Northern Devon
Railway Development Alliance

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

Modernising the Exeter to Barnstaple Railway Line
An Integral Part of The Devon Metro Vision

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What Is A Business Case And Why Is It Important?

- The Treasury February 2026 *Green Book* definition: “the information needed to make a decision on a public sector spending proposal”
- The audience is therefore all those involved in making decisions:
  - Stakeholders deciding whether to back a proposal
  - All those involved in designing the scheme
  - The sponsor seeking funds
  - The body/bodies providing funding
  - The rail industry and others involved in implementing the proposal
  - Anybody investigating whether the scheme has gone well and has been value for money
- At times it can seem like frustrating bureaucracy, but if you want to win a game, play by the rules

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Business Case Structures 1)

- The *Green Book* mandates a 5-Case approach:
  - The *Strategic Case* - sets out a robust case for change that demonstrates how the proposal has a strong strategic fit with the organisation's priorities, government ambitions and the area(s) in scope – the 'strategic dimension'
  - The *Economic Case* – demonstrates the value for money and the best choice for maximising social welfare through options appraisal – the 'economic dimension'
  - The *Commercial Case* – illustrates the commercial viability and supply-side capacity for the proposal – the 'commercial dimension'
  - The *Financial Case* – demonstrates the proposal is financially affordable – the 'financial dimension'
  - The *Management Case* – sets out the proposal's deliverability through the effective development of plans, management and resources to oversee the project from outputs to outcomes – the 'management dimension'

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Business Case Structures 2)

- The *Green Book* requires three consecutive stages:
  - The *Strategic Outline Business Case* (SOBC) is the first formal stage focusing on developing the strategic narrative in favour of a scheme and identifying options
  - The *Outline Business Case* (OBC) is used to decide if funding can be justified to develop a detailed scheme design of the preferred option
  - The *Full Business Case* (FBC) is the final stage for a successful scheme, forming the basis for a decision to be taken whether to fund and deliver the project
- The *Preliminary Strategic Business Case* was a 'starter for 10' identifying key strategic arguments and a basis for building stakeholder consensus
- Important recent changes in *Green Book*:
  - Greater focus on the importance of a strong strategic narrative
  - More emphasis on place-based and regional investment impacts
  - Benefit Cost Ratios ('BCR') not to be treated as strict decision thresholds, but as part of an overall balanced judgement

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Is The Vision For Barnstaple Fundable?

- Everything is changing in rail enhancements

Sources of Rail Enhancement Funding		
Alliance Formed 2024	**Now**	**Future**
Network Rail Control Period Enhancement Funding	Network Rail Control Period Enhancement Funding	GBR Funding Period Enhancement Funding
DfT centrally-allocated competed funds: • Restoring My Railway • New Stations Fund • Access for All	Existing allocated funds being worked through New funding streams to be announced?	Strategic Combined Authorities main source of funding Some special central funding streams to remain?
Non-DfT centrally-allocated competed funds: • Levelling Up Fund	Existing allocated funds being worked through	Strategic Combined Authorities main source of funding
Mayoral Authority funds: • Integrated Settlements • Growth Funds	Mayoral Authority funds: • Integrated Settlements • Growth Funds	Greater consistency of funding of Mayoral authorities
Other including non-mayoral local authorities	Other including non-mayoral local authorities	Strategic Combined Authorities in all English areas
Private sector incl s106 and other developer contributions	Private sector incl s106 and other developer contributions	Private sector incl s106 and other developer contributions

- Lessons?
  - Huge competition for funding will continue: a competitive edge needed
  - Keep pushing ahead with planning activity: developing the business case
  - The early bird catches the worm (‘early mover advantage’)

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Is The Vision For Barnstaple Realistic? 1)

- Nothing in the vision not already recently achieved somewhere

Faster journey times



Train service frequency increase



Public domain – railway station approach improvements







Improved station usability



EV charging Reading station





Pay-as-you-go reader St Erth

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Is The Vision For Barnstaple Realistic? 2)

- Much of the 2011 Devon Metro vision already achieved



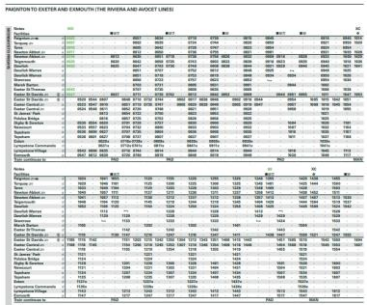












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Some Personal Thoughts on Metros

- The Devon Metro is not a ‘metro’ in the UITP sense, so what might ‘metro’ mean in Devon terms?
- Predictability of standards key:
  - Higher than historic frequency of train services (half-hourly at least – higher in core)
  - Regularity maintained throughout the day and week
  - Seen and understood by both users and non-users as a single system
  - Simple, modern ticketing, preferably with digital options
  - Better usability of stations and public domain interface, with future improvements planned
  - Intermodal connectivity: bus, car, walking, cycles
  - Strong sense of local identity and ownership
- The London Overground is also not a ‘metro’ in the UITP sense, but has a strong, recognisable brand identity achieving all the above and drastic jump in usership compared to the routes taken over
- The London Overground is also a project in progress: it hasn’t tried to do everything at once, with an ongoing programme of station and other improvements