

# Regular train services will return to the Northumberland Line in 2024

March 6, 2023



The transport secretary has announced that the historic Northumberland Line will reopen next summer. The government is working with Northumberland County Council, Network Rail and Northern Rail to restore regular services to vital line from next year, creating faster and easier journeys between Ashington and Newcastle.

The completed line will see journey times slashed in half, brand new stations built and historic railway towns, which have not seen footfall of eager passengers since the heydays of The Beatles, revived.

Transport Secretary, Mark Harper said: “Communities in Northumberland can get ready for regular train services that will better connect people to jobs, education and opportunities while growing our economy.

“Restoring lost railway connections will drive tourism, boost local business opportunities and encourage investment across our regions, which is why I’m pleased to say that we are on track to reopen this historic line next summer.”

With six new, fully accessible stations being built, the new line will stop at Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth, Bebside, Newsham, Seaton Delaval, Northumberland Park and finally Newcastle Central.

Northumberland County Council Leader Glen Sanderson said: “We are delighted to have reached this major milestone which gives the green light for the main construction works to start. This is such a transformational scheme which will bring benefits for residents, businesses and visitors for generations to come.

“We have been working so hard over recent years to make this scheme happen, getting all the necessary planning and stations approved and preparing the line for the major works.

“This is the moment we’ve been working towards and I am so excited we’ve reached this point as we prepare to get trains rolling again through this part of our county.”

Not only will the restoration of passenger services reconnect communities and improve connections, but it will also boost the region’s economy through improving access to jobs.

Once complete, the journey time between Newcastle and Ashington will be reduced from 70 minutes to just 35, with services operating regularly seven days a week, providing easy access to jobs, education and tourism opportunities in the city centre for not only local residents but all those passing through too.

The line’s construction work alone has created almost 100 high-skilled jobs and apprenticeships, demonstrating the benefits it’s already having on the local community.

Congestion and air quality is also expected to plummet as people will be encouraged away from their cars and onto trains.

Matt Rice, Network Rail’s North & East Route Director said: “This is hugely welcome news as we get closer to delivering a transformed railway which will support the re-introduction of regular passenger trains and connect communities in Northumberland and Newcastle.

“We’re proud to be working with our industry partners on this truly revolutionary project, which will boost economic growth and bring a new lease of life to the region.”

The Northumberland Line project forms part of the Government’s Restoring Your Railways scheme, which has been reinstating local services and restoring closed stations and railway lines that were axed as a result of the Beeching cuts in 1963.

It has already seen the successful delivery of the Dartmoor Line, which reopened to passengers in November 2021 and has since doubled its passenger services and benefitted students studying in Exeter.

SENRUG, the group that campaigns for better rail services in South East and East Northumberland, has welcomed the news. Chair Dennis Fancett, said: “We are absolutely delighted with today’s announcement. It’s taken a long time coming, but we applaud both the Council and the Government for this decision.

“It proves that campaigning really does work, as very few people were listening to us when we first put our ideas forward in 2005. Special thanks are due to the team at Northumberland County Council who have been working very hard going through the processes to turn this re-opening aspiration into reality. I’m very

much looking forward to catching a train from my local station in Bedlington in just over a year's time."

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