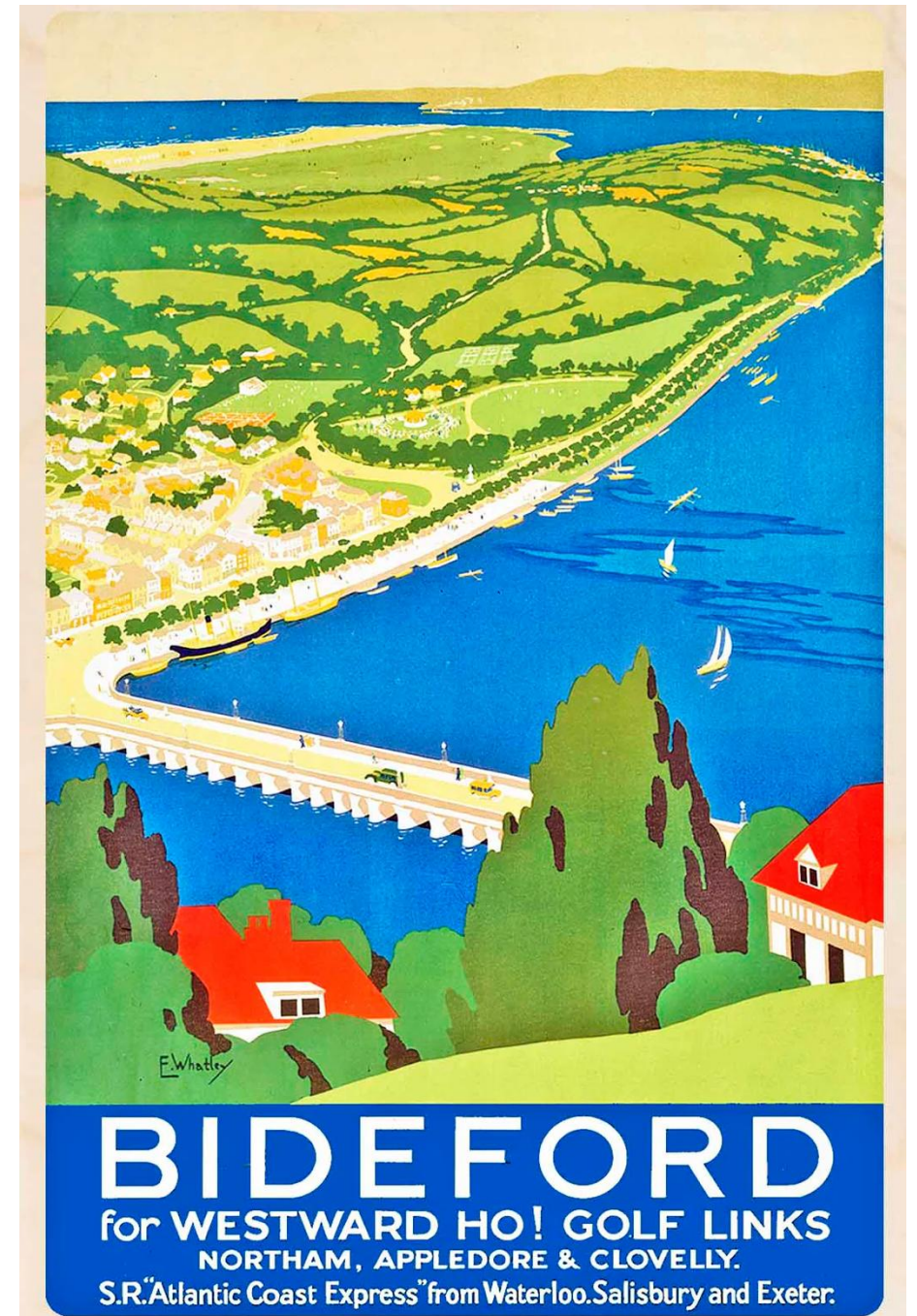


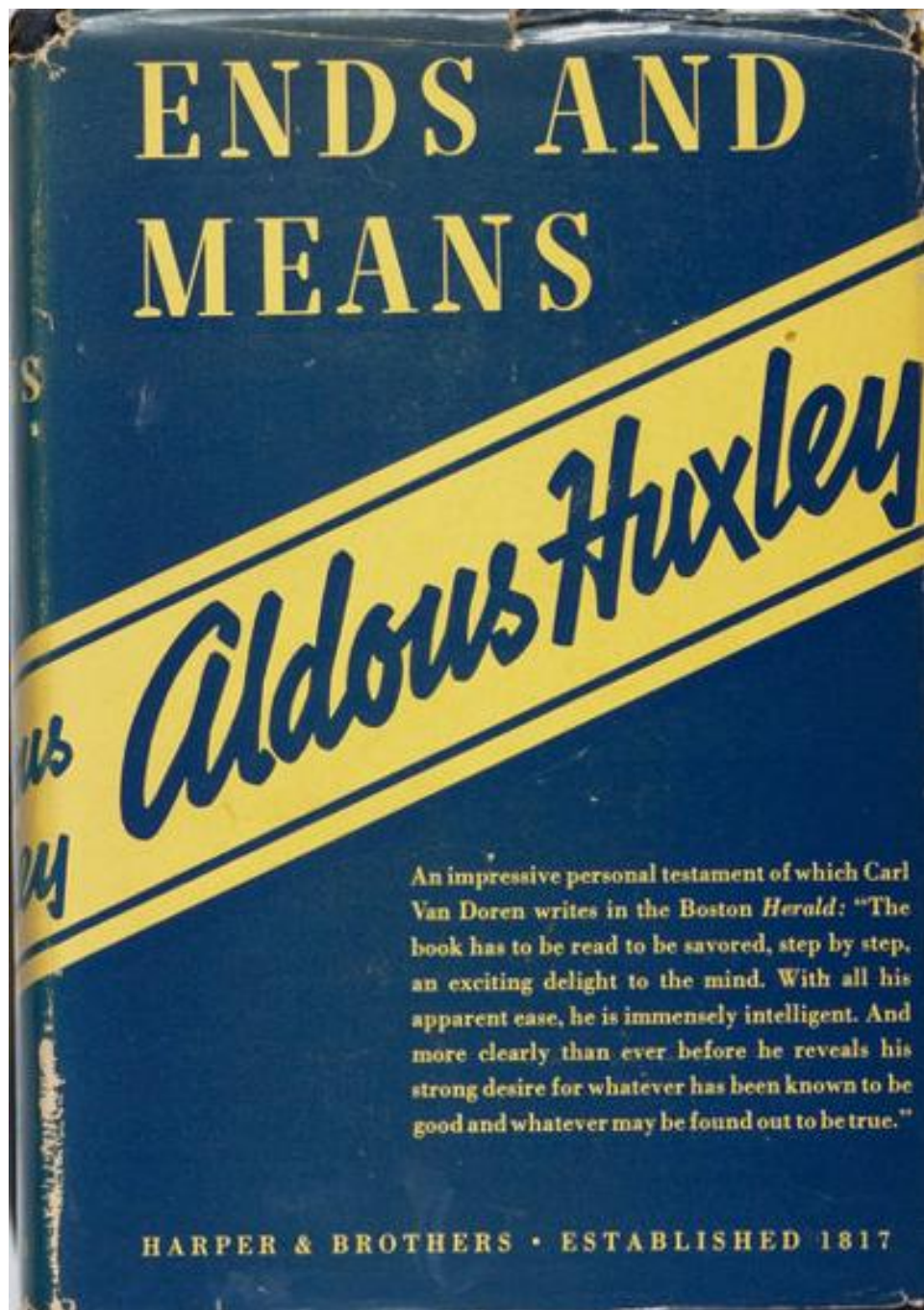
# Reopening the Barnstaple-Bideford Line

## The Case for Change and 'What Next?'

3<sup>rd</sup> September 2025

Ian Baxter  
Strategy Director





Purpose of the railway



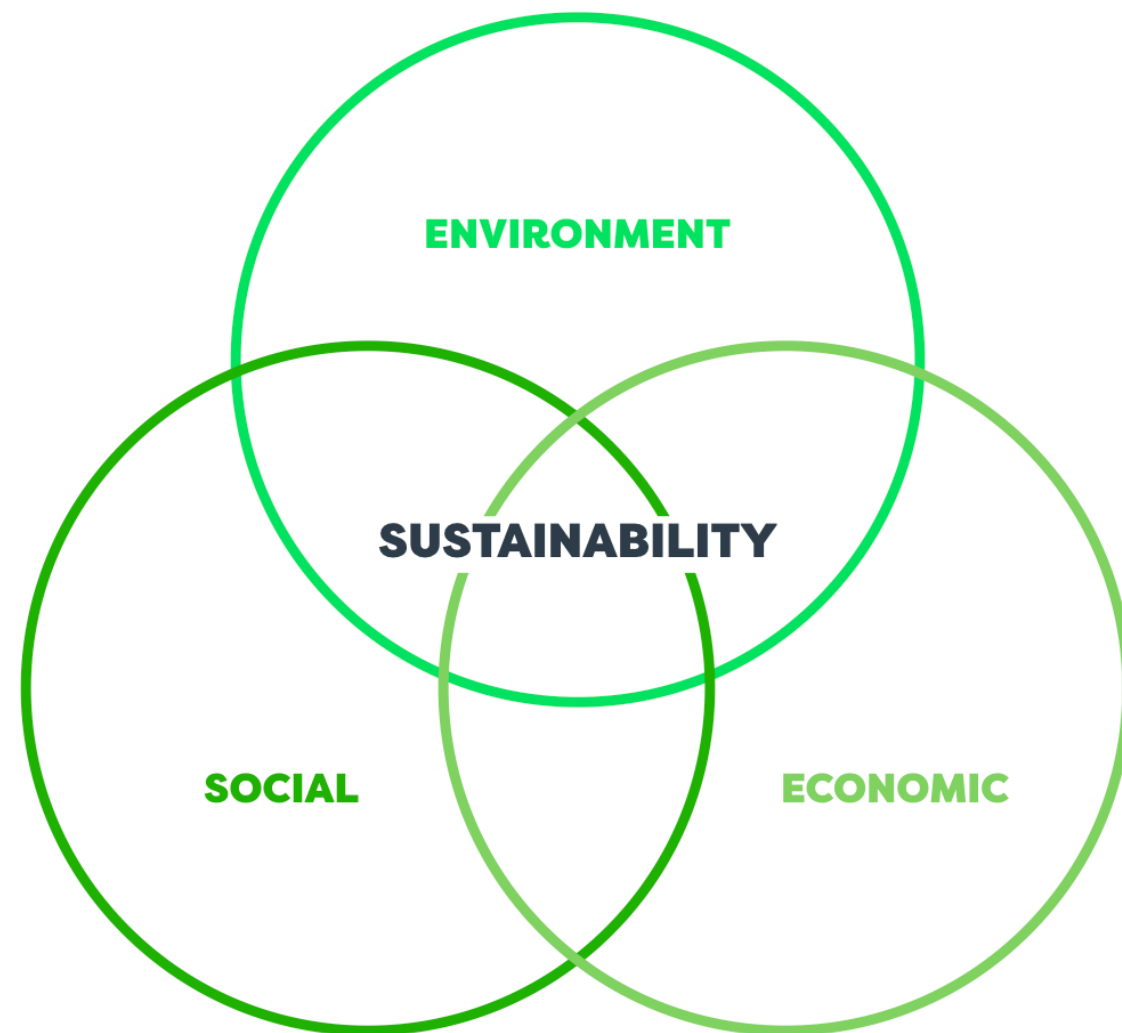
Purpose of the railway

**Economy**

**Community**

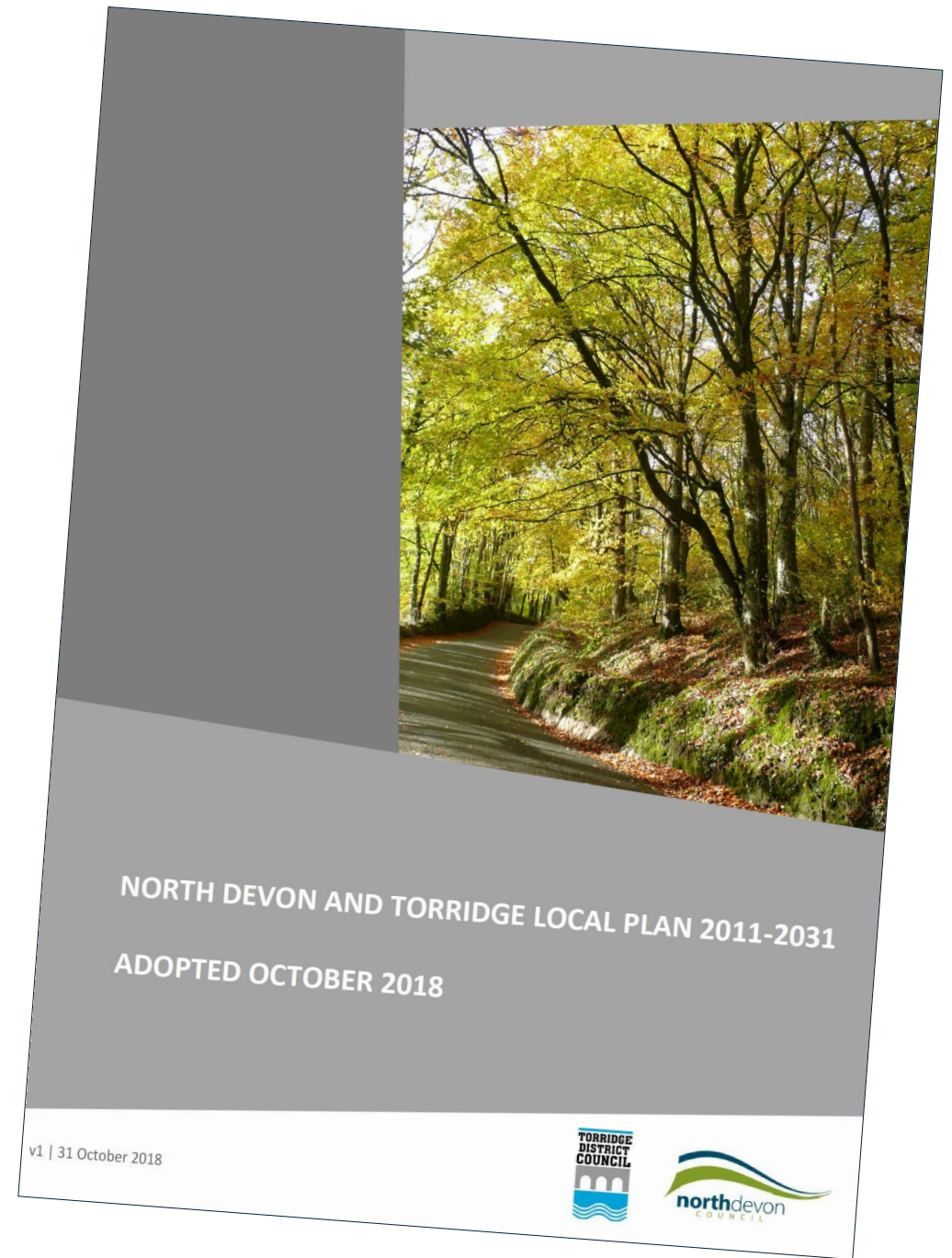
**Environment**







# North Devon & Torridge Local Plan → 2031

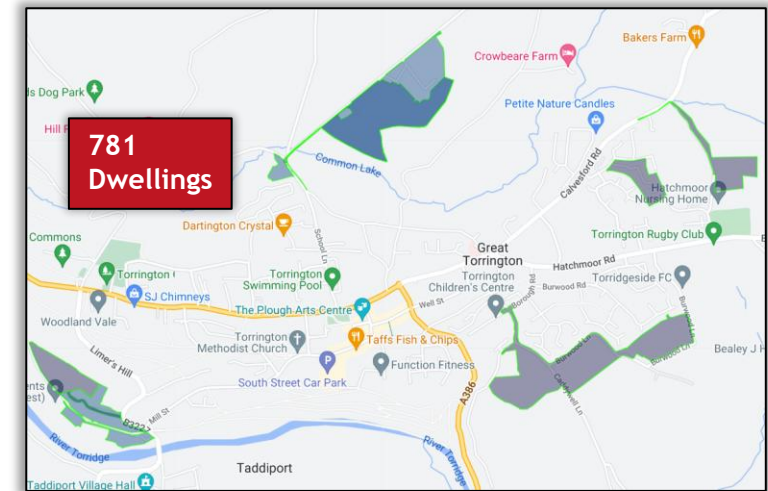
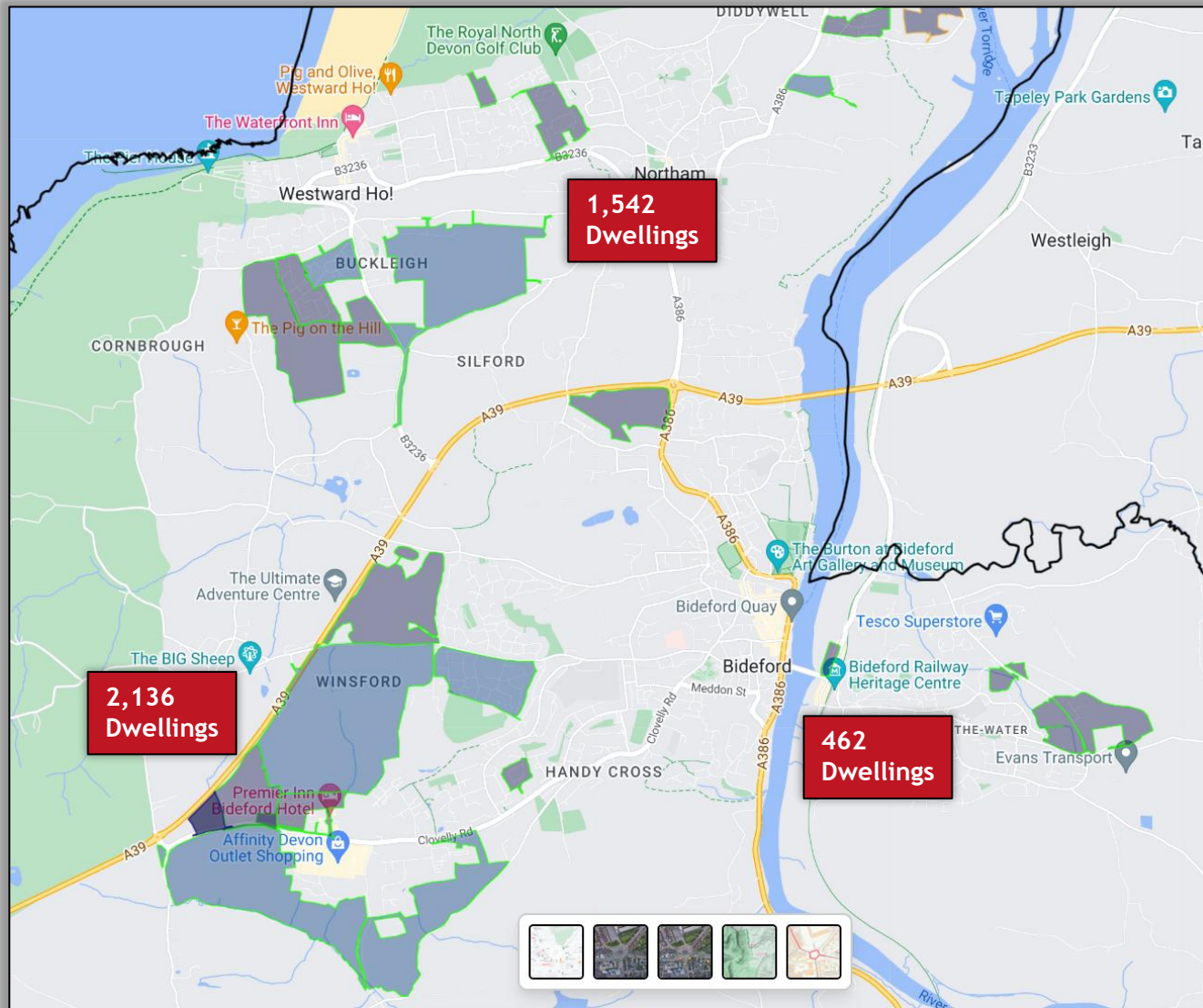




## **North Devon & Torridge Local Plan → 2031**

- 157,500 people 2011
- 166,700 in 2021 ↑ 5.8%
- c. 50% in Taw & Torridge estuaries
- 17,220 homes or 861 p.a. 2018-2031
- = c. 39,600 people ↑ 25%  
from 2011 population
- 2024 HMG Mandatory Housing Targets  
from 861 p.a. ↑ 1,300 p.a.

# The Bideford Station Catchment → 2031



c. 4,900 new homes

c. 11,000 more people



# Challenge



# and Opportunity

# The SLC work

- Engineering assessment
- Economic Case



# Who we are

- Warwick Parkway
- Coleshill Parkway
- Stratford Parkway
- Bermuda Park
- Kenilworth
- Rugby Parkway (development)

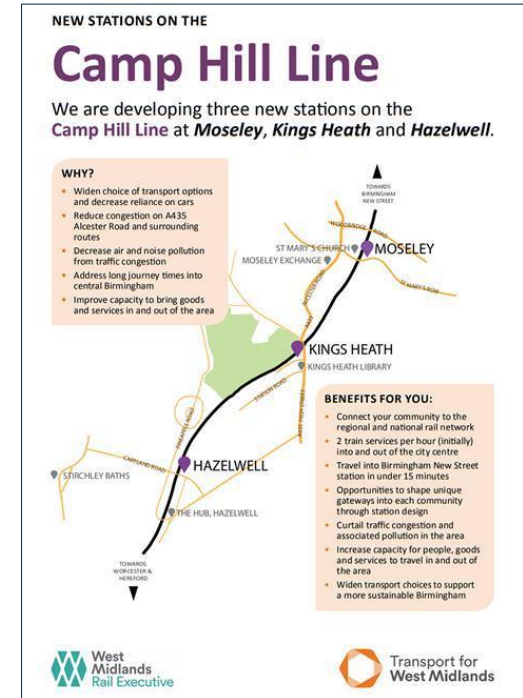
2000-2025

Chiltern Railways



# Who we are

- Worcestershire Parkway 2020
- Northumberland Line 2024  
6 stations
- Camp Hill Line, Birmingham 2025  
3 stations



# Who we are

- Economically evidenced investment prioritisation for combined/local authority members and officers
- Pre and post-COVID assessments



# Who we are

## APPROACHES

- 'THIRD PARTY'
- Local authority promoted / delivered
- Bespoke and innovative public/private sector financing
- Ground-breaking 'LAND VALUE CAPTURE' on Northumberland Line



# **The Bideford Case**

## **Engineering and Capital Costs**

# A lot to do

9.5 miles

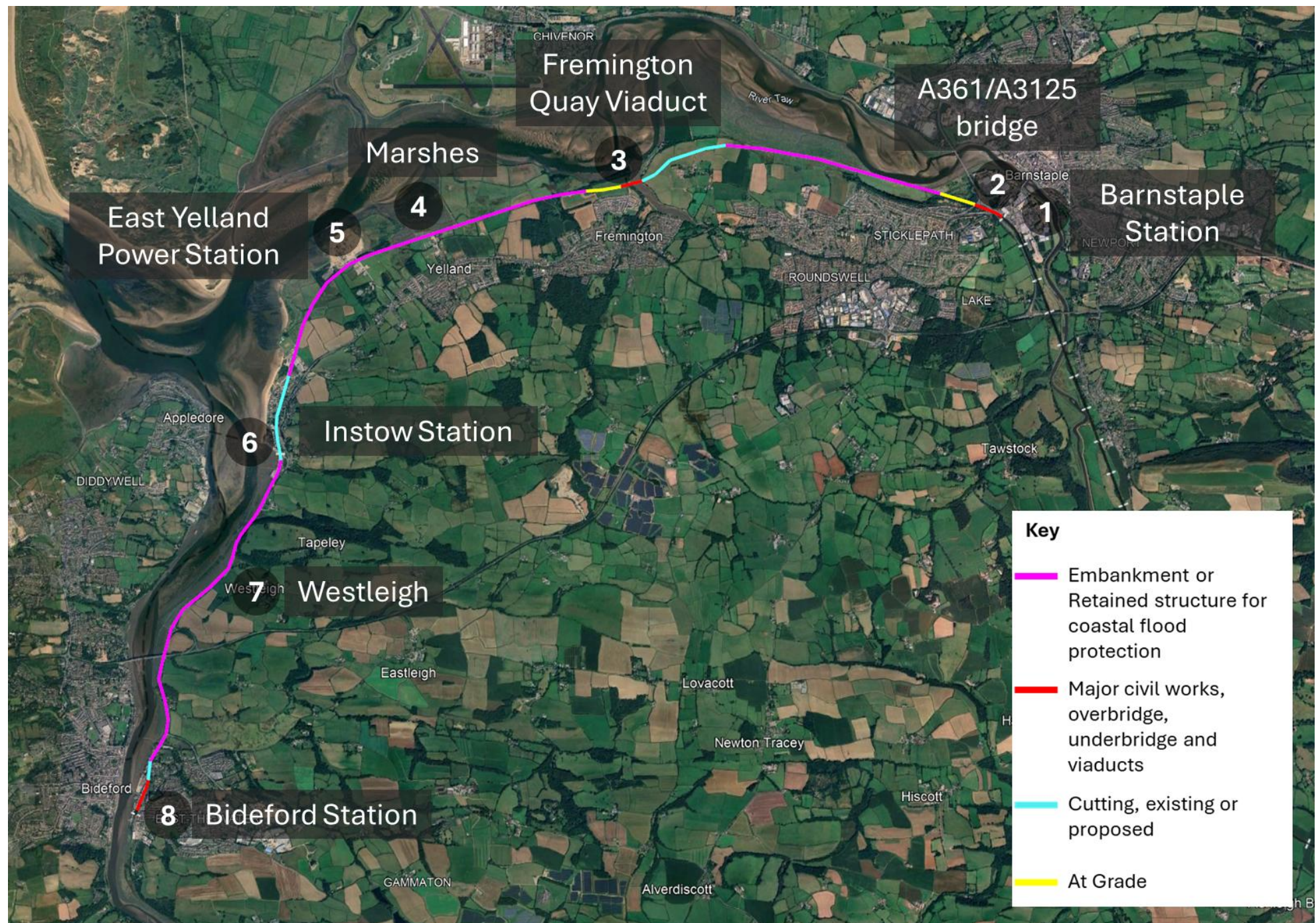
Single track

+

Passing loop

Civils

Coastal  
protection



# **The Bideford Case – capital costs**

## **3 tests**

### **BASE CASE**

**LOW**      **↓ 10% + excludes flood defence costs**

**HIGH**      **↑ 10% + flood defence costs x 2**

# **The Bideford Case – capital costs**

## **3 tests**

**BASE CASE     £264m + £158m RISK → £422m**

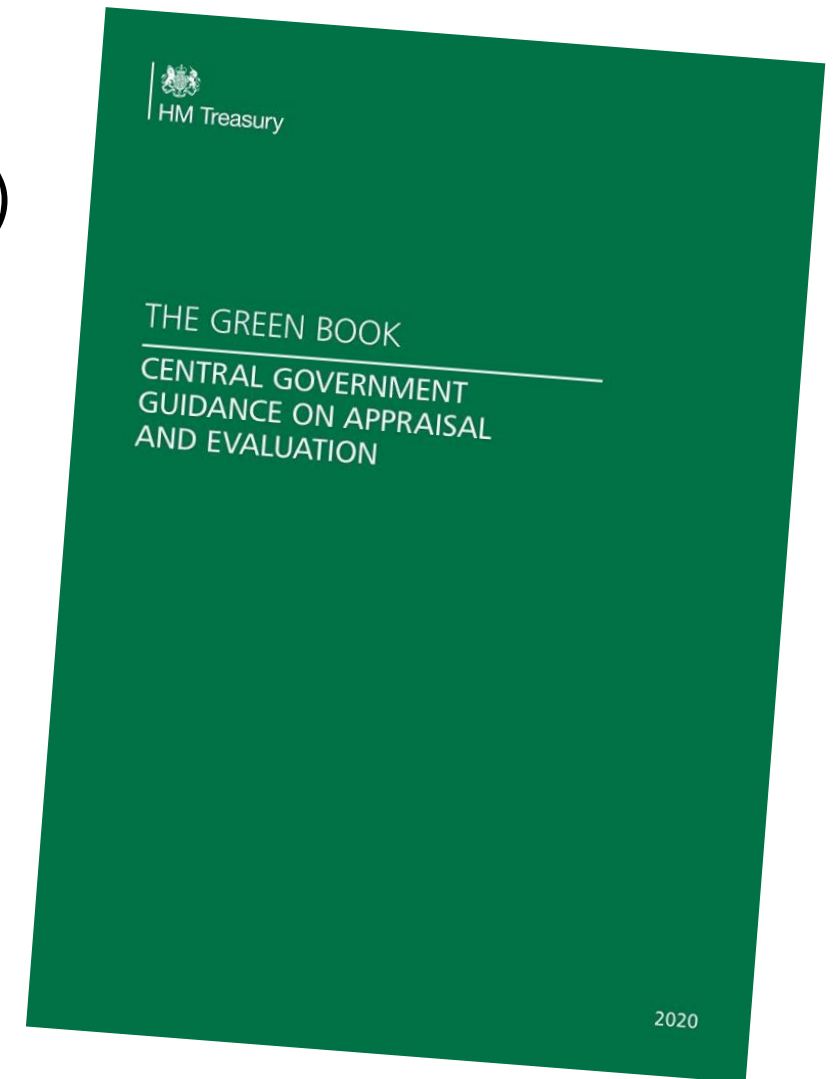
**LOW             £191m + £114m RISK → £305m**

**HIGH            £331m + £198m RISK → £529m**

# **The Biddeford Economic Case**

# Why an 'Economic Case'?

- HM Treasury 'Green Book' and DfT 'Transport Appraisal Guidance' (TAG)
- One of the 5 'Business Case dimensions'
  - ♦ Strategic WHY?
  - ♦ **Economic** **VALUE FOR MONEY**
  - ♦ Financial FUNDING /AFFORDABILITY
  - ♦ Commercial PROCURING THE SCHEME
  - ♦ Management DELIVERY



# Why an 'Economic Case'?

- Measures the markets for travel
- Tests demand against train service options
- Tests BENEFITS against COSTS – capital and operational
- Considers 'Wider Economic Benefits' (e.g. access to jobs/environment)

→ **BENEFIT COST RATIO** or '**BCR**'



# Today's market – Barnstaple to Exeter & beyond

c. 550,000 p.a. / c. 850 RTN day

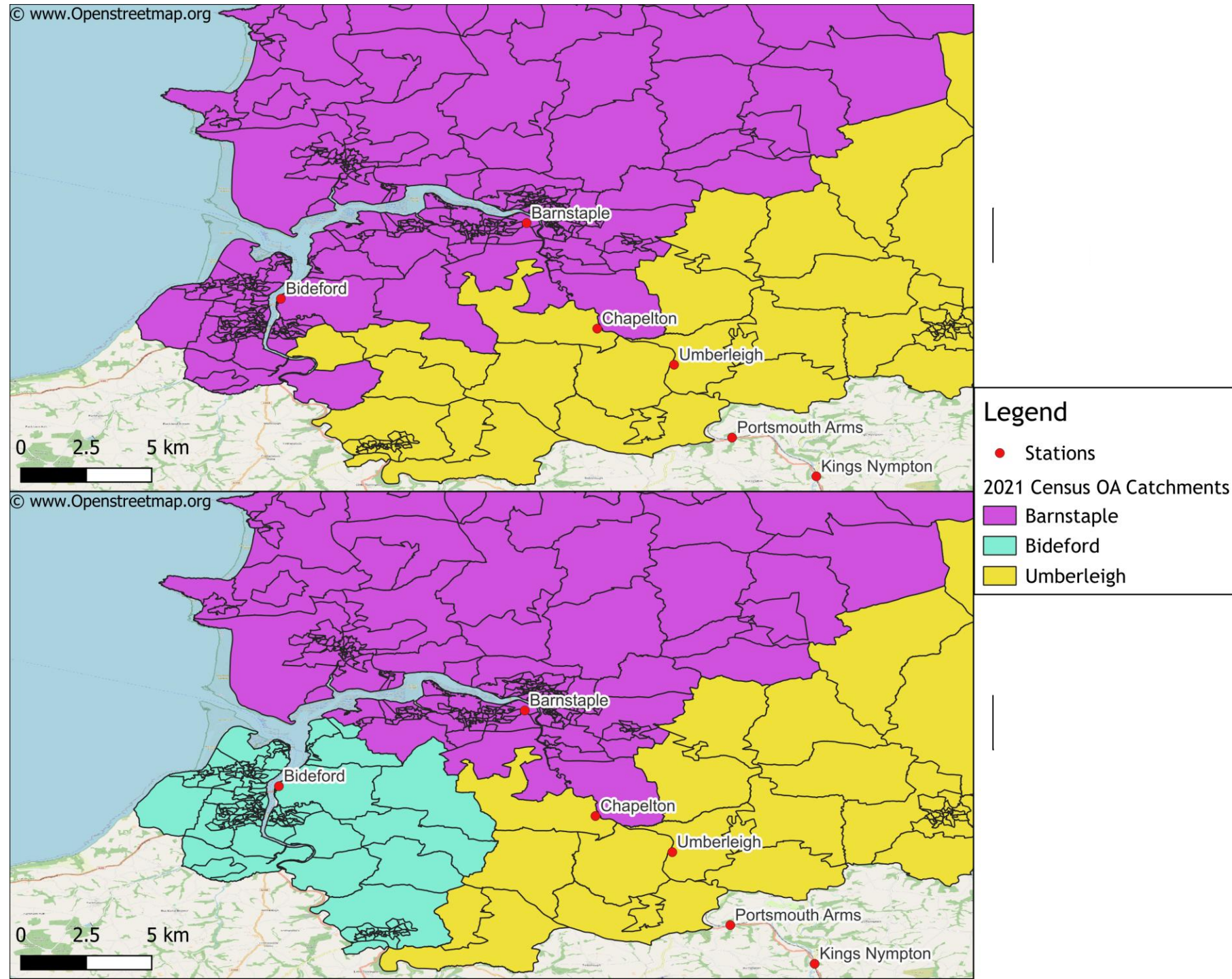
- Exeter 40%
- Digby & Sowton 25%
- London 8%
- Plymouth 5%
- Bristol 2%
- Other 20%



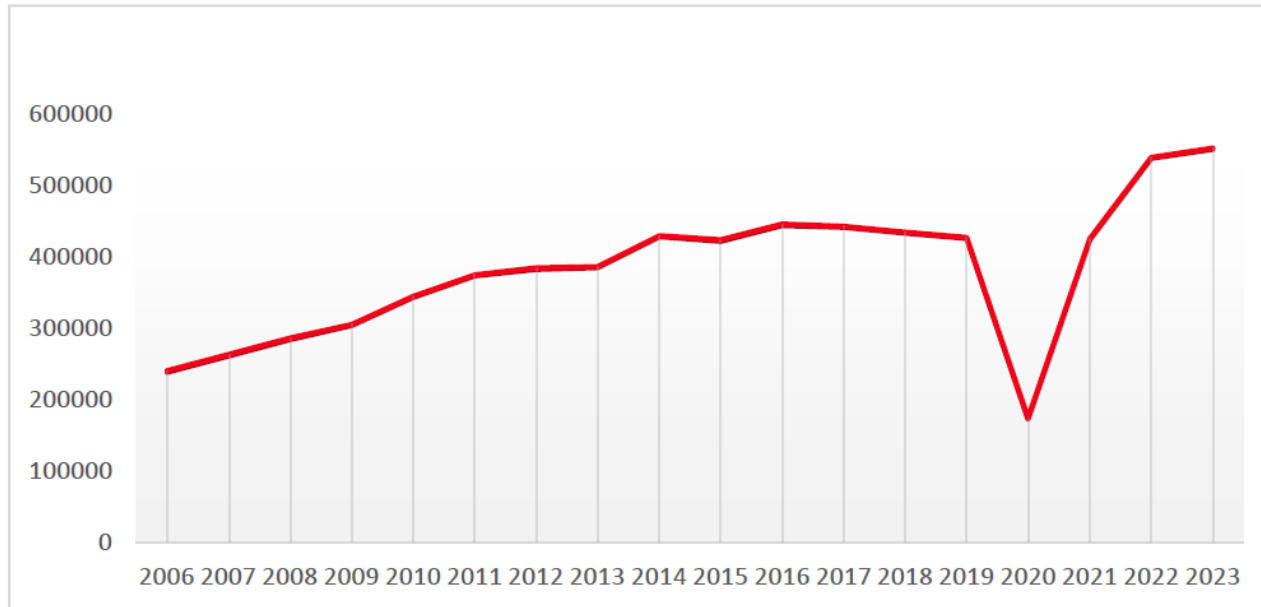
Why we  
need to  
know this

‘Abstraction’

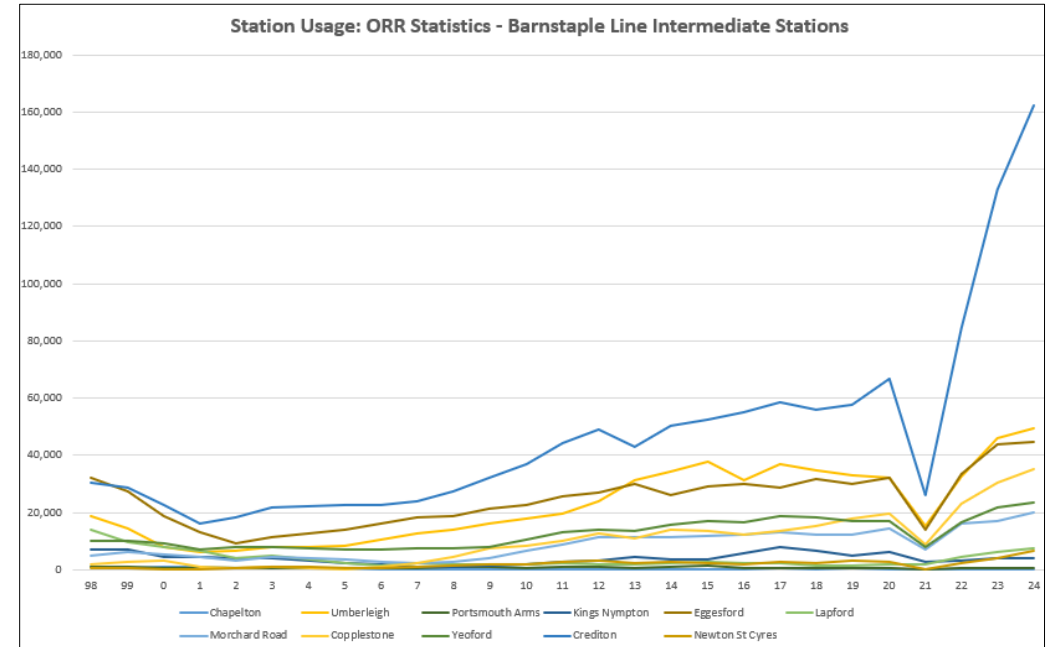
‘New to rail’



# The Bideford Market



Barnstaple



Barnstaple Line intermediate stations

Powerful post-COVID growth beyond pre-COVID levels

# The Bideford Market

## 2 Core Tests

- 1 - 'Today' - without ND & T Local Plan housing growth
- 1- 'Today' - Exeter – Barnstaple 1 train per hour as today
- 2 - With ND & T Local Plan housing growth
- 2 - With enhanced Exeter – Barnstaple service

# The Bideford Market

## The 2 outputs – 2040 passenger numbers

- 1 - 'Today' + Bideford → c. 358,000 - c. 550 RTN/day
- 1 - c. 17% 'abstracted' + 83% 'new to rail'
- 2 - With housing growth → c. 553,000 - c. 850 RTN/day
- 2 - c. 14% 'abstracted' + 86% 'new to rail'

# The Bideford Market

***Enhanced Exeter-Barnstaple 2 tph / 20 min JT ↓***

- 1 - 'Today' → c. 512,000 - c. 790 RTN/day
- 2 - Housing growth → c. 795,000 - c. 1,200 RTN/day
- (2) = c. 650<sup>th</sup> volume out of 2690 GB stations
- (2) = similar to St. Ives, Digby & Sowton and Clacton

# The Bideford Case – Benefits : Costs

	Barnstaple-Exeter as today		Barnstaple-Exeter enhanced	
Summary	Current Housing	Future Housing	Current Housing	Future Housing
LOW Capex	0.21	0.47	0.51	1.94
BASE CASE Capex	0.13	0.26	0.26	0.60
HIGH Capex	0.10	0.18	0.18	0.37
NEW TO RAIL p.a.	282,000	432,000	351,000	540,000

## DfT Value for Money/BCR Thresholds

- < 1.0 POOR
- 1.0 – 1.5 LOW
- 1.5 – 2.0 MEDIUM

# What does it mean?

- Significant 'new to rail' market
- New housing/population key to the economic case
- Bideford rail key to new housing sustainability
- Cautious case pre-HMG housing numbers
- High capital costs in cold £ climate
- Coastal flood alleviation funding outside of rail scheme

# What next?

- Decision to promote
- Look to THIRD PARTY development and delivery
- Move to formal Strategic Outline Case
- Link directly to Local Plan housing delivery
- Consider funding options including Land Value Capture
- Engage with partners re coastal flood alleviation funding
- Build on Devon & Torbay LTP & Peninsula Transport support
- Engage with the rail industry – now and future
- Three human beings – politician + officer + railway expert

Policy paper

# English Devolution White Paper

Published 16 December 2024



**Great British  
Railways**



Ask not what the railway can  
do for you ...

but what you can do for the  
railway



