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Dear North Devon and Torridge Councils Planning Policy,

## **People and Place – planning for our future together**

Railfuture is Britain's leading and longest-established national independent voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network for passenger and freight users, to support economic (housing and productivity) growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities.

We seek to influence decision makers at local, regional and national levels to implement pro-rail policies in development and transport planning.

### Community Survey

#### **1. Where do you live, by town or village or the closest hamlet / village / town if located in the countryside.**

Our members in North Devon and Torridge live in various places across the two districts.

#### **2. What are the key characteristics that you think make North Devon and Torridge a great place to live and work?**

For those fortunate enough to be able to afford to live, and to have work, in the two districts, the attractions of community cohesion, coast and country plus access to the city of Exeter.

#### **3a. How would you like the area to improve over the next 20 years? Please rank the below in order of preference or add alternatives (in question 3b).**

- ~ Deliver the infrastructure needed to support development, local communities and businesses.
- ~ Provide a safe, sustainable and convenient transport network, ensuring the necessary transport infrastructure is in place to make it easy for everyone to get around.
- ~ Support economic growth and the creation of good quality jobs.
- ~ Provide a sufficient supply of new market and affordable homes to meet the diverse needs of our communities.
- ~ Improve health and wellbeing and contribute to reducing inequalities.
- ~ Regenerate our town centres and network of vibrant communities.
- ~ Work towards achieving carbon neutrality and ahead of 2050 and inspire action to combat the climate and ecological emergency.

[www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk) [www.railfuturescotland.org.uk](http://www.railfuturescotland.org.uk) [www.railfuturewales.org.uk](http://www.railfuturewales.org.uk)  
[www.railwatch.org.uk](http://www.railwatch.org.uk)

- ~ Promote local character and delivery of high-quality design.
- ~ Conserve and enhance our protected habitats and biodiversity and our network of green infrastructure and open spaces.

**3b. Please specify any alternative priorities, with an indication of importance in the context of question 3a, and indicate whether you consider it should be ranked high, medium or low.**

Specifically, the biggest single improvement within the next 20 years as a central feature of our first two priorities above, and in support of our next five priorities, will be restoration of a mainline rail link (precise route to be defined by detailed assessments to be commissioned) for services between Bideford and Exeter Central via Barnstaple and the Tarka Line.

**4a. In planning for how the area should grow to meet our future needs, where do you think development should occur?**

- ~ Mainly around the major towns of Barnstaple and Bideford.
- ~ New town / village or a significant expansion of an existing town or village.
- ~ All towns and larger villages, focusing on Barnstaple, Bideford, Braunton / Wrafton, Fremington / Yelland, Great Torrington, Holsworthy, Ilfracombe, Northam, and South Molton.
- ~ All towns and villages across the wider area.

**4b. If you think an alternative approach would be beneficial, please indicate below.**

An integrated and iterative approach to planning jointly the locations of future development and of future sustainable strategic transport infrastructure, particularly in the form of new rail stations as transport hubs, will bring together the two key strands of development planning. There are unique and transformational benefits to be derived from agglomerating growth into main centres where a comprehensive suite of community services and facilities can most efficiently and economically be provided for the largest number of residents and businesses.

The place where you live now... See response to 1. above.  
Please tell us about how you view the area where you live.

**5a. Where I live has a good range of services and facilities to meet my day-to-day needs, excluding travel for education and employment. Please select the option considered the most appropriate.**

No specific comment.

**5b. Please provide any comments to further explain or add context to your response:**

As our members in North Devon and Torridge live in various places across the two districts we cannot offer a single view on this.

**5c. If I need to access services and facilities that are not available locally, I travel to the following town/village(s):**

No specific comment as our members in North Devon and Torridge live in various places across the two districts and we cannot offer a single response to this.

**6a. My local area is well served by public transport, with good connections to other towns and villages, allowing residents to access services and facilities which are not available in my own town/village without the need to use a car. Please select the option considered the most appropriate.**

No specific comment.

**6b. My local area is well served by public transport, with good connections to other towns and villages, allowing residents to access employment opportunities which are not available in my own town/village without the need to use a car. Please select the option considered the most appropriate.**

No specific comment.

**6c. Please provide any comments to further explanation/context to your response to questions 6a and 6b:**

As our members in North Devon and Torridge live in various places across the two districts we cannot offer a single view on these two questions.

**7a. The footpaths and cycle routes in my local area are of good quality, safe and accessible, enabling residents to make short journeys without the need to use a car. Please select the option considered the most appropriate.**

No specific comment.

**7b. Please provide any comments to further explain or add context to your response.**

As our members in North Devon and Torridge live in various places across the two districts we cannot offer a single view on this.

**8a. Where I live, provides a good range of employment opportunities. Please select the option considered the most appropriate.**

No specific comment.

**8b. Please add any further explanation or context to your response.**

As our members in North Devon and Torridge live in various places across the two districts we cannot offer a single view on this.

**9a. Where I live benefits from high-quality natural environment either within the settlement or the surrounding area (or both). Please select the option considered most appropriate.**

No specific comment.

**9b. Please add any further explanation or context to your response.**

As our members in North Devon and Torridge live in various places across the two districts we cannot offer a single view on this.



**10a. Where I live benefits from a high-quality built environment, with attractive and accessible public spaces and buildings. Please select the option considered most appropriate.**

No specific comment.

**10b. Please add any further explanation or context to your response.**

As our members in North Devon and Torridge live in various places across the two districts we cannot offer a single view on this.

**11a. Where I live benefits from an active and vibrant local community where there are a range of locally run events, clubs, societies and community/voluntary organisations which offer all sections of the community the opportunity to participate in and/or contribute to community life. Please select the most appropriate option.**

No specific comment.

**11b. Please add any further explanation or context to your response.**

As our members in North Devon and Torridge live in various places across the two districts we cannot offer a single view on this.

#### Statement of Community Involvement, draft

We have no particular comments but look forward to engaging and collaborating with the two District Councils as the processes for the new joint Local Plan evolve.

#### Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), proposed methodology

We have one main general comment, developing the observation made in response to **4b.** above. An innovative model for financing new strategic transport infrastructure such as the new rail link mentioned in **3b.** above has been pioneered in Northumberland and is being developed further in Oxfordshire by E-Rail: <https://www.e-rail.co.uk/>. In assessing land available for housing and economic development it is therefore most advantageous to take a holistic view of the location and scale of such new developments in relation to their ability to generate added value to finance, separate from and outwith S106 and CIL processes, the new strategic transport infrastructure necessary for those new developments to function economically, efficiently and not least sustainably.

We have had initial exploratory discussions with Torridge and Homes England officers, have an established relationship with E-Rail through joint work on a new rail link in Oxfordshire, and therefore look forward to exploring further how the creative approach based on the model of Land Value Capture financing might be of assistance in North Devon and Torridge.

Yours faithfully,

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS  
Railfuture  
Director for Infrastructure & Networks, national Board

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