to be done afterwards.

SENRUG was advised this

study is scheduled for completion in December, so the local authority should now be aware of the costs of re-opening the line—then it's decision

*"The government's strategy to beat the recession is increased public spending. Northumberland needs to be telling central government that it already has a costed, viable scheme ready to be signed off."*

time. The costs of a smaller scheme from Morpeth to Bedlington via Choppington have already been established.

In reality, of course, it is unlikely one organisation can

fund the full costs and SENRUG anticipates that the County Council will need to work with other organisations—such as One North East—and perhaps

secure European funding to finance the scheme.

However, SENRUG believes that all the regional agencies are supportive, following the successful charter.

**MEANWHILE THE** government has announced that their strategy to combat the recession is increased public spending. The Chancellor made a speech in which he mentioned rail infrastructure projects as an example of what the government will do.

Northumberland therefore needs to be telling central government that it already has a costed, viable scheme ready to be signed off. It is important that the ABT scheme is well-known in Westminster circles so that it doesn't miss its chance. ●

## Timetable Changes

**THE FOLLOWING** additional services will run on **Sundays between 7th and 28th December 2008**. Please see notes below.

Alnmouth	1105	—	1702	MetroCentre	—	1214b	1605
Acklington	1112	—	1709	Newcastle arr	—	1222b	1613
Widdrington	1119	—	1716	Newcastle dep	1014	1223b	1616
Pegswood	1125	—	1722	Cramlington	1025	1235c	1628
Morpeth	1129	1312a	1726	Morpeth	1033	1242c	1635
Cramlington	1138	1320a	1735	Pegswood	1037	—	1639
Newcastle arr	1150	1331a	1745	Widdrington	1042	—	1645
Newcastle dep	1157	1334a	—	Acklington	1049	—	1651
MetroCentre	1205	1342a	—	Alnmouth	1056	—	1659

a 2 minutes later on 14th, 21st and 28th December

b 6 minutes later on 14th December and 10 minutes later on 21st and 28th December

c 5 minutes later on 14th December and 12 minutes later on 21st and 28th December

**EARLY MORNING** commuters travelling into Newcastle may need to reset their alarm clocks on 15th December as the "Chathill Flier" service will run 10 minutes earlier.

The new times are: Chathill 07.11; Alnmouth 07.23; Acklington 07.31; Widdrington 07.38; Pegswood 07.44; Morpeth 07.49; Cramlington 07.57; 08.14.

Morpeth passengers who turn up at 8am expecting the Northern train will be able to

catch the new CrossCountry service at 08.02, arriving into Newcastle at 08.19 (but not calling at Manors).

**THE CROSSCOUNTRY** timetable also changes in December—for full details, see "CrossCountry Cuts" on Page 1 and below to find out how this affects Morpeth station. ●

Remember to check with National Rail Enquiries or the train operators for full timetable information. Phone 08457 48 49 50 or visit their website at [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk).

## Car Parking

**PROGRESS TO** expand the station car park at Morpeth is welcome—but SENRUG has written to Northern Rail, concerned about the introduction of parking charges. Free station parking plus a rail ticket is very competitive to parking charges in central Newcastle. But if you have to pay to park at the station, many people will just drive to Newcastle.

Concern over non-rail users parking at the station has led to suggestions of free parking with a valid rail ticket. ●

## « CrossCountry Cuts, continued from page 1

**ON SATURDAYS** the pattern is similar but with slightly different times. CrossCountry are improving the Sunday service, with the 21.02 northbound running on Sundays too, and a new southbound service to Penzance at 11.01.

Several SENRUG members with family or business connections in Aberdeen noted the original draft timetable provided a direct southbound service to Morpeth from the city. Sadly, this hasn't been implemented so Morpeth is

still left with one direct service to Aberdeen (the 08.55 National Express) but none in return.

To be fair, CrossCountry had a massive task since winning the franchise to prepare for this change due to major issues elsewhere on the network—perhaps there was no scope to seriously consider requests to change the draft plan. Recently, though, SENRUG has had a more constructive dialogue with CrossCountry and they have promised to "look again"

at Morpeth once this December's major changes are implemented; but of course, with no guarantees. However, even if the withdrawn services are subsequently reinstated, those who have swapped to rail since CrossCountry introduced a Morpeth service will be back in their cars, and all SENRUG's painstaking efforts to make the case for rail will need to be repeated. ●

Ticket prices and further information can be found at [www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk](http://www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk).

## Committee & Communications

**FEEDBACK FROM** members is always appreciated by the SENRUG committee. So when comments were made that we sometimes struggle to keep members up-to-date with what's going on, we did something about it. Two documents have therefore been published: (i) setting out the role of various committee posts and who currently has each job, and (ii) how we propose to communicate with our members.

Information can be sent to you to you faster and more frequently by email—and it saves on postage costs too. Whilst not everyone has email, if you do have access please send your address to John Earl, Membership Secretary (j.earl942@btinternet.com). In future, postal communications will only be sent out two or three times a year. ●

## SENRUG Manifesto

**SENRUG HAS** published a Manifesto, listing all the changes it campaigns for in one handy document. This will shortly be launched to the press, and a copy is on our website. Despite being called a "manifesto", SENRUG is not aligned to any political party, but rather seeks to influence all parties with well reasoned arguments and campaigns.

Some members have asked if SENRUG is a charity. The answer is no, as some of its activities may require political campaigning. Because it would be very difficult for your committee to determine and adhere to what is and is not acceptable under the charity rules, we feel it is better for SENRUG to remain as a non-charitable voluntary organisation. ●

## Membership & Renewals

**IF YOU** have not renewed your membership for 2008, please do so as soon as possible to avoid your membership lapsing. Rates remain at £5 for adult or family, £2.50 for unwaged or £10 for corporate members.

The easiest way to pay is by Standing Order—to do so, simply download and complete a membership form (even if you are renewing) from [www.senrug.co.uk](http://www.senrug.co.uk) or from the Membership Secretary. Payment by cheque can be posted with a completed membership form (please indicate if you are renewing). ●

Membership enquiries: John Earl, 28 Bracken Ridge, Morpeth NE61 3SY; email [j.earl942@btinternet.com](mailto:j.earl942@btinternet.com); phone 01670 518411.

## Thanks to Franks

**SENRUG WOULD** like to thank David Franks, Managing Director of National Express Trains, for speaking at our AGM in July. In David we found a man who was willing to listen to the concerns we were raising and take a number of points and suggestions away for consideration. The AGM Minutes, slides of David's talk, and our list of follow-up questions are all on our website.

There has been no written response to the follow-up questions so far but we do know National Express are actively looking at a number of points, particularly an earlier arrival in London from Morpeth. ●

The next public SENRUG meeting will be held in the Spring. Members will be informed when a date has been decided upon.

## One-way Woes

**If integrated transport is to succeed, it is not only the rail industry that needs to sort out its ticketing,** says *Dennis Fancett, SENRUG Chairman*

**SINCE MOVING** to Northumberland 5 years ago, I heard persistent rumours that a through ticket is available allowing travel by bus to Haymarket, then on by Metro or a second bus to Central Station. But I have never been able to find out any details of what the ticket is, how much it costs or where to buy it.

However, I can now reveal

*"The 'Explorer North East' ticket allows travel throughout the North East by bus and Metro"*

the ticket in question is the "Explorer North East" ticket, which allows travel throughout the North East by bus and Metro.

The ticket can be bought on the bus, and cost only £1 more than an Arriva-only day ticket. So when you arrive at Haymarket, the onward Metro travel to Central Station is included. The ticket will similarly get you to Airport, by changing on to

grated ticket to get home.

Is there a conspiracy amongst all the participants of the scheme to not promote it—maybe so they can phase it out through lack of use?

You'll find no mention of it on the Arriva Bus website, and the NEXUS website has very little information. Neither the Arriva nor the NEXUS travel offices at Haymarket had any

leaflets on the scheme (though the NEXUS office did say they could sell the ticket)—so what's going on? ●

*The Explorer North East costs just £7 for one day and is valid on busses in Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, County Durham and North Yorkshire; it is also valid on the Metro and Route 685 (Carlisle to Newcastle).*

*Unfortunately it is not available for any mainline rail serv-*



PHOTO: NEXUS

**PICTURED:** Metrocar leaving Ilford Road station for the City Metro at Regent Centre.

Unfortunately there is a fairly significant problem—it can not be purchased at Metro Stations, so if you are at Central Station or the Airport and want a through ticket including your bus back to Northumberland, you'll be unlucky.

Come on NEXUS—please re-programme your machines, at least at the key stations mentioned, so Northumberland passengers can buy an inte-

*ices, except between Newcastle and Sunderland.*

*Concessionary tickets are available for £6 and family tickets (up to two adults and three children) cost £14.*

See [www.explorernortheast.co.uk](http://www.explorernortheast.co.uk) for further information.

*Phase 1 of NEXUS's "Metro Re-invogoration" plan, due for completion in 2010, includes provision for new ticket machines and barriers—hopefully these will offer the full range of tickets and passes.*

# To Rome and Back With the Chathill Flyer

Our intrepid Membership Secretary travels to Rome, the green way. *John Earl, Membership Secretary*

The origins of the Chathill Flyer are lost in the mists of the timetables. Legend has it that this train, which descends through Northumberland at an early hour, was first charged with that task of ferrying commuters into the distant metropolis of Newcastle in the nineteenth century by the directors of the North Eastern railway when the sway of their vast empire extended even unto Seahouses on the coast. The branch to Seahouses closed in 1951, but the Flyer continues with its noble duty into the 21st century.

We were particularly anxious to see it at eight of-the-clock at Morpeth one cold Saturday morning in February this year, as it was the first link in a chain which was to take us through London to Paris, down through the Alps and Italy, to Rome, over a thousand miles away.

It was a very long ribbon of steel, and we had no idea whether the links would hold out to the end. A lot depended on the Flyer, because there were only eight minutes to wait at Newcastle for the London connection. We could have caught a later train of course, but any hitches would have taken some of the pleasure out of the journey.

We had been sent a lovely fat wallet of tickets by Ffestiniog Travel, and we just wanted to issue them in proud sequence like a pack of cards all the way down to Rome and back. In our weaker moments

we even wondered whether to get a taxi to Newcastle but decided that would have been treacherous to the concept of going every last inch by rail, and even worse, disloyal to the Flyer, which we knew to be one of the more depend-

star for Paris, then caught the sleeper, "Il Palatino", from Paris Bercy—landing us at Roma Termini on a bright sunny Sunday morning.

Coming back we decided to see more of Italy on the way, so it was Eurostar again—

Milan—it's "Parigi" in Italian.

After an overnight stop in Parigi, it was through the "Chunnel" on Eurostar at a civilised 11.13 a.m., which made a sandwich stop at St Pancras quite possible before catching the two o'clock from King's Cross. No, the Eurostar is not *that* fast, but there are advantages to be gained from swapping time zones! The National Express train was fast and comfortable, despite its advanced years, and before long we were waiting on the platform at Newcastle once more for the Chathill Flyer, which threaded its way round the superb curve of Dobson's station—all the more to be admired even after seeing so many fine European termini—as to the manner born at 5.10 p.m. precisely.

It had been a great trip, and smooth as clockwork throughout. I think that the great days of rail travel are back with us again, Northern playing no small part in the revival. As the Flyer pulled out of Morpeth station we watched its tail light disappearing into the darkness, feeling somehow deprived. It had been a great adventure, and we did not want to get off. ●

*The rail trip, for two people in peak time (February half-term), cost slightly under £800, comparing favorably with flying, both for price and comfort.*

*Ffestiniog Travel offer a comprehensive range of holidays by rail. See [www.festtravel.co.uk](http://www.festtravel.co.uk) or phone 01766 772030.*



PHOTO: FERRE

A French TGV in Milan Centrale, one of Europe's great rail termini

able features of the Northumberland landscape.

We need not have worried. Bang on time, the Flyer made its way into the station, and we knew we were in for a good trip. We drank a toast of champagne at St Pancras before departing on the Euro-

star back through the Mont Cenis tunnel to Paris; remember not to look for the latter name on the destination boards at

case to make this permanent. We are told the case is nearing completion, and indeed SENRUG recently wrote to the Regional Station Manager to express their support for longer opening hours. Let's hope there will be good news soon. ●

## Morpeth Ticket Office

THREE YEARS after the summer trial that extended the opening hours of Morpeth's ticket office, Northern Rail are still working on their business

**Do you have any comments on the new-look SENRUG newsletter? Would like to contribute to the next issue?**

**Chairman:** Dennis Fancett [enquiries@senrug.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@senrug.co.uk)  
**Membership:** John Earl [j.earl942@btinternet.com](mailto:j.earl942@btinternet.com)  
**Editor:** Richard Hilton [richard@hilton.me.uk](mailto:richard@hilton.me.uk)

» [www.senrug.co.uk](http://www.senrug.co.uk) » 01670 825 500 (chairman)