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Chloe's hitting all the right notes on piano bike tour



» North Devon's Chloe Marie Aston has continued to tour towns and cities across the country, delighting audiences with her unique performances. See Page 3

Railway expansion plan secures boost

» Torridge District Council officially endorses rail alliance goal to revolutionise connectivity across North Devon. **See Page 11**

Campaigners' joy after council gets on board with rail alliance project



» A plan to extend and improve the Tarka Line was backed by GWR in the past, now Torridge District Council is on board with Northern Devon Railway Development

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RAIL campaigners have welcomed Torridge District Council's move to officially align itself with the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance (NDRDA).

This collaboration is set to transform transportation in the region, enhancing connectivity and economic prospects.

The council's community and resources committee recently endorsed the alliance's ambitious plans to establish a new rail link between Bideford and Barnstaple, alongside improvements to the existing Barnstaple to Exeter line.

TDC has agreed to explore a joint feasibility study for the new rail link, allocating £10,000 for this purpose

as part of its strategic plan.

Importantly, there is no additional cost for TDC to join the alliance, as the group's goals align with the council's objectives.

Tim Steer, vice chair of the Tarka Rail Association, celebrated this development saying: "It brings me great joy in knowing all the work that I was leading under the Tarka Rail Association's ACE Rail campaign has now been absorbed by the Northern Devon Railway Alliance.

"Having Torridge District Council join the alliance as an official stakeholder is fantastic, it shows that they understand there are transport challenges that make the district less desirable to invest in and cause social deprivation."

Torridge is currently the only district in Devon without a rail connection.

“An upgraded existing North Devon line will be transformational”

Tim Steer, Tarka Rail Association

The region has been grappling with increasing traffic congestion, exacerbated by a 25% rise in passengers on the Barnstaple to Exeter line since the Covid-19 pandemic.

The group says the success of the recently restored Okehampton to Exeter line, which has stimulated the local economy in Dartmoor, further underscores the potential benefits of enhanced rail connectivity.

Mr Steer highlighted the broader impacts of this initiative, saying: "Other areas that have already

invested in connectivity/transport to the whole nation by reinstating their rail link have received great social and economic prosperity whilst tackling the climate emergency on a local level."

He added that Great Western Railway and Railfuture part-funded the initial business case with the Tarka Rail Association, providing a solid foundation for the Railway Alliance to build the strategic outline business case with supported funding.

While the exact type of rail system Bideford will receive and the route are still undetermined, Tim is optimistic about the transformative potential.

"To improve the connectivity to Torridge (one of the nation's most deprived districts), with an upgraded existing North Devon line will be transformational," he said.