



RESPONSE TO CROSSCOUNTRY CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED TIMETABLE CHANGES FOR DECEMBER 2017.

Emailed to consultation@crosscountrytrains.co.uk on 1st January 2017

1. INTRODUCTION

CrossCountry are currently consulting on proposed timetable and train configuration changes across their network to be implemented from December 2017. The full consultation document is on their website at <https://www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk/about-us/future-timetable-consultation>. Responses are required by 17:00 on 2nd January 2017.

Additionally, as part of CrossCountry's Direct Award, they are required by the Department For Transport to introduce 2 new extra services each way at Morpeth per day, making 5 each way in total (in addition to the 3 already provided). On Sundays, CrossCountry only provide 2 southbound services at Morpeth so they must increase this by 3, making 5 services each way per day every day of the week.

Whilst the extra services to be delivered at Morpeth are not specifically proposed by CrossCountry (although some of the proposed general changes do impact on Morpeth), SENRUG nevertheless wishes to propose the additional services that CrossCountry should provide. This response therefore falls into 2 parts: Section 4 deals with SENRUG's response to the changes proposed in CrossCountry's consultation document, and Section 5 deals with the specific additional services for Morpeth proposed by SENRUG. These response sections are preceded by Section 2 which gives general information on SENRUG, and Section 3 which answers the specific questions in the CrossCountry Consultation Document which are relevant.

2. ABOUT SENRUG

SENRUG is a voluntary pro-rail campaign group that promotes rail travel and campaigns for better rail services in, within, to, from and through South East Northumberland, representing the interests of both existing and potential rail travellers in the area. As at the end of November 2016 SENRUG had 187 individual and 8 corporate members.

The key station in South East Northumberland served by CrossCountry is Morpeth. Therefore, SENRUG's response is limited to those issues that affect passengers travelling to and from Morpeth. (Whilst some South East Northumberland passengers additionally join or leave CrossCountry trains at Newcastle or Alnmouth, SENRUG has nevertheless decided to limit its comments to issues affecting Morpeth station directly).

SENRUG has been campaigning for some time to achieve a joint inter-city timetable (CrossCountry and Virgin Trains combined) at Morpeth of 1 train in each direction at least every 2 hours. SENRUG's response to this consultation therefore takes into account the existing services provided by Virgin Trains. At certain times of the week, CrossCountry and Virgin have trains at Morpeth in the same direction within 6 minutes of each other, whereas in other parts of the day there are gaps of 4-6 hours. One of the changes proposed by CrossCountry will create a further occurrence of this phenomena. Having 2 trains so close to each other is not an issue (noting the two companies serve different cities south of York) provided the long gaps at other times of the day are plugged.

SENRUG particularly wishes to draw attention to the Morpeth – Edinburgh market which is used for commuters, business and leisure trips. This market cannot be adequately served by travelling south and changing at Newcastle. It is important to ensure the combined timetable of both operators provides a regular service to and from Edinburgh throughout the day.

3. RESPONSE TO CROSSCOUNTRY CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

CrossCountry's consultation document includes 11 specific questions on which respondees are asked to comment. Questions 1 to 8 concern specific issues elsewhere on the CrossCountry network and only affect South East Northumberland to the extent that passengers may be travelling to, from or through these areas from Northumberland. SENRUG has decided to offer no response to these specific questions, though Section 4 gives SENRUG's comments on the proposed solutions which have a knock-on effect for South East Northumberland. For the sake of completeness the full list of CrossCountry's questions is given at Annex 1.

Answers to questions 9 to 11 are below.

Question 9: Please provide any further observations you would like to include in your response to this consultation

These are included in Sections 4 and 5 of this response.

Question 10: Please tell us whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation or as an individual, and if an organisation please indicate which one.

This response is from SENRUG, an organisation, details of which are in Section 2.

Question 11: Please tell us whether you are a regular CrossCountry service user or representing an interested party. If you have identified as an Interested Party please indicate which one

The SENRUG Chair and committee members who have written or contributed to this response all use CrossCountry services regularly, as do many of the organisation's members.

4. RESPONSE ON SPECIFIC CROSSCOUNTRY PROPOSALS THAT AFFECT MORPETH

Four of CrossCountry's specific timetable and train configuration proposals directly affect Morpeth. These are listed below with SENRUG's response. For ease of reference, the page number within CrossCountry's consultation document on which the change is itemised is provided.

- a) **07:00 Edinburgh to Reading** service which calls at Morpeth at 08:13 will be changed from a 4 coach to 5 coach set, providing an additional 62 seats (page 36)

SENRUG welcomes this change due to current levels of crowding on this train departing Morpeth.

- b) **07:25 Newcastle to Southampton** will start from Edinburgh at 05:36 calling at Dunbar, Berwick, Alnmouth and Morpeth (page 38). SENRUG calculates the approximate time at Morpeth will be around 07:05. SENRUG assumes this train will be overtaken on route by the 05:40 Edinburgh to London VTEC "Flying Scotsman" service (arrives Newcastle 07:03) at Dunbar. It will also be closely followed by the 05:48 Edinburgh to London VTEC service which calls at Morpeth at 07:11.

Whilst SENRUG welcomes the extra journey opportunity this gives passengers from Morpeth travelling south of York, who (on Mondays to Fridays) must currently take the 06:37 VTEC train from Morpeth and change, and would under this proposal be able to depart 30 minutes later, SENRUG would be most disappointed if this service forms one of the two additional southbound services CrossCountry must provide at Morpeth, as it is only approximately 6 minutes from the VTEC service, whereas there are longer gaps of several hours at either times of the day.

- c) **13:25 Plymouth to Edinburgh** is changed to a higher capacity HST set but will terminate at Newcastle and no longer serve Morpeth at 20:50 (page 46).

This change would deny Newcastle to Morpeth passengers of the 20:36 departure and would create a 115-minute gap in the local timetable from Newcastle to Morpeth between 19:45 and 21:40. However, CrossCountry also propose the current **15:45 Reading to Newcastle** (arrives Newcastle 20:42) is extended to Edinburgh. The withdrawal of the 13:25 ex Plymouth north of Newcastle is only acceptable if the 15:45 ex Reading stops at Morpeth (plus Berwick and Dunbar) in its place. The approximate time at Morpeth would be 21:00. This would allow passengers from north of Birmingham (except Leeds)

travelling to Morpeth, and passengers from Morpeth to Berwick and Scotland, to continue to have the same journey opportunities, although approximately 10 minutes later. Passengers from south of Birmingham (or from Leeds) to Morpeth would be able to change at Newcastle.

- d) **15:00 Glasgow to Bristol** calling at Morpeth at 17:17 is reduced to 4 cars with a loss of 62 seats (page 47).

This train is observed to be busy leaving Morpeth and is additionally a key commuter service from Newcastle to Durham. The loss of 62 seats is expected to cause standing between Morpeth and Durham so the reduction in seating capacity is not welcomed.

5. SENRUG PROPOSALS FOR ADDITIONAL CROSSCOUNTRY SERVICES TO SERVE MORPETH

In the Department For Transport's earlier consultation in autumn 2015 on CrossCountry's direct award, SENRUG proposed specific additional CrossCountry trains that should call at Morpeth (see <http://www.senrug.co.uk/widescope/resources/15-10-22-response-to-xc-direct-award-consultation.pdf>)

However, additional services introduced by Virgin Trains at Morpeth from December 2016 means the original proposals are in some cases no longer optimum. There is scope to modify these proposals to avoid both companies have trains call at Morpeth at the same time, and to achieve SENRUG's aspirations of having an inter-city service at Morpeth at least every 2 hours in each direction. Therefore, SENRUG's revised proposals for additional CrossCountry services are as follows:

Monday – Friday Northbound

Time at Morpeth (approx.)	Service	Rationale
10:48	07:03 Birmingham to Edinburgh	Bridges current 4-hour gap at Morpeth between 08:56 and 12:57 VTEC services. Current dwell time at Newcastle is 6 minutes.
18:50	11:25 Plymouth to Dundee (to become 09:35 Penzance to Dundee)	Bridges current 3-hour gap at Morpeth between 16:57 and 20:00 VTEC services. Current dwell time at Newcastle is 7 minutes and at Edinburgh is 6 minutes.
21:00	15:45 Reading to Newcastle which is to be extended to Edinburgh	Replaces the Morpeth stop at 20:50 on the 13:25 Plymouth to Edinburgh which will terminate at Newcastle.

CrossCountry would then have services calling at Morpeth at:
07:48, 10:48, 14:49, 18:50 and 21:00 (total 5)

The combined CrossCountry and Virgin Trains timetable at Morpeth would then be: **06:38, 07:48, 08:56, 10:48, 12:57, 14:49, 16:57, 18:50, 20:00, 21:00, 21:55** (and Friday only at **22:57**) – a total of 11 at 2 hourly intervals or better from 06:38 to 21:55, plus an extra train on Friday).

This achieves the SENRUG objective of a service every 2 hours.

Monday to Friday southbound

Time at Morpeth (approx.)	Service	Rationale
10:20	07:50 Glasgow - Plymouth	Plugs 3-hour gap between 08:15 and 11:20. Current dwell time at Edinburgh is 13 mins
13:20	11:00 Glasgow to Penzance	Plugs 4-hour gap between 11:20 and 15:15. Current dwell times of 9 mins at Edinburgh and 9 mins at Newcastle

CrossCountry would then have services calling at Morpeth at: **07:05¹, 08:15, 10:20, 11:20, 13:20** and **17:17** (total 5 if the 07:05 is disregarded)

The combined CrossCountry and Virgin Trains timetable at Morpeth would then be: **06:37, 07:05¹, 07:11, 08:15, 10:20, 11:20, 13:20, 15:15, 17:17, 19:56, 20:57, 22:28** plus an extra train on Friday at 23:34. (total 11 disregarding the 07:05).

This achieves the SENRUG objective of a service every 2 hours with the exception of between 17:17 and 19:50 where the gap is 2 hours 40 minutes.

Note 1: The additional CrossCountry service at approx. 07:05 proposed by CrossCountry is not at the most optimum time for Morpeth, being just 6 minutes from the VTEC service, so the addition of this service is only supported if 2 further southbound services are added as well.

Saturdays

SENRUG believes that, as far as possible, the Saturday timetable should emulate the Monday to Friday one, so SENRUG proposes the same changes as proposed for Monday to Friday are introduced on Saturday as well.

Whilst the issues highlighted by CrossCountry's proposal at section 3.b do not apply on Saturdays as the 07:11 VTEC service from Morpeth does not run, SENRUG still believes it is preferable for the Saturday timetable to emulate the Monday to Friday one, and believes Virgin Trains should do the same.

Sundays

On Sundays, the current timetable is so dissimilar to the Monday to Friday timetable that the objective of keeping trains at the same times on every day of the week cannot be achieved. Therefore, specific proposals for extra services are as follows:

Sundays Northbound

Time at Morpeth (approx.)	Service	Rationale
13:45 ¹	10:03 Birmingham to Glasgow	Plugs gap between 11:56 and 14:40
15:45	10:30 Bristol to Glasgow	These 2 services plug the 6 hour gap between 14:46 and 19:58
17:45	09:25 Plymouth to Glasgow	

Note 1: CrossCountry are only required to introduce a further 2 northbound calls. It is suggested the stop at approximately 13:45 is in lieu of the stop on the train 1 hour later at 14:46 (09:15 Bristol to Edinburgh service) which is just 6 minutes after the Virgin Trains stop at 14:40.

CrossCountry would then have services calling at Morpeth at:
09:58, 13:45, 15:45, 17:45 and 20:48 (total 5)

The combined CrossCountry and Virgin Trains timetable at Morpeth would then be:
09:58, 10:28, 11:56, 13:45, 14:46, 15:45, 17:45, 19:58, 20:48, 20:56 and 22:09

This achieves the SENRUG objective of a service every 2 hours throughout the day from 09:58 onwards.

Sundays Southbound

Time at Morpeth (approx.)	Service	Rationale
10:20	09:08 Edinburgh to Ply or Pze	Currently no southbound service before 11:19
15:20	14:08 Edinburgh to Exeter	Plugs 4 hour gap between 13:33 and 17:19
19:20	16:55 Glasgow to Birmingham	Plugs 4 hour gap between 17:32 and 21:27

CrossCountry would then have services calling at Morpeth at:
10:20, 11:19, 15:20, 17:19 and 19:20 (total 5)

The combined CrossCountry and Virgin Trains timetable at Morpeth would then be:
10:20, 11:19, 12:31, 13:33, 15:20, 17:19, 17:32, 19:20 and 21:27

This achieves the SENRUG objective of a service every 2 hours throughout the day from 10:20 onwards.

End

Annex 1 follows (Full List of CrossCountry Consultation Questions)

Annex 1: Full List of CrossCountry Consultation Questions

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposal to enhance the number of seats on the Birmingham to Leicester route?

Question 2: Do you agree with the proposal to extend one service per day in each direction from Leicester to Cambridge?

Question 3: Do you agree with the proposal to deliver over 3000 additional seats between Bristol and Exeter and other changes to services in the South West for its delivery?

Question 4: Do you agree with the proposal to increase the number of seats per day through Reading on CrossCountry services? Do you agree with the proposal to introduce an earlier first train from Reading to Bournemouth via Southampton?

Question 5: Do you agree with the proposal to operate through services from the Midlands to Aberdeen in the daytime vice early morning / late evening?

Question 6: Do you agree with the proposal to utilise higher capacity rolling stock in the "core" of the network at peak times?

Question 7: Do you agree with the proposal to enhance the number of seats in the Bristol area?

Question 8: Do you agree with the proposal to increase the peak time service frequency between Leeds and Sheffield, so providing 1,000 extra seats per day?

Question 9: Please provide any further observations you would like to include in your response to this consultation

Question 10: Please tell us whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation or as an individual. If you have selected an organisation please indicate which one

Question 11: Please tell us whether you are a regular CrossCountry service user or representing an interested party o Regular CrossCountry user o Interested Party If you have identified as an Interested Party please indicate which one