

SENRUG PRESS RELEASE 12th SEPTEMBER 2016

CAMPAIGN FOR NORTH SEA COAST RAIL SERVICE LAUNCHED

SENRUG – The group that campaigns for better rail services in South East Northumberland – today unveiled its new campaign for a local rail service running north of Morpeth, every hour of the day.

Dubbed the “North Sea Coast” route, SENRUG wants to see the existing Metrocentre to Morpeth rail link extended north to Berwick, with Belford and Beal stations re-opened en route.

The group is working with sister campaign group RAGES north of the Scottish border who are campaigning for a similar service from Berwick to Edinburgh, and the 2 campaign groups believe the new passenger routes should be linked together to create a new local rail service between Newcastle and Edinburgh, calling at all stations. North of the border stations at Reston and East Linton would also be re-opened.

There are lots of intercity services running non-stop between Newcastle and Edinburgh, but SENRUG believes a local service serving all the smaller stations is needed too.

Dennis Fancett, Chair of SENRUG said: “A through service such as this would create access to jobs and universities at either Newcastle or Edinburgh and boost the economies of the smaller towns and villages in both Northumberland and southern Scotland. We particularly feel there is an urgent need for a regular throughout the day service to Pegswood and Widdrington in the first instance, which could be delivered in advance of the full scheme.”

The new route would follow the Northumberland and Scottish coast paths for much of its route as well as connecting with St Cuthbert's Way, St Oswald's Way, The John Muir Way and The Southern Upland Way, and is expected to be a major boost to tourism in both Northumberland and southern Scotland.

"This is arguably the most scenic rail line in the entire UK, with glorious coastal views for much of its length. But you can't get a local train along it. Neither can you travel easily from one local community to another. We would seek to form a Community Rail Partnership to market the route once the trains start running" added Dennis.

"With modern, electric, local trains now able to run at 100 miles per hour, the new service would only need a few extra passing loops to enable non-stop and limited stop trains to overtake them. Department for Transport grants are available towards the cost of re-opening the stations, and as a first step we are pressing Northumberland County Council to commission a study to confirm the feasibility of the scheme. In Scotland, this work has already been done and if a local service would work for Scotland, then it should do so for Northumberland as well."

SENUG are urging those who support the scheme to join their group. "The more people we speak for, the louder our voice is heard" said Dennis. Details are available at www.senrug.co.uk.

Ends (470 Words)

Notes for Editors

SENUG – The South East Northumberland Rail User Group is a voluntary pro rail campaign group: contact Dennis Fancett Chair, tel 01670 825500 or 07810 353651, e: chair@senrug.co.uk
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Attached Map (Map North Sea Coast.jpg): Map showing the local rail route proposed by SENUG and RAGES

Attached Photo: (Royal Borders Bridge.jpeg): Suggestion Caption: "Could local trains soon be running over the Royal Borders Bridge?" **(if using this photo please credit Clive Nicholson / Steve Miller)**

