

Tarka Line closures leave North Devon passengers ‘thrown into chaos’, says rail campaigner

The Tarka Line between Barnstaple and Exeter remains closed after recent storms, leaving North Devon passengers facing widespread disruption. Tim Steer, chair of the Devon & Cornwall branch of Railfuture, said daily travel for work, education, health appointments and social activities is being thrown into chaos, while a petition calling for long-term investment in the line has now gathered over 3,000 signatures.



Tim Steer at Barnstaple train station. *Credit: Tim Steer*

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A North Devon rail campaigner has renewed calls for long-term investment in the Tarka Line as the route between Barnstaple and Exeter remains closed following recent storms.

Tim Steer, a North Devon resident and chair of the Devon and Cornwall branch of Railfuture, said repeated closures were continuing to disrupt daily life for passengers and businesses across the region.

Railfuture is an independent national rail campaign group that works to improve rail services for passengers and freight.

“The lack of resilience in the North Devon Line’s infrastructure is continuing to ruin the daily lives of so many people and businesses who need to be able to rely on it,” Mr Steer said.

“Getting to and from work, education, health and other appointments such as job interviews, public events and even social activities are being thrown into chaos because our rail line is not a fit-for-purpose lifeline.”

The Tarka Line has been closed since recent storms caused damage to the railway, with engineers continuing repair work. No date has yet been given for a full reopening.

Mr Steer said passenger numbers on the line had reached record levels, putting additional pressure on infrastructure which he said was no longer adequate.

“The record-breaking numbers of passengers who use the line are rightly demanding long-term investment to fix our broken railway, not just more patch-and-mend,” he said.

Railfuture is part of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance, which is working on a business case to modernise the route. The group said its proposals would be published in March 2026.

The North Devon Gazette understands that the Liberal Democrat MP for North Devon, Ian Roome, is due to hand in a petition calling for improvements to the Tarka Line in Parliament this evening. The petition has now attracted more than 3,000 signatures.

Mr Steer thanked Mr Roome for supporting the campaign and raising the issue in Westminster.

Network Rail said safety was its priority and that teams were working to restore services as quickly as possible. Passengers are being advised to check before travelling, with replacement bus services in place.