

## Presentation to Fremington Parish Council – 29-02-2024

Good morning Councillors, ladies and gentlemen. I last had the pleasure of addressing you on the subject of a new Bideford to Barnstaple railway in my presentation on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022, and meeting Minute 2207/06 refers: *“Cllrs were in general support of the overall project but would like to know the outcome of the Consultant’s report when it is available prior to making any firm decision.”*

Since that meeting the success of the Tarka Rail Association’s ACE Rail campaign has been recognised in Railfuture’s annual national Awards for Rail User Groups, first for Best New Group in 2022 and Best Campaign in 2023. I personally accepted the 2023 joint award for Best campaigner.

Thanks to financial support from the Tarka Rail Association, Railfuture and Great Western Railway an Initial Business Case for the Torridge and North Devon Connectivity Programme was completed and returned to them as the clients in mid-2023.

The destination of Greater Bideford (including East the Water, Appledore, Northam and Westward Ho!) is by far the largest population cluster in the whole of the South West without its own direct access to the rail network. Devon County Council’s Communities profile identifies Greater Bideford as the third-largest market town in the county at c.43k people. This is almost twice the minimum size understood to be used by Network Rail to justify having a rail service. That is probably the single most significant, all-embracing outcome from the consultant’s report, that the sheer scale of the unserved population alone is sufficient to merit a rail link, and that further project development work to establish a viable business case is therefore fully justified.

The Torridge and North Devon Connectivity Programme is a comprehensive package of measures, taking a roundly 20-year forward view. That coincides with our target of October 2040, as the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last scheduled passenger train services for Bideford, as in our judgement a realistically-deliverable target by which time we are aiming to have restored such mainline services. The Programme’s strapline is *‘Better lives through better journeys’* as our underlying purpose is transformational socio-economic and environmental outcomes for Torridge and North Devon communities.

After North Devon and Torridge District Councils had agreed separate Motions in April and June 2022 respectively, the Joint Planning Policy Committee of the two Councils agreed in July 2022 that the rail link be considered as part of the revised joint Local Plan.

In December 2023 Torridge District Council agreed an amended Strategic Plan for 2024-29 which includes a commitment to examine the commissioning and funding of a study to evaluate the benefits and impacts of re-establishing the rail link.

In December 2023 and January 2024 Bideford and Barnstaple Town Councils respectively agreed to become founder members of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance, a new forum of stakeholder organisations’ representatives *“To secure a new rail link between Bideford and Barnstaple and upgrade of the North Devon (Tarka) Line between Exeter and Barnstaple, championing their transformational benefits for communities and businesses and advocating to decision-makers the economic, social and environmental case for developing and investing in the project.”* Other founder members are the Tarka Rail Association and Railfuture, and the Alliance will be holding an inaugural event in Bideford <sup>tomorrow</sup> ~~imminently~~; Network Rail alone are sending four senior representatives.

In January 2024 Torridge District Council committed some of its Shared Prosperity Fund revenue towards a feasibility study for the Barnstaple-Bideford rail link. Bideford Town Council had previously committed £3k in February 2022.

Earlier this month the Torridge Place Board, to oversee the new Levelling Up Partnership first announced in last year’s Spring Budget, held its first meeting and appointed its Chair, the Chief Executive of the South West Business Council. Torridge and Torbay are the only two such Partnerships in the South West, two of the 20 nationwide. It is therefore clear that there is a very strong drive from within Torridge generally and Bideford in particular to remedy the transport injustice inflicted on the area almost 60 years ago with the closure of public passenger train services, just as there is a strong push from Barnstaple to do likewise and add some significant, essential and overdue capacity to the area’s transport network to help avoid some of the chronic congestion faced by residents, businesses and public community facilities on a daily basis.

We are now moving onto a funded Strategic Outline Business Case for Bideford.

The five parts of a SOBC are Strategic, Economic, Financial, Commercial, and Management. In elaborating the case, the transport issue and the case for intervention can be expressed as addressing the economic and environmental impacts of congestion by adding public transport capacity, improving connectivity, increasing travel choice, reducing carbon, and raising economic productivity.

In parallel, engineering studies will examine route and station location options, bearing in mind that by the time the new rail link opens, in well over a decade's time, population and housing growth will almost certainly have continued largely unabated. Maintaining the continuity of the South West Coastal Path, the Tarka Trail and its underside South West Water riser main, is of paramount importance.

From this meeting, Councillors, I and my colleagues in the Tarka Rail Association would be grateful if the Fremington Parish Council would give consideration to adding a reference to support a rail link to serve your parishioners through Fremington parish to the Neighbourhood Plan and joining the new Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance as the forum which will be leading the development of this project over the coming years. There is no financial obligation, any contributions being entirely at the discretion of the Parish Council. Following next month's inaugural forum, likely to be repeated on an annual basis, it is anticipated that the first meeting of stakeholder organisation officers, such as Town and Parish Clerks at the most local level, will take place this summer. I have no doubt that the presence of an officer of this Council, alongside the Town Clerks for Barnstaple and Bideford, would be valued as one means to ensure that Fremington's interests are represented.

Tim Steer

Tarka Rail Association – Vice chair and ACE Rail officer

# Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance



***#Reconnection2040***



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To secure a new rail link between Bideford and Barnstaple and upgrade of the North Devon (Tarka) Line between Exeter and Barnstaple, championing their transformational benefits for communities and businesses and advocating to decision-makers the economic, social and environmental case for developing and investing in the project.

## Inaugural event on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024 – in Bideford, Torrington, Devon.

Minute of the **Bideford Town Council** Decarbonisation and Environment Committee meeting on 8 February 2022:

29. ACE RAILWAY – ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FUNDING SUPPORT

RECOMMENDED that: £3,000.00 is provided from the Climate Change budget to support the Environmental aspect of the Economic Report and the benefits to the decarbonisation of Bideford. (approved at Town Council meeting on 3 March 2022).

Minute of the **North Devon District Council** Strategy and Resources Committee on 4 April 2022:

127. Reinstatement of Bideford to Barnstaple Rail Link. RESOLVED that motion to support the re-instatement of Bideford to Barnstaple rail link for passenger and other services, as proposed by ACE Rail be supported and the Council agrees:

(a) That the inclusion of this policy aim within the revised joint local plan be referred to the Joint Planning Policy Committee for consideration;

(b) To work with partners and organisations to explore this idea and where necessary to lobby those who may contribute to making this happen including Great British Railways, Devon County Council, Peninsula Transport, and the Government.

Minute of the **Torrington District Council** meeting on 13 June 2022:

Minute 12a Written Notice of Motion. That TDC, following on from the presentation made at the last Full council meeting, do support the extension of the railway line from Barnstaple to Bideford and that this aspiration is embedded in the new Joint Local Plan. Extension of the railway line from Barnstaple to Bideford also be embedded in the Economic Development Business Plan.

Minute of the **Joint Planning Policy Committee of North Devon and Torrington District Councils** on 15 July 2022:

16. Reinstatement of Bideford to Barnstaple Rail Link. RESOLVED that the Bideford to Barnstaple rail link is considered as part of the People and Place project (the revised joint Local Plan).

Minute of the **Bideford Town Council** meeting on Thursday 7 December 2023:

98. NOTICE OF MOTION. That this Council joins the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance as a founding member. Bideford Town Council recognises the importance of multiple transport links to the rest of the country and aims to see Bideford reconnected to the national rail network for the benefit of the local economy and community as soon as practically possible.

This Council therefore Resolves (extract)

a. To join the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance as a founding member.

b. To call on other public bodies, voluntary and business stakeholders and others to take an active role in the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance.

c. Support ACE Rail 'Reconnection 2040' to see Bideford fully reconnected to the national rail network by 2040.

Minute of the **Torrington District Council** meeting on Monday 11 December 2023:

214. Draft Strategic Plan 2024-29. Under the 'Local Economy' theme, 'Actions by us and in partnership' now includes:

"Investigate with the relevant partner organisations (North Devon Council, DCC, ACE Rail and Network Rail) the appetite to jointly commission and fund a study to evaluate the economic and environmental benefits and impacts of re-establishing the rail link."

Draft Minute of the **Barnstaple Town Council** meeting on 22 January 2024:

107. The Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance is promoting a rail link between Bideford and Barnstaple. This council believes that such a link contributes to a sustainable transport strategy for the northern Devon area.

This Council therefore RESOLVES (extract):

1) To join the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance as a founding Member

2) To call on other public bodies, voluntary and business stakeholders and others to support sustainable transport options for northern Devon and to take an active role in the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance

3) To support an integrated sustainable transport strategy for northern Devon, including proposals to see Bideford fully reconnected to the national rail network, by 2040.

Draft Minute of the **Torrington District Council** meeting on 22 January 2024:

231. Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan 2024/25. Resolved: That the revised Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan priorities for 2024 – 2025 intervention themes for delivery be approved.


Economic Development Manager's report: Proposed increases / changes for 2024 / 2025 –

E31: Feasibility studies (3) including "Bideford railway study (to work alongside other key stakeholders)" - £105,000 revenue.

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Inaugural event on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024 – in Bideford, Torrridge, Devon.



## railfuture

campaigning for a bigger, better railway


Devon's 19 Market and 10 Coastal towns – the top 17

	Pop'n 2021 *	Station	Usage 2022/23
M - Newton Abbot	75,051	Y	1,155,346
M - Barnstaple	57,004	Y	536,940
C - Exmouth	50,248	Y	898,376
<b>M - Bideford-Northam</b>	<b>42,987</b>		<b>(tbc)</b>
M - Tiverton	39,676	Y	524,190
M - Ivybridge	38,707	Y	100,900
M - Cullompton	30,651	(Y)	tbc
M - Tavistock	30,439	(Y)	tbc
M - Okehampton	29,544	Y	228,272
M - Totnes	27,847	Y	687,394
C - Sidmouth	22,042		
M - Crediton	21,990	Y	133,176
C - Teignmouth	20,491	Y	691,384
C - Kingsbridge	20,216		
M - Honiton	18,648	Y	288,228
C - Dawlish	18,399	Y	510,574
M - Axminster	18,281	Y	366,450

\* Pop'n 2021 = Devon CC Communities profile  
 Y = existing station  
 (Y) = stations funded for further project development  
 tbc = towns with planned stations undergoing project development  
 (tbc) = Greater Bideford not yet funded for further project development





**Greater Bideford (Appledore, Bideford, Northam, Westward Hol)**  
 Devon's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest Market Town, but without a passenger rail link since 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1965


# ACE Rail



## Reconnecting Bideford to the rail network

Find us on Facebook: ACE Rail





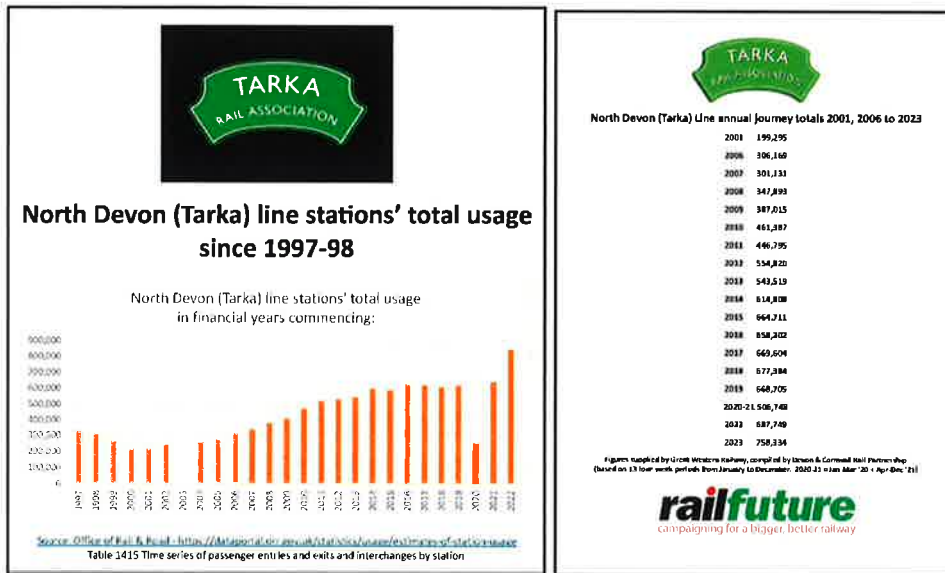
# discoverbideford



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Sponsored by Bideford and Barnstaple Town Councils, Tarka Rail Association and Railfuture

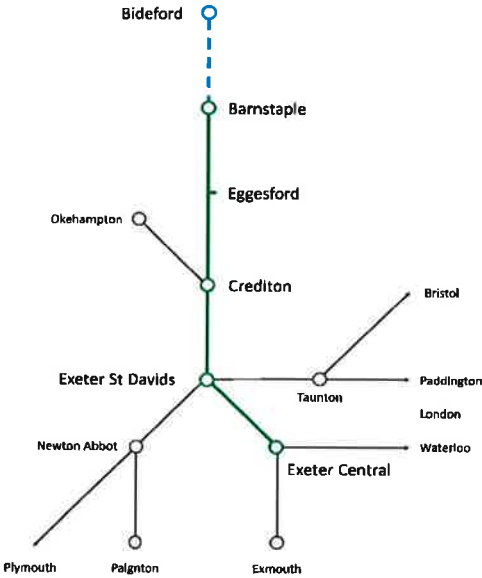


**TARKA**  
RAIL ASSOCIATION

ACE Rail: Reconnecting Bideford to the rail network


Find out more, then register your support:

[www.railfuture.org.uk/Bideford](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Bideford)



The diagram illustrates the rail network. A vertical line connects Bideford (top, dashed blue line), Barnstaple, Eggesford, Crediton, and Exeter St Davids. From Exeter St Davids, lines branch out to Okehampton, Newton Abbot, Exeter Central, Taunton, and Plymouth. From Exeter Central, lines branch out to Palngton and Exmouth. From Taunton, lines branch out to Bristol, Paddington, London, and Waterloo.

Modernising the Tarka Line - fit for the 21st Century



**railfuture**

*Campaigning for a bigger better railway*

## #Reconnection2040

# Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance



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**Participants invited to inaugural event on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024 in Bideford, Torridge, Devon  
Sponsored by Bideford and Barnstaple Town Councils, Tarka Rail Association and Railfuture**

Barnstaple Town Council - Mayor of Barnstaple – Cllr Louisa York  
Barnstaple Town Council - Town Clerk – Rob Ward  
Bideford Town Council - Mayor of Bideford – Cllr Jamie McKenzie  
Bideford Town Council - Town Clerk – Paul Swan

Devon County Council - Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport – Cllr Andrea Davis  
Devon County Council - Deputy Director for Planning – Jamie Hulland

Great Western Railway - Managing Director – Mark Hopwood CBE  
Great Western Railway - Business Development Portfolio Director – Tom Pierpoint  
Great Western Railway - Head of Strategic Service Development – Matt Barnes  
Great Western Railway - Regional Growth Manager (West) – David Whiteway

Harland & Wolff - General Manager, Appledore – Tom Hart

MP for Torridge & West Devon – Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Cox KC  
MP for North Devon – Selaine Saxby  
MP for Central Devon – Rt Hon Mel Stride  
MP for North Cornwall – Scott Mann

Network Rail - Western Route Director – Marcus Jones  
Network Rail - Western Route Business Manager – Victoria Storey  
Network Rail - Devon and Cornwall Director – Chris Fuoco  
Network Rail - Industry Programme Director – Bogdan Lupu  
Network Rail - Restoring Your Railway Programme Director – Mike Smith  
Northam Town Council - Mayor of Northam – Cllr Peter Hames  
Northam Town Council - Town Clerk – Jane Mills  
North Devon District Council - Chair of North Devon DC – Cllr Julie Hunt  
North Devon District Council - Leader of North Devon DC – Cllr Ian Roome  
North Devon District Council - Chief Exec – Ken Miles  
North Devon District Council - Head of Place Property & Regeneration – Sarah Jane Mackenzie-Shapland

Petroc College - Vice Principal Finance, Resources & Regional Affairs – Bill Blythe

Railfuture - Policy Director and Devon & Cornwall liaison – Ian Brown CBE  
Railfuture - Infrastructure & Networks Director – Roger Blake

South West Business Council - Tim Jones – Chairman  
South West Business Council - Paul Coles – Chief Executive

Tarka Rail Association - Chair – Mike Day  
Tarka Rail Association - co-Vice Chair and ACE Rail project campaign lead – Tim Steer  
Tarka Rail Association - co-Vice Chair – David Northey  
Tarka Rail Association - Vice-President – Peter West OBE  
Torridge District Council - Chair of Torridge DC – Cllr Doug Bushby  
Torridge District Council - Leader of Torridge DC – Cllr Ken James  
Torridge District Council - Chief Exec – Steve Hearse  
Torridge District Council - Head of Communities & Place – Sean Kearney

Lewis Clarke – South West region reporter, Reach

Paul Crockett - Managing Director, The Voice FM