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**SENUG BLASTS DfT CROSS COUNTRY TRAINS PROPOSALS**

SENUG – The group that campaigns for better rail services in South East Northumberland - has strongly criticised the Department For Transport's proposals that Cross Country trains should no longer call at smaller stations such as Morpeth, Alnmouth and Berwick.

In its formal response to the DfT consultation issued today, SENUG points out the idea contradicts Network Rail's proposals, who have said that there should in fact be more calls at smaller stations between from long distance operators, as local services cannot cater for demand.

SENUG says that Cross Country services at Alnmouth and Berwick should be retained at the same level with a modest increase at Morpeth, which should have a service every two hours. However, it wants the times of the trains co-ordinated with those of government run LNER, rather than have two trains in 6 minutes then nothing for 3 hours, as Morpeth currently experiences on Sundays.

SENUG is also asking for the calling patterns on Cross Country and LNER trains to be co-ordinated to make it possible to travel between Northumberland and Scottish Borders stations.

Chair Dennis Fancett pointed out that in alternate hours, 3 trains leave Newcastle for Edinburgh within 20 minutes of each other. "We accept that one of these trains should travel non-stop, but we think at least one train an hour should call at each of the regions key centres which are Morpeth, Alnmouth, Berwick and Dunbar. What's more, we think Cramlington should be added to that list too, as it will soon be Northumberland's largest town, serving a population of 39,000."

SENUG also points out that cutting out Northumberland stations would not necessarily speed up Cross Country trains, as they have to wait behind other trains on the line with slower acceleration. “The Cross Country stops at Morpeth were first introduced using the time the trains waited at signals outside Edinburgh and Newcastle stations, and did not add to the overall journey times for travelling between these cities” added Dennis. In fact, SENUG claims that cutting out stops at places such as Morpeth and laying on extra local trains - even if these were available - is more likely to slow Cross Country trains down, as there would be more track congestion.

But SENUG agrees Cross Country trains are too crowded and it is the biggest problem facing the network. “We think the answer is longer trains, with a significant number of extra seats” said Dennis. SENUG also propose a sophisticated seat reservation system so that passengers travelling on longer journeys are not frequently disturbed by those on short hops.

SENUG urges Northumberland travellers who want to ensure their Cross-Country services are retained to respond directly to the DfT’s consultation, and also to join SENUG to help it in their campaigning efforts by going to [www.senrug.co.uk](http://www.senrug.co.uk).

## **Ends (465 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](mailto:chair@senrug.co.uk). [www.senrug.co.uk](http://www.senrug.co.uk)

The DfT Cross Country Re-Franchising Consultation is at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/714761/cross-country-passenger-rail-franchise-public-consultation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/714761/cross-country-passenger-rail-franchise-public-consultation.pdf). And SENUG’s formal response is on its website at <http://www.senrug.co.uk/widescope/resources/18-08-17-dft-xc-re-franchise-consultation-response.pdf>

Network Rail’s proposal that more inter-city trains should call at smaller stations in Northumberland is at: <https://cdn.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/East-Coast-Main-Line-Route-Study.pdf>. (page 47)

Suggested photo caption: A CrossCountry Train at Morpeth. Does the DfT have an alternative plan for passengers? (photo credit Trevor Watson)

