

## **SENUG PRESS RELEASE 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025**

### **SENUG STILL CRITICAL OF NEW EAST COAST RAIL TIMETABLE**

SENUG – the pro-rail voluntary campaign group representing travellers in South East and East Northumberland, remains critical of the new East Coast Main Line timetable, which is now to be implemented from December 2025.

Dennis Fancett, SENUG Chair said: “Overall this timetable remains bad for our region. Whilst we would support the objective of providing more train capacity between London and Edinburgh, this should not be achieved by reducing services in Northumberland. Additional infrastructure should be provided first to allow the extra London – Edinburgh trains to run without slashing regional and local services.”

“It’s true there will be additional TransPennine Express services between Newcastle and Edinburgh, and a later weekday return from Edinburgh back to Northumberland stations, both of which we welcome. But Morpeth for instance loses 3 LNER northbound and 2 southbound services. Whilst LNER points to the fact an alternative operator now serves Morpeth, this does not help business people needing to travel first class so they can work on the train, or those needing to reach destinations such as Peterborough. Crucially it is proposed LNER’s heavily used direct morning service to Aberdeen will no longer call at Morpeth, making travel more difficult for oil industry workers commuting to and from South East Northumberland.”

“Additionally, Northern’s services between Morpeth and MetroCentre and Hexham are severed, and passengers will need to change at Newcastle, making it difficult for those working at MetroCentre and needing to travel by train. It’s difficult to understand what the reason for this is and how it can be justified. Alnmouth also loses the vital 08:10 service to Newcastle which is used by commuters and by those going to college.”

“For business travellers from Berwick, Alnmouth and Morpeth, the earliest possible arrival in London slips back from 09:40 to 09:50, adding 10 minutes to the morning journey, meaning in most cases it will now be impossible to make a 10:00 London meeting. This no doubt will push some passengers back to air travel, the opposite of what the timetable is seeking to achieve.”

“None of the above can be justified by cutting 10 minutes off a London to Edinburgh journey. With good wifi on board trains, time on the train is not time lost to business. But adding an extra half hour to a journey by introducing the need to change at Newcastle or Edinburgh, is most definitely is time lost to business. We

request that even at this late stage tweaks can be made which address the issues we have consistently raised, and deliver a fair deal to Northumberland passengers and businesses.”

Ends (427 words)

#### Notes for Editors

SENUG – The South East Northumberland Rail User Group - is a voluntary pro rail campaign group: contact Dennis Fancett, Chair, tel 07810 353651, e: [chair@senrug.co.uk](mailto:chair@senrug.co.uk). [www.senrug.co.uk](http://www.senrug.co.uk).

The timetable to be implemented in December 2025 was first proposed in 2021 and met strong objections from northern stakeholders. SENUG’s response to the consultation is [here](#). Since then, a Newcastle to Edinburgh limited stop service has been introduced by TransPennine Express, and this increases to 8 trains each way per day under the new timetable. But the difficulties highlighted by SENUG for passengers travelling to Peterborough, London and north of Edinburgh remain. The direct service from Morpeth to Manchester and Liverpool, a franchise commitment for December 2019 and introduced briefly for a few weeks before being suspended for Covid has never been re-instated.

**Suggested photo caption:** A northbound LNER Azuma service departs from Morpeth station. The morning train to Aberdeen and all off-peak LNER services are scheduled to be withdrawn under the new timetable. Photo credit Dennis Fancett.

