

Press release – June 2026

TavyRail meets Railfuture Devon & Cornwall

Railfuture has demonstrated its support for the reopening of the former line from Tavistock to Bere Alston, for services to Plymouth and beyond, by meeting the campaign group TavyRAIL which has recently affiliated to the national organisation.

Railfuture's Devon and Cornwall regional branch chair Tim Steer and branch secretary Alan Clark made their way to Tavistock to meet with TavyRail chair Richard Searight and some other members, and be given a guided walk and talk along the rail alignment which has been disused since 1968.

The track bed though overgrown in places provided Railfuture with a first-person experience on how well-located the proposed new Tavistock station would be, on the south side of the town and easy for residents of new housing there, for travel to Plymouth and other destinations.



Alan Clark, Tim Steer, Cllr Anne Johnson, Richard Searight, Simon Earland (photo: TavyRail Secretary Kevin Cook)

Vice-chair of TavyRAIL Councillor Anne Johnson - now Mayor of Tavistock - provided Railfuture with an insight on West Devon's five-year housing land supply and how Tavistock is fulfilling its duty to build new homes, as well as on the problems the residents face with their daily commutes.

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Richard Searight said: *“The Plymouth-Tavistock line restoration is not a ‘nice to have’. It is the solution to a literal car crash about to happen if Plymouth is to avert the traffic chaos to be created when Babcock start to receive the £4.4 billion increase in military spending over the next few years. The A386 link road is already the slowest A-road in the South West. It is about to get even slower! Any fears that the line would be little used are totally ill-founded. The Okehampton-Exeter service has generated huge rail traffic. Approaching 350,000 people use it per year. Current projections for the Tavistock-Plymouth service are approaching 400,000 as both destinations are significantly larger than those the current Dartmoor line serves.”*

Tim Steer stated that Plymouth City is now starting on multi-billion pound defence contracts and simply does not have the transport capacity to provide a sustainable alternative to car parks or roads for defence employers and manufacturers to take on new staff. The MP for Plymouth Sutton & Devonport, Luke Pollard, also Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence since last September, has recently given his support to see the Tavistock line reopened, as well as new stations at Plympton and at Laira. The Tavistock line has also seen support from the Torridge and Tavistock MP Sir Geoffrey Cox KC, and the South Devon MP Rebecca Smith who is on the House of Commons Transport Select Committee.

Tim Steer says: *“Public transport infrastructure needs to improve for Plymouth as it has already been shown in the annual global traffic scorecard from INRIX to be the worst congested city in the South West; Exeter is second, followed by Barnstaple. These are all growing conurbations which require additional supporting rail capacity or face further traffic gridlock in jams which lower productivity and overall delivery.”*

Thanks to funding from the DfT, through the Ideas Fund in the former Restoring Your Railway programme, and Devon County Council, a Strategic Outline Business Case was commissioned and published. This is only the first stage, however, and now funding is required to commission an Outline Business Case. Reopening the line from Bere Alston for services to Tavistock is in the Local Transport Plan 4 2025-40, adopted by the new Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority. It’s also in the Delivery Plan of Peninsula Transport’s Strategic Implementation Plan 2025-50 as a ‘Tier One / Region-wide’ ie High Priority scheme, and is integral to the Plymouth Metro package of schemes.

Tim went on to say: *“I have been to see Sir Geoffrey Cox KC MP who has personally stated to me that he wants this line to be reopened. Railfuture understands that in October 2023 the previous government had indicated “that the project will be funded to delivery, subject to future updates to the project business case” but sadly the current government has been unable to continue this commitment. If central government now wants to see the military able to deliver on its multi-billion pound defence contracts then we will need to see an acceleration on the Plymouth Metro, with the business cases provided to the Department for Transport for Tavistock and Plympton. Railfuture fully support affiliated group TavyRail, and we will help them get towards the Final Business Case so that the line supports the Tavistock community and alleviates the traffic congestion around Plymouth.”*

Railfuture is Britain's longest-established and leading independent voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for better rail services for passengers and freight. It advocates on behalf of all rail users nationally and through 14 branches with 20,000 affiliated and individual members. Railfuture is completely independent, being funded solely by its members’ subscriptions and legacies.

Full details of Railfuture’s Devon & Cornwall regional branch: [Railfuture | Devon and Cornwall Branch](#)
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