

SENRUG COMMITTEE 2025-26

The committee and office holders were agreed at the SENRUG AGM on Tuesday 8th July 2025 as follows:

Dennis Fancett*	Chair
Andrew Carmichael	Deputy Chair
Ronald Hunt	Membership Secretary
Peter Strong*	Treasurer
Marc Stewart*	Newsletter Editor
Reemer Bailey	Social Media Secretary
John M Scott*	General Secretary
Adrian King	Committee Member with no specific role
Sally Milner	Committee Member with no specific role
Dave Shaw	Committee Member with no specific role
Geoff Stainthorpe	Committee Member with no specific role
Gordon Summers	Committee Member with no specific role
Trevor Watson*	Committee Member with no specific role

** Peter Strong works in the rail industry, Dennis Fancett and Trevor Watson are committee members for Railfuture North East Branch. Marc Stewart is the proprietor of the café at Morpeth Station. John Scott is secretary of the North Eastern Railway Association.*

SENRUG welcomes other members joining its committee. If interested, please contact the Chair. It is very unlikely there will be a contested vote and normally anyone who wants to join the committee may do so. The requirements for being a Committee Member are given below.

Requirements of Committee Membership

1. You must be a member of SENRUG and support its aims and objectives.
2. You must have access to email and a computer which can open and read documents produced in Word or Excel (this is because most of the committee work is done by email correspondence between members).
3. You must declare any actual or potential conflict of interests (for instance if you work in the rail industry, hold or are standing for office as an elected representative, or hold office within a Trade Union or political party). Such circumstances will not disqualify you and indeed your experience will be valuable, but we need to be aware so SENRUG as a whole can be transparent and independent. Individual membership of a political party or trade union which does not involve holding a specific position of responsibility does not need to be declared.
4. You must consent to your name and any actual or potential conflicts of interest you have declared being included in the list of Committee Members published on the SENRUG website.
5. Additionally, the Chair, Deputy Chair and Newsletter Editor must agree to some contact details (eg an email address and / or phone number) being published on the SENRUG website and other SENRUG literature.

DRAFT MINUTES OF SENRUG AGM Tuesday 8th July 2025 (Held at Morpeth Town Hall)
(Minutes to be confirmed at 2026 AGM)

There were 19 members in attendance thus making the meeting quorate.

Apologies for absence: Marc Stewart; David Kelly; Gordon Summers, Charlotte Houlton, John Brierley, Peter & Mrs Davies

The Minutes of AGM held on Wednesday 26th June 2024 were agreed

The Election of Officers and Committee Members was AGREED by the membership present as follows:

Chairman	Dennis Fancett
Deputy Chairman	Andrew Carmichael
Treasurer	Peter Strong
Membership Secretary	Ronald Hunt
General Secretary	John M Scott
Newsletter Editor	Marc Stewart
Social Media Secretary	Reemer Bailey
Committee Members	Adrian King; Sally Millner, Geoff Stainthorpe; David Shaw; Gordon Summers; Trevor Watson.

The following Motions were discussed and AGREED by the members present:

1) That our membership rates be increased as follows from 1st August 2025 or as soon as it is practical to so thereafter:

Individual or couple rate:	from £5.00 pa to £8.00 pa
Concession rate:	from £2.50 pa to £6.00 pa
Corporate rate:	from £10:00 pa to £20.00 pa

Explanation: SENRUG has so far never increased its rates since it was first formed in 2004. However the cost of servicing memberships has increased, for members that do not have an email address and for whom the Newsletter is sent by post, the stamp + envelope now come to over £1.00 per mail-out. Our everyday running costs have also increased in the 21 years since we first started. Therefore it is time to put our rates up though we want our new level to remain competitive and realistic. The committee considered, but rejected options such as i) having a higher membership rate for those requiring communications through the post, and ii) introducing a lifetime membership. The committee also wanted to retain a lower rate for concessions, which include students, people receiving state retirement pension and people receiving state benefits due to unemployment. The phrase “as soon as it is practical thereafter” is included because we are not sure how long it will take to alter the online payment page on our website.

Proposed by Peter Strong, seconded by Geoff Stainthorpe

2) That the name of the group be changed as follows:

From: The South East Northumberland Rail User Group
To: SENRUG

Explanation: SENRUG increasingly campaigns throughout a much wider area than South East Northumberland, including Newcastle and Gateshead, North Tyneside, and to the rail corridor north to Berwick. These campaigns are increasing in focus and priority as the Northumberland Line (phase 1) draws near to being fully finished. Our name therefore, no longer reflects what we do, and can be a barrier for people considering joining SENRUG from the wider area. However the committee do not wish to drop the acronym SENRUG by which we are well known, and have a web presence. So the name would simply become “SENRUG” without spelling out what the letters in the acronym originally stood for. The committee are likely to agree a strap line to accompany the new name such as “Campaigning for Better Rail Services in Northumberland and Beyond” and once agreed the SENRUG logo will be amended to reflect the new strapline. The new strap line and logo will be discussed further and confirmed by the committee; this resolution is solely about changing the legal name of SENRUG.

Proposed by Chris Calver, seconded by Peter Strong.

Any Other Business

- a) A Public Meeting will take place at Berwick Council Offices on Monday 14th July at 18.00
- b) Station Adoption should be increased to include stations on the Northumberland Line and the mainline north to Berwick-upon-Tweed.
- c) A meeting in Bedlington should be organised to allow the local population and community groups to interact with SENRUG on any matters of mutual interest.

The meeting ended at 21.02

Reports to the AGM follow on the next page.

Chair's Report (From Dennis Fancett)

Northumberland Line Opening: The key event dominating the year for SENUG was the opening of the first stage of the Northumberland Line in December 2024, followed by Newsham station in March 2025. We are still waiting for Blyth-Bebbside, Bedlington and Northumberland Park to open, which will then mark full completion of the project as approved and signed-off. The opening day in December was a momentous achievement for SENUG, and followed a nineteen year-long campaign, which first commenced in 2005. So, as Churchill put it: “we may allow ourselves a brief moment of congratulation”, though there remains plenty more to do, as detailed below. Whilst we hold fast to our firm conviction this opening simply wouldn't have happened if it were not for the existence of SENUG, it's also time to pause and thank all those who have helped us on our way, sometimes catapulting the campaign forward to the next crucial step. This includes both politicians and employees of the various organisations we have dealt with, some still in post today but also who have longed moved on from the positions and responsibilities they once held. To those who have allowed us to put our case to them and acknowledged it had merit and acted on their convictions – we thank you. As indeed I'm sure do all those passengers now travelling on the Northumberland Line whether they are aware of the long and tortuous campaign history or not.

New Government - New MPs: The year has seen a change of government and the regions MPs. I have held introductory meetings with David Smith MP (North Northumberland), Emma Foody MP (Cramlington and Killingworth) and continue to enjoy a warm relationship with Ian Lavery MP who now represents Blyth and Ashington. However, despite repeated requests, I have been unable to secure a meeting with the North East Regional Mayor Kim McGuinness who is now over one quarter of the way through her four-year term. SENUG did nevertheless submit a detailed and comprehensive response to the Mayor's North East Transport Plan consultation. There have been local authority elections too; the Conservatives remain the largest political group at Northumberland County Council but now lead a minority administration. I continue to enjoy warm and constructive relationships with the Council Leader Glen Sanderson and Deputy Leader Richard Wearmouth.

East Coast Main Line Timetable: The industry continues to move forward relentlessly to the now agreed December 2025 implementation date for the new timetable which SENUG continues to oppose. It will see a loss of LNER services at Morpeth and Berwick, partly off-set by more TransPennine Express services between Edinburgh and Newcastle, plus severance of through trains from Morpeth to Carlisle (Northern trains will terminate at Newcastle). The new government has not departed from the mantra of the former one that cutting a few minutes off journey times between London and Edinburgh is more important than requiring thousands of travellers across the North East to change trains to get to where they want to go. Worse, as the new timetable means the first morning train to London from anywhere north of Newcastle will take 10 minutes longer, there is even the possibility that it will divert some rail passengers back to flying. Nevertheless, understanding that rail timetables are “set in concrete” and become virtually unchangeable more than six months in advance, means realistically all we can hope for at this stage are last minute tweaks. We are hoping for some of the current LNER trains at Morpeth and Berwick to be re-instated, including the all-important morning Aberdeen service. There has been no response to my email to David Horne, (LNER Managing Director) other than an acknowledgement.

Press Coverage: SENRUG was predictably in high demand around the time of the Northumberland Line opening and has also received ongoing coverage during the year on the ECML timetable issue. Deputy Chairman Andrew Carmichael also participated in a radio interview.

The Future of SENRUG: The Committee have undertaken a review of our campaign objectives following full completion of the Northumberland Line, and these are reflected in our new leaflet and the [campaigns page](#) of our website. Top priorities are Morpeth – Bedlington, Newcastle – Berwick local service and Ashington – Newbiggin. In addition to this are Ashington to Alnmouth via the Butterwell line, Blyth Town Centre to Airport Metro route (running under battery power on Northumberland Line tracks between Newsham and Northumberland Park) and a new station at Seghill. Bus integration remains a key priority which splits into physical integration (buses calling at station turning circles), fares integration and timetable integration.

A quick win would be the 777-airport bus being extended to Morpeth station to provide a new rail/air link. Thinking to the future, the committee will be putting forward some key proposed changes which will hopefully be endorsed at the 2025 AGM.

SENRUG Funding: During the year SENRUG approached a range of town and parish councils throughout the region in which we operate with a request to contribute to funding our running costs (newsletters, website and one more leaflet) for the next five years. We gratefully acknowledge the response and funding support we have received from Ashington, Berwick Upon Tweed, Cramlington, Morpeth, Newbiggin by the Sea and West Bedlington Town Councils, Adderstone with Lucker and East Bedlington Parish Councils, which in total cover our anticipated costs. These positive responses are I believe a testament to SENRUG's ability to set our clear and realistic campaign objectives moving forward, and our track record of delivery and achievement to date.

Dennis Fancett - Chairman
8th July 2025

Treasurer's Report 2024-2025 (From Adrian King)

Little has changed over the financial year except for the following:

Miscellaneous income increased by just over £4,000 due to grants from: West Bedlington Council; Ashington Town Council; East Bedlington Town Council; Berwick-upon-Tweed Council; Cramlington Town Council; Morpeth Town Council and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Council for which we are exceedingly grateful. The sum of £3,745.11p has been classed as restricted funding for the cost of printing SENRUG newsletters and leaflets and maintaining our website for the period between 2024 to 2029. With regards to expenditure, there was reduced demand for printing by just over £900.

Consequently, I commend the independently examined accounts to the AGM for approval.

In addition, I have made the decision to stand down as Treasurer after fourteen years; a role I have enjoyed very much. I shall work alongside the new Treasurer during the handover period and wish my successor all the best for the future. However, I am content to stay on as a Committee Member if this is agreed at the AGM.

(Independently Examined Accounts below)

Adrian King – Treasurer
8th July 2025

Sheet1		
SENUG		
The South East Northumberland Rail User's Group		
Summary of Accounts for Period 1 June 2024 to 31 May 2025		
	This Year 2024-2025	Last Year 2023-2024
INCOME	£	£
Balance at start of year	6096.37	£7,157.88
Petty cash fund (See below)	0.00	0.00
Membership subscriptions	842.24	£734.45
Other donations	0.00	0.00
Miscellaneous Income	4148.90	£55.95
TOTAL	11,087.51	£7,948.28
EXPENDITURE		
Multi Expenses	48.90	56.40
Miscellaneous Expenditure	50.00	£83.72
Venue Hire	85.50	285.50
Postage	13.60	10.00
Website	354.00	320.40
Printing	175.11	1,100.89
Photocopying	0.00	0.00
Stationery	0.00	15.00
Travelling Expenses	0.00	0.00
TOTAL	727.11	£1,851.91
Balance in hand at end of year	10360.40	£6,096.37
Independently Examined By:	Name <i>RONALD OWEN</i>	
	Date <i>11/6/25</i>	
	Signature <i>R. Owen</i>	
Summary:		
TSB as at 31 May 2025	10,313.66	£6,034.93
Petty cash as at 31 May 2025	46.74	£61.44
TOTAL	10360.40	£6,096.37
* The Closing Balance includes £3,745.11 restricted funding for the cost of printing SENUG newsletters and leaflets; and maintaining the SENUG website for the period 2024 – 2029		

Membership Secretary's Report (from Ronald & Elena Hunt)

STATUS JUNE 2024: The status of the membership as of 31 May 2024 was:

182 memberships and of these
14 were corporate members
197 individual members

STATUS JUNE 2025: The status of the membership as of 30 June 2025 was:

155 memberships and of these
10 were corporate members
173 individual members

Changes

Memberships = minus 27

Individual members = minus 24

We note that the total memberships has declined during 2024-2025. Whilst during the year we have had new members join however we have had a number who have not renewed their membership in that period. We have contacted all on the list after their subscription expired for more than 12 months.

Members are kindly asked to check their subscription status. We believe that those who have not renewed could be encouraged to re-join. All members who have provided e-mail addresses have been sent reminders, however, we have four members without an email address.

The membership secretary thanks all members for their continued assistance and communications sent to us during the past twelve months.

Ronald + Elena Hunt - SENRUG Membership Secretary
8th July 2025

Newsletter Editor's Report (from Marc Stewart)

Over the past year I have continued to serve as Editor of our newsletter with the aim of producing editions that are timely, informative and rooted in the campaign spirit that defines our group.

The January issue marked a significant milestone for us as we celebrated the long-awaited opening of the Northumberland Line; an achievement made possible through years of tireless advocacy. That edition captured the pride and significance of the moment, with reflections from across the region on what the new service means for our communities.

It was a particular honour this year that our work was recognised nationally when we received the Paul Abell Gold Award for Best Newsletter in Railfuture's 2024 Rail User Group Awards. This reflects not only editorial effort but also of the strength of our campaigns; the quality of our contributors and the importance of the issues we raised.

Thanks are due to all who supported, contributed to, or simply read the newsletter during the year. That level of engagement is what makes it a valued and award-winning resource for our rail community.

The next newsletter will be produced in a few weeks aiming for publication as soon as possible.

Marc Stewart – Newsletter Editor

8th July 2025

Social Media Report (from Reemer Bailey)

Facebook page followers total = 1698

Audience values are based on total followers of the SENRUG page.

Gender: Men 60.90% - with the highest proportion (15%) in the 65+ age range

Women 39.10% with the highest proportions (10% each) in the 45-54 and 65+ age ranges

Location of followers: 1) Morpeth 255; 2) Ashington 204; 3) Blyth 197; 4) Bedlington 140;

5) Newcastle upon Tyne 116; 6) Cramlington 82; 7) Seaton Delaval 44; 8) Alnwick 43; 9)

Choppington 38; 10) North Shields 34

A new Blue-Sky Account has been set up at **senrug.bsky.social**

Reemer Bailey – Social Media Secretary

8th July 2025

End of Reports to Members