

Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance



Opening welcome by the Mayor of Barnstaple Councillor Janet Coates to 2nd annual Convention on Friday 7th March 2025



Good afternoon,

I would like to thank Mr Roger Blake for inviting me to say a few words to mark the start of the second annual stakeholder gathering of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance.

It is a pleasure to be able to welcome you all to Barnstaple today. This is an important occasion which will give us all the opportunity to hear about the exciting developments over the past 12 months.

The two years have quickly passed since the Alliance was inaugurated in late-2023 by Bideford Town Council, followed by the Tarka Rail Association and Railfuture, and now there are many participating stakeholders involved as evidenced by the representatives here today.

I am aware that the modernisation of the North Devon (Tarka) line was advocated in the draft Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan for 2025-2040 and that it meets the criteria for Peninsula Transport's Strategic Implementation Plan and as a basis for the extension of rail services to Bideford. It was mentioned in a December Westminster Hall debate "The future of rail services in Devon" brought by the Honourable Member for Exeter at which the Honourable Member for North Devon also spoke.

During this year, work is continuing to finalise business cases for investment, for adoption by official bodies. We are looking forward today to hearing more about this work.

We at Barnstaple Town Council are proud to be one of the stakeholders in this important organisation. The railway has always played an important role in the life and prosperity of our town. We are very much aware of the vital need to modernise and then, in time, extend the line.

I hope we will all leave this event today inspired and energised to continue the momentum of working to ensure that these vital improvements are made to our local railway network.

Thank you.