

"To achieve delivery of a modernisation programme for North Devon (Tarka) Line passenger rail services between Barnstaple and Exeter, and their extension to Bideford, 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 programme"

Second annual convention, Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2025 – Barnstaple, North Devon (Sponsored by Railfuture)



Credit: Barnstaple Town Council



Convention venue 2025: Royal & Fortescue Hotel

Initial NDRDA founder members: Bideford Town Council, Railfuture, Tarka Rail Association (2023), Barnstaple Town Council, Northam Town Council, Torridge District Council (2024). Chittlehamholt, Satterleigh & Warkleigh Parish Council, King's Nympton Parish Council, Chulmleigh Parish Council, Lapford Parish Council, Burrington Parish Council (2025).



### Since the inaugural NDRDA gathering in Bideford on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024:

<u>In Parliament's eyes</u> (and Hansard) - "*The future of rail services in Devon*" - Westminster Hall debate, 11 December - Motion introduced by new MP for Exeter, acknowledging a personal briefing from NDRDA representatives, and with a contribution to the debate from new MP for North Devon; a Government Transport Minister present throughout.

<u>In policy-makers' eyes</u> - North Devon & Torridge Economic Strategy 2024-29 (July) says: "Visibility and connectivity -Ensuring that the Barnstaple - Exeter link achieves a journey time of under one hour is of genuine significance, improving work, study and leisure opportunities as well as removing carbon and volume from the roads. Yet it is also hugely important to not just "settle". Early-stage feasibility work is now underway for the Barnstaple - Bideford line to be reconnected as a follow-on to improvements from Exeter, in turn servicing new growth stimulated in and around Bideford and the wider Bideford Bay." Bideford Cultural Strategy (September) highlights poor transport as a key issue. Network Rail's "Connecting communities: framework assessment of new station opportunities on Western Route" (November) used Bideford and Plympton as two of five case studies, with favourably high scores.

In partners' eyes - Peninsula Transport's draft Transport Strategy (adopted in March), the proposed Devolution Deal for Devon and Torbay, draft Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 2025-40 (LTP4) due for adoption this month, and Peninsula Transport's survey for draft Strategic Implementation Plan due adoption in June (NDRDA representatives had made a submission), all had consultation responses from Railfuture as a founder member of the NDRDA. NDRDA ran a July workshop for officer representatives of nine partner organisations to discuss progress with the development of business cases for the modernisation and extension of the North Devon (Tarka) Line and its services.

<u>In national specialists' eyes</u> – 'Modern Railways' item in August by GWR's MD Mark Hopwood CBE featured the Barnstaple-Exeter line - "*Western optimism: Barnstaple bonus*"; 'RAIL' magazine item in October by Christian Wolmar (Railfuture Hon. President) featured his trip "to Barnstaple, on the lovely branch line from Exeter" and its need for both modernisation and extension to Bideford, en route for his talk at Appledore Book Festival.

In the regional public's eyes - on BBC Spotlight in June and BBC Radio Devon on New Year's Day; BBC South West enquiry about cancellation of Restoring Your Railway gave opportunity to explain NDRDA work continues unaffected.

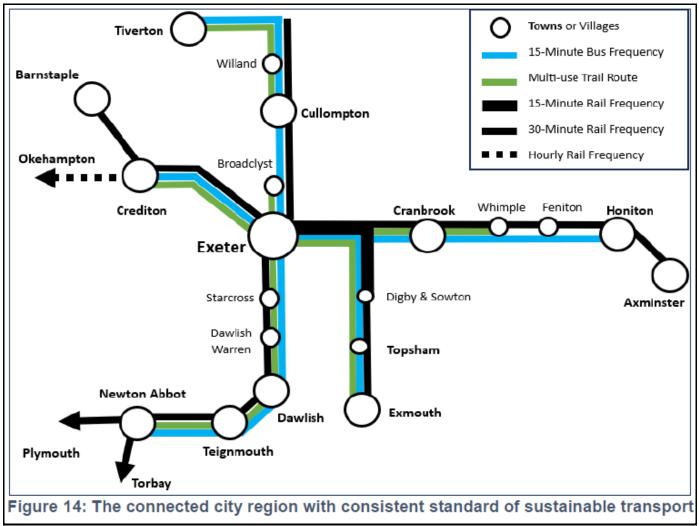
<u>In local councils' eyes</u> - new Alliance members Torridge District Council (April, re-affirmed July), Chittlehamholt Satterleigh & Warkleigh and King's Nympton Parish Councils (January), Burrington, Chulmleigh and Lapford Parish Councils (February); Tawstock Parish Council affirmed support for line modernisation and extension (November).

<u>In local organisations' eyes</u> - presentations given to Rotary Club of Bideford Bridge in September, to Westward Ho! Ladies Club in January, to Rotary Club of Barnstaple Link in February.

<u>In the local public's eyes</u> - Railfuture Devon & Cornwall regional branch campaigns stall at Barnstaple RailFest 2024 for 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary in August. Frequent coverage in North Devon Journal, Devon Live, and North Devon Gazette; features in Bideford Railway Heritage Centre's 'Atlantic Coast Express' and Combe Rail's 'Devon Belle' magazines.

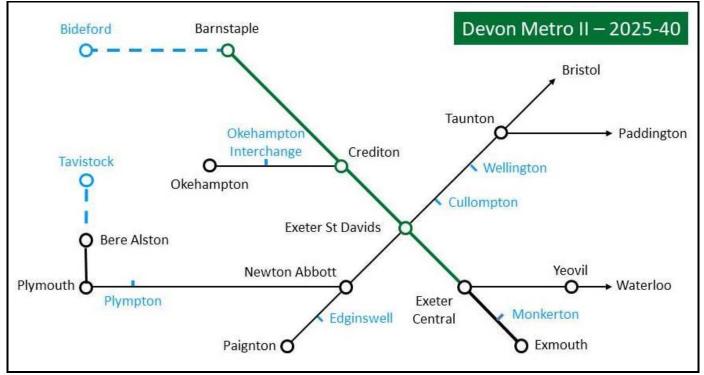
<u>In everyone's eyes</u> - social media channels disseminate news and information ('ACE Rail' and 'Tarka Line friends and groups' on Facebook, Railfuture Devon & Cornwall website and on X / formerly Twitter, NDRDA representatives on LinkedIn). All channels publicise Railfuture's research on performance indicators including the North Devon (Tarka) Line's record-breaking stations usage and journeys (2024 data shows a near-12% increase in journeys on 2023 and near-27% increase since 2019) comparing very favourably with almost everywhere else in Britain, research on final destinations from the line's stations showing Exeter as the no.1 choice at c.60% of all journeys, and research on 'rail-mindedness' showing growth potential with still-low per capita usage around the line's catchment populations.

Finally, extra trains for GWR's fleet appear in prospect for 2025 – 70 carriages in 27 Class 175 'Coradia' trains (tbc).



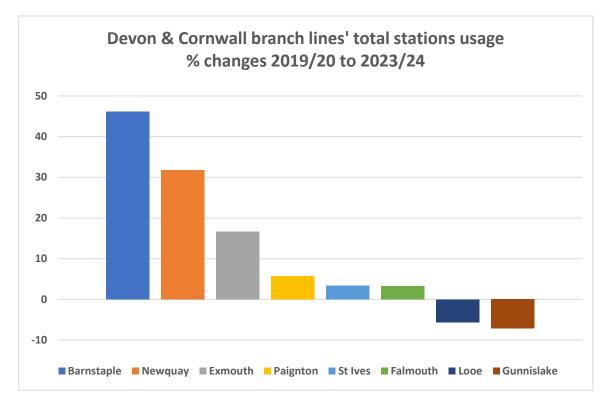
Extract from draft Devon & Torbay Local Transport Plan 4 – 2025-40

(note two Barnstaple trains per hour and, with two Paignton tph, extending across Exeter possibly to / from Digby & Sowton)



Promoted by Railfuture Devon & Cornwall regional branch

### **Devon & Cornwall branch lines post-pandemic station usage**



Source: Office of Rail & Road - <u>https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage</u> Table 1415a Time series of passenger entries and exits by station, GB, annual data, April 1997 to March 2024

#### Tabulated and presented by Railfuture Devon & Cornwall regional branch



Bideford, our next destination station



Barnstaple rail station – at 29.4% since 2019-20, strongest-growing station footfall in Peninsula Transport area. Photo: Tim Steer



Class 175 'Coradia' trains coming to GWR during 2025, including Barnstaple-Exeter services (tbc) Photo: Tom Curtis Rail Gallery

### Participants invited to 2<sup>nd</sup> annual stakeholder event on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2025 in Barnstaple, North Devon

Barnstaple Town Council - Mayor of Barnstaple – Cllr Janet Coates Bideford Town Council - Mayor of Bideford – Cllr Rachel Clarke Bideford Town Council - former Mayor of Bideford – Cllr Jamie McKe	
Burrington Parish Council – Cllr John Short	Parish Clerk – Angela Snell
Chittlehamholt, Satterleigh & Warkleigh Parish Council – Cllr Malcolr Chulmleigh Parish Council – Cllr Grant Sherman	m Neal Parish Clerk – Linda Stapleton Parish Clerk – Sue Squire (A)
Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership - Manager – Richard Burningham	MBE
Devon County Council - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Clim	nate Change, Environment & Transport; also Chair, Peninsula Rail Task Force – Cllr Andrea Davis (A)
Devon County Council - Deputy Director for Planning – Jamie Hulland	d (A) Transportation Strategy Manager – Hannah Clark (A)
Great Western Railway - Managing Director – Mark Hopwood CBE (b GWR - Business Development Portfolio Director – Tom Pierpoint (A) GWR - Head of Strategic Service Development – Matt Barnes	by video) Head of Public Affairs – Tom Lydon(A) Regional Growth Manager (West) – David Whiteway (A)
Harland & Wolff / Navantia UK, Appledore - General Manager – Marl	k Lawther Bid Engineer – Daniel Burke
King's Nympton Parish Council – Cllr Martin Pailthorpe	Parish Clerk – Debbie Cook (A)
Lapford Parish Council – Steve Munday	
Mid-Devon District Council - Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Regeneration – Cllr Steven Keable Mid-Devon District Council - Director of Place & Economy – Richard Marsh	
MP for Central Devon – Rt Hon Mel Stride (A) MP for Exeter – Steve Race (A)	MP for North Devon – Ian Roome (A) MP for Torridge & Tavistock – Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Cox KC (A)
Network Rail - Western Route Infrastructure Director – Ian Joslin (o.k NR - Western Route Business Manager – Victoria Storey (A) NR - Industry Programme Director (South West) – Bogdan Lupu (A) Network Rail - Restoring Your Railway Programme Director – Mike Sr Northam Town Council - Mayor of Northam – Cllr Niki Tait Northam Town Council - former Mayor of Northam – Cllr Peter Hame North Devon District Council - Chair of North Devon DC – Cllr Helen N North Devon District Council - Chief Executive – Ken Miles (A) North Devon District Council - Director of Resources and Deputy Chie North Devon District Council - Head of Place Property & Regeneration	Devon and Cornwall Director – Chris Fuoco Senior Strategic Planner (Western) – Andrew Robinson mith Town Clerk – Guy Langton es Walker ef Executive – Jon Triggs (A)
Peninsula Transport - Programme Director – Hannah Shrimpton (A) Petroc College - Vice Principal Finance, Resources & Regional Affairs	– Bill Blythe
Railfuture - Infrastructure & Networks Director – Roger Blake (Acting Railfuture - Peter West OBE (independent adviser, NDRDA) Railfuture - Policy Director and Devon & Cornwall regional branch lia Railfuture - ACE Rail lead; also Chair, Friends of Barnstaple Railway St Reach - South West region reporter – Lewis Clarke	aison – Ian Brown CBE
SLC Rail - Strategy Director – Ian Baxter South West Business Council - Tim Jones – Chairman	Paul Coles – Chief Executive; also Chair, Torridge Place Board
Torridge District Council - Chair of Torridge DC – Cllr Doug Bushby Torridge District Council - Leader of Torridge DC – Cllr Ken James Torridge District Council - Chief Executive – Steve Hearse (A) Torridge District Council - Head of Communities & Place – Sean Kearn TravelWatch SouthWest - Chair – David Northey; also Chair, North De	