

Campaign group wins top accolades

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The South East Northumberland Rail User Group (SENRUG) – a group that campaigns for better rail services in South East and East Northumberland – has recently scooped four Rail User Group Awards.

Best known for their the campaign for the Northumberland Line, the new passenger railway that will connect Newcastle to Ashington, the group said it is delighted to have received the awards from Railfuture, the national voluntary campaign group calling for a bigger and better railway.

First up was Joint Gold for Best Newsletter which has been given to SENRUG Newsletter Editor Dave Shaw. Additionally, the group also won Joint Silver for Best Website and another Joint Silver for Best Campaign. On top of this, SENRUG Chair Dennis Fancett, who last year won the Rail Campaigner of the Year Award, has this year been awarded Joint Silver for Best Campaigner.



The awards were presented by Railfuture North East Branch Chair Keith Simpson, at Seaton Delaval, with the new Northumberland Line railway station just visible in the background. “It is a delight to come here today and present these awards, whilst seeing the Northumberland Line construction work taking place first hand” said Keith. “Congratulations to Dennis and Dave, and the entire team at SENRUG, who are an example to other campaigning groups around the country”.

Roger Blake, a Director of Railfuture and organiser of the annual Awards for Rail User Groups added: “SENRUG epitomises all the qualities which are so essential for local rail campaign groups – persistence, patience, persuasion, pragmatism and professionalism, to name but a few. We are aware that whilst its premier campaign – the Northumberland Line – is now coming within sight of physical completion, their other activities such as seeking to improve services at Cramlington, campaigning for a Newcastle to Berwick local service, and fighting proposed cuts in long distance trains at Morpeth all carry weight and are increasingly recognised on the national stage”.

Receiving his award for Best Campaigner, SENRUG Chair Dennis Fancett commented “it’s pleasing to know what we do here in Northumberland is recognised. When we first launched our campaign for The Northumberland line some 19 years ago – in those days known as the Ashington Blyth & Tyne line – it was hard to be taken seriously. Everyone said it could never happen. But we stuck with it, diligently presenting our arguments to influencers from the different stakeholder groups. Now at last the line is finally being built – with the expectation that the first trains will be running late next year. Never let anyone tell you that campaigning from volunteer groups like ours will not pay off”.

“But we are not stopping here. We have plans for further extensions for the Northumberland line, which we are already discussing with the local authority, and nether are we neglecting the need to protect and develop the services on South and East Northumberland’s existing rail routes.”

The group are urging those that support their objectives to join them which can be done on their website at www.senrug.co.uk.