

SENRUG Press Release: 15th February 2011

SENRUG Delighted As Morpeth Hits Eureka Jackpot

SENRUG, the group that campaigns for better rail transport in South East Northumberland, has stated it is delighted with the new East Coast train inter-city timetable that will come into effect from 22nd May 2011.

The new timetable offers South East Northumberland passengers the opportunity to reach London by 09.40 each weekday morning by taking a new early bird service from Morpeth at 06.35 and changing at Newcastle. Alternatively, passengers can get to London at 10.06 by staying on the same train and not changing.

“This is a full hour earlier than the current earliest possible arrival, which is 10.40” said Dennis Fancett, Chair of SENRUG. “What’s more, there is a later return service too. From May, passengers won’t need to leave London until 18.30 (or 19.30 on Friday), giving business people 2 extra hours in London, perhaps eliminating the need for that overnight stay and making South East Northumberland businesses more competitive. Business passengers should also benefit from a significantly improved first class offer including complimentary food that we understand East Coast is also introducing from the same date” continued Dennis.

The new timetable contains 3 Monday to Friday Morpeth to London services, at 06.35, 07.07 and 19.53, whereas previously there was just one. Northbound, Morpeth now gets two Monday to Thursday trains from London instead of previously just one, with an additional later train on Friday. Morpeth also benefits from 3 Sunday trains from London instead of the one at present. “There is also a direct return evening service from Aberdeen, eliminating the precarious 10 minute platform change at Edinburgh Waverley, which will compliment the morning service north at 08.56”.

However, it wasn't always going to be like this. Earlier drafts of the timetable showed Morpeth losing out big time, with longer journey times, later arrival in London and an earlier return departure. But SENRUG volunteers along with those from other rail user groups in the county have been lobbying East Coast, the DfT and Network Rail, making the case for Northumberland.

“What this shows is that our voice has been heard” said Dennis. “If ever there was evidence that it is worth joining a group like SENRUG then this is it. Our hours of volunteer effort, attending meetings, writing letters and engaging MPs have been effective. East Coast has listened, and the result is a much improved intercity service for Morpeth Station.”

One existing East Coast service is withdrawn. That is the Sunday afternoon direct train to London which currently departs at 16.43. However, this service is currently within 20 minutes of a CrossCountry

departure. “We have always said we want the East Coast and CrossCountry departures more evenly spaced out throughout the day” said Dennis. “If the new timetable retains a CrossCountry train at the same time, then journeys to London will still be possible by changing at Newcastle or York”

SENRUG are still waiting to hear details of the new CrossCountry timetable that will be introduced from the same date. “As soon as these are known, we will post an easy to read combined summary of all inter-city departures on our Notice Board at Morpeth Station”, said Dennis. Meanwhile, anyone who wishes to join SENRUG to support the group in their various campaigns can download an application form from their website at www.senrug.co.uk.

Ends (548 words)

Notes for Editors.

1. SENRUG is The South East Northumberland Rail User Group and campaigns for better rail transport in South East Northumberland. We are a voluntary group, and our full campaign manifesto is on our website at www.senrug.co.uk
2. Enquiries - Dennis Fancett, Chairman SENRUG, Mobile 07810 353651
3. The new timetable affects all operators using the East Coast Main Line and was previously known by the codename “Eureka”
4. The new East Coast Trains full timetable is available from the company’s website at www.eastcoast.co.uk/22may and the East Coast Trains Press Office is Tel:0845 059 3988 or 0845 059 3494, email: media.centre@eastcoast.co.uk