

NORTH DEVON JOURNAL

Thursday, October 13, 2022

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Project to reopen railway line on track with new funding



» Tarka Rail Association secures £6,500 grant to draw up case for Barnstaple-to-Bideford line. [See Page 4](#)

Firm lands £34m defence contract

» Barnstaple-based SEA business secures major deal with MoD to upgrade weapons systems aboard naval fleet. [See Page 4](#)

Bid to home asylum seekers in seafront hotel divides town

»NORTH Devon residents have been left divided over plans to house asylum seekers in an Ilfracombe hotel.

It was announced last week the Home Office plans to house people at the Dilkhusha Hotel while they wait for a decision on their asylum application.

Cllr David Worden, leader of North Devon Council, said they became aware of the plans through local knowledge, and were only approached by the Home Office on October 4 to confirm the hotel's inclusion in the Asylum Dispersal Scheme. He said the council will make every argument to convince the Home Office the town is not suitable for the scheme.

Some residents believe Ilfracombe to be unsuitable for refugees due to the current lack of housing and deprivation in the town.

One local said: "We don't have the infrastructure to look after these people. Our town is at capacity, with so many of its locals already homeless. Schools are full, doctors and dentists are stretched thin. It's just not viable for our tiny town to take on an extra 500 people."

Another added: "We cannot cope at present with how North Devon has increased its population. This will make it even worse."

But one commenter said: "People waiting for housing are looking for permanent homes, not small hotel rooms."

Cllr Terry Elliot, Housing Champion for Ilfracombe Town Council, said: "It's amazing how many people are flagging up the



»A project to develop the case for an extension and upgrade of the Tarka Line has received a £6,500 grant from Great Western Railway

Bideford rail line project gets boost with GWR funds

A PROJECT to develop the case for an extension and upgrade of the Tarka Line has received a £6,500 grant from Great Western Railway.

The Tarka Rail Association successfully applied for a grant from the train operator's Community Fund, which was launched in May to support local communities and address areas of social need.

The Atlantic Coast-Exeter Railway project, ACE Rail, aims to give Bideford a boost by extending the Tarka Line to the growing town's 30,000

people, avoiding the Tarka Trail, and also by improving the existing line to add a second, limited-stop, hourly service to link Bideford with Exeter Central in 60 minutes.

First step is an initial business case to present why the Tarka line should be extended and further work would look at where stations would be and how it would be funded.

Tarka Rail Association chairman Mike Day said: "We're extremely grateful for this funding from Great Western Railway, which has helped

us to engage an independent specialist advisor to produce an initial business case for the Atlantic Coast-Exeter Railway, the association's ACE Rail campaign, reporting by next March.

"We're grateful, too, for the guidance and support with strategic advice over the past 18 months from independent national rail development campaign Railfuture, which has also contributed financially.

"We have developed a strong base of stakeholder and public support to

drive forward a shared ambition to transform the prospects for Devon's largest community without its own rail service since 1965."

GWR business development director Tom Pierpoint said: "The Community Fund is a fantastic opportunity for us to invest in our communities in projects that really make a difference at a local level."

"We're pleased to provide this funding to help towards further exploring the idea of extending the Tarka Line to Bideford."