

# Social media an unsatisfactory platform to achieve change

ALL rise. The council of Facebook is now in session; please be seated.

On today's agenda are: Potholes. Why do Bideford and Barnstaple go to gridlock? What about the Tarka Trail and the rail link to Bideford?

And finally a petition from a member of the public who has not attended any parish, town or district meeting or written to the public consultation.

Engagement with the public on social media can be 'interesting'. Some councils and councillors write on social media but there is a standing order against officers making comments. Councillors can express opinions and gain an idea of what mood the public are taking on any proposal but there are standing orders that all councils abide by; other councillors only listen to those who write letters/emails to them and hear constituents speak in council meetings under 'public participation'.

What is interesting is the public opinion that social media sites such as Facebook are taken as factual! One item I put on the agenda, 'Potholes',

**Tim Steer**

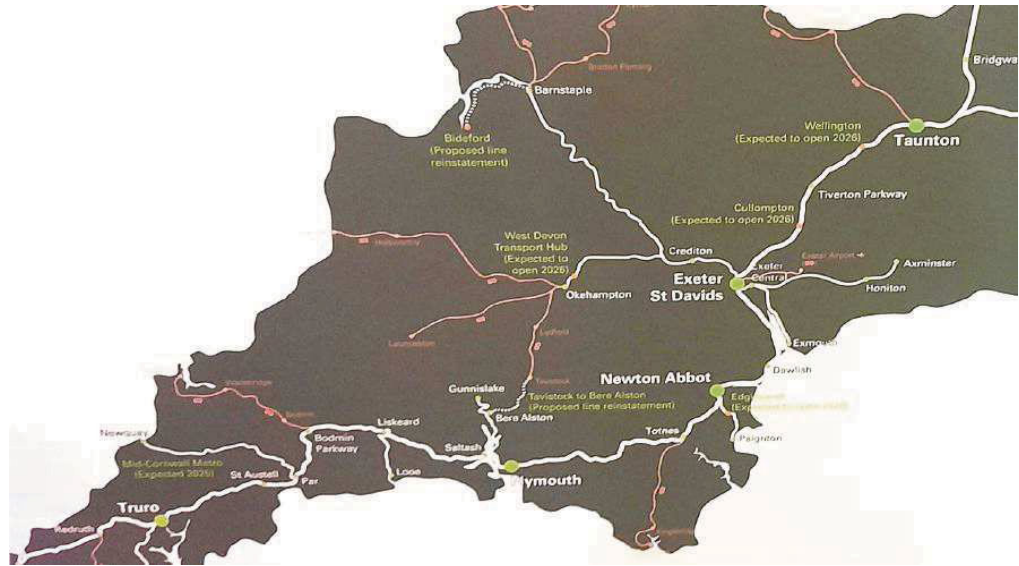
Vice-chair of the Tarka Rail Association



is debated on social media to the point that people write on posts that have nothing to do with the subject. 'Bloom judges are impressed by Barnstaple' - comment, "Blooming in potholes".

Proposed rail link to Bideford - comment, "Fix the potholes first". Maybe this is as good a time to explain that funding for floral judging or for a rail link cannot be used to fix potholes. Would anyone dare put such a remark on a post that says funding found for a new foodbank?

Allocated funding for various projects MUST fit the funding programme. When the Barnstaple to Exeter North Devon line gets the funding for a much-needed infrastructure and capacity upgrade, people cannot argue that they wanted the



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funding used on potholes, social-housing or even a new school as it does not fit the metric. Ring-fenced funding can only be used for that specific purpose and cannot ever be for other programmes; if you do not agree with how our authorities have worked on these successful bids to central government then you can write to the public consultation or attend a council meeting to raise your concerns.

If you really wanted to make a difference, you could attend your local council meetings to gather facts before posting an opinion on social media or how about becoming a councillor by asking to be co-opted when a council vacancy arises?

If you have a petition, have you checked it fits with the relevant policies or have you based it on personal opinion? So, before you crack your knuckles and begin typing, think about what really is the desired outcome of your post or comment. No council looks to see who gained the most likes but certain comments that are relevant can be seen as a common thread of thought and some councillors may bring this to the meeting.

New housing developments for Northern Devon are being built annually and that is not set to change under the new government. We need the infrastructure to be balanced to support the housing.

Being opposed to housing is understandable but that does not help the North Devon and Torridge Housing Crises campaign. Being opposed to the rail link to Bideford does not help sort out the potholes as more vehicles mean these holes are going to become a common sight as is the gridlock traffic.

Well done to all the local campaigners fighting to better your communities by doing more than posting on social media.

Would Great Western Railway have unveiled a national map with the Bideford proposed line reinstatement at their annual 22nd June conference if there was no campaign?

# Welcome recognition in a milestone year

TO the crew's great delight recently, after 45 years of dedicated volunteering, the last 20 of which have been as Appledore RNLI's coxswain, Martin Cox was awarded the Northam Town Council's Community Champion award in the first year that these have been presented.

People within the Northam wards were asked to nominate those who they would like to see so honoured, people who have made an outstanding contribution to the community and enriched the lives of the residents of Appledore, Northam, or Westward Ho!

To quote from part of Martin's nomination: "There must be many around Northam, Westward Ho! and Appledore who have had their lives touched for the better by this man. Whether that is from an actual rescue, with residents here that quite literally owe their life to Martin, either directly, or via the skill and knowledge he has passed onto his fellow crew members, or through water safety and community work. I can honestly think of no-one better for this accolade. He embodies a local man delivering for his local community."

We are deep into RNLI 200, a year celebrating 200 years since the formation of the charity. Locally, plans are now well under way to celebrate

**Niki Tait** shares the latest news and advice from Appledore RNLI



our own Appledore RNLI 200. On February 28, 1825 Appledore received the first RNLI lifeboat ever received at any lifeboat station, aptly named The Volunteer, which remained in service for the next 31 years.

With the Appledore Bar reputed to be the second most dangerous bar in the British Isles, and nowhere claiming to be more dangerous, this was a natural progression for Appledore, whose men has been saving lives at sea for countless years previously, mainly through oarsmen manning six to ten-oar pilot gigs.

With over 31 emergency shouts already this year and the summer only just starting, we remind everyone to take care on or by the water. Check the weather forecasts and the tides, be aware of ebbing tides and offshore winds making it difficult to get back to land, whilst incoming tides can result in people getting cut off by the cliffs ad on sand banks.

Have a means of calling for help, let someone know where you are and



Meet the Appledore RNLI team in this special anniversary year. Picture: Simon Ellery

what time you will be back, use a life-guarded beach and swim between the red and yellow flags. If you get caught in a rip current do not try to swim against it.

If you can stand, try to wade rather than swim.

Swim parallel to the shore until free of the rip and then head for shore.

Raise your hand and shout for help.

If you see anyone who appears to be in difficulty on or by the water, call 999 and ask for the coastguard. The volunteer RNLI crews would prefer to be called out to a false alarm with good intent, than not to be called to someone in real need.

The RNLI as a charity receives no public funding and as such has been reliant for its 200 years of service, not only on its volunteer crew, but on

fundraising, donations and legacies. Events run by our Fundraising Guild this summer include a Tea at Tapeley on August 20, the annual Clovelly to Appledore sponsored walk on September 7 and a special bicentenary black-tie dinner at the Barnstaple Hotel on September 14.

Details can be found on the RNLI Appledore fundraising website: <https://www.rnliappledore.org.uk>