

SENRUG Press Release: 1st May 2015

SENRUG Deplores New Charges For Station Parking

SENRUG, the group that campaigns for better rail services in South East Northumberland, has stated it is bitterly disappointed with Northern Rail's decision to introduce charges for parking at Morpeth and Cramlington stations.

The new charges appear to mark the end of a 5 year battle in which SENRUG has opposed charges for parking at stations which have at various times been proposed by Northern Rail, Network Rail and the County Council. With no buses serving either station, SENRUG believes commuters in particular have no other viable means of reaching the station to get to work.

“With a day return from Morpeth to Newcastle being £4.60, a parking charge of £2 per day represents a 30% increase in the cost of getting to work in an area where many people are only earning little more than the minimum wage” said Dennis Fancett, Chair of SENRUG.

“For this reason, we've asked Northern Rail to look again at their charging structure, suggesting they might have a significant discount for regular commuters who are season ticket holders, even if occasional day users have to pay more.”

“Without such an initiative, we fear many commuters will abandon using the train to for work as it will become cheaper to drive to a Metro Park & Ride, or drive all the way to Newcastle and pay the parking charges there. We are not convinced Northern will make money out of this. What they gain through parking charges they might lose from fare revenue, and we have asked to see details of their business case to see if a potential loss of revenue has been factored in.”

“Sadly however, Northern Rail has not responded to any of these points and appears to be pressing ahead with its plans regardless. This is very unusual for Northern as in the past they have put a high emphasis on consultation with user groups. We can only assume it is because they are nearing the end of their franchise period”

SENRUG is however aware of the extreme congestion in the car parks at both Morpeth and Cramlington. At Morpeth, SENRUG has put forward plans showing how an additional 80 spaces could be created on a mixture of nearby redundant railway and council land, increasing the parking capacity by 40%, whereas at Cramlington, Northern Rail had assured us they would ask British Transport Police to take action against those using the station car park who do not travel by train. There is a large company next door to the station who have admitted to SENRUG their employees now use the station for car parking which is contrary to railway byelaws.

SENRUG has also asked Northern Rail to ensure that at Morpeth, the ticket machines allow overnight parking for people who travel to London one day and return the next, whilst at Cramlington, SENRUG has suggested charges should be delayed until the new Customer Information System screens are introduced. Commuters at Cramlington have seen no investment in either their station or their services for decades, so need to see they are getting something for their money.

The new franchise that starts in 2016 will see evening and Sunday services introduced on the Newcastle – Cramlington – Morpeth line, and SENRUG continues to press for improved service frequencies at both stations along with more inter-city trains at Morpeth.

Ends (553 words)

Notes For Editors

SENRUG is The South East Northumberland Rail User Group, a pro-rail campaign group that campaigns for better rail services for existing and potential passengers in South East Northumberland.

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