

Barnstaple railway campaigner branching out into regional role

Tim Steer, who has pushed for a Bideford to Barnstaple line and Tarka Line improvements, is now regional chair for Railfuture

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Tim Steer, who has campaigned to get a Bideford to Barnstaple railway line reinstated has been elected as chair for the Devon and Cornwall branch of Railfuture. Credit: Andrew Toon

By **Tony Gussin** 18 Jun 2025 3:13 PM

A dedicated Barnstaple railway campaigner will now be looking to champion the extension and improvement of lines in two counties after being elected for a new role.

Tim Steer has been selected as the chair for the Devon and Cornwall branch of Railfuture, which campaigns nationally for better rail services for all.

In North Devon and Torridge, Tim has campaigned for several years for improving, modernising and extending the Tarka Line between Barnstaple and Exeter, as well as working on the project to get a railway line reinstated between Bideford and Barnstaple.

He said he was 'delighted and honoured' to be elected to his new post and thank all those who had supported him.

Tim added: "As new chair for Devon and Cornwall, I will now look at all rail campaigns across the region and am ready to support them.

"In addition I want Railfuture's membership to grow so that it represents students, parents, employers and their employees, patients and other rail users, future as well as existing.

"For too long, I feel, railways campaigns have often been seen as the sole preserve of train enthusiasts, so instead my emphasis will be actively campaigning to represent the wider public who already use and want to use the railway."



Above: Tim Steer has been helping to lead the bid for a Barnstaple to Bideford railway line. Credit: Andrew Toon

Tim initiated the ACE Rail (Atlantic Coast – Exeter railway) campaign to extend North Devon line services to Bideford. His work has laid the foundations for the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance, set up in 2023.

This is a group of more than two dozen organisations which has absorbed the ACE Rail campaign and with independent specialist advisers is developing business cases for both the modernisation and extension of North Devon line services.

Those efforts earned Tim Railfuture's Gold Award for Best New Group in 2022 and then the Gold Awards for Best Social Media and Campaigner of the Year for 2023.

Of aspirations to reinstate the Bideford line, he said: "The professionally-drafted business cases will prove that building a better railway for the area will improve community prosperity and help lead the area out of deprivation.

"What the Bideford line will look like and where exactly it will go is now in the hands of independent specialist advisers and representatives of organisations in the still-growing Alliance."

Tim is also a Rotarian and chair of Friends of Barnstaple Railway Station, which is a member of the national Community Rail Network and a local group which has been winning awards for four consecutive years for enhancing the station.



Above: Tim Steer (right) with the Mayor of Barnstaple Janet Coates and other dignitaries at the 170th anniversary celebrations of the railway coming to Barnstaple. Credit: Simon Ellery