

**SENUG Press Release: 13<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

## **SENUG Fears For Inter-City Services at Morpeth**

SENUG, the group that campaigns for better rail transport in South East Northumberland, is concerned that Morpeth, the region's inter-city station, is still being overlooked when it comes to planning the new East Coast Main Line station, that will come in to force from May 2011.

Although this date seems a long way away at present, the reality is the new timetable will be set in stone shortly, and it will be most difficult to negotiate further improvements after that.

The new timetable is designed to deliver improvements all the way along the line from London to Aberdeen, providing faster journey times, earlier morning and later evening trains. But the current draft shows none of these aspirations are being achieved for Morpeth. The morning southbound service to London will take longer, leaving Morpeth earlier and arriving in London later, and SENUG is now most alarmed to learn that the latest timetable draft shows Morpeth will lose its stop on the all important 17.30 northbound service from London.

"The new timetable has been dubbed "Eureka" by East Coast trains, the DfT-owned franchise holder, and we understand this word was the cry that prospectors in previous centuries would shout when they thought they had discovered gold. But of course, history tells us that in many cases, subsequent detailed analysis revealed it was only

worthless fool's gold they had found, and it does seem the same is pretty much the case for the new timetable as far as Morpeth is concerned" said Dennis Fancett, Chairman of SENRUG

"We have attended all the consultation events with East Coast and have been making the case for Northumberland as loudly as we can" he continued. "We've also been working through our MP Denis Murphy who at one stage secured an assurance from the Transport Minister that Morpeth services would at least be retained at current levels. But subsequent to that letter, we have seen further ministerial correspondence saying the Morpeth stop on the 17.30 service from London will be transferred to the 16.30 instead".

"We understand the Department for Transport think it's ok for the Morpeth stop on the 17.30 from London to be removed since passengers on the 17.30 train can change at Newcastle onto the CrossCountry service that follows 30 minutes later. But the DfT have forgotten the CrossCountry service in question, and indeed the local train that runs after that, are not franchised protected and can be withdrawn at any time. The 17.30 from London is in fact the last northbound franchise protected service of the day to call at Morpeth. The only way it might be an improvement for this stop to be transferred to the 16.30 from London is if the new timetable mandates that the 19.00 from London which will now run through to Edinburgh daily, also stops at Morpeth. We would then have the choice of either a 16.30 or a 19.00 service from London to Morpeth, which would at last start to look like an improvement for us", continued Dennis.

“It is true the new timetable does deliver some benefits for Morpeth”, added Dennis. “There is an evening service from direct to London which is most welcome, and some extra morning and evening services between Morpeth and Edinburgh. But it is the all important services to and from London that are most critical, and ultimately, I suspect that is how the new timetable will be judged.”

SENUG is appealing to those who support its campaigns to join the group. “Our membership is only £5 per year, and the more people we can say we speak for, the louder our voice will be heard” said Dennis. Membership details can be found at [www.senrug.co.uk](http://www.senrug.co.uk)

**Ends (615 words)**

**Notes for Editors.**

1. SENUG is The South East Northumberland Rail User Group and campaigns for better rail transport in South East Northumberland. Our full campaign manifesto is on our website at [www.senrug.co.uk](http://www.senrug.co.uk)
2. Enquiries - Dennis Fancett, Chairman SENUG, Mobile 07810 353651
3. The new timetable has been developed by Network Rail though the consultation exercise is being managed by East Coast Trains. The latest publicly available current draft is on East Coast Train's website at [www.eastcoast.co.uk/Documents/PDFs/Eureka/Draft%20EurekaTT%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.eastcoast.co.uk/Documents/PDFs/Eureka/Draft%20EurekaTT%20(2).pdf)
4. Senrug's formal response to the document is on our own website at <http://www.senrug.co.uk/news/93/comments-on-draft-east-coast-main-line-slc2-timetable>
5. That latest publicly available draft timetable is dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010 and still shows the 17.30 service from London will stop at Morpeth. Therefore SENUG's formal response, dated 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010 does not address this issue. However, a letter from Lord Adonis to Sir Alan Beith MP dated 9<sup>th</sup> February 2010 states the 17.30 will no longer call at Morpeth, but the 16.30 will call at Morpeth instead. This proposal has subsequently been informally confirmed by DfT officials
6. DfT (Rail) Press Office: Tel 020 7944 3108
7. Network Rail Press Office (North East): Tel 01904 383180, email [mediarelations@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:mediarelations@networkrail.co.uk)
8. East Coast Trains Press Office: Tel:0845 059 3988 or 0845 059 3494, email: [media.centre@eastcoast.co.uk](mailto:media.centre@eastcoast.co.uk)