Great Western Route

NetworkRail

Devon Metro timetabling analysis



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Background

- March ‘26, we met at Eggesford
- Outlined the work done on investigating enhancement options for the North Devon Line
- Timetable analysis was the next piece of the puzzle
- Generous offers of funding support from NDC, MDDC and DCC



Analysis scope

- Would calculate the indicative timings for trains using the proposed new infrastructure (passing loops etc) – for both existing and future train types.
- Timings would be used to develop a concept train plan for the Devon Metro scheme, including a new 2tph service Barnstaple - Exeter, extending on to Digby & Sowton.
- Work to give an indication of:
    - Which of the proposed infrastructure interventions would be essential to deliver the timetable uplift and proposed new services.
    - Whether the scale of the proposed infrastructure interventions could be reduced, or whether it needs to be increased, for example, passing loop length.
    - Whether any further/alternative infrastructure interventions in other locations that have not yet been formally considered may be required.



Update on progress

- Concept train plan completed for Battery-Electric Multiple Unit (BEMU) timings for full Devon Metro scope, including North Devon Line.
- Comparative DMU concept train plan in development.
- Final report due early 2027.



North Devon Line findings

- Broadly same amount of infrastructure required as previously identified, but in slightly different locations.
- An earlier stage, just looking at Barnstaple – Exeter, had crossings between Cowley – Newton St Cyres, Coleford – Copplestone, Lapford – Kings Nympton and at Barnstaple.
- Fitting Barnstaple service alongside the Exmouth service puts crossing points around Umberleigh, Lapford and Cowley Bridge.
- Removes need for double tracking/second platform at Barnstaple and gives 10-15 minute turnarounds.
- Double track from ~Newton St Cyres – Coleford is required in any scenario for Okehampton trains to cross.
- Barnstaple – Exeter journey times of circa 50 minutes, with a skip-stop calling pattern. This assumes some line speed increases, as well as new loops etc.



North Devon Line findings cont.

- Interaction with main line services at Cowley Bridge is a challenge – pathing options available, but sub-optimal.
- Exeter St Davids is becoming increasingly congested, which also limits options for where trains can be pathed.
- This will be considered as part of a broader piece of work necessary to look at the future structure of the Bristol – Exeter timetable.
- SWR service structure review ongoing – assumptions made regarding this, will need to be revisited once this work is complete.



Key takeaways

- The ‘order of magnitude’ infrastructure requirements for achieving 2tph are as previously described.
- Precise locations vary depending on the end-state being delivered (i.e. running to Exeter or Digby).
- DMU timings might point to different options. Timescales for upgrades vs. new rolling stock need to be considered.
- There are a number of moving parts which will dictate the ultimate requirements – train type, SWR recast and broader GWR service development in the south west.
- But ultimately, the analysis to date broadly confirms previous assumptions and shows what is achievable if investment can be unlocked.

