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2023-11-08

Dear Torrige District Council,

## Torrige draft Strategic Plan 2023-28 – supplementary response

Railfuture has already welcomed the public consultation on the Council's draft Strategic Plan 2023-28, in our letter of 14<sup>th</sup> October, and now offers this supplementary contribution below.

We previously referred to the Motion agreed by the Full Council at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2022 – see Minute 12 (a): *“That TDC, following on from the presentation made at the last Full council meeting, do support the extension of the railway line from Barnstaple to Bideford and that this aspiration is embedded in the new Joint Local Plan.”* It was seconded with a suggested amendment that the extension of the railway line from Barnstaple to Bideford also be embedded in the Economic Development Business Plan, which was agreed by the proposer and the amended Motion was then carried by an overwhelming majority. As stated in that quoted Council Motion, that previous contribution related to the new Joint Local Plan.

We come now to the current Local Plan 2011-31, adopted by the Full Council at its meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018. It states as follows:

in Chapter 4 Spatial Strategy, Policy ST10 Transport Strategy on pages 42-43 states -  
“The Transport Strategy for northern Devon will:

(1) Provide good strategic connectivity by:

- (c) improving journey times and service quality on the Barnstaple-Exeter rail line linking northern Devon to Exeter and the wider rail network; and
- (f) safeguarding routes and exploring opportunities for the reuse and reinstatement of former railway lines; (our underline, and as below)

(2) Meet the needs of local communities and visitors to the area by:

- (a) providing transport infrastructure that facilitates the delivery of proposed strategic extensions for housing and employment development and facilitates economic regeneration;
- (b) developing quality public and community transport networks (and supporting infrastructure) within and between Barnstaple and Bideford and the networks linking these centres to northern Devon's main towns and rural communities where viable;
- (c) improving overall accessibility of northern Devon by providing a wide range of integrated practical and attractive travel options and improving interchanges for transfer between modes of travel; and
- (f) recognising transport impacts from the seasonal nature of traffic in northern Devon.

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(3) Reduce the environmental and social impacts of transport by:  
(a) reducing the need to travel by car and enabling alternative sustainable travel options as supported by the Local Transport Plan;”

In order therefore to truly reflect those already-adopted Local Plan policies, as well as the June 2022 commitment for the new Local Plan, in the Council’s Strategic Plan for 2023-28, we reiterate our advocacy of the inclusion of the following additional Priority and Actions within the ‘Local Economy’ theme of the final Strategic Plan, recognising the socio-economic benefits that rail already brings to the wider area and that those benefits could be further embedded by restoring a link to Bideford:

*Priority - Develop opportunities to enhance community prosperity through improved public transport connectivity.*

*Actions by us and in partnership - Support further work on developing the business case for restoring a Bideford-Barnstaple rail link, to allow the strategic, economic and environmental case and the implications of reopening to be more fully evaluated.*

As previously noted, it will be seen that this also supports the Priority “*Develop Torrington to be a great place to work and build a career*” within the ‘Our Council’ theme.

In these early stages of project development it must be emphasised that there cannot be any valid presumptions made about the route or other aspects of a new rail link; the proposition here is simply to “*support further work on developing the business case ... to allow the strategic, economic and environmental case and the implications of reopening to be more fully evaluated.*”

Yours faithfully,

Alan Clark  
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Secretary, Devon & Cornwall regional branch