

Cullompton and Wellington on the line between Taunton and Exeter.

BARNSTAPLE BONUS

Mark Hopwood would like to see progress on resignalling the Barnstaple line, currently stymied through lack of funds at Network Rail. 'We waste a lot of time on this route, with token exchange at Crediton and Eggesford, along with stopping for operation of the level crossing barriers at Eggesford.'

As well as sweeping away these impediments to speedier operation, resignalling could encompass restoration of Coleford Junction. At present, the Barnstaple and Okehampton lines operate as two parallel single-track railways from Crediton to the site of the former Coleford Junction, where they go their separate ways. By reinstating Coleford Junction and having up and down lines, trains could pass one another, and service intensification would be feasible.

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Set to bow out next year: GWR's handful of remaining 'Castle' HSTs are mostly confined to services west of Plymouth, although in the summer timetable there is a daytime Saturday working to Exeter. One regular duty for them in Cornwall is Plymouth to Liskeard shuttles; on 6 March 2024 a set prepares to depart the Down Main platform at Liskeard, bound for Plymouth, using the east end crossover. **CRAIG MUNDAY**

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line, but Barnstaple's catchment area captures a large swathe of north Devon – the end-to-end



“Western optimism – from Paddington to Penzance”

Barnstaple bonus

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“When we compare the cost of doing this, compared to the cost, say, of re-opening to Tavistock, the bang for our buck would be so much greater” comments the GWR MD. “Don’t get me wrong, I’d be happy to operate a service to Tavistock if someone else wants to pay for re-opening the line, but Barnstaple’s catchment area captures a large swathe of north Devon – the end-to-end traffic is substantial, so there’d be significant economic benefits from reducing journey times.”

Extract reproduced from Modern Railways Special Report, August 2024 -

‘In Focus: Great Western’