

# DEVON CPRE

The Voice for Devon's Countryside

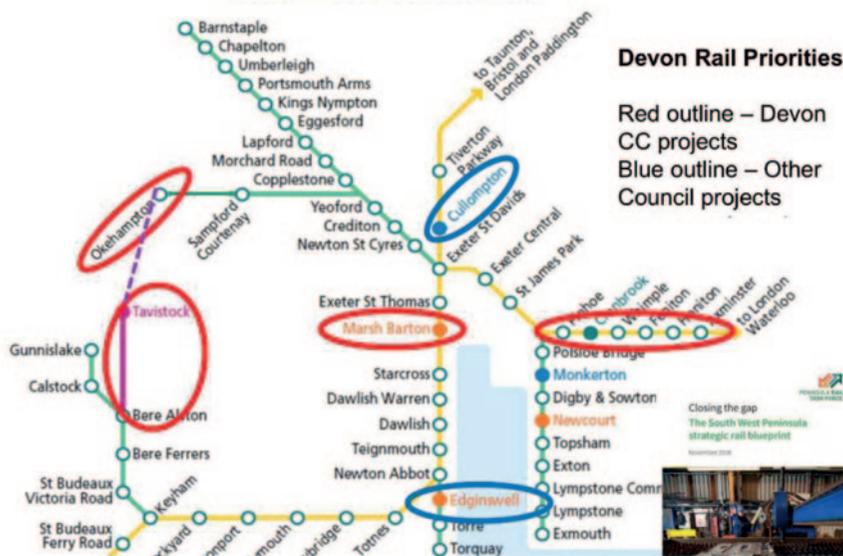
Devon Voice Newsletter - Spring 2022



# Devon Metro and Restoring Your Railway Projects

Andrea Davis, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport, Devon County Council

## Devon Metro Network Map



### Dartmoor Line

The re-opening of the Dartmoor Line marked a proud day for Devon, and everyone involved in making this happen should rightly feel proud of what they have helped to achieve. Over 10,000 people used the new service in the first two weeks alone.

This was the first rail line to re-open under the Government’s Restoring Your Railway programme, which is a magnificent accomplishment in itself. Delivered £10m under budget and within nine months, the strong partnership formed between Network Rail, GWR and Devon County Council paid dividends for the community.

There was great fanfare when the first train arrived at Okehampton Station on

29 August 1871, similar scenes were witnessed in November last year when the new reinstated service started, now we are to have an hourly service following the phenomenal success with 200% higher passenger numbers in the first 6 months than forecast by the rail industry.

The campaign to restore regular services on this line lasted more than a decade. There have been times over the years when many people might have thought that the reopening would never come. But through a combination of commitment, dogged determination and never giving up hope – here we are.

Devon County Council maintained the Summer Sunday service on the line



L to R: Sir Peter Hendy, Chairman Network Rail, Mark Hopwood, Managing Director GWR; Rt Hon Grant Shapps SoS for Transport; Cllr Andrea Davis, Cabinet Member for Transport Devon County Council.

since 1997. When totalled up over the years that's been a fairly sizeable investment by the council, and looking back, that appears to have been crucial to have reached the point where we are today.

During the years of austerity, it would have been very easy for Devon County Council to cut the budget for the Summer Sunday service.

But maintaining that service demonstrated what could be achieved, and if nothing else it kept hope alive that we could see a return of regular services between Okehampton and Exeter.

We also invested in the initial study which gave partners an idea of what investment would be needed to bring the line up to modern standard

necessary to run regular services. That investment has paid dividends for residents, businesses and visitors in this rural part of Devon. We owned the Station buildings and it was a great day when handing over the keys to Network Rail.



Handing the keys to Network Rail, Summer 2021

To launch the hourly service the Rail minister Wendy Morton recently visited the Dartmoor line with Andrea, they met rail passengers, toured the station to see the progress on improvements to facilities and spoke to passengers and the driver on the 118 bus service which Devon County Council funds to connect with trains, this has extended the reach of the new rail service to Tavistock and the surrounding communities.

### **Tavistock to Plymouth**

Following on from the success with the Dartmoor line to Okehampton, Devon County Council were successful with the bid to Restoring your Railway Fund and we are currently working on the strategic outline business case.

The business case is around reinstating 5 miles of track between Tavistock and Bere Alston to enable an hourly service to be delivered between Tavistock and Plymouth, while maintaining a 2 hourly service between Plymouth and Gunnislake. In doing so, it delivers an increased frequency of local city rail services in some of the most deprived parts of Plymouth.

Longer term the scheme would have potential to extend east serving other communities east of Plymouth in the travel to work area, e.g Ivybridge and potential new station at Plympton.

Improved connectivity encouraging a shift from car to rail for journeys between Tavistock and Plymouth, addressing congestion on the A386 corridor and by supporting lower carbon travel options.

Enhanced access to employment,

education and healthcare in Plymouth for Tavistock residents and residents of west Devon and north Cornwall, e.g Babcock International employs 1000s of people at Devonport Dockyard.

Provide an improvement in rail services for the communities of St Budeaux, Keyham and Devonport in Plymouth

Improve visitor access by public transport to the natural environment, particularly the Dartmoor National Park.

Tavistock station has an annual passenger demand forecast of 363,000 pa, which is comparable to other Devon stations like Honiton (359,000) and Barnstaple (432,000).

The new station will serve 13,000 Tavistock residents and 8,000 residents of rural villages in the wider catchment area including Horrabridge, Lamerton, Mary Tavy and others. Encouragingly, 98% of passengers at the Tavistock station will be new rail users.

The new train service generates an additional 31,000 rail passengers at the existing Gunnislake line stations, several of which are located in Plymouth communities that fall within the 40% most deprived areas in the country. As an added incentive to new rail users travelling from Tavistock to Plymouth by rail will on average be 4 minutes faster than by car, and 10 minutes faster than by bus.

We will be submitting the Final Strategic Outline Business Case to the Department of Transport in June.

## Tavistock to Plymouth Rail Link

### The Case for Investment

The Tavistock to Plymouth rail link will reopen the route to Tavistock with new hourly services complementing existing Tamar Valley services to Gunnistake.

This will transform public transport between Tavistock and Plymouth encouraging modal shift, addressing congestion and creating new opportunities. It will treble the train service for deprived communities in Plymouth and also boost access to jobs in Devonport Dockyard. It will also make efficient use and achieve better value from existing rail assets.

The scheme is being developed jointly with NR and GWR with broad community support and will allow future expansion eastwards. The scheme is a key component of the Local Plan and also part of the Peninsula Rail Task Force Twenty Year Plan.

### Extensive Development

The scheme has benefited from extensive development:

- 85% of land in DCC ownership.
- detailed feasibility, conceptual design and operational planning.
- Extensive business case analysis undertaken.

### Partnership Approach

Devon County Council is working with NR and GWR to develop the scheme, building on the partnership established for the Dartmoor Line, with support from Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council. Broad stakeholder and community support includes LEPs and MPs.

### Tavistock to Plymouth Spatial Context



#### Key Benefits

- Driving modal shift and decarbonisation
- Accessing jobs, training and skills
- Boosting deprived communities
- Devonport Dockyard accessibility

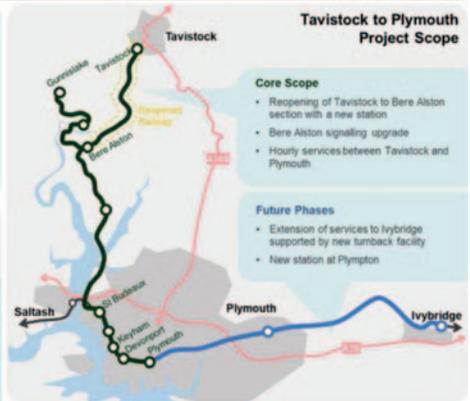
### Tavistock to Plymouth Project Scope

#### Core Scope

- Reopening Tavistock to Bere Alston section with a new station
- Bere Alston signalling upgrade
- Hourly services between Tavistock and Plymouth

#### Future Phases

- Extension of services to Ivybridge supported by new tuckback facility
- New station at Plympton



#### Timetable Structure



## HOW YOU CAN HELP US TO PROTECT DEVON, LONG TERM

Our members are a special breed of people, who love Devon and want to see it preserved and protected for generations to come. That's what we're here for.

If you'd like to play your part, as well as being a member (and remaining a member even after that immediate threat to your locality has faded into history!) there are three key ways you can leave your mark permanently on the Devon landscape – by leaving it as it should be.

### DONATIONS

Membership of Devon CPRE – which includes membership of the CPRE national charity – costs £3 to £5 a month. It's much appreciated, but it doesn't provide us with all the fighting funds we need to do the job we're renowned for: fighting off inappropriate planning proposals and guarding the countryside against degradation.

**So, if you can afford a little more per month, or have a little extra money you'd like to do something worthwhile with, please consider becoming a Devon CPRE Donor.**

### LEGACIES

Leaving Devon CPRE a legacy in your Will is a wonderful (and tax-efficient) way of leaving a gift to future generations by helping us preserve the county we love.

**Just tell your solicitor or will-maker that you would like to leave something to 'The Devon Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England CIO', charity number 1175228.**

### LAND

If you have a parcel of land – a meadow, a copse, a special place that gives you joy – that you would like to see protected in perpetuity, you could leave it in our care. We will provide a covenant to ensure that your special place is safe from development or despoliation, and used to provide rich habitats for wildlife and joy to future generations.

**To find out more about land legacy, contact us at [director@cpredevon.org.uk](mailto:director@cpredevon.org.uk)**

## Trains - Tim Steer, Bideford Atlantic Coast to Exeter Railway Lead

My late father Brian Steer was a fireman on the steam trains for Barnstaple Junction (now Barnstaple station) he would tell me that seeing the Taw and Torridge estuary from a footplate was magic; ships coming in and out of Bideford quay, fields full of grazing animals and the distant smoke of steam engines coming from and going to Ilfracombe. My grandfather (Grampy) Bill Steer worked at Barnstaple station as well, he never bought a car because he had a bicycle and lived right next to Barnstaple Junction. Grampy had family living in Torrington and Crediton, where having a bicycle and a railway was perfect. Then, Dr Beeching came to Devon... Sadly, 1965 saw the closure of many lines and Bideford was no exception; we were fortunate to keep the line active for freight use. Daily railway wagons loaded up with clay from Meeth would be a regular sight. I was only 3 years old when my Grampy took me for a walk, we stood next to the railway track and watched a special passenger train making its way back to Barnstaple. That was the last train, the year was 1982.

Today, we are lucky that Devon County Council decided to purchase the old track bed and turn it into the Tarka Trail, so we can all have my late father's experience as a leisurely walk or cycle ride. No one would want to take away that experience, it is healthy fresh air for the active travel community however, but what has happened to Beeching's promise of a faster bus

service to take the railway's place? The answer is the population rose, Barnstaple now has approximately 33,000 residents and Bideford now has 31,000 residents while the parish village of Fremington that lies between both towns has a staggering 13,000 parishioners! That faster bus service is now stuck in daily congestion. Residents of Bideford tell me that the bus can range from getting to Barnstaple in 30 mins and up to 3 hours, this is no good if you are employed, going to a meeting, appointment or class. Car ownership in North Devon equals approximately 1 person 1 car, a family of four equals four cars, so imagine 200 cars on a road now, then imagine a three-carriage train - that train can take all those commuters, tourists and students plus more! This would free up roads making lorry and van deliveries get to destinations on time or sooner.

The residents of Greater Bideford are in the district of Torridge, an area known for deprivation with some of the lowest wage earners in the entire country. What they would give to find new employment opportunities in Barnstaple, Exeter and beyond or see a new wave of tourists coming to their town by train. The students would be able to commute to Barnstaple in 10 minutes and Exeter in an hour. Those dreaded tailbacks that occur each summer when the local residents and tourists congest the roads around Barnstaple and Bideford would be eased causing less vehicle emissions.

The Barnstaple to Fremington stretch of the former railway track bed was made to broad gauge and the Tarka Trail only uses half of this land, maybe we could see a new raised profile railway track acting as flood resilience. If you study the coastal town of Exmouth and the Avocet line; they have the active travel Exe Trail running beside it all the way to Exeter. Can we have a similar system for our Bideford to Barnstaple Tarka Trail? The Bideford ACE Rail project (Atlantic Coast to Exeter Railway) wants to develop a sustainable public transport system and we suggest upgrading the existing Tarka Trail at the same time.

What is truly amazing is the level of support that I have been receiving for the return of the passenger service; local authorities have seen my presentation and they have been supporting the restored railway service. The Tarka Rail Association represent the users of the Barnstaple to Exeter railway line, they have been exceedingly supportive and fully see the need to extend the existing line and service from Barnstaple to Bideford. Railfuture have fully supported the work with advice and found us a specialist independent railway consultant. I must thank the Bideford town mayor, chair of Torrridge district council and Devon County Councillor for East the Water who came to Bideford Railway Heritage Centre to warmly meet with Cabinet DCC lead for Climate, Environment and Transport – Andrea Davis [also chair of the sub-national transport body Peninsula Transport].

I know some of you would like to one day see a steam train go back to

Bideford (just as my late father worked on) and who knows, we could see a special chartered train every once and a while but, for now, we need faster, more frequent, reliable sustainable public transport and active travel to coexist in harmony.



Tim Steer, Andrea Davis and Railfuture's Director Roger Blake discuss what restoring your railways do for communities. *Photo: © Rob Dark*



Barnstaple Town Mayor and Bideford Town Mayor meet at Barnstaple railway station on the recently restored Bideford bound platform. *Photo: © Tim Steer*