



Representing users of the Barnstaple to Exeter rail line

**Welcome.....>** to the eighth edition of our Station News.

Marsh Barton railway station in Exeter was officially opened by the Transport Secretary Mark Harper on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> July and opened to the public on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July when the first service called there at 05:38. It has an hourly Paignton to Exmouth service, plus additional peak hour trains. Access to the station is step free and there is a pedestrian/cyclist overbridge to link the two platforms. The unstaffed station has help points and full CCTV. The station encourages sustainable travel. There are nearby bus services and a cycle route.

Mark Harper also visited the Dawlish sea wall which has recently been completed and which will make the coastal railway line more resilient and protect the town of Dawlish from coastal storms like the one that damaged the route in 2014. The work has taken two and half years to complete.

On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2023 the annual national Railfuture awards for Rail User Groups were held at Senate House in the University of London. The awards were announced by Railfuture director Roger Blake whilst the framed certificates were handed to the winners by Rail future's Honorary President, the leading transport commentator, journalist, and author Christian Wolmar. At the awards were three Devon based representatives. The TRA 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. Representing the Tarka Rail Association was their 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. Tim also 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



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groups. Tim gave a presentation thanking all those who support and help with the campaign work. In the last year many local MPs, local authorities, groups, and the railway operator had written motions of support towards ACE Rail.

The second Devon representative was the Chair of the Dartmoor Rail Association (DRA) Sue Baxter, who received the joint award for Best Website (Gold). Its website was significantly noted by the judging panel of railfuture Vice-Presidents for its up-to-date news section, history, gallery, and even free section for former issues of its Pony magazine in pdf format. DRA's response to the award can be found here <https://www.dartmoor-railway-association.org/news>.

Devon 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. Councillor Davis gave a fantastic closing presentation to finish the awards ceremony, speaking about the recent projects that Devon County 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.

Devon County Council's official response to the award can be seen here <https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/devon-honoured-to-receive-railfuture-award/>

Work at platform two at Barnstaple continues weekly with visits by volunteer groups including Barnstaple in Bloom to maintain and plant this area. It now has a designated wildlife area. Adopters are required at Yeoford. Please contact [secretary@tarkarail.org](mailto:secretary@tarkarail.org) for details.