



**North Tyneside Council**

**Phil Scott**  
**Head of Environment, Housing & Leisure**

North Tyneside Council  
Quadrant, The Silverlink North  
Cobalt Business Park  
North Tyneside, NE27 0BY

3 December 2018

Stuart McNaughton  
Strategic Transport Policy Officer  
Northumberland County Council  
[by email]

Dear Stuart,

### **Northumberland and Newcastle Railway project**

We write to express North Tyneside Council's support for the project, promoted by Northumberland County Council, to reintroduce a passenger service on the line between Ashington and Newcastle and provide new stations along the route, one of which would be located in the borough of North Tyneside.

We note that the Northumberland and Newcastle Railway project was cited as an example of a transformational project in the North of Tyne Devolution Deal. Of the six pillars identified in the North of Tyne Combined Authority's economic vision, the project would particularly support the 'Network of connections' pillar by creating stronger regional links. It would deliver an improved link from across the region into the A19 Employment Corridor in North Tyneside, which is at the heart of the Industry Innovation Zone identified in the economic vision.

At Cobalt Park alone over there are 1.6 million square feet of Grade A office space, three state-of-the-art Data Centres, and around 14,000 jobs, with thousands of daily commuter journeys to the area from Northumberland and Newcastle as well as within the borough.

Northumberland Park is already a thriving bus, Metro and park and ride interchange with strong cycling and walking links. By providing a station on the national rail network at this location, the project would improve transport links from across the region, both for the many people travelling to workplaces in the area and for visitors to North Tyneside's coast and our town centres.

In so doing it would provide an attractive alternative to car travel for thousands of journeys and thereby assist efforts to minimise carbon emissions from transport and reduce local air pollution such as nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) emissions.

The North Tyneside Local Plan recognises that the reinstatement of a passenger service on this line is a key aspiration for both Northumberland County Council and North Tyneside Council. The project is fully consistent with the North Tyneside Transport Strategy, whose aims include to support economic growth through

targeted major transport improvement schemes, link people to workplaces and destinations in the region, and improve interchange between forms of transport.

The project would also complement a further public transport link envisaged in the North Tyneside Local Plan, which notes the potential in the future to introduce a Metro and/or rail link in the 'Cobalt corridor' between Northumberland Park and Percy Main/Howdon, which would directly serve major employment sites in the corridor.

We welcome Northumberland County Council's efforts to develop the Strategic Outline Business Case for the Northumberland and Newcastle Railway project and we look forward to its being granted entry to the Department for Transport's Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP). We believe that the project would make a vital and positive contribution to the economy of the North of Tyne Combined Authority area.

Yours sincerely



**Phil Scott**  
**Head of Environment,**  
**Housing & Leisure**



**Councillor C Johnson**  
**Cabinet Member for**  
**Environment & Transport**



34 Front Street East  
Bedlington  
Northumberland  
NE22 5AA  
e: [chair@senrug.co.uk](mailto:chair@senrug.co.uk)  
Tel 01670 825500

29<sup>th</sup> November 2018

Mr Stuart McNaughton BSc. MSc. MIHT CMILT  
Strategic Transport Policy Officer  
Economic and Inclusion Policy Team  
Planning, Economy and Housing Directorate  
Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
Northumberland, NE61 2EF

Dear Stuart

**Support For Re-Introduction of Passenger Services on Ashington Blyth & Tyne Railway Line**

SENUG strongly supports the plan to re-introduce passenger rail services on the Ashington Blyth & Tyne railway line, which is currently a fully maintained freight only line.

SENUG is a voluntary pro-rail group which represent the interests of both existing and potential rail passengers in South East Northumberland. By potential we mean people who would travel by train if only trains went where they want to go, at convenient times, at affordable, easy to understand fares, and in a safe, clean, secure and accessible environment.

As such, SENUG started campaigning for the re-opening of the Ashington Blyth & Tyne line in 2004. We have progressed our campaign through a number of organisations and channels, including meetings with Ministers at the Department for Transport in July 2008 and March 2009. We have worked closely with Northumberland County Council and are delighted that following rigorous Demand Assessment and Market Appraisal Studies, the Council is now pursuing the scheme.

SENUG understands the plans currently being progressed by the Council are for a rail service between Newcastle and Ashington and Woodhorn, with intermediate stations at Northumberland Park (Metro connection), Seaton Delaval, Newsham for Blyth, Bebside, and

Bedlington plus passive provision for a station to be added at Seghill at a later date, with a service frequency each way of every 30 minutes (peak hours) and every hour (off peak) Monday to Sundays, including evenings.

SENUG believes the main benefit of re-opening the line will be to improve access to employment opportunities from areas with significant levels of economic deprivation in the South East Northumberland corridor, to employment opportunities in Newcastle, Cobalt Business Park (which has a free bus connection from Northumberland Park station), and to the wider area accessible through the rail network from Newcastle. The re-opened line will assist the regeneration of South East Northumberland by making it a more attractive place to live due to easier commuting to Newcastle. The station at Woodhorn, in addition to being a Park & Ride for outlying areas, would serve the adjacent Museum of Mining and Northumberland Life, one of Northumberland's top visitor attractions, and could create an off-peak leisure passenger flow on the line.

SENUG currently has 172 individual members and 12 corporate members. SENUG is highly regarded locally and has been successful in securing a number of rail improvements in the region. Based on the response received from our media coverage and website, we believe the level of support for our campaigns and the re-introduction of Newcastle - Ashington rail services in particular is far in excess of our actual membership numbers. In 2007, SENUG set up an on-line petition to 10 Downing Street asking for the line to be re-opened and this very quickly achieved over 1,000 signatures

**Kindest Regards**

*Dennis Fancett*

**Dennis Fancett**

Chair, SENUG: The South East Northumberland Rail User Group

Campaigning for better rail services in South East Northumberland  
[www.senrug.co.uk](http://www.senrug.co.uk)

**Transport for the North**  
6th Floor  
3 Piccadilly Place  
Manchester  
M1 3BN  
Tel: 0161 244 1270

19<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Dear Stuart

**Re: Northumberland line reintroduction of rail passenger services**

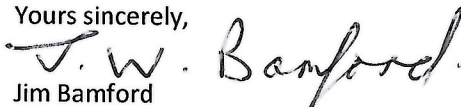
Transport for the North would like to express its support for the development of this important project to reintroduce rail passenger services on the route from Ashington to Newcastle, currently a freight only route following the withdrawal of passenger services in the 1960s. The proposal to build new stations at Northumberland Parkway, Newsham, Bedlington, Ashington, Seaton Delaval and Blyth Bebside will provide rail connectivity to a large region, currently unserved by rail which would benefit greatly from the economic regeneration this would bring.

Transport for the North's Long Term Rail Strategy (LTRS), adopted in 2015, included five clear objectives: connectivity, capacity, coherence, cost effectiveness and reducing environmental impact. Work on the project so far has been in line with these objectives, in particular there has been a clear emphasis on developing and delivering the scheme cost effectively. Transport for the North would also like to see such clear focus on minimising operating and maintenance costs upon completion of the infrastructure project. If there is a desire for TfN to include the service in one of its franchises at a later date, then in accordance with the LTRS cost effectiveness requirement and our service frequency Desirable Minimum Standard we would require that a service of two trains per hour is provided and is capable of being run with three rolling stock units.

The LTRS also includes a Desirable Minimum Standard for journey time. For this type of local service we have set the standard at 40mph and two trains per hour. It remains to be demonstrated whether the speed standard is fully achievable on all such routes and we are currently working to do this. For this welcome new passenger service, we would encourage you to aim for the maximum attainable speed.

We have been impressed with the quality of the work done on the project to date and hope that your bid for funding to develop the Outline Business Case is successful.

Yours sincerely,



Jim Bamford

Head of Investment Planning



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29<sup>th</sup> November 2018

Stuart McNaughton BSc. MSc. MIHT CMILT  
Strategic Transport Policy Officer  
Economic and Inclusion Policy Team  
Place Directorate  
Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
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NE61 2EF

Emailed to: [stuart.mcnaughton@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.mcnaughton@northumberland.gov.uk)

Dear Mr McNaughton

### **The Northumberland Line**

I understand that Northumberland County Council are progressing with plans for the introduction of passenger services on a fully operational and maintained freight line between Ashington and Newcastle.

As developers of Cobalt, we support this scheme as we believe the measures proposed would provide an important link between several local communities in Northumberland and Cobalt Business Park, North Tyneside.

During the 20 years since the first members of staff started work on the park, we have built over 1.6 million square feet of Grade A office space, three state of the art Data Centres, a 144-bed hotel, spa and pub and parade of shops. Employment at Cobalt has grown steadily to approximately 14,000, these staff are employed by major companies such as Proctor and Gamble, EE, Santander and public bodies Northumbria NHS and North Tyneside Council who have demonstrated their commitment to the park by signing 15-year leases without break. Two companies have purchased their building which demonstrates confidence and commitment to the park and the region. 10 major employers have since leased a second building or additional space on Cobalt Park. Accenture who moved on site in 2012 with initially 200 staff now employ 1,200 across three buildings on Cobalt.

This growth of employment has been achieved through a combination of the provision of high-quality office space, the availability of suitably qualified staff in the area and the effort that Northumberland County Council, North Tyneside Council, Liftshare, Nexus, the bus companies and Highbridge Business Park Ltd have put in to enhance both the public transport network and other sustainable means of travelling to work. These initiatives, including the introduction and active promotion of convenient new cycling facilities locally and several new bus routes, such as the flagship 19 and 309/310 services, have helped to make the jobs available at Cobalt accessible to the many people in the surrounding areas who do not have access to a car.



[www.morecobalt.co.uk](http://www.morecobalt.co.uk)







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As Cobalt continues to develop it is expected the number of staff working there will increase to over 18,000. We are in regular discussions with both existing and potential new occupiers who are looking for additional space. However, this increase in employment will only be achieved if current and potential occupiers continue to be able to attract staff to fill vacancies as they occur, and potential recruits can access the park easily. Providing the proposed new rail route and possible metro expansion, the enhanced transport options between Ashington and Cobalt will:

- Help to increase the number of jobs available at Cobalt.
- Improve access to employment for staff based in a number of local communities.
- Assist with recruiting and retaining staff
- Increase the mode share of public transport (and thus reduce congestion) by providing more staff currently working at Cobalt with an improved journey time service. This will prove to be an effective and popular alternative to single car use for several commuters.
- Wider recruitment area due to reduced journey time and affordable travel costs.

We are convinced of the importance of providing potential employees from key Northumberland communities with easy access to employment.

The highly successful annual jobs fair held on site now in its fourth year in partnership with North Tyneside Council offers Cobalt occupiers the opportunity to showcase the range of opportunities including apprenticeships, graduate, full and part time positions.

Further HR support is also offered with school work experience, Army leavers and Get into Cobalt/Get into Digital schemes.

We are also willing to continue to support the service through our on-site MoreCobalt team and would promote through the **CobaltSmartMovers** and [www.morecobalt.co.uk](http://www.morecobalt.co.uk) channels to actively market and promote throughout the park.

I very much hope that this scheme can be successfully delivered.

Yours sincerely,

**For and on behalf of Highbridge Business Park Ltd**

Lynn Cramman  
Cobalt Development Manager



[www.morecobalt.co.uk](http://www.morecobalt.co.uk)





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cc: Garry Ward Highbridge Business Park Ltd



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Stuart McNaughton  
Strategic Transport Policy Officer  
Place Directorate  
Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
Northumberland, NE61 2EF

29<sup>th</sup> November 2018  
Sent by email

Dear Stuart,

**Northumberland Line – SOBC for DfT's Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline**

The North East LEP is pleased to offer its continued full support to Northumberland County Council in its efforts to re-establish passenger rail services on the former Ashington –Blyth-Tyne rail line connecting to Newcastle Central Station.

The North East LEP Board has, on a number of occasions, expressed its support for this scheme as a priority transport investment project since first including the project in the North East Strategic Economic Plan in 2014.

The North East LEP is investing significant capital funds to support housing and economic growth along the South East Northumberland Growth Corridor extending into North Tyneside- including investment in Enterprise Zone sites in both Ashington and Blyth, new College STEM facilities in Ashington, support for Housing Investment Fund schemes at Murton and currently a new work programme in conjunction with Newcastle City Council and Network Rail to improve sustainable access into Newcastle Central Station.

The re-opened rail line would better connect over 120,000 people in South East Northumberland to the heart of the Tyne and Wear conurbation, including the Tyne and Wear Metro system at Northumberland Park and wider national rail network - improving access to jobs, higher education and cultural facilities. Equally it will enable the wider North East workforce to access employment on the major Enterprise Zones on the River Blyth and in Ashington. Journey times from established communities and planned strategic housing growth sites, compared to current public transport provision, would improve significantly. This new facility is critical to providing developers with the necessary confidence to take forward strategic housing sites and offers the whole corridor a sustainable transport option that will alleviate pressures on the sub-regional road network.

We look forward to close working with the Council to help realise this strategic opportunity.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Golightly  
Chief Executive



Network Rail  
George Stephenson House  
Toft Green  
York  
YO1 6JT

Stuart McNaughton  
Strategic Transport Policy Officer  
Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 2EF

28 November 2019

Dear Stuart,

### **Northumberland Line Introduction of Passenger Services**

I am pleased to confirm that Network Rail is happy to support the project to introduce passenger services to the existing railway between Ashington and Newcastle via the Blyth & Tyne line. The current delivery model – delivery by Northumberland County Council with support from Network Rail – is in line with Network Rail's 'Open for Business' designation of the project, which encourages Third Party investment in the rail network and the use of alternative delivery methods.

As current infrastructure owner, Network Rail has had a keen involvement in the project to date. Network Rail is committed to continuing the collaborative working partnership with Northumberland County Council. We are also working with the train and freight operating companies, the Department for Transport, Transport for the North and other key stakeholders on a collaborative basis to make the project a success.

We welcome the proposal to reintroduce passenger services on the line and Network Rail will continue to support the delivery team's work to integrate the new services with the East Coast Main Line timetable to ensure that we are putting passengers first for the new and existing journeys.

Subject to the Transforming Cities Fund submission for the project being approved by Government, we look forward to working with Northumberland County Council and partners in taking this forward. In the meantime, I am delighted to offer our support to the project.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. R. Hind".

Stephen Hind  
Route Enhancements Manager  
Network Rail  
Eastern Region



Stuart McNaughton BSc MSc MIHT CMILT  
Strategic Transport Policy Officer  
Economic and Inclusion Policy Team  
Economy and Regeneration Service  
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4 December 2018

Dear Stuart

**Support for the Northumberland Line passenger service SOBC**

Nexus is fully behind Northumberland County Council's bid to secure proposed entry into the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline and thus gain agreement to fully develop and implement passenger services on the Northumberland Line.

The reinstatement of passenger services on this line is consistent with the Metro and Local Rail Strategy and forms an important new route as part of a wider package of expansions to the current rail network. This new transport link will provide significant economic opportunities feeding into Newcastle Central and also through interchange with the Tyne and Wear Metro system.

We have worked closely with the Council through the formulation of the business case to date and continue to offer support and advice where appropriate. Nexus on behalf of the Combined Authority has also been championing this enhancement through Transport for the North and Network Rail and ensured it is included in strategic forward planning of both organisations.

Yours sincerely

**Tobyn Hughes**  
**Managing Director**