

A Campaigner's Story

The Northumberland Line – North East England



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Northumberland Line History

- Series of freight lines built to move coal
- 1853: Incorporated into Blyth & Tyne Railway
- 1874: Incorporated into North Eastern Railway
- 1948: Incorporated into British Rail
- 1964: Closed to passengers
- Several routes remain operational for freight
- Power station at Lynemouth. Port of North Blyth



The lines and branches that exist today
Map credit: SENRUG

Bedlington: Cradle of World Railways

- Malleable rail invented at Bedlington
- Allowed construction of Stockton – Darlington
- Now used all over the world
- First steam train from Kings Cross built here
- “*De Arend*” (Netherlands) built at Bedlington
- “*Bayard*” (Italy) built at Bedlington
- Rail used for **Tsarkoe Selo – Pavlovsk** (Russia)



SENUG's 2008 Charter train passes over the Furnace Bridge – the site of the Bedlington Iron Works
Photo credit: Northumbria Rail

Northumberland Line Business Case

- Serves former mining areas of South East Northumberland
- Rapid de-industrialisation since mines closed
- High incidence of economic deprivation
- Connects areas of economic need to areas of economic opportunity.
- Area becomes more attractive place to live
- Supports new housing development



SENUG's 2008 Charter Train passes through the disused and overgrown station at Bedlington
Photo credit: John Brierley

Campaign Timeline (1)

- 2005: SENRUG proposes re-opening
- 2007: First Feasibility Study Commissioned
- 2007: Petition to 10 Downing Street
- 2007: Parliamentary (Adjournment) Debate
- 2008: First study with Network Rail launched
- 2008: SENRUG organises Charter Train



SENRUG's 2008 Charter Train waits to depart from Newcastle station.
Photo credit: John Brierley

Campaign Timeline (2)

- 2009: ATOC gives rail industry support.
- 2010: SENRUG organises “hustings” meeting.
- 2012: SENRUG / AECOM & Council present to DfT.
- 2014: SENRUG organises schools competition.
- 2015: Funding allocated for Network Rail studies.
- 2018: Chief Economist to Bank of England blogs.



SENRUG's 2010 “Hustings” Meeting with 3 of the Candidates for the Wansbeck constituency. Ian Lavery (far left) was elected MP. Photo credit: Dennis Fancett

Campaign Timeline (3)

- 2019: Council organise Charter Train
- 2020: PM Boris Johnson informally commits
- 2020: Covid: Promised announcement **not** made
- 2021: Part funding allow initial work to start.
- 2021: Public Enquiry starts.
- 2022: Public Enquiry complete.
- 2023: Secretary of State announces Scheme



Secretary of State Mark Harper (front left) announces the re-opening with SENRUG Chair Dennis Fancett (back right).

Photo credit: Northumberland County Council

The Outcome

- Campaign started in 2005
- Finally agreed by government in 2023
- 18 year campaign
- To re-open in 2024
- Construction underway
- 16 miles of freight track upgraded
- 5 new stations
- + 1 Metro Interchange (6 stations in total)



The map shows what is actually being delivered.
Map credit: Northumberland County Council

Crucial Campaign Action 1

The 2008 SENRUG Train Charter

- Only possible as it's a working freight line.
- 3 journeys: 1 for stakeholders, 2 for public.
- Political stakeholders from indifferent to positive.
- Major press coverage, including regional BBC.
- Massive community support and engagement.
- Tickets sold at target “final price” rates.
- Here is the BBC (Regional) News report:



SENUG's 2008 Charter train passes through Ashington station.
Photo credit: David Niven



BACK on TRACK?



Crucial Campaign

Action 2

The 2014 SENRUG Schools DVD Competition

- To celebrate 50th anniversary of the closure
- Designed to get people looking forward.
- Schools to create 5 minute DVD on business case
- Local Newspaper agreed to be one of judges.
- Prizes donated by sponsors and rail industry
- Here is the winning DVD:



The winning team from Hirst Park Middle School in Ashington present their DVD to Wansbeck MP Ian Lavery at parliament.

Photo credit: SENRUG



Thank You

Questions or Comments?

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