

# Rail link revival gets my vote

YOUR newspaper has requested feedback on the Bideford rail issue.

In short, the proposal gets my vote. Devon has been able to reopen the Okehampton route, plus new stations like Cranbrook, Newcourt, Marshall Barton (and additional one at Okehampton to come). The existing Tarka Line's growth is well-known.

All these have been success stories, predicted growth being far exceeded. Don't wait for Tarka Line infrastructure upgrades, pushing ahead with Bideford will add more weight to the upgrades.

As a regular leisure user of rail in Devon, I can't wait for the improvements to services!

**Roger Moseley**

## Funding question

RAILFUTURE seem to think (*North Devon Gazette, April 8*) that the greatest obstacle to connecting Barnstaple and Bideford by rail is the issue of the railway cutting through Barnstaple Station's car park.

Looking at the eight miles beyond the car park to Bideford, I can foresee many bigger problems to solve, not least of which is the business case to support the huge cost. After many years of pressure, no funding has yet to be identified for the relatively modest investment required to upgrade the Tarka Line so what hope is there for a hugely bigger project in this area?

**Tim Gibbs**  
Bideford

## Revive link

THERE is support for the reopening of a Bideford rail service.

After Brixham, Bideford is, I believe, the largest settlement in Devon with no rail service

The impact of rail closures can now be assessed — for instance Ilfracombe is now one of the poorest conurbations in the country, showing the dependence of the local economy on rail services to the rest of the country.

Costs need to be analysed. It may be possible for the line to be considered a 'light railway' with significant reductions in costs. Although cycle routes need to be supported this should not be at the expense of rail reopening. More people are able to take a train than can cycle.

**Roger Dixon**  
Torbay Rail Users Group

## Incredible idea

I THINK your survey on the railway extension to Bideford must have been filled in mainly by train enthusiasts.

It seems incredible how anyone who had seen the proposals could believe that the scheme would 'benefit' the Tarka Trail. How on earth would this well-loved cycling and walking route be improved by having a railway running alongside it, by diverting it through busy streets in

## Red sky at night...



A Bideford sunset, captured by photographer Graham Hobbs on April 20

Instow and Bideford, and by reducing access points?

One of the charms of the Tarka Trail is the many formal and informal access points which allow people, especially dog walkers, to get on it close to where they live. The 'rationalisation' of access points, for which it is suggested building un-

derpasses or overbridges, would destroy this feature.

The proposal to reroute the path along the waterfront in Instow and away from the original track on the approach to Bideford is totally unsatisfactory. Not only would it interrupt the 30-mile off-road route, it would reduce well-used access to

and across the old track bed, for example at Embury's Drang in East-the-Water, a lovely old passage full of heritage value.

Anyone who has given the matter a moment's thought can immediately see that the character of the trail would be fundamentally altered if heavy commuter trains were allowed to run alongside it, disturbing the peaceful estuary environment. As Railfuture themselves point out, the mudflats and marshlands are important ecologically, but I note that the (already astronomical) budget does not include any allowance for mitigating environmental damage.

People who use the Tarka Trail will also be concerned about what might be lengthy closures of sections while work is carried out. The impact on businesses, on healthy leisure habits and on the ecology, not to mention noise and disruption for residents would be unacceptable. Can't we think of other, cheaper, quicker, less disruptive ways of improving public transport?

**Dr Teresa Tinsley**  
Bideford

## Mental health

AS Mental Health Awareness Week (May 11-17) approaches, I would like to encourage readers to join us in taking action to support their mental wellbeing.

We have been running Mental Health Awareness Week for 25 years, helping to break the silence around mental health and promoting an openness which has improved people's lives. But awareness alone isn't enough. This year, we're focusing on Action because the small things we do each day can make a big difference to how we feel. Whether that's asking for support, taking time to do things that are good for your wellbeing, or checking in on someone else.

When we each take small steps, we build a sense of hope, connection and momentum. Together, we can shape our workplaces, schools, and communities so that everyone feels supported.

And by showing what's possible in our own lives, we can help push for the bigger societal and cultural changes needed to make good mental health a reality for all.

Visit [mentalhealth.org.uk/action](http://mentalhealth.org.uk/action) for information, resources and advice as we encourage you to take action for good mental health this Mental Health Awareness Week — for yourself, for someone else, for all of us.

**Alexa Knight**  
Director of policy and influencing, Mental Health Foundation

## Protect UK jobs

THIS Labour government is determined to defend the UK's core industrial capacity and keep necessary skills and supply chains in UK-accountable hands.

It is not always a good idea to surrender UK jobs and skills to price undercutting by agents of a foreign power.

Once given up, as with Thatcher's deindustrialisation policy, does one get it back after you have surrendered design, leadership and home industrial capacity?

The government is protecting 10,000 steel making jobs and also trying to support downstream manufacturing that is important to the UK and EU as it aspires to create a European super power to head off US and Chinese domination.

The SNP in Scotland has sent work on new buses to Chinese makers, who are to get the majority of a £45 million contract despite protests from Scottish Labour MPs.

Andy Burnham in Manchester, operating under the same legal framework, has placed significantly more orders with UK makers. If he can do it, so can the Scottish Nats! Are they not interested in the Falkirk bus firm?

**AD Gill**  
Ashford

## Restaurant plan

I AM against the application by KFC to build a restaurant at Affinity, Bideford.

Primarily because they use broiler chickens who are raised to be as large as possible, which means they can't stand very well, are often squashed together in large buildings in artificial light with no opportunities for a natural life.

KFC say they are improving standards and aiming for 35% of chickens to be UK bred. That means 65% come from other countries which have much lower standards, probably including birds in cages.

Chickens are intelligent birds who can count, recognise faces, feel deeply, have about 30 different calls for communicating with each other, and can see ultraviolet as well as other colours.

They need natural daylight and to be able to peck, perch, take dust-baths, run and explore. This information is on the RSPCA website. Why should they be denied this?

Unfortunately, these reasons probably aren't planning ones to refuse the application.

The design also looks very unattractive and it says it'll be sustainable but says nothing about recycling, renewable energy, for example solar panels, and reducing carbon travel, although KFC say they are aiming towards net zero in 2040.

These are more likely to be planning reasons to refuse.

If anyone else would like to look it up and object, the application number is 1/0184/2026/FUL

You can send your comments to [planningssupport@torridge.gov.uk](mailto:planningssupport@torridge.gov.uk) along with your name and address.

**Miranda Cox**  
Bideford