

Passenger group calls for solutions after Tarka Line closed for third day in row

The Barnstaple to Exeter Tarka Line remains closed this week, with no replacement bus services either and a passenger group is calling for action



One of the flood damaged sites on the Tarka Line, between Crediton and Exeter, one of nine sites washed out as a result of flooding from the River Creedy. Credit: NDLRPG

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By Tony Gussin

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With trains between Barnstaple and Exeter suspended for a third day in a row due to recent flooding and no replacement buses either, a passenger group is calling for action.

The North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group says there should be better rail replacement provision in the form of buses as the closure of the Tarka Line has created significant challenges for commuters, students and vulnerable passengers.

The group, which has championed North Devon rail passengers for more than 40 years, has pointed out other road traffic continues to run on the route between Barnstaple and Exeter.

It believes this shows that some limited replacement provision may be possible, even if full timetables cannot be restored immediately.

Chair of the North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group, David Northey, said: "We recognise that severe weather and infrastructure issues can create complex operational challenges.

"However, it is important that passengers on branch lines receive the same level of contingency planning and support as those travelling on mainline routes.

"We understand that safety must always come first, but there may be scope for a reduced or phased replacement service that at least maintains basic connectivity between North Devon and Exeter."

The group's statement said the disruption has had a particular impact on students travelling to Exeter.

President of the group, Andrea Davis, added: "For many people in North Devon, the railway is not a convenience — it is a lifeline. When services stop and no alternatives are provided, whole communities feel the impact immediately.

"We want to work positively with GWR to make sure passengers are supported properly and that future disruption is handled more effectively."



Above: North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group president Andrea Davis and chair David Northey at a recent site meeting at the new Okehampton Interchange. Credit: NDLRPG

Mr Northey added: “We recognise that extreme weather events such as flooding are, to some extent, outside the direct control of the railway.

“However, resilience planning, infrastructure maintenance, capacity management and contingency arrangements are within the industry’s influence. That is where we believe further progress can and should be made.”

The group says it remains committed to working constructively with Great Western Railway (GWR) and Network Rail to improve long-term resilience and ensure North Devon communities continue to benefit from a reliable and growing rail service.

When it announced yesterday (Wednesday) that the line could be closed for several days, operator GWR said ‘limited replacement bus services’ were in place on some South West routes, but it said buses were expected to be in demand.

GWR has asked passengers to check their journey before attempting to travel, online at <https://www.gwr.com/travel-information/travel-updates/check-your-journey>