

Rail group calls for better replacement services

By [Alan Quick](#) | Editorial Manager/Photojournalist | Thursday 29th January 2026 4:09 pm



North Devon Rail Group says it remains committed to working constructively with Great Western Railway and Network Rail. (North Devon Rail Group)

THE North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group is calling for improved rail replacement provision following several days of disruption on the North Devon Line, which has left passengers without alternative transport options.

Services between Barnstaple and Exeter have been suspended for a third consecutive day, with no rail replacement buses currently operating.

The Group says this has created significant challenges for commuters, students and vulnerable passengers across North Devon.

Chair of the North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group, David Norhey, 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."

The Group has noted that other road transport services continue to operate along the corridor and believes this demonstrates that limited replacement provision may be possible, even if full timetables cannot be restored immediately.

“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 disruption has had a particular impact on students travelling to Exeter.

Exeter College has indicated that it would expect a functioning bus replacement service to be in place by Monday, given the large number of North Devon students who rely on the rail link to access education and training.

President of the North Devon Line Rail Promotion 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.”

The Rail Promotion Group has represented rail passengers on the North Devon Line for more than four decades and works closely with the rail industry, local authorities and regional partners to strengthen, protect and grow the line.

This partnership approach has helped deliver significant improvements in services, passenger growth and station investment over many years.

David 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 and Network Rail to improve long-term resilience and ensure North Devon communities continue to benefit from a reliable and growing rail service.