

SENRUG Press Release: 9th December 2015

SENRUG Delighted As Morpeth Wins Direct Train Service To Leeds, Manchester & Liverpool From 2019.

SENRUG, the group that campaigns for better rail services in South East Northumberland, said it was delighted by today's announcement from the Department For Transport about the 2 new rail franchise awards, which will see Morpeth gain a new, hourly, direct service both to Edinburgh and also to Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool from 2019.

The new services will be delivered by First Group who has won the new TransPennine Express franchise. SENRUG had argued that the current TPE services to Newcastle should be extended to / from Morpeth rather than empty coaches waiting at Newcastle for 55 minutes. In fact the services will extend to Edinburgh, with stops at Morpeth a commitment, and at other stations along the route still to be decided. SENRUG will continue to lobby for Cramlington to be included as well. In addition to the Edinburgh – Morpeth – Newcastle – Leeds – Manchester Victoria - Liverpool service, First will also re-instate direct trains from Newcastle to Manchester Airport.

The new Northern Rail franchise goes to Arriva, who will be introducing an evening and Sunday service on the Cramlington and Morpeth line from 2017. The franchise agreement also requires Arriva to work constructively with Northumberland County Council to help secure the re-introduction of passenger services to Ashington, and to replace the universally hated Pacer trains by 2019.

Dennis Fancett, Chair of SENRUG, added: "We'll also be giving Arriva a hard time on bus / rail integration. We want our Arriva busses to serve the rail stations at both Morpeth and Cramlington. We know that bus and rail operate as completely separate business units, but that's no excuse for this nonsense where you can't get to the station by bus. The entire public transport sector would grow if services were integrated".

"It is interesting to note that of the 3 companies who bid for the Northern Rail franchise, only Arriva took the time to come and meet SENRUG to hear our

aspirations, and of the 3 companies that bid for TransPennine Express, it was only First that met with SENRUG. We think that's a lesson for all rail companies that bid for new franchises" added Dennis. "Don't just sit in your offices in York or London but get out and meet the user groups and listen to their ideas."

"In particular, we had very intensive discussions with First Group about the market for a semi fast service at Morpeth and are delighted our points have been taken on board. I received a phone call from First this morning thanking us for our input and contribution to their plans. It makes us feel the hours of volunteer time we spend in meeting with the train companies and responding to consultations is worth it and can genuinely deliver improvements for South East Northumberland."

SENRUG is looking forward to working constructively with both Arriva and First Group as they take over the franchises and introduce their new services in this region.

Ends (487 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.

Enquiries: SENRUG Chair Dennis Fancett, Tel 01670 825500, Mob 07810 353651, email chair@senrug.co.uk, web www.senrug.co.uk. Facebook www.facebook.com/SENRUG

Arriva UK Press Office 0191 520 4106

First Group Press Office: 020 7291 0514