

Issues continue on the Tarka and Okehampton rail lines

By [Alan Quick](#) | Editorial Manager / Photojournalist | Saturday 8th November 2025 07:00 am



The key exchange taking place at Credition Railway Station.
Stock image by Alan Quick, Credition Courier. AQ 7365 (Alan Quick, Credition Courier)

ISSUES on local rail services continue.

On the Tarka Line between Exeter and Barnstaple on Sunday, October 26, a car was struck by a train at Umberleigh crossing.

Fortunately there were no injuries.

A GWR spokesperson said: “We can confirm the 0912 Exeter Central-Barnstaple struck a vehicle on Umberleigh level crossing on Sunday.

“Emergency services attended the scene and trains resumed with the 1832 Barnstaple-Exeter Central service.

“The British Transport Police are currently investigating the incident.”

On Wednesday, October 29, at about 7pm, rail travel between Credition and Okehampton was stopped.

GWR said: “Due to animals on the railway between Credition and Okehampton all lines are blocked.

“Train services running to and from these stations will be cancelled or delayed.

“Disruption is expected until the end of the day.”

This is a similar message to that issued about a week before by GWR following animals on the line.

Local farmers have long complained then that fencing along the line was not made stock proof when the line was re-instated and there have been previous instances on animals escaping onto the line.

On some occasions livestock have been killed by trains travelling on the line.

A GWR spokesperson said: “We’re really sorry to customers delayed after animals strayed onto the line between Crediton and Okehampton on Wednesday night and one was unfortunately hit by a train.

“The extent of damage to the vehicle meant it couldn't be moved, and we had to transfer customers onto another train at the scene, before they were taken to Exeter St Davids to continue their journeys.

“We recognise this was a particularly unpleasant experience for customers but would like to reassure them that their safety is always our priority.

“We will work closely with Network Rail – who manage the infrastructure and security of the track – to see where improvements can be made to prevent incidents like this.”

Problems started for rail users on the Tarka Line, from Barnstaple to Crediton and Exeter early on Wednesday, October 29.

One person wrote on Facebook: “Severe overcrowding on the 0935 from Barnstaple this morning with just two cars 150263.

“Full and standing on departure.

“Further passengers from Umberleigh, Eggesford and Crediton struggling to find even standing space!

“I know it is half term week but resources should allow for the later travel plans of the local day trippers many of which are families with lots of children as very occasional rail travellers.

“I noticed the earlier 0735 departure was a 4 car 150 although perhaps with a lot fewer passengers as no students about this week. Roll on the 175s.”

Comments which followed included: “It should have been 3 car 158 which has failed, so replaced with a 150 from another service to save a cancellation.”

Another wrote: “Frankly it’s such a mess that I have stopped using it, unreliable, overcrowded, has be one of the worst services on the GWR network.”

Another wrote: “Same as the 10.35 yesterday morning, terrible state of affairs.”

One person said that due to a fault on a train at Crediton, all lines were suspended between Exeter St David’s to Barnstaple, and Exeter St David’s to Okehampton (both ways) until further notice - disruption expected until 3pm 29/10.”

Other users said issues should be reported and politicians be made aware.

A GWR spokesperson said: “We’re in the process of adding 26 Class 175 trains to our fleet in Devon and Cornwall. These will start to enter passenger service soon and will provide much-needed additional capacity across the two counties, including on both the Okehampton and Barnstaple lines.”

On Tuesday, November 4, there was a points failure on the Tarka Line.

Tim Steer, Railfuture, Devon and Cornwall regional branch chair, said: “The Tarka Line has become a victim of its own record-breaking success in attracting passengers.

“Railfuture are representatives in a two-dozen-strong member organisation called the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance who want to upgrade the existing North Devon line for a better frequency, higher capacity and improved journey time service that will eventually extend to serve the town of Bideford.

“I am privvy to just how much work is going on behind the scenes by GWR and Network Rail to address the manifest inadequacies of the current service, both its peak period capacity and its performance which is far too often scuppered by infrastructure as well as train failures.

“I recognise that GWR is still able to offer a very limited capacity service that is causing severe overcrowding however, it is better for the transport operator to run a two-carriage service than not run a service at all or we will all face overcrowding on the next available service.

“GWR's old and limited train fleet is nowhere near what's required and although they've taken on 26 additional trains, they have come out of open storage by the leasing company and so need much more repair work than anticipated to get them into a fit state for passenger service.

“This does mean that it's going to be several months yet before GWR can do what they know needs doing which is to get those newer class 175 trains on the Barnstaple and Okehampton services and run them in three carriage sets to provide more seating capacity especially at peak periods. The need for the class 175 trains to be coupled in 5 and 6 sets has to be addressed sooner rather than later.

“The line usage figures compiled by the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership suggests that there will be over 900,000 trips along the North Devon line this year!

“Meanwhile passengers must absolutely not take out their justifiable frustrations on frontline staff.”