



# Torridge

## District Council



Thank you, Chair. My name is Tim Steer, I'm Vice-Chair of the Tarka Rail Association and also one of the Directors of Bideford Railway Heritage Centre.

*Many members will recall the presentation which I gave to Full Council last April, and the update report to the Joint Planning Policy Committee last July. That joint meeting highlighted resolutions of both North Devon and Torridge District Councils and recommended that the Joint Committee require officers to ensure that consideration of including a new rail link between Bideford and Barnstaple be explored and embedded within the work programme for the new Local Plan project. Since then an independent specialist transport advisor has been commissioned and completed an Initial Business Case report which is being considered by its client body the Tarka Rail Association, and a published Summary of which was reported to Bideford Town Council, in the company of Sir Geoffrey Cox KC, on Thursday 3rd August.*

*It is recognised that at most no more than 700 metres of a new rail link between Bideford and Barnstaple would physically be in the Greater Bideford area and Torridge District. Nevertheless, district boundary proximities play little in why railways are reinstated, railways are now restored to serve neighbouring communities and large conurbations. Just look at the district of West Devon, in 2021 they had the UK's first restored railway service - naming it the Dartmoor line to Okehampton, the line has now received levelling up funding for a second parkway station nearer to the district of Mid Devon and now a business case has been presented to Department for Transport to reinstate Tavistock to Bere Alston - a line that will be nearer to Cornwall.*

*The Bideford Railway Heritage Centre has ambitions to play its part in the new Levelling-Up Partnership by seeking to develop a project which will at the same time expand its visitor offer and physically expand its operation as a small initial step to protect the site for a future modern rail link towards Barnstaple. In that respect the project would aim to align with the 'Our Economy' and 'Our Environment our Future' themes in the Strategic Plan, and so far as possible at least some of the four key levelling-up criteria and some of the 12 Missions set out in the government's Levelling Up White Paper in February last year.*

*Tarka Rail Association and Bideford Railway Heritage Centre look forward to collaborating in supporting the new Strategic Plan and in the new Levelling Up Partnership.*

*Thank you.*

Address to Full Council, Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023