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2025-06-20

Dear Mr Anstee,

### **Devon & Torbay Combined County Authority – draft Local Growth Plan**

Railfuture is Britain's leading and longest-established, independent national voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network for passenger and freight users, to support economic (housing and productivity) growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities. We seek to influence decision makers at local, regional and national levels to implement pro-rail policies in development and transport planning.

We share our thoughts about the draft plan, which we welcome and gladly endorse:

Unleashing the economic potential of Devon and Torbay: Major opportunities – “A new approach to spatial development planning” is a most welcome commitment.

Welcome in particular is “Guide and support local skills plans and align with other strategies and plans, including the Local Transport Plan” – we understand the final draft LTP4 2025-40, to which we contributed, is due to be adopted at the CCA Board on 28<sup>th</sup> July.

Working in partnership across our region: We indeed “wish to play an active part in helping to realise the great opportunities within our region,” and so “we look forward to working with you to unleash the economic potential of Devon and Torbay.” Through our Devon & Cornwall regional branch and the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance (NDRDA) we have supported through consultation responses development of the new Devon & Torbay Local Transport Plan, and also Peninsula Transport's Strategic Implementation Plan.

Constraints on future growth:

*Transport* – “parts of the region remain less well connected” applies particularly to northern Devon which has especially slow and unreliable journey times with Exeter and beyond, accentuating the challenges of geographic peripherality with poor economic performance and social indicators resulting from a low level of integration with the economy of the Exeter city region. This statement “Public transport is limited and its effectiveness as a viable alternative to commuting by car for residents outside of the catchment of urban areas continues to be a challenge. Improvements in public transport infrastructure to better service the rural geography over time will help widen the regional labour market creating the conditions for broader growth across the region.” is notably applicable to northern Devon, where strong and sustained post-pandemic rail usage growth underpins the case for infrastructure investment which is being developed by the NDRDA.

[www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk) [www.railfuturescotland.org.uk](http://www.railfuturescotland.org.uk) [www.railfuturewales.org.uk](http://www.railfuturewales.org.uk)  
[www.railwatch.org.uk](http://www.railwatch.org.uk)

We have noted and echo these two contributions from the University of Exeter's recent Report of the Devon Housing Commission, section 8.6 Infrastructure: *"Much of the opposition to new development, as well as concerns over the impact to landscapes and distrust that local housing needs will be served, centres on the need for adequate new infrastructure"* and 8.10 Coordination with transport: *"A key part of local opposition to new development is the potential increase in traffic that will follow. Investment in transport infrastructure can help overcome these objections and improve productivity."*

*Digital Connectivity* – "However, rural North and West Devon experience pockets of low coverage highlighting that while digital connectivity is not an overall growth constraint, continued rollout of digital infrastructure will be necessary to ensure comprehensive coverage across the region." is a welcome recognition of the digital as well as geographic downsides and challenges of addressing peripherality.

Yours faithfully,

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS  
Acting Convener, Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance  
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