

## SENRUG COMMITTEE 2024-25

The committee and office holders were agreed at the SENRUG AGM on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2024 as follows:

Dennis Fancett*	Chair
Andrew Carmichael	Deputy Chair
Ronald Hunt	Membership Secretary
Adrian King	Treasurer
Marc Stewart*	Newsletter Editor
Reemer Bailey	Social Media Secretary
Sally Milner	Committee Member with no specific role
Geoff Stainthorpe	Committee Member with no specific role
Peter Strong *	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, Dennis Fancett is also a member of Railfuture's European Passenger Group. Marc Stewart is the proprietor of the café at Morpeth Station.*

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.

The minutes of SENRUG's 2024 AGM follow on the next page.

## DRAFT MINUTES OF SENRUG AGM 26<sup>th</sup> June 2024 (to be confirmed at 2025 AGM)

12 attendees present

1. Minutes of the AGM held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023 were agreed.
2. Apologies had been received from Colin Wakeling and Reemer Bailey.
3. The Chair's Report, Membership Secretary's Report, Treasurer's Report, Social Media Secretary's Report and Newsletter Editor's Report were all received and no questions arose.
4. Dennis Fancett explained that whilst the existing committee members and office holders had all agreed to continue in their roles if required, other nominations would still be welcome. However, no other nominations were received.

*Dennis Fancett asked Adrian King to temporarily chair the meeting for the next item.*

5. Peter Stanners proposed and Ronal Hunt seconded that Dennis Fancett be re-elected as Chair. This was carried unanimously.

*Dennis Fancett then resumed as chair of the meeting*

6. Lynn Bickle proposed and Mark Occomore seconded that Ronald & Elena Hunt, Adrian King and Reemer Bailey be re-elected as Membership Secretary, Treasurer and Social Media Secretary respectively, and Marc Stewart be elected as Newsletter Editor. This was carried unanimously.
7. Roger Bagnall proposed and Adrian King seconded that Sally Millner, Geoff Stainthorpe, Peter Strong, Gordon Summers and Trevor Watson be re-elected as additional committee members. This was carried unanimously.
8. **Other Business:** Ronald Hunt proposed that the concession membership rate (£2.50) be abolished. This led to a wider debate on subscription rates with the following comments made:
  - Clarification was needed as to what proportion of the SENRUG members paid the concession rate. Anecdotally this was reported as approximately half.
  - Clarification was also needed as to whether SENRUG needed further membership income.
  - It was better to put prices up gradually year by year, rather than by a significant amount every several years
  - If the concession rate were abolished, or if any other changes to membership rates were made, all SENRUG literature quoting the membership rate would need to be re-printed.
  - A higher number of members is more important than additional income in turn of demonstrating a support base when campaigning. For this reason, the membership rate had been kept deliberately low, so as not to be a deterrent to anyone from joining.Noting these comments, it was suggested that Ronald should put forward his proposal for consideration by the SENRUG Committee who would consider, and if a change were deemed necessary, then a clear proposal would be put to the next AGM.
9. There being no other business, Dennis Fancett thanked all SENRUG Members for their support during the year and closed the meeting.

## **SENRUG – REPORTS TO AGM 26<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2024**

### **Chair’s Report 2023-24 (From Dennis Fancett).**

Following the announcement in March 2023 of final sign-off for opening of the Northumberland Line, this was the year in which we expected to see steady and increasing progress of the line’s construction, as we neared the promised opening date of summer 2024. Indeed, we have seen progress, sometimes dramatic such as the bridges going in at Newsham, and sometimes less visible, smaller incremental steps. However, overall the construction has been slower than expected. Whilst there have been good reasons, these reasons have not always been clearly communicated to the general public. And if service is indeed going to start in September (surely the last month that could be described as “summer”) then tickets should be on sale by now. At time of writing (mid-June), we have no timetable, no published fares, no ticket sales and ongoing silence as to when the actual opening date might be.

In December 2023, rumours started to circulate that Bedlington, Bebside and Northumberland Park station would be delayed. This was subsequently confirmed. The Northumberland Line will commence with trains from Ashington calling only at Newsham and Seaton Delaval initially. It’s disappointing, but important to keep both this and the slower than expected progress of the construction as a whole in perspective. We’ve waited 19 years and can tolerate a few months more. These delays should not dampen our enthusiasm in welcoming the passenger trains when they finally arrive. It’s also pleasing to record there have been very constructive conversations with Northumberland Councillors about further extensions to the Northumberland Line once the core route is open. Top of the list are Ashington – Woodhorn – Newbiggin, and Bedlington – Morpeth. The latter is now actively being progressed by Northern, to be achieved by simply extending the Carlisle – Morpeth services on to Bedlington, and this is thanks to continued SENRUG lobbying and pressure.

My last comment on the Northumberland Line is simply to express the concern that all the preliminary technical investigations and pilot borings, funded ultimately by council or general taxpayers, didn’t seem to have highlighted the construction problems subsequently experienced. What then was the point of these earlier studies, which added years (to say nothing of the expense) to the timeline of reaching the point where the case could be put to central government for final sign-off? I hope there are lessons here that can be learned for other re-opening projects elsewhere in the country.

SENRUG will of course still have a lot more to do after the Northumberland Line is open, but our key large green leaflet will become out of date. For this reason, during the 2nd half of this year, we produced 2 further leaflets. Both are DL size (A4 folded into 3): one covers all our ongoing campaigns and one is specific to the Blyth Town Centre to Airport campaign. These complement the existing North Sea Coast local service leaflet, produced jointly with RAGES some years back.

The other big event of the year was the North East Mayoral elections. The new mayor will have an important role in developing and implementing transport policy for our region. SENRUG organised a hustings meeting in April 2024 allowing each candidate to set out their views and respond to questions. Sadly, Labour’s Kim McGuinness (who was subsequently elected) was unable to join us, though her statement was still published in our Newsletter. SENRUG has now emailed Mayor McGuinness congratulating her on her appointment and seeking a meeting so we can set out our own plans for rail services, which we hope she will support and pursue.

In July 2023, SENRUG responded with vigour to the consultation on the extremely poorly thought-through nationwide Ticket Office Closure Consultation, and was delighted to hear at the end of October that these plans had been scrapped. The former East Coast Main Line timetable plans, which SENRUG strongly objected to back in 2022 also re-surfaced, this time without any further consultation. We were again active in behind the scenes lobbying and briefing, and we delighted to hear in April that these plans had once again been deferred. In this case, though, it is only another deferment; the industry seems determined to see this new timetable introduced, and if the plans remain unmodified, it could involve a loss of LNER services at Morpeth, and the severance of Northern's Morpeth – Carlisle services at Newcastle.

The failure to upgrade the power supply on the Newcastle – Edinburgh section of the East Coast Main Line continues to be an issue. It is becoming clearer that this could prohibit more electric trains from running, which in turn impacts on the aspiration for the new all-station local service between Newcastle and Berwick, which is another of SENRUG's major campaigns. The earlier Feasibility Study concluded the service was technically feasible (ie train paths could be found provided electric trains are used) and commercially viable, so there seems very little reason not to implement the service as quickly as possible, though resolution of the East Coast Main Line timetable is of course needed first.

Moving further back, the year started with the news that TPE's franchise contract would not be extended and the company would move into public ownership through DOHL (DfT OLR Holdings), itself owned by DfT. SENRUG does not express a view on what is the right ownership model for rail franchises, recognising that opinions will vary according to political persuasion. Instead, we judge a company by its results. Nevertheless, I was sorry to see TPE go. I could not justify their performance figures at the time, but what I will say about both them and their former parent company First Group is that they were good at listening. We made our case for Morpeth, and it is no coincidence that all the First operating companies were happy to stop their trains here, fully appreciating the commercial arguments SENRUG was making about the Morpeth – Edinburgh market, and other aspects of their routes. On that note, we are pleased to note open access operator Lumo (also owned by First Group) has announced plans for more trains (but only as far as Newcastle) and extension of some services to Glasgow.

In June 2023, I presented the Northumberland Line and the history of SENRUG's campaign to the European Passenger Federation Conference in Barcelona, and in April 2024, I gave a similar presentation to the North East Railway Association in York. I have continued to be mentioned, quoted or interviewed in local newspapers and radio, as well as on Sky News in May in 2023 and in The Guardian and The Observer in February 2024.

### **Newsletter Editor's Report** (from Marc Stewart).

Over the past year, as the editor of SENRUG's newsletters, I've had the privilege of curating content that not only informs but also involves our community in the vital conversations around rail travel developments in our region. From the impactful Autumn/Winter issue, where we celebrated the reversal of government plans to close ticket offices, to our comprehensive coverage of the Mayoral Elections in the Spring issue, where candidates outlined their transport policies. Each newsletter has also aimed to communicate SENRUG's objectives in a clear and engaging format. It's been a year of significant dialogue and campaigning, and I am proud to contribute to this essential work.

## Membership Secretary's Report (From Ronald and Elena Hunt).

	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2023	Change
Discrete Membership subscriptions	182	169	+13
Includes Corporate Memberships	14	15	-1
Total Number of Individual Memberships	197	188	+9
<b>Total</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>+8</b>

We note that the total memberships have increased from May 2023 to May 2024. Whilst during the year we have had 22 new members join, we have 9 who have not renewed their membership in that period. This is an improvement in membership numbers reported at the time of the 2023 AGM.

Unless a person specifically advises they do not wish to continue as a SENRUG Member, names are retained on our Membership List for up to 18 months after the expiry of their membership, and are contacted after 12 months if we have an email address on file. This is in case a renewal has been overlooked. However, we have five members without an email address. 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.

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

## Social Media Secretary's Report (from Reemer Bailey).

Facebook page is at 1710 followers. With an average monthly reach of 1400. I've not been able to post much this month due to work. However on average the interactions are at about 8 - 10 people per post.

## Treasurer's Report 2023/24 (from Adrian King).

Below are our independently examined accounts for the year. Our thanks to Ronald Owen for examining them for us on a voluntary basis. Some points to note (these notes do not form part of the accounts that have been independently examined):

1. Membership subscription income for 2023/24 was £60 less than the 2022/23
2. Printing in 2023/24 included one-off costs for design and printing of 2 new leaflets (at £510 each.)
3. Printing for 2023/24 did not include the cost of the final newsletter (no 42) - £104.22, as the invoice had not been received by the end of the year.
4. The funding we received 5 years ago to cover our website and newsletter costs has now expired and we are in the process of seeking further funding for these items for the period September 2024 to August 2029.
5. Overall, provided we can maintain and increase our membership subscription income, our finances appear to be in a relatively healthy position
6. We are pleased and grateful to note some members have made donations along with their membership subscriptions. Donations made at the same time as a membership subscription or

via the website have been counted under "membership subscriptions" in these accounts.

**SENUG**

**The South East Northumberland Rail Users' Group**

**Summary of Accounts for Period 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024**

	This Year 2023-2024	Last Year 2022-2023
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Balance at start of year	£7,157.88	£7,368.08
Petty cash fund (See below)*	£0.00	£0.00
Membership Subscriptions*	£734.45	£794.67
Other Donations *	£0.00	£0.00
Miscellaneous Income*	£55.95	£44.51
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£7,948.28</b>	<b>£8,207.26</b>
* NB - Total of * items	£790.40	£839.18
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Multi Expenses	£56.40	£149.69
Miscellaneous Expenditure	£63.72	£49.39
Venue Hire	£285.50	£252.00
Postage	£10.00	£11.40
Website	£320.40	£320.40
Printing	£1,100.89	£266.50
Photo Copying	£0.00	£0.00
Stationery	£15.00	£0.00
Travelling Expenses	£0.00	£0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,851.91</b>	<b>£1,049.38</b>
<b>Balance in hand at end of year</b>	<b>£6,096.37</b>	<b>£7,157.88</b>
<b>Independently Examined By:</b>	Name <b>RONALD OWEN.</b>	
	Date <b>19/6/24</b>	
	Signature <b>R. Owen</b>	
<b>Summary:-</b>		
TSB as at 31 May 2024	£6,034.93	7059.27
Petty Cash as at 31 May 2024	£61.44	98.61
<b>TOTAL Balance in hand</b>	<b>£6,096.37</b>	<b>7157.88</b>

**End of Reports to AGM 26<sup>th</sup> June 2024**