

# Further £10m commitment to bringing back rail service

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The re-introduction of direct passenger trains between south-east Northumberland and the centre of Newcastle in the next three years is nearer than ever.

The Outline Business Case is complete and the go-ahead now given for a £10 million commitment to work on the next detailed design stage.

This would involve the preparation of the Outline Design, procurement of a Principal Designer and Contractor for Phase 1, and securing appropriate consents for its delivery.

With a proposed opening date for passenger services in early 2023, thousands of residents a day could be transported from Ashington to the centre of Newcastle in just over half an hour, while the scheme could boost the local economy by up to £70m.

Depending on funding, the scheme could be constructed in phases. The first would create four new stations at Northumberland Park, Newsham, Bedlington and Ashington. The remaining stations at Seaton Delaval and Blyth Bebside would come on line over the next two years once the service was underway.

Phase 1 of the project was included within the North East's Transforming Cities Fund submission. The outcome of this bid is due to be announced in the Spring of 2020

Council Leader Peter Jackson said: “There is real momentum gathering on this project now and we’ve made significant progress over the past 12 months.

“Last month Transport Secretary Grant Shapps MP visited Blyth and said he saw no reason why the Northumberland Line couldn’t be re-opened. This was followed shortly after by a £1.5m Government funding contribution towards project development costs.

“As we move forward there’s ever more confidence our long-term aspirations are going to become reality – bringing benefits to residents, commuters, visitors and businesses both in Northumberland and the wider region.”

*Photo credit: Northumberland County Council*