

## Press release – July 2026

### Modernisation momentum maintained

A transformational modernisation of the North Devon Line and its services is long overdue, as it continues to beat all known records since 2001 for the ever-increasing volume of passengers now travelling the route. Each of the first three months of this financial year have once again stretched the graph to new heights.

The capital investment required to deliver such a modernisation programme, however, must be bid for - and it's a competitive process, locally as well as nationally. The 'application for funding' takes the form of a three-stage business case, submitted to the Department for Transport and HM Treasury for their approval.

The first stage - a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) – could need c.£150k and 16 delegates from 12 partner and representative stakeholder organisations associated with the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance came together in an Exeter workshop to start putting together a package for funding.

Railfuture's Fighting Fund, built up from legacies, has put £10k on the table, and national Board Director for Infrastructure & Networks Roger Blake, who also acts as the Alliance's Convener, commented: *"We all need to find our own ways of putting some money where our mouths are. Central government tends to sit up and take more notice when 3<sup>rd</sup>-party sources contribute, however small or large their individual sum, and from across a broad spectrum of representative organisations."*

Potential target for completion of an SOBC is the Alliance's 4<sup>th</sup> annual Convention in early-March next year, coinciding with when central government is expected to open calls for schemes to be supported in the next national Comprehensive Spending Review for 2028-32. Success for the Alliance would then look like central government committing funds for the 2<sup>nd</sup>-stage Outline Business Case, costing several millions.

Workshop participant Tim Steer, Chair of Railfuture's Devon and Cornwall regional branch, reflected: *"We all have to be in it to win it. It's a long slog but the size of the prize, not just for northern Devon but actually for most of Devon's current districts, given the wider network benefits, is incalculable. A half-hourly service from Barnstaple getting into Exeter in 45 minutes? Turning that vision into reality is our mission. We must however be mindful of other growth-enabling schemes in the Devon Metro network, such as Tavistock-Plymouth and a West of England line upgrade especially now that Marlcombe is due for 10k new homes."*

## Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance

Modernising the North Devon (Tarka) Line - fit for the 21st Century



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