

Devon scooped most awards at national Railfuture ceremony

By [Sue Read](#) | Senior Reporter |
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DEVON scooped up the most awards among Rail User Groups at the annual national Railfuture awards at Senate House in the University of London on Saturday, July 15.

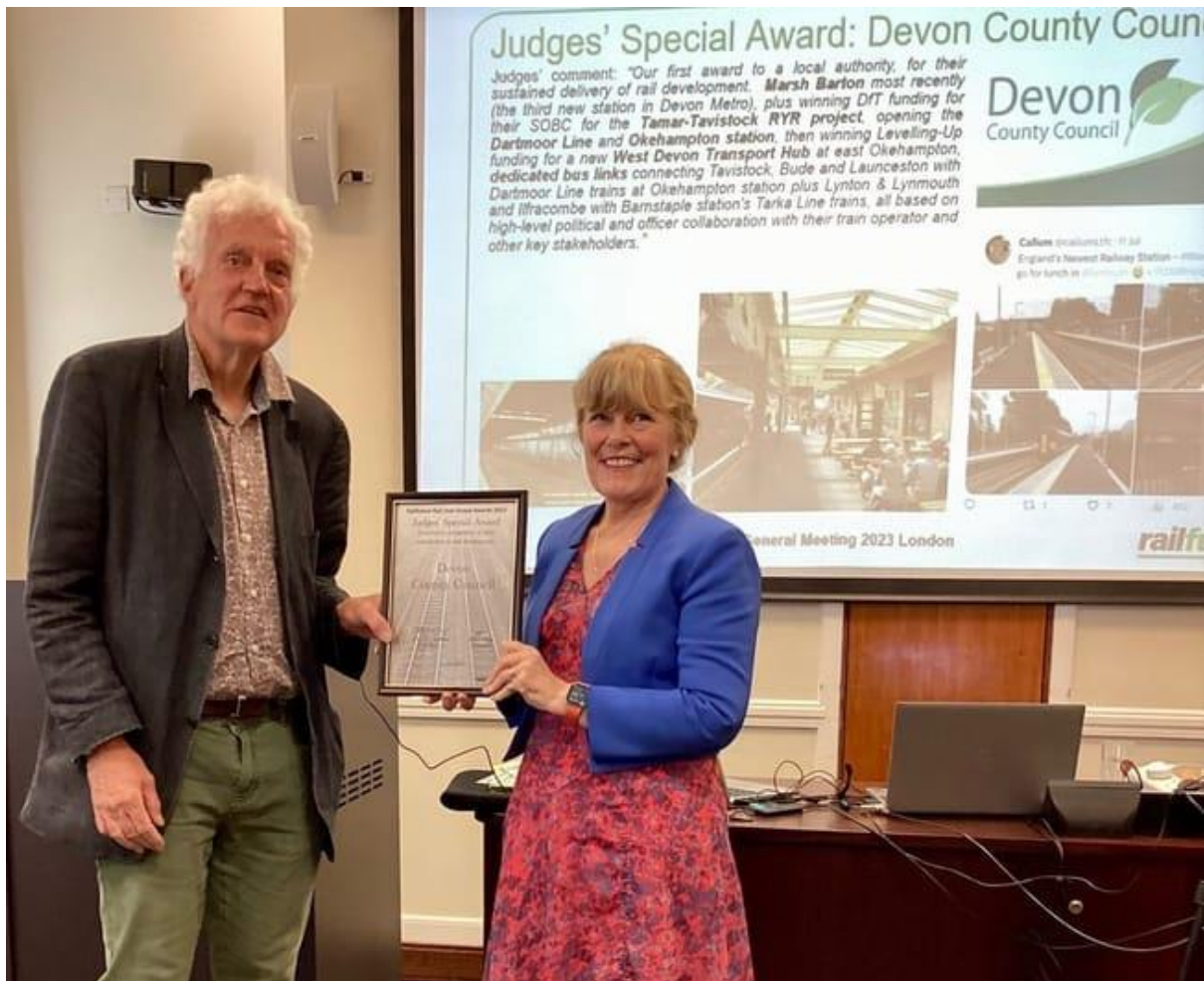
It was mentioned and awarded more times than any other county for all the work that has been noticed locally and nationally.



It came as quite a surprise that the coveted Judges' Special Award went not to a Rail User Group but for the first time to a local authority, Devon County Council.

There to receive the award was the Council's Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport - Councillor Andrea Davis - who received the award for outstanding dedication towards rail development and public transport.

Cllr Davis gave a fantastic closing presentation to finish the awards ceremony, speaking about the recent projects that Devon County Council had helped through to completion: the Dartmoor Line (Okehampton to Exeter), Dawlish sea wall resilience project, Marsh Barton Railway Station and various bus connectivity programmes that get the public to stations such as Barnstaple and Okehampton on time for departing railway services.



Devon picked up a grand total of five national awards.

TARKA RAIL

Tarka Rail Association is the rail user group that looks after the needs and campaigns for the users of the Barnstaple to Exeter line.

The TRA also has an active campaign named ACE Rail (Atlantic Coast - Exeter Railway) that looks at upgrading the existing line for a faster, better capacity and frequency service and to also extend the line to Bideford.

There from the Tarka Rail Association was its lead officer for the ACE Rail project - Tim Steer.

Tim was thrilled to be joint Railfuture Campaigner of the year (Gold Award) for all the work put into the Tarka line service upgrades and the recognised need for an extension to Bideford.



This was not the only time Tim had his name called as he received a further two awards: the Bronze Award for Best Campaign - Tarka Rail Association's ACE Rail campaign - and the Gold Award for Best Social Media for Tarka Rail Association and ACE Rail Facebook groups.





Tim gave a presentation thanking all those who support and help with the campaign work.

He said it was only a year ago that he had been asked to attend Railfuture's award ceremony for Best New Group (ACE Rail) and since then many local MPs, local authorities, groups and the railway operator had written motions of support towards ACE Rail.

Videos he showed began with GWR's MD Mark Hopwood CBE interviewing Tim last December at Barnstaple station.

A month later Mark Hopwood was talking at a House of Commons Transport Committee session on Rural Connectivity about how he had met the Tarka line representatives at Barnstaple and that the line was suffering from Victorian era infrastructure that needs investment.

The third video showed the North Devon MP in a Westminster Hall debate on the Restoring Your Railway Fund, mentioning positively the TRA and its ACE Rail campaign.

Tim said: "What a privilege it is to be a campaigner of the year. Only last year Tarka Rail Association's ACE Rail project won Railfuture's Gold award for Best New Group and now I'm back."

He thanked everyone who had helped in giving their time and skills in making this an award-winning campaign, some of whom were at the award ceremony.

DARTMOOR RAILWAY

Dartmoor Railway Association is the volunteer organisation dedicated to supporting the former London and Southwestern Railway / Southern Railway route between Meldon Viaduct and the site of the former Coleford Junction, centred on Okehampton Station.

In 2021 GWR with Network Rail and Devon County Council restored the rail link to Okehampton, and the Dartmoor Rail Association was delighted as the Okehampton railway station once again became alive with an hourly Dartmoor Line service to Exeter which stops at Crediton Station.

The Okehampton Railway Station is now a picturesque heritage-looking site with cafe, museum centre and the DRA's own shop.

There for the awards was Chair of the Dartmoor Rail Association Sue Baxter who received the joint award for Best Website (Gold).

Sue gave a presentation on why the Dartmoor Railway Association was significantly noted by the judging panel of Railfuture Vice-Presidents with its up-to-date news section, history, gallery and even free section for former issues of its Pony magazine in pdf format.



The awards were announced by Railfuture director Roger Blake whilst the framed certificates were handed to the winners by Railfuture's Honorary President, the leading transport commentator, journalist and author Christian Wolmar.