

## **Railfuture Devon & Cornwall regional branch submission to Devon County Council's North Devon Highways & Traffic Orders Committee special meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

### **Barnstaple Rail Station Bus Integration Enhancements Scheme**

Dear HATOC members,

On behalf of the Devon & Cornwall regional branch of Railfuture, an independent national organisation, I write to support the recommendations in the report before the committee from the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport.

We welcomed the consultation on the original proposals back in May-June, and a representative took part in the webinar on 3<sup>rd</sup> June to offer suggestions for modifications which we considered might further improve the scheme. We were then especially pleased to see the cross-party support for the scheme when Devon's Cabinet approved it, as announced in the September news release:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/cross-party-support-for-barnstaple-railway-station-transport-interchange/>

We recognise the balance which has to be found in public policy decisions between community and individual interests. We also recognise various councils' commitments to improve public transport for existing and potential users in order to tackle the widespread daily problems of congestion, car-dependency and carbon emissions by offering better connectivity, choice and capacity. Better connectivity and choice in particular include improving integration between complementary public transport modes.

We would wish to draw committee members' attention to the very latest official data available from the Office of Rail and Road and, through the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, from our local train operator GWR. In summary, the scale of the rise in popularity of the North Devon (Tarka) line, especially since the pandemic, is quite simply unprecedented. That comparison is not just within Devon, or even across the South West, but at a national level; it fundamentally reverses the prevailing image of a railway still struggling to recover pre-pandemic ridership. In 2022/23 Devon was unique in Britain outside London for its higher regional rail usage than pre-pandemic, and in 2023/24 it was joined by Cornwall. I have attached a few graphics to illustrate the more local picture.

We view the current layout of Barnstaple rail station's forecourt as no longer fit for the purpose of safely managing the present (never mind likely future) flows of passengers arriving and departing the station by various transport modes, with its confusing and hazardous arrangements and points of potential conflict, and lack of clear 'desire lines' for pedestrians. As a significant - and hopefully positively-memorable - point of arrival and departure for North Devon's principal town and its surrounding communities, it plays a vital role in helping to promote the town and the wider area as an attractive place to live, work, visit, and invest. In all our experience, successful railways and their stations help support successful places.

In conclusion, it is our considered view that there is a very clear community interest to be served by adopting the recommendations before you and enabling this scheme to be implemented, to deliver overall benefits for both station users and for the town and its wider catchment.

Following my email I have attached the following evidence to support the proposals.

Regards,

Alan Clark  
Secretary  
Railfuture Devon and Cornwall Branch

[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)

# Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance



## Peninsula Transport stations - Barnstaple and busier: post-pandemic usage trends

	2019-20	2023-24	% change
<b>Barnstaple</b>	<b>424,822</b>	<b>549,860</b>	<b>29.4</b>
Digby & Sowton	624,496	804,202	28.8
Tiverton Parkway	510,386	581,478	13.9
Exeter Central	2,536,316	2,783,330	9.7
St. Ives	706,826	774,928	9.6
Penzance	573,718	618,956	7.9
Teignmouth	690,972	728,100	5.4
Paignton	632,482	651,194	3
Plymouth	2,372,040	2,438,540	2.8
Exmouth	896,248	916,968	2.3
Exeter St. David's	2,676,464	2,721,596	1.7
Newton Abbott	1,203,100	1,183,296	-1.6
Truro	1,211,362	1,188,052	-1.9
Totnes	725,038	710,378	-2
Taunton	1,585,206	1,464,918	-7.6

Of Peninsula Transport's 15 busiest stations in 2023-24, **Barnstaple** had the highest rate of post-pandemic growth

Source: Office of Rail & Road - <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage>

Table 1415a Time series of passenger entries and exits by station, GB, annual data, April 1997 to March 2024

Tabulated and presented by Railfuture Devon & Cornwall regional branch  
on behalf of Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance



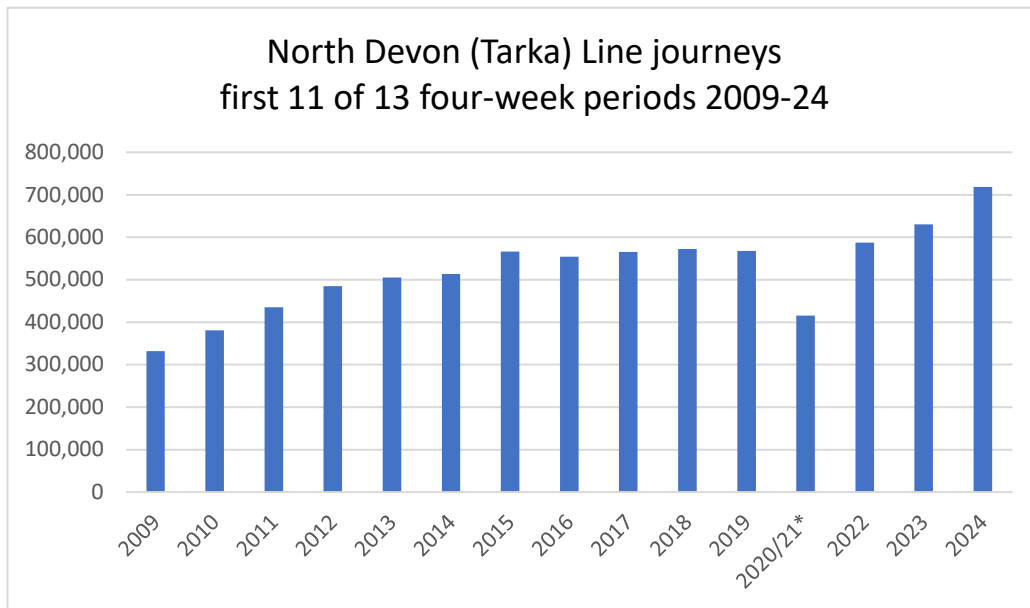
Initial NDRDA founders: Bideford Town Council, Railfuture, Tarka Rail Association, Barnstaple Town Council, Northam Town Council, Torridge District Council

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## North Devon (Tarka) Line journey figures 2009-24

First eleven 4-week periods - 7 January to 9 November 2024



\* 13 periods = 1-3 2020 + 4-13 2021

Compiled by the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership from official sources



Tabulated and presented by Railfuture Devon & Cornwall regional branch

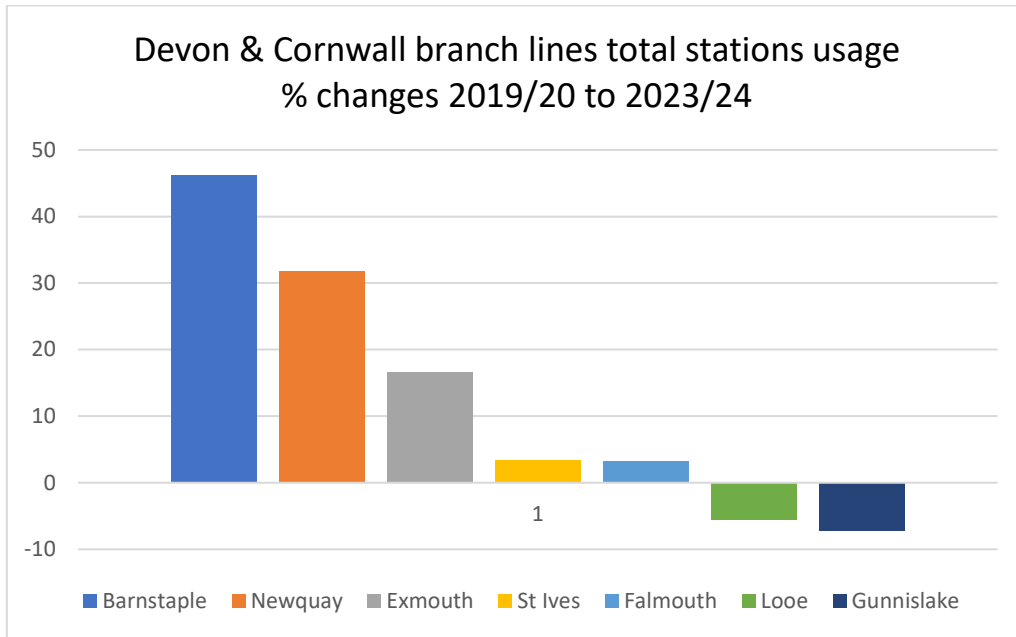


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## Devon & Cornwall branch lines post-pandemic station usage



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