



Northumberland County Council

Northumberland Line consultation FAQs

Below are responses to some of the most commonly asked questions about the Northumberland Line. If you have any questions that are not covered in this document or other public consultation materials, please contact us on rail@northumberland.gov.uk.

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Benefits

1. Why are you re-introducing passenger trains to the Northumberland Line?

The railway between Ashington and Newcastle used to run both passenger and freight services until the Beeching cuts in the 1960s. Since then, freight trains have continued to use the line, primarily serving Lynemouth Power Station.

The reintroduction of passenger services on the line has been an aspiration of Northumberland County Council for many years and the current political, social, economic and rail industry context means that it can now be successfully delivered. As a result of being awarded development funding from the DfT, the council has been working alongside partners since 2018 to develop the scheme.

Improving transport links from towns such as Ashington and Blyth is of key importance to encouraging more sustainable access to the main economic centres across Tyne and Wear. Enhancements to transport links within South East



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Northumberland will also be instrumental in stimulating economic investment within the region and will help to bring forward much needed housing. The project will address the following issues.

- Car ownership in South East Northumberland is set to increase. This will worsen road congestion, impacting on journey times and the commercial viability of buses across South East Northumberland. A lot of people commute from Northumberland into Tyne and Wear. Road congestion is already an issue and alternative modes of transport need to be provided to ensure people can access employment in a sustainable way.
- Links into Tyne and Wear, particularly Newcastle, are vital for the economic prosperity of Northumberland.
- Current public transport options do not meet the needs of all residents. A lack of available services, long journey times and high public transport costs mean that public transport is not currently a viable option for many people.
- Air quality is a major concern. Collectively, there is a need to reduce harmful vehicle emissions.

2. What benefits will the scheme deliver?

The Northumberland Line aims to stimulate and support economic growth, regeneration and community development in Northumberland and the surrounding regions by providing new and improved transport links for local people and businesses. By doing so the scheme will:

- Improve access from towns such as Ashington and Blyth to employment hubs like Newcastle and open up new opportunities for education, leisure and travel.
- Provide a real incentive for potential employers to relocate to and invest in the area.
- Provide vital infrastructure to help deliver the region's aspirations for economic growth.
- Help to attract visitors and improve local tourism.
- Enhance public transport connectivity within and beyond the region.
- Help to reduce congestion and improve air quality on key corridors by moving people away from car travel and onto public transport; and
- Support the delivery of significant growth in sectors such as renewable energy, offshore oil and gas.



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Scheme development and delivery

3. Is the scheme definitely going ahead?

Although the Northumberland Line has been talked about for many years, the current political, social, economic and industry context provides a strong case for re-opening. The scheme has the support of central government as well as key industry stakeholders such as Network Rail, Nexus and Transport for the North. On the strength of wider industry support and the positive business case, this has given us the confidence to proceed with design and planning.

4. When will construction start?

Early enabling works will start on site in early 2021. This will mainly be clearance and engineering works with standalone operational benefits, which don't require planning permission. Construction of the stations is anticipated to begin in summer 2022, subject to the necessary approvals being secured.

5. When will passenger services be operational?

The scheme is subject to several approval processes that may impact the timeline for delivery. The line is currently anticipated to be open to passengers in winter 2023.

6. Who is delivering the scheme?

The scheme is being delivered by Northumberland County Council, supported by a number of key project partners, including North Tyneside Council, Department for Transport, Network Rail, Transport for the North, Nexus and Northern Rail.

7. Who is funding the scheme?

The scheme is funded by the Department of Transport and Northumberland County Council's capital funding programme.



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Train services and operation

8. How frequent will services be?

It is anticipated that there will be two trains per hour from Monday to Saturday 6am to 7.30pm, and one train per hour on Sundays and after 7.30pm Monday to Saturday. Services will run from early in the morning (6am) until late into the evening (11pm) to support the night-time economy.

9. Two trains per hour is not frequent enough; can this be increased in the future?

The scheme has been designed to ensure that future opportunities to expand the services may be available subject to passenger demand and operational availability.

10. Who will operate the trains on the new line?

The current assumption is that the train service will be incorporated into the existing Northern Trains operation. However, we are examining alternative solutions for operating the train services in line with recent Government announcements into the way that railway services may be operated in future. A decision on an operator is expected in winter 2020.

11. What type of trains will you use?

At this stage we are unable to confirm the type of trains that will be used, as this will be dependent on who operates the services. Our aspiration is that electric battery-operated rolling stock will eventually be used on the line, though these may not be available at scheme opening.

12. Will it still be used for freight? Won't that interfere with passenger services?

The freight trains that use the railway line will still be able to and the improvements to track and signalling will enable the new passenger services to operate and still allow some growth for freight in the future. The single-track sections of the line are being reduced in length and a new passing loop installed as well as increases in line speeds to improve the capacity of the route.



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13. Will the services extend beyond Newcastle?

This project proposes to deliver a service between Ashington and Newcastle only. However, there may be future opportunities to extend beyond Newcastle as part of a later project. We will look to ensure that if people need to change trains at Newcastle Central for onward connections, that this can be done as simply and seamlessly as possible. The current working assumption is that trains will terminate at Newcastle Central Station; whether the service is extended beyond Newcastle will ultimately be the franchise operator's decision.

14. Will Northumberland Line trains travel from Northumberland Park to Newcastle Central or will passengers have to change onto the Metro?

The proposed Northumberland Line route runs from Ashington to Newcastle Central without the need to change onto the Metro.

15. What will be the price of a ticket? Will it be possible to get a through ticket onto the Metro?

At this stage we are unable to confirm the type of ticketing options that will be used and the cost of tickets. However, we are in discussions with Nexus to explore integrating ticketing with Tyne and Wear Metro services, to enable people to switch between the two services as easily as possible.

The stations and surrounding areas

16. What facilities will be provided at the station(s)?

Each station will have the following:

- Bike parking
- Car parking
- Ticket machines
- Seating and shelters
- Real time information boards
- CCTV cameras
- Audio frequency induction loops
- Lighting

The stops will have tickets machines but will be unstaffed and will not have ticket offices. Shelters will be provided on each platform, providing waiting passengers with



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protection from the weather. These shelters will have 8 to 16 seats, with extra standing space and access via each end.

Toilets will not be provided at stations, but an accessible toilet will be available on all trains serving the new line, which will run roughly every half hour.

The stations will not have dedicated space for cafes or other retail facilities, but their designs allow for the possibility of pop-up businesses, such as coffee carts, in the future. We are keen to find opportunities to support local businesses and involve local people in the development and care of the stations to help ensure that they reflect the needs of the community.

17. How will people get to the stations?

Improving public transport connections is one of the scheme's priorities. This includes making it easy and accessible for passengers to change between modes of transport. We are already talking to local transport providers, including Nexus and Arriva, to understand how the new service can form part of an integrated transport offer. Those within walking and cycling distance of the station sites are encouraged to walk and cycle where possible, and car parking is provided at each of the station sites.

18. Is there parking at all the stations? What will the parking arrangements be? (on-street or car park)?

Each station except Northumberland Park will have a new or extended car park, which will include Blue Badge spaces and Electric Vehicle (EV) charging bays. Blue Badge parking provision will be 6% of total car parking provision, with an additional 5% of spaces being enlarged ones that could be adapted for Blue Badge holders in the future. EV charging facilities will be provided at 6% of the scheme's total car parking spaces, with an aspiration for this to be increased to 10% where practicable.

The number of car parking spaces has been informed by car parking demand assessments and a Transport Assessment (subject to the constraint of the amount of land available). Where possible, the car parks have been designed to accommodate potential expansions.



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There is no expectation that rail service users would be required to park on surrounding residential streets and measures will be put in place to prevent this if required. In addition, Northumberland County Council and neighbouring authorities will consider improved sustainable access to the stations to promote walking and cycling modes to access new rail passenger services.

19. Will the stations reflect their localities and communities?

The railway line was previously used by passenger services before they ceased operation in the 1960s. Some of the locations of the stations are within close proximity to the original station sites. The railway line represents the history of how the area grew to be what it is. Coal mining and the railway line are a strong part of the heritage of the communities of Northumberland. The stations seek to embody this history in restoring the railway line to its original use. We are exploring opportunities to develop a series of information boards along the line as a reminder to the rich heritage of the area.

Sustainability

20. How will the scheme integrate with existing transport systems?

In line with the Northumberland County Council's aim to be carbon neutral by 2030, we will aim to encourage sustainable travel to the stations by facilitating good connections by public transport, bike and foot. We are already talking to local transport providers, including Nexus and Arriva, to understand how the new service can form part of an integrated transport offer.

Buses

We have developed our station designs for easy interchange with existing bus routes. In some locations, existing bus stops can be used and in others they will be relocated to make them easier to reach from the stations. The target maximum walking distance from stop to station of around 400 metres. We will also engage with bus operators to explore the potential for new bus services, with a focus on local 'feeder' services between towns and the new stations.

Cycling

Cycle routes to and from the stations will tie into existing cycle routes. Details of these routes will be confirmed later in the design process, but our intention is to widen roads at key points to minimise the risk of conflict with other vehicles.



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Storage for bicycles will be provided at each of the stations, with the exception of Northumberland Park (where sufficient cycle storage is already in place). In addition, we will explore whether electric scooter storage could also be provided, in line with national policy and legal frameworks. The cycle storage will be sheltered and the number of spaces at each station will be approximately 5% of the anticipated passenger count at each location. It will be close to the car park and station entrance, well-lit and covered by CCTV for security.

Walking

The final design for amended walking routes to the stations will be determined later in the design process. However, the council's local Walking and Cycling plans have been prepared with the location of the proposed train stations in mind and consultation on these plans will take place in the near future.

We are aware of areas where routes are currently unpleasant for pedestrians (e.g. on busy roads or through isolated areas) and will explore options to improve these, working with delivery partners where relevant. We would welcome any suggestions on how we could improve local walking routes. Wherever possible, pedestrian links will be designed to be accessible to all.

Taxis

Taxi pick-up and drop-off zones will be provided at all stations and we will also engage with local taxi operators to ensure that the stations cater for them appropriately.

21. How are you making the stations sustainable?

There are several aspects to sustainability, including care of the environment, community integration, and long-term economic benefit. The Northumberland Line project is being designed and delivered to achieve all of these. The passenger services will themselves take people out of cars and reduce pollution. Stations will include facilities for bus/taxi interchange to support local public transport, cycle storage facilities to support personal mobility and healthy lifestyles, and electric car charging points to reduce personal transport pollution. Drainage for the car parks will use Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), and landscaping will soften the visual appearance wherever possible. We are actively working with local community and business groups to identify ways in which the stations and their immediate surrounds may be used to enable and enhance local services for



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education, training, and commercial opportunities and the long-term benefit of the region.

Giving feedback and staying involved

22. How can I/my community group get involved?

We welcome feedback as part of our public consultation on the scheme. As part of this, we are inviting local people and groups to sign up to be scheme 'champions' and be ambassadors for the scheme in their local communities.

23. How can I keep up to date with news on the project?

We are also inviting people to sign up to receive scheme email updates. You can make use of any of these options by filling out our response form at <https://nland.uk/line> or emailing us at rail@northumberland.gov.uk.

24. How can I provide feedback about the scheme?

There will be various ways in which members of the public can have their say, including opportunities to comment as part of the planning application process. At the moment, you can view our public consultation materials and respond online at <https://nland.uk/line>, or request hard copy or alternative format materials by phone or by emailing rail@northumberland.gov.uk. Public consultation feedback will be welcomed until **14 December 2020**.

Going forwards, people can keep informed about project progress and feedback opportunities via the project webpage: www.northumberland.gov.uk/line. If you have any questions, please get in touch with us using the phone number and email address above.

25. What happens next?

All feedback must be submitted by **11.59pm on 14 December**. After this date, we will review all the feedback we have received and update our designs prior to submitting the planning applications. As part of the planning applications for the stations, we will submit a Statement of Community Engagement that explains how



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people's feedback has been considered and a short summary will be added to the project website (www.northumberland.gov.uk/line).