

Bideford rail link From campaign to project



12.2.25
Tim Steer

Steer family

HALF A CENTURY IN RAILWAY SERVICE

Mr. W. Steer Retires in Barnstaple

Mr. William Steer, of 2, West View, Barnstaple, retired last week after nearly half-a-century in the railway service. He started working at Crediton in 1899 and was a signaller for 37 years. He was stationed at Instow and Portsmouth Arms, and spent 27 years as a signaller at Barnstaple. He served under five stationmasters: Messrs. Heath, Samson, Ford, Cawsey, and Kelland.



Mr. Steer has two sons, both of whom are employed at the Barnstaple Junction station.



Railman retires

Mr. Bill Steer, of 20, Linden Close, Barnstaple, has retired after 41 years with the railway service. He joined at Barnstaple, where he has remained ever since. He was leading railman



Mr. BILL STEER

in the parcels office. He has been presented with a gold watch by the management and cigars and an electric cigarette lighter by his colleagues.

In the beginning

1855 The railway was extended to Bideford.



The Beeching Axe

1965 Bideford loses all passenger services.



Early campaign work

- Campaigner Roger Joanes.
- Booked the line for rail charter tours.
- Over 800 passengers on last train 1982.



The 'Last train to Torrington' calls at Bideford. 6.11.82. Photo: Roger Joanes.

How the ACE Rail campaign started

- March 2021
- The Bideford loco nameplate returns to stay!
- Mayor Ratcliff says the railway must return.



The figures

- Bideford deprivation shockingly high!
- Torridge based students expect lower grades.
- Transport options officially rated poor.

Devon County Council's 29 market (19) and coastal (10) towns:- the top 18

	Pop'n 2021 *	Station	Usage 2023/24
M - Newton Abbot	75,051	Y	1,183,296
<u>M - Barnstaple</u>	57,004	Y	549,860
C - Exmouth	50,248	Y	916,968
<u>M - Bideford/Northam</u>	42,987		(tbc)
M - Tiverton (Parkway)	39,676	Y	581,478
M - Ivybridge	38,707	Y	118,118
M - Cullompton	30,651	(Y)	tbc
M - Tavistock	30,439	(Y)	tbc
M - Okehampton	29,544	Y	314,984
M - Totnes	27,847	Y	710,378
C - Sidmouth	22,042		
M - Crediton	21,990	Y	162,178
C - Teignmouth	20,491	Y	728,100
C - Kingsbridge	20,216		
M - Honiton	18,648	Y	313,530
C - Dawlish	18,399	Y	534,856
M - Axminster	18,281	Y	379,754
C - Ilfracombe	17,376		

* Pop'n 2021 = Devon County Council Communities profile

Y = existing station

(Y) = stations were funded for further project development;

tbc = towns with planned stations undergone project development;

(tbc) = Bideford not yet funded for further project development.

**Greater Bideford (Appledore, Bideford, East-the-Water, Northam, Westward Ho!)
is Devon's 3rd-largest Market Town, but without a rail service since 2 October 1965**

Delivering presentations



The supporting motions

- Bideford Town Council, Barnstaple Town Council, Northam Town Council, Crediton Town Council.
- Torridge District Council, North Devon Council.
- Bishops Tawton Parish Council, Chittlehampton Parish Council, Eggesford Parish Council, Fremington Parish Council, Tawstock Parish Council.

The awards and publicity



The Initial Business Case



We successfully applied to GWR's Community and Customer Investment Fund for an Initial Business Case.

The NDRDA

- 1st March 2024.
- The Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance.
- Bideford Town Council becomes the founding member.
- Inaugural event held in Bideford organised by Railfuture.
- The ACE Rail campaign work is absorbed.



The new government

- Mandate to near-double housing growth in Torridge / North Devon.
- Opportunity to redress transport infrastructure deficit in northern Devon
- Old Government 'Restoring your Railway programme' cancelled but Northern Devon campaign projects were not part of it.
- Infrastructure delivery system now reset and controlled by National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority.

Where next and my resignation

- NDRDA aims are inclusion in DCC's Local Transport Plan and revised Devon Metro.
- GWR show reinstatement to Bideford on network map.
- Strategic Outline Business Cases being drafted for North Devon line services upgrade and extension to Bideford.
- Resignation from Tarka Rail Association as campaign lead.

The TWO SOBCs

1. Commissioned study to upgrade the North Devon (Tarka), line for 2 faster services per hour.

2. Commissioned study to extend the North Devon (Tarka), line to Bideford.

*** Please note there is no speculated costs or proposed route.**

200 years of railways

- 2025 Great Western Railway is now celebrating 200 years of British railways.
- I am now the Friends Of Barnstaple Railway Station – Chair

Support to the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance continues to grow.

Thank you The Rotary Club of Barnstaple Link!



Bi-Modal active travel and rail systems in Devon that already exist!
Maybe the studies will give our communities something similar.