

Major Devon rail upgrade has just edged closer

A new blueprint could pave the way for long-lost rail connections

DevonLive NEWS By [Lewis Clarke](#)

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A new blueprint for transforming transport in Devon and Torbay has been adopted
(Image credit : Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance, original from First Group / GWR)

A new blueprint for transforming transport in Devon and Torbay has been adopted – prompting strong support from regional rail campaigners.

The 15-year Local Transport Plan, approved on Monday, July 28 by the Board of the newly formed County Combined Authority, outlines a long-term strategy for improvements across all modes of transport, with implementation set to begin in April 2026.

Tim Steer, Chair of the Devon and Cornwall regional branch of Railfuture and founder of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance (NDRDA), described the plan as “a vitally necessary point of reference for all those campaigning for sustainable transport improvements.”

Tim added that the plan represented a “very satisfying reward” for the group's proactive and sometimes challenging involvement in the consultation process, noting their data-backed contributions in favour of improved rail connectivity.

The initiative also drew praise from Roger Blake, Railfuture’s national Board Director for Infrastructure and Networks, who is acting convener of the Alliance, which includes more than two dozen stakeholders.

“This completes the twin building blocks of regional transport planning for years to come,” Roger said, referencing the earlier adoption of the Peninsula Transport Strategic Implementation Plan 2025–50 in March.

Both documents, he noted, highlight the urgent need to modernise and extend passenger train services on the North Devon Line, including a proposed extension to Bideford.

“We must continue to drive the expansion of sustainable transport capacity, connectivity and choice,” Roger added. “The Alliance will continue to champion those causes for Northern Devon.”