A NEW TRAIN SERVICE CONNECTING BIDEFORD WITH EXETER AND BEYOND

Preliminary Strategic Business Case

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On behalf of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance

Incorporating key findings from the report *Bideford to Barnstaple Line Reopening Engineering Feasibility and Economic Appraisal* prepared by SLC Rail in August 2025

Version 4 (27 April 2026) – compared to version 3, including reference to the Network Rail *Connecting Communities* report

REVISION AND COMMENTS

Version 4: author Peter West 27 April 2026: compared to version 3, including reference to the Network Rail *Connecting Communities* report

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Incorporating key findings from the report *Bideford to Barnstaple Line Reopening Engineering Feasibility and Economic Appraisal* prepared by SLC Rail in August 2025

Disclaimer

The author of this document cannot vouch for the correctness of third party sources quoted, but has put particular emphasis on official statistics such as those from the Office for National Statistics, local authorities and the Office of Rail & Road. Conclusions drawn in the document are explained and are based on a cautious, sober assessment of options and contextual information. Such conclusions at the early stage of development of this document are necessarily provisional and it is recognised that other legitimate conclusions could be drawn. The document has been produced to aid decision-making at a local and regional level and is intended for that purpose alone. It is the start of the analytical approach to decision-making through the various stages of business case described in the Introduction below, not its conclusion. The views expressed in this document are those of the author alone, even where comments have been accepted from other parties, and do not purport to represent the views of the members of the Northern Devon Rail Development Alliance, whether individually or as a group nor Network Rail or Great Western Railway as corporate entities.

Table of Contents

Foreword

The Purpose and Shape of this Document, and Background to the Scheme

The present document reviews options for reintroducing passenger train services between Bideford and Exeter and the rest of the national rail network. Although 'reopening' is a convenient and often-used term, this report reviews a wider range of options than a purely historically-informed approach would imply, including alternative lines of route. It does so in order to focus on present day and future needs and benefits that are delivered by the train service operated rather than the infrastructure. While historical elements of the former Bideford railway line may be retained and enhanced, the aim is not to create a heritage railway, but a modern train service operating on a key piece of modern infrastructure and the mobility and associated socio-economic benefits that could enable, both now and in the foreseeable future.

The conclusions drawn at the early stage of development of this document are necessarily provisional and it is recognised that other legitimate conclusions could be drawn. The document has been produced to help start the process of decision-making and is intended for that purpose alone. It is the start of the analytical approach to decision-making through the various stages of business case described in the Introduction below, not its conclusion.

The scheme has already attracting considerable local interest and enthusiasm. That is positive and shows that the scheme is a genuinely local initiative to solve local issues. However, the present document aims to be a sober assessment of options and potential benefits. A risk for schemes of this sort is that benefits are magnified and downsides and risks diluted. That is not the intention here.

The document follows the Five Case Business Case format mandated by the Department for Transport, albeit in preliminary form to act as an initial view to help inform decision-making. The author does not have the professional background needed for the full Economic and Financial Cases. A separate study[1] covering early engineering, financial and economic analysis undertaken by SLC Rail has been funded jointly through Torridge District Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund and from Railfuture Ltd, Bideford Town Council, Barnstaple Town Council, and Devon County Council's Locality Budget for Bideford East. Key conclusions from that study are included in this document. A full SOBC would need to be developed in the event that a decision to progress the scheme further was taken.

The five 'cases'[2] are:

- "The *Strategic Case* - sets out a robust case for change that demonstrates how the proposal has a strong strategic fit with the organisation's priorities, government ambitions and the area(s) in scope – the 'strategic dimension'
- The *Economic Case* – demonstrates the value for money and the best choice for maximising social welfare through options appraisal – the 'economic dimension'
- The *Commercial Case* – illustrates the commercial viability and supply-side capacity for the proposal – the 'commercial dimension'
- The *Financial Case* – demonstrates the proposal is financially affordable – the 'financial dimension'
- The *Management Case* – sets out the proposal's deliverability through the effective development of plans, management and resources to oversee the project from outputs to outcomes – the 'management dimension'."

The Department's guidance explains that "a holistic approach should be taken when developing business cases as the five dimensions are thoroughly connected and indivisible. Therefore, each dimension should not be considered in isolation." This document highlights cross-references between the different cases, not least because the five-case structure will be unfamiliar to some readers and it will therefore not always be clear where some considerations will be found.

The Department for Transport mandates business cases to be taken through three stages:

- The Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) is the first formal stage;

[1] *Bideford to Barnstaple Line Reopening Engineering Feasibility and Economic Appraisal*, SLC Rail, August 2025.

[2] Quoted from the Department for Transport's *Transport Business Case Guidance*, 16 December 2022.

- The Outline Business Case (OBC) is used to decide if funding can be justified to develop a detailed scheme design of the preferred option; and
- The Full Business Case (FBC) is the final stage for a successful scheme, forming the basis for a decision to be taken whether to fund and deliver the project.

While not itself one of the business case development stages, the Department for Transport now normally also undertakes post-implementation review of benefits for its larger schemes.

The Department has put increasing emphasis on the importance of the strategic case for early stage decision-making on potential investments in recent years[3]. This increased emphasis on the strategic case is reinforced in the *Green Book Review 2025: Findings and actions*[4] published by HM Treasury in June 2025. This concludes that there is "continued over-emphasis on BCRs in decision making". The BCR is part of the Economic Case.

Another conclusion of the *Green Book Review* is that many "business cases typically answer the question "what is the best way to undertake this project?", rather than "what is the right project to improve growth in this area?". This is summarised as: "Insufficient emphasis on place-based objectives". This document seeks to avoid that trap, with substantial analysis of local issues and how rail-based schemes could help address them. In particular, it aims to start the articulation of what the *Review* describes as the need for "a compelling case for change".

Effectively, the strategic case answers the question 'is the proposed scheme something that should be undertaken and, if so, why?'. That means the initial focus is on the strategic arguments, including clear objectives. Given that Northern Devon, Torridge and Mid Devon rank very low in a range of national social and economic indicators, this document follows the structure recommended in the Department for Transport's guidance on levelling-up elements of transport schemes[5].

The Loss of Train Services to Bideford

The 1963 *The Reshaping of British Railways* report ('Beeching Report') identified the railway from Barnstaple Junction (now Barnstaple) to Torrington and Halwill via Bideford for closure to passenger services. It subsequently closed to regular passenger train services between Torrington and Halwill in March 1965 and between Barnstaple and Torrington via Bideford in October 1965. The route solely between Barnstaple and Bideford was not separately appraised for continued operation.

Unlike the scheme proposed in this document, the Barnstaple to Bideford route was operated largely as a branch line from the main Exeter to Ilfracombe service at Barnstaple, with with only a few trains direct to/from Exeter. With the exception of a few summer through coach workings[6] from Waterloo, Exeter most passengers had to change train. The timetable at the time of closure was thin, with only nine trains Monday to Saturday and three on Sundays. Trains did not run to an easily-remembered pattern and intervals between trains varied between 50 minutes and 2 hours 47 minutes.

After closure to passengers, freight trains continued to run, together with occasional special passenger services, until January 1983. The Barnstaple (Junction) to Exeter line shown in green on the adjacent map (Wikipedia) has remained open, all other lines now being closed.

In the 1960s there was wide public resistance to the Beeching cuts, but it was rarely successful in averting closures, as the only criterion

[3] See, for example, *Green Book supplementary guidance: Value for Money*, March 2022: "Options can either 'achieve' value for money or not based on a holistic view of benefits and costs as summarised in Box 18, but can never be 'good' or 'bad' value for money based solely on quantified costs and benefits separate from considering the SMART objectives."

[4] HM Treasury, 11 June 2025: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-book-review-2025-findings-and-actions/green-book-review-2025-findings-and-actions

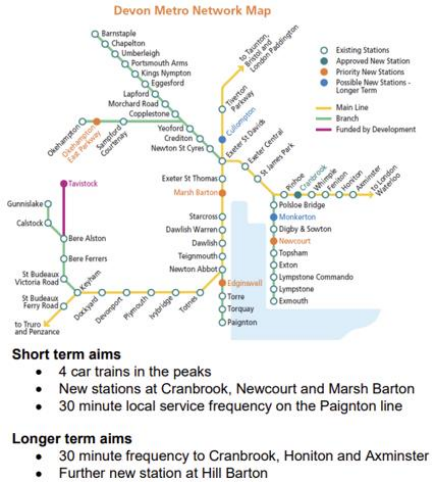
[5] Department for Transport, *Transport Business Cases: The Levelling Up Toolkit*, February 2022.

[6] One or more coaches were detached from one train and coupled to another, in this case detached from the through train from London Waterloo to Ilfracombe and attached to the branch train to Bideford and Torrington.

for refusing a closure request was 'hardship'. Many felt that the future lay in road transport, in particular the private car.

Since the 1960s, both Britain and its railways have changed enormously. Entirely new railways have been built, new stations have opened on existing railways and some previously closed railways have been reopened. The cases in favour of these investments have highlighted the value that rail can provide to communities lacking direct access to the railway network, often alongside greater value being attached to walking and cycling as 'active travel' options.

Devon County Council's Success in Promoting Rail Investment Schemes



Investment in local/regional rail services has been and remains a key part of Devon County Council's transport policy. New stations at Ivybridge and Digby & Sowton opened in July 1994 and May 1995. In 2011 Devon County Council working with Torbay Council published the 'Devon Metro' proposals, a combination of investment in new stations, reopened lines and frequency improvements to existing train services (image and text source: Exeter City Council).

The Devon Metro has been matched by few similar local authorities. New stations at Cranbrook, Newcourt and Marsh Barton have already opened, 30-minute frequency on the Paignton line has been introduced, the Okehampton line has reopened[7], and Okehampton Interchange new station[8] is under construction.

Reflecting a focus on how the railway can best serve Devon in the 21st century, the new stations at Digby & Sowton, Cranbrook, Newcourt, Marsh Barton, Edginswell and Okehampton Interchange are at locations where no previous stations had existed, not reopenings of earlier closed facilities. Funding for Cullompton station was confirmed by the Department for Transport on 8 July 2025.

Reflecting these wider developments, in particular Devon County Council's success in achieving investment in the local rail network, the Atlantic Coast to Exeter Railway campaign (ACE Rail) was launched in 2021. This aimed to "reconnect Bideford to the national rail network to offer a modern, fast mainline rail service to central Exeter." The Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance, including local authority and rail industry members, was established in March 2024. The new *Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4, 2025-2040* adopted in July 2025[9] says that Devon will: "work with the rail industry to … explore feasibility of the North Devon Line extension to Bideford."

The Department for Transport has published an evaluation of the reopened Okehampton line[10] (Executive Summary in Annex K). This paints a picture of success, highlighting in particular:

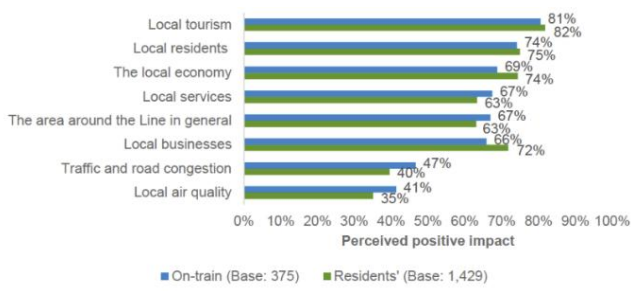
- Improved connectivity, in particular for employment, education and leisure;
- Materially reduced journey times, increased rail use and improved public transport accessibility;
- High levels of passenger satisfaction with the train service;
- Evidence of modal shift, albeit with some reduction in bus frequency;
- A very positive impact on inbound tourism;
- Usage forecasts exceeded in the first two years and tracking the forecasts now;
- A small operating surplus generated, meaning the train service needs no subsidy; and
- The use of Project SPEED enabled implementation more quickly and at lower than forecast.

[7] A limited summer Sunday-only service had previously been funded by Devon County Council.

[8] 'Okehampton East Parkway' on the Devon Metro map.

[9] https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-information/transport-planning/devon-local-transport-plan-4-2025-2040/

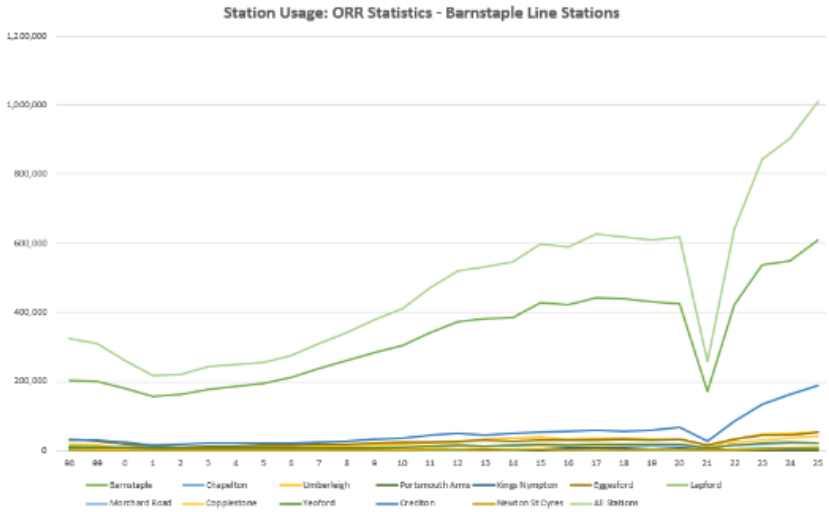
[10] *Dartmoor Line Early Impact Evaluation*, Department for Transport, March 2025: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d119dce65dc716bfb1dbbc/dartmoor-line-early-impact-evaluation.pdf



Source: On-train and residents' survey

The *Evaluation* contains the adjacent graphic showing the degree of perceived positive impact, both among train users and residents:

Strong Longer-Term and Post-COVID Rail Usage to Barnstaple and in the South West of England



In many parts of the country rail demand remains below pre-COVID levels, in particular where longer-distance commuting to office-based jobs has been displaced by increased home-working. In contrast Office of Rail & Road (ORR) station usage statistics show that the Exeter to Barnstaple route has performed particularly well, both longer-term and post-COVID (chart: author based on ORR figures).

Against this backdrop, this document examines options and arguments for the reinstatement of railway passenger services to Bideford within a context of a period which has seen a renaissance of rail in Devon and with a usage trend that suggests that rail is likely to continue to flourish in the future. With the new Local Transport Plan supporting feasibility work on a rail link to Bideford, now is a good time to review options for next steps.

Given the wider social benefits that reinstating train services can address, given that Devon County Council's successful record in improving the rail network, and given that train services in Devon and the South West continue to be well used and grow even after the COVID pandemic, Northern Devon should be seen as a place in which there should be confidence in investing in rail.

Executive Summary

Key points

- Very weak socio-economic conditions and transport peripherality in Northern Devon are key problems reinstating train services connecting Bideford with Exeter and beyond can help solve;
- Strong post-pandemic passenger growth on the existing Exeter to Barnstaple rail route and elsewhere in the South West: Northern Devon is a place for confidence in rail investment;
- The likely level of capital cost and project timescales are realistic aspirations for Devon;
- All trains to run direct between Bideford and Exeter Central[11] in typically 86 minutes, with a journey time of 15 minutes Bideford to Barnstaple: competitive with car journeys;
- Strong synergy with separate, complementary schemes to:
  - Replace GWR's older fleet of diesel multiple unit trains with modern, faster accelerating, more reliable, higher capacity, more comfortable, more environmentally friendly trains; and
  - Modernise the Exeter to Barnstaple line, with the potential to materially reduce Bideford to Exeter journey times, increase frequency to two trains per hour and improve performance;
- Reinstatement of train services has high social, connectivity and sustainability value, supporting regional growth and development, sustainable transport and tourism in Northern Devon;
- The economic case is highly sensitive to scheme costs, improved journey time on the existing route between Exeter and Barnstaple and assumptions on housing development in the area[12];
- A core scenario, using mid-range capital costs and current train service levels, results in a BCR of 0.23 … "Sensitivity tests demonstrate that with a certain combination of future assumptions the scheme could achieve a BCR of around 2.0";
- Capital costs could be in an envelope between £305 million and £539 million;
- A substantial level of usage of Bideford station is likely: 343,000 p.a. (lower than Barnstaple, but higher than Okehampton), placing it 1,000 out of c. 2,960 stations nationally;
- 89% of trips new to rail, with low levels of abstraction from Barnstaple and Umberleigh; and
- Subject to further development work, at this stage, the preferred route is a modified version of the original coastal alignment, with retention/improvement of the Tarka Trail as a key objective.

Strong post-pandemic growth – Northern Devon is a place for confidence in rail investment

Given that Devon County Council has a successful record in promoting improvements to the rail network and given that train services in Devon and the South West continue to be well used and are growing even after the COVID pandemic, with the Exeter-Barnstaple route in particular substantially above the best pre-pandemic passenger numbers, Devon, Torridge and North Devon should be seen as places in which there should be confidence in investing in rail.

Within that wider context, this document concludes, at an early stage of business case development and through a cautious, sober assessment of the factors involved, including SLC Rail's early stage professional engineering and economic study, that the aspiration for passenger train services to be reintroduced to Bideford is sufficiently realistic and is of sufficient potential to help address the material local socio-economic and transport-related issues to justify further work being undertaken. This would involve decisions on who should sponsor business case work going forward and on whether to progress the development of a full Strategic Outline Business Case.

The problems reinstating train services to Bideford can help solve

Very weak socio-economic conditions in Northern Devon: Bideford, nearby urban areas and the wider Torridge district register unusually poorly on a wide range of socio-economic indicators. The trend towards the centralisation and specialisation of services and facilities means that many people need to travel to Exeter and beyond for work, education, health care, leisure and other purposes, even with countervailing initiatives to maintain local self-containment.

[11] Potentially, as now, some early and late trains may only directly serve Exeter St Davids.

[12] *Bideford to Barnstaple Line Reopening Engineering Feasibility and Economic Appraisal Executive - Executive Summary*, SLC Rail, August 2025 – also for the BCR and capital costs quoted here.

The physical peripherality of Northern Devon inhibits the development of stronger areas of the local economy: The local economy has strengths in the growing sectors of defence, renewable energy, tourism and other fields. Key employers report that weaknesses in transport provision make it harder to recruit permanent staff. 'Hard-to-recruit' specialists such as sub-contractors from other parts of the country need to travel inwards to support these developing areas of the economy.

Long journey times for all transport modes result in physical peripherality: Bideford and other places in Torridge are poorly connected by all transport modes with Exeter and beyond. Car journeys are long and slow and suffer from congestion, in particular in Exeter and Barnstaple. Public transport journeys are longer and slower still, with slow, infrequent through bus services to/from Exeter. Combined bus-rail journeys are made uncompetitive with car by slow local road conditions and the interchange between bus and train at Barnstaple.

More sustainable transport modes have a low market share for travel within and to/from Northern Devon: Current transport provision is not a suitable basis for sustainable future growth and development. Car travel has a very high share of the local travel market. Restoring train services would allow more sustainable train, bus and active travel modes to take a higher share of the travel market. While restoration of train services cannot solve all the problems and issues experienced in an area alone, putting a town and its surrounding areas back on the national rail map can play an important part in addressing those issues.

Materially shorter journey times a key feature of the proposed reinstated train service

Key features of the train service reviewed in this document include:

- A journey time of 15 minutes between Bideford and Barnstaple;
- All trains run direct between Bideford and Exeter, with a typical through journey time between Bideford and Exeter St Davids of 81 minutes (Exeter Central typically 86 minutes[13]);
- Those journey times would be significantly better than any bus or bus-rail intermodal journey and would be competitive with car journey times, in particular with road congestion in the Exeter and Barnstaple areas;
- A separate, complementary investment scheme to modernise the existing Exeter to Barnstaple rail route could materially further improve the Bideford train journey time and could also substantially improve punctuality and reliability;
- A considerably longer turn-round time at Bideford compared to Barnstaple would give recovery time for delayed trains and substantially help to improve punctuality on the existing Exeter to Barnstaple route which suffers from poor operational performance and exports delay to other parts of the network such as the longer distance routes to London and the North;
- Additional station[s] between Bideford and Barnstaple to be confirmed (Instow assumed);
- Trains would need to be longer than currently to ensure sufficient capacity both for growth on the Barnstaple-Exeter route and for additional passengers from the Bideford extension; and
- No specific class of train is specified at this stage, but the direction of rolling stock development means a battery or other alternative powered train could be used, limiting noise and local emissions and avoiding the visual intrusion and high capital cost of overhead wires and masts.

A modified coastal route the preferred infrastructure option

This train service is supported by the preferred option for infrastructure, which together appear to be the best fit with local, regional and national plans and strategies:

- Reinstatement of the original coastal rail alignment, with a local deviation at Fremington Quay, with the SLC Report[14] identifying costs in an envelope between £305 million and £539 million;
- Retention and improvement of the Tarka Trail as a central, integral feature of the scheme;
- Sustainability a key objective throughout, including protection of and continued public access to the environmentally sensitive areas the route runs through;
- Options around intermediate stations at Instow and potential further intermediate station[s] at Yelland or Fremington;

[13] Some trains run in as little as 4 minutes between Exeter St Davids and Exeter Central, some take a little longer at 6, 7 or 8 minutes, with a few taking longer still. A few early trains to Barnstaple and a few late trains from Barnstaple start or terminate at Exeter St Davids. See the GWR timetable in Annex C.

[14] *Bideford to Barnstaple Line Reopening Engineering Feasibility and Economic Appraisal Executive*, SLC Rail, August 2025.

- Recognition of the importance of connectivity with bus services at the Bideford station site, together with active travel improvements; and
- Options for possible future train service frequency improvements.

A shorter inland rail route is not the preferred option at this stage of development:

- Extremely high construction costs for either inland route option through challenging terrain;
- Much or all of the journey time gain from the shorter route would be lost through operational solutions to the junction for an inland route being south of Barnstaple station – which would also increase operating cost and impose operational performance risks;
- Bideford station would either need to be at an out-of-town park & ride site or a more difficult, slower approach to the original station site would need to be made; and
- While Barnstaple is unlikely to be the dominant passenger flow from Bideford, an inland route means there would be no direct train service between the two towns.

A light rail option is not favoured at this stage:

- It has high costs but does not achieve the journey time benefits of avoiding interchange at Barnstaple and therefore does not address the key objective of tackling peripherality; and
- A light rail system for the wider corridor across Northern Devon would address other objectives and could potentially use a reinstated heavy rail line to Bideford as part of its route.

Objectives

The following are proposed, aligning with and pursuing local, regional and national strategies:

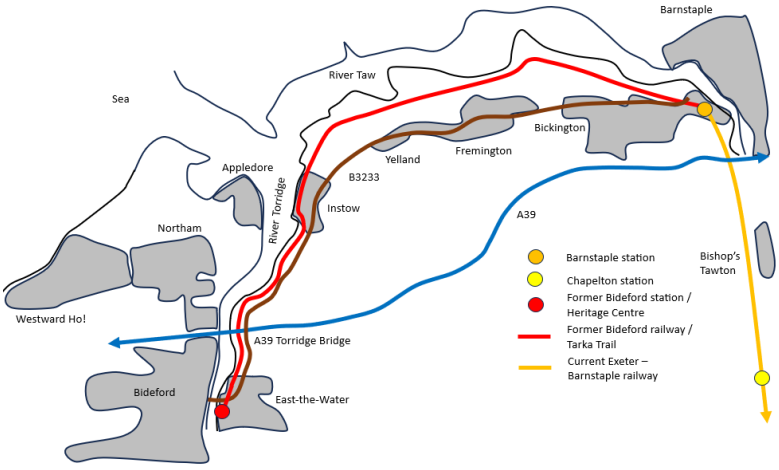
1) Improve socio-economic conditions in the Bideford and wider Torridge areas by reducing the negative impacts of peripherality, assisting in lifting productivity, prosperity and local economic growth;
2) Add low-carbon capacity, choice, resilience and reliability to the area's transport network to contribute towards decarbonising transport on the Torridge/North Devon - Exeter corridor;
3) Enable rail and more sustainable active and public transport modes to take an increased share of overall transport demand, supporting and mitigating the impacts of current and expected future demand growth, including where driven by increasing local population and planned housing expansion;
4) Enhance access to employment opportunities, education and healthcare in Exeter and beyond for Bideford and Torridge residents and facilitate access to 'hard-to-recruit' jobs in Bideford and Torridge for people outside these areas; and
5) Improve visitor access by sustainable public transport to the natural environment, including the Tarka Trail, the South West Coast Path, the North Devon National Landscape, the UNESCO North Devon Biosphere and other coastal areas.

Strategic Case

Alignment with Local, District, County and Regional Strategies

Location

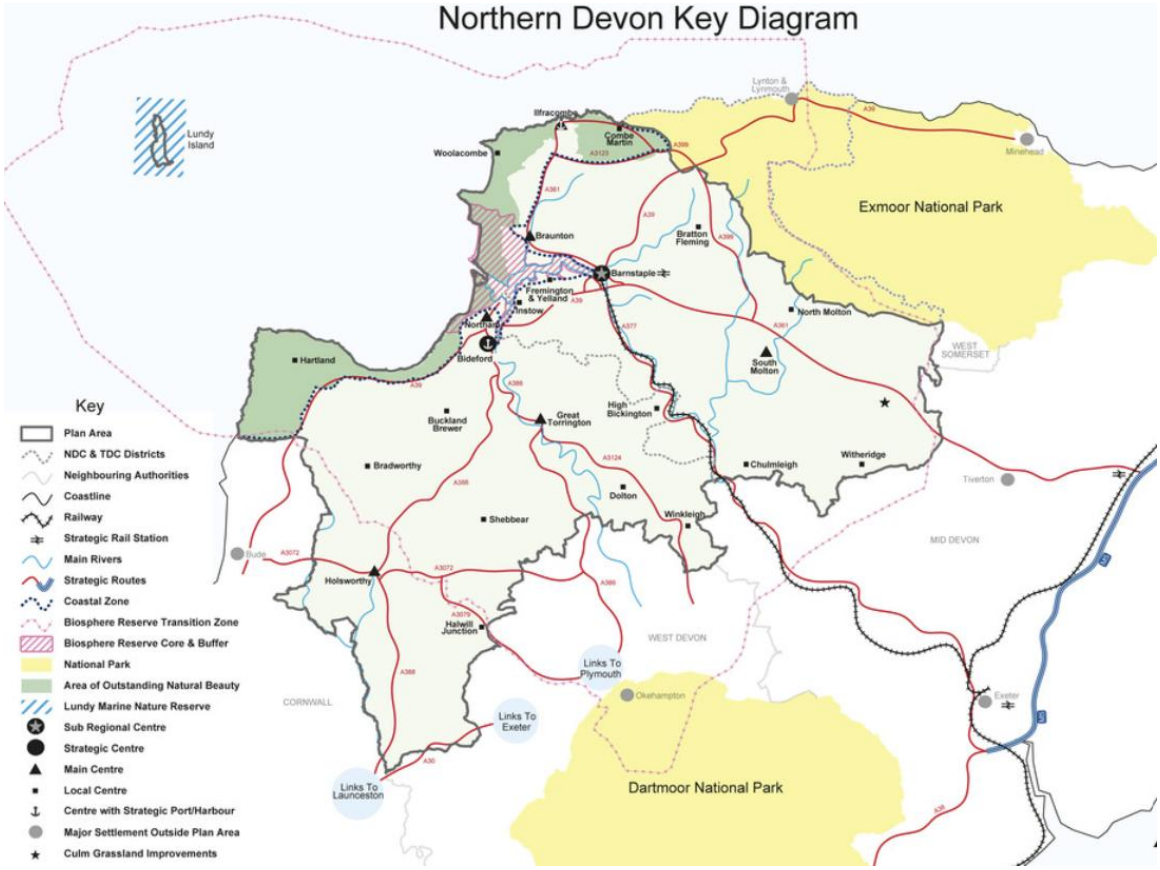
The boundary between Torridge District Council and North Devon District Council crosses the former railway way line to Bideford and Torrington around ½ km north of the former Bideford station.



Bideford, East-the-Water, Northam, Appledore and Westward Ho! are covered by Torridge District Council. Instow, Yelland, Fremington, Bickington, Roundswell and Barnstaple are covered by North Devon District Council. Both districts are within Devon County Council's remit for transport matters.

Sketch map: author

The following map[15] from the *North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2011-2031* locates the former railway considered in this document within the wider geographical context:



Torridge and North Devon District Councils and Bideford and Barnstaple Town Councils

All four authorities have passed resolutions supportive of the reinstatement of train services between Bideford and Exeter. Copies of the resolutions are contained in the leaflet publicising the inaugural meeting of the

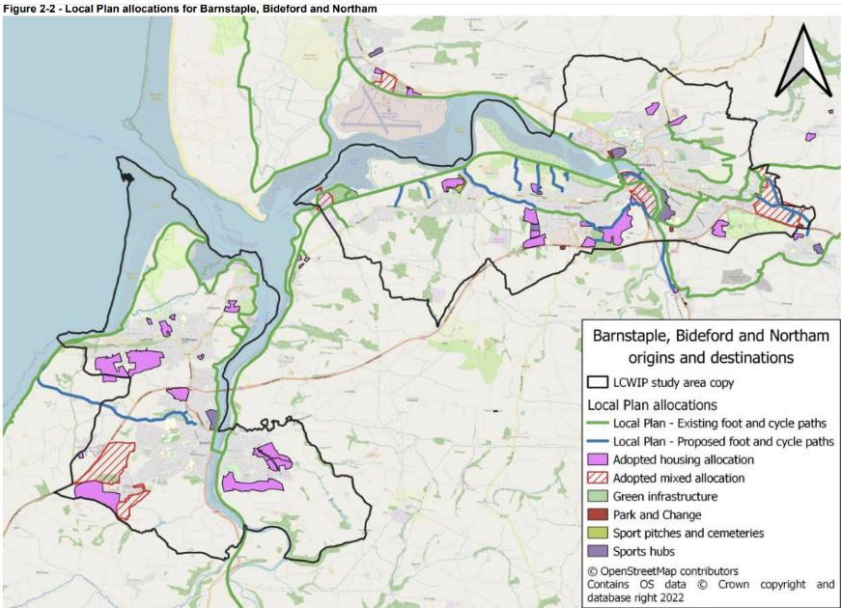
[15] https://consult.torridge.gov.uk/kse/event/33615/section/

Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance (NDRDA) in Annex E. Torridge and North Devon District Councils reiterated their written support for reinstating train services to Bideford in their joint December 2024 response[16] to the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) Consultation.

Two days before the inaugural event, Northam Town Council committed to membership of the NDRDA; one day before the inaugural event, Fremington Parish Council committed a representative to the NDRDA. It is understood that Torridge District Council is planning to publish an economic strategy, but that was not yet available at the date this document was drafted.

As planning authorities, Torridge and North Devon District Councils' joint *North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2011-2031* sets out where residential and other development is expected to take place. It explains that: "Development will continue to be focused at the Taw-Torridge estuary settlements of Barnstaple and Bideford with further growth planned for all northern Devon towns". Bideford, as the only 'Strategic Centre' (see previous map): "will provide a focus for housing and employment development. Significant levels of development will be accommodated in Bideford consistent with its scale and its complementary role to Barnstaple, which is classified as a 'Sub Regional Centre'. Sustainable development opportunities will be secured to increase self-containment and achieve balanced development to enable the town to meet its own needs and those of the surrounding area". Northam ('Main Centre') and Instow, and Yelland/Fremington ('Local Centre') will also have roles to play in development in the area covered by this document. The adjacent map from the the *Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan*[17] shows the development locations[18].

Figure 2-2 - Local Plan allocations for Barnstaple, Bideford and Northam



Since this map was published, the Government has said that substantial increases in local housing will be needed in all parts of the country and that targets will be mandatory[19]: "In addition to restoring mandatory housing targets, the method used to calculate them, which relied on decade old data, will be updated. The new method will require councils to ensure homes are built in the right places and development is proportionate to the size of existing communities, while adding an extra level of ambition in the most unaffordable areas.

The first port of call for development will be brownfield land. Reforms announced today will make explicit that the default answer to brownfield development should be "yes" and promote homebuilding at greater densities in urban centres, like towns and cities. To help deliver 1.5 million homes over the next five years, councils will have to review their green belt land if needed to meet their own target, identifying and prioritising 'grey belt' land, which the government has today set out a definition for. This includes land on the edge of existing settlements or roads, as well as old petrol stations and car parks."

[16] https://www.torridge.gov.uk/media/27644/Devon-and-Torbay-Local-Transport-Plan-4-2025-2040-1-October-to-30-November-2024/pdf/241129_Devon_and_Torbay_LTP4_consultation_response_from_TDC_and_NDC_locked.pdf?m=1733241744537

[17] *Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan*, Devon County Council, February 2023.

[18] The Government has put considerable emphasis on house building and suggested that increased numbers of houses will need to be built compared to previous plans.

[19] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/housing-targets-increased-to-get-britain-building-again

Torridge District Council has stated[20] that the new requirements will "mean there is now a need to deliver more than 1,300 new homes across North Devon and Torridge each year in order to meet the Government's mandatory housing targets. This is a significant increase on the amount previously required and planned for delivery." This statement emphasises the local challenges the new mandatory targets will bring.

An initial focus on brownfield sites and greater density in urban centres, if achievable, would help a rail scheme such as Bideford train service reinstatement, where distance usage declines with distance from a station. The work undertaken by SLC Rail shows that the Bideford train service reinstatement scheme is likely to have the best financial results in the event that not only housing in the existing plan are built, but also those included in new targets. As a more sustainable mode of transport, the Bideford train service reinstatement scheme could help mitigate the local challenges in meeting the new mandatory housing targets highlighted by Torridge District Council.

Devon County Council Strategic Plan[21]

Devon County Council's Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 sets out the Council's vision of Devon as "the best place to Grow Up, Live Well and Prosper". The Plan says that it "focuses on how we will help the county to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, build on the resilience of local people and communities to create a fairer, healthier and more caring place, and grasp the opportunity to create a greener, more prosperous and inclusive future for all."

The Plan sets out five challenges:

- "Climate Change: Climate change poses a serious threat to quality of life now and for the future generations";
- "Devon's Changing Population: Devon's population is ageing and growing, with proportionately more older people when compared nationally";
- "Fairness and Equality: COVID-19 has brought to wider consciousness inequalities within society, in areas from healthcare to technology";
- "Trust and Confidence: Research during the pandemic shows that trust in local government and feelings of local unity have remained higher than at the national level, and local communities have become more important than ever"; and
- "Financial Resilience and Prosperity: The pandemic has caused an economic decline not witnessed in the UK since the 1930s. Even before the pandemic, Devon was home to the District area with the lowest average wages in the UK[22]".

The Plan's priorities include Making Devon Greener by prioritising sustainable travel and transport. It will also support Economic Recovery and Growth and Helping Communities be Safe, Connected and Resilient by delivering infrastructure which will increase the range of travel choices and improving accessibility to jobs and services, tackling social isolation in rural parts of the County.

Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan

The *Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4, 2025-2040*[23] (LTP) is the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority's statutory Local Transport Plan, setting out how the transport networks will meet the strategic priorities of both council areas covered and continue to serve the economy, the environment and society. It considers transport connectivity needs to other parts of Britain and abroad as well as transport needs in the

[20] https://www.torridge.gov.uk/article/22110/New-government-housing-requirements-impact-councils-housing-land-supply

[21] *Best place - Devon County Council Plan 2021 – 2025*, Devon County Council, 2021: https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s46163/Best%20Place%20Strategic%20Plan%202021-2025%20Progess%20Report%20FINAL.pdf

[22] West Devon according to Office for National Statistics. ONS ASHE Table 8 shows a median weekly wage of £407.70 with a mean weekly wage of £466.50 for West Devon. Torridge: median £464.00/mean £466.50. Exeter: median £475.00/mean £545.60. Broadly, the median is a 'typical' wage, while the mean is a mathematical average. Larger upwards discrepancies between median and mean tend to show that there are more higher earners.

[23] https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-information/transport-planning/devon-local-transport-plan-4-2025-2040/

Combined County Authority area. The 2025-2040 LTP was formally adopted in July 2025, replacing the *Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 3 2011-2026* [24]*.*

The 2025-2040 LTP comprises an overall Vision, with the analysis of needs and proposed solutions is contained in a 'place-based strategy' incorporating four areas sharing characteristics. A summary Action Plan concludes the document.

The four place-based strategy groups are Exeter, Torbay, Growth Areas and Rural Devon & Market/ Coastal Towns. Bideford, Northam and Barnstaple are included in the Growth Areas category as a single area. The Growth Areas are described as: "larger market towns that are identified in District Council Local Plans as areas for significant new economic and residential development. The levels of development will be large enough to support new transport, education and community facilities. These areas have maturing walking, wheeling and cycling networks and frequent public transport connections."

Within each place-based strategy, there is analysis against the six elements of the overall Vision:

- *"Decarbonisation* Reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and a 50% reduction against 2010 levels by 2030, by reducing the need to travel, increasing digital access and shifting trips to sustainable transport and fuels."
- *"Reliability and resilience* Protecting and enhancing the reliability, resilience and safety of the local transport network and the strategic road and rail links that connect Devon and Torbay to the rest of the country."
- *"Easier travel* Increasing bus and rail patronage by providing well-integrated, inclusive and reliable transport options for residents and visitors in both rural and urban communities."
- *"Unlocking development* Supporting delivery of clean growth and regeneration by improving transport choices and use of technology to ensure new housing and employment developments are well connected."
- *"Greater places for people* Enhancing the attractiveness and safety of the built, natural and historic environment by improving air quality, public realm and reducing the number of people harmed on our roads." and
- *"The place to be naturally active* Enabling people to be more active with improved public health outcomes by expanding the multi-use trail network, delivering a network of quiet lanes and improving facilities and safety in urban areas."

The analysis in the Growth Areas section of the LTP puts considerable emphasis on the contribution transport improvements can make to the considerable housing challenges emerging in part as a result of the upwards revision of housing targets: "The following sections describe the scale of previously identified development in existing or emerging Local Plans; however, following the release of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, there is potential for housing targets in these areas to be increased. The large level of development in these growth areas mean they will: 1) Support new education and community facilities within the development. 2) Increase demand for local services. 3) Require new transport infrastructure to provide access and unlock sites. 4) Require sustainable travel choices to ensure safe and suitable access and/or mitigate the impact of new development." There are two key additions for the purposes of this document compared to the *LTP 2011-2026.* The new LTP says that the Combined County Authority will:

- "work with partners and support ongoing feasibility work for the potential extension of the North Devon Line to Bideford"; and
- "Working with the rail industry we will prioritise making the case for enhancing services on the North Devon Line to provide a half hourly frequency and journey times to Exeter of under an hour."

Peninsula Transport Peninsula Rail Strategy

Peninsula Transport, the Sub-National Transport Body (STB) established in 2018 covering Cornwall, Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay, has published a strategy[25] outlining how "rail underpins the region's future

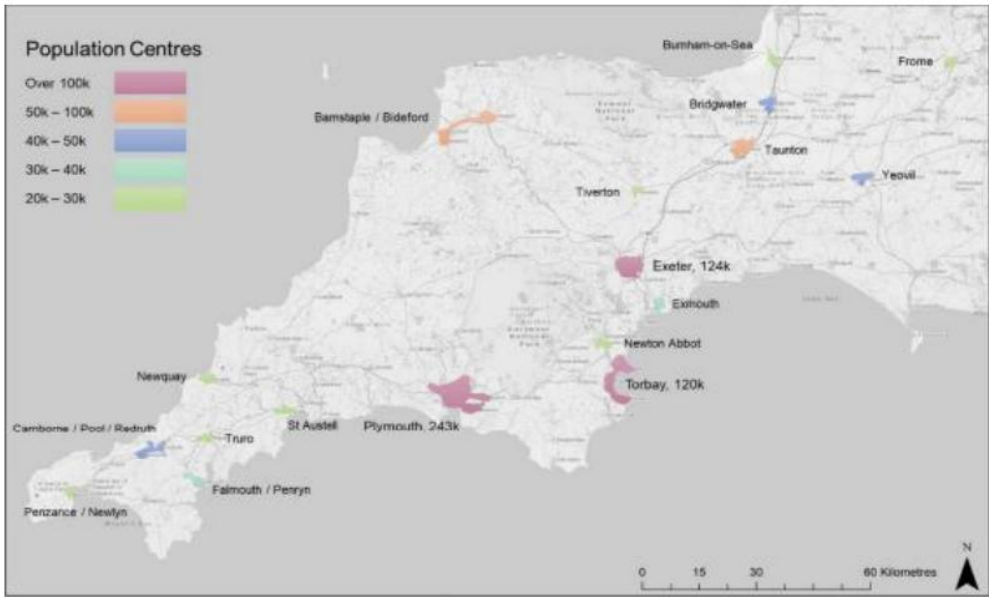
[24] *Local Transport Plan – Devon and Torbay Strategy 2011 – 2026*, Devon County Council and Torbay Council, April 2011: https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-information/transport-planning/devon-and-torbay-local-transport-plan-3-2011-2026/

[25] *Peninsula Rail Strategy*, Peninsula Transport, July 2023. Peninsula Transport's wider Transport Strategy includes direct references to the *Peninsula Rail Strategy*.

economic growth while helping to meet climate goals". The *Peninsula Rail Strategy* includes the following table summarising the impacts of not investing in rail in the Peninsula given the characteristics of the area described in the report, the challenges it faces, the forecast outcomes arising from those characteristics and changes and the impacts that would result:

CHARACTERISTICS	CHALLENGES	OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
Growing and ageing population	Significant travel demand growth	Congestion and journey time unreliability	Social isolation
Large and growing rural and coastal population		Pinch points in towns and cities	Increased living costs
Key facilities in urban areas		Dependency on private car trips	Housing affordability challenge
Structural shift to the knowledge economy	Risk of exacerbation if bus patronage declines	Development pressures	Knowledge sector constrained by labour
Continued importance of leisure & tourism	Somewhat offset by change to working patterns		Leisure economy less attractive
Renowned natural environment			Carbon burden increases
			Financial pressure on highway authorities

The *Peninsula Rail Strategy* includes the following map, which shows the area covering Barnstaple, Fremington, Yelland, Bideford, Northam, Appledore and Westward Ho! as constituting one of only five population clusters larger than 50,000 in the entire Peninsula.



The area encompassing Bideford, East-the-Water, Northam, Appledore and Westward Ho! is one of the larger places in Britain with no direct access to the rail network. Network Rail has calculated that it is the 19th largest of such places.

The *Peninsula Rail Strategy* includes the following among a number of key challenges highlighted: "There are concerns that poor connectivity – such as the long journey times required to reach the more rural areas – is posing a barrier to growth and prosperity. This is paralleled by a desire to reduce deprivation, both in the rural regions and in several urban 'pockets' that are relatively poorly served by public transport of any form, local or strategic."

The *Peninsula Rail Strategy* concludes that there is a need for additional rail stations and line reopenings in order to increase the catchment area rail is able to serve effectively: "whilst the use of rail on a park-and-ride basis is well established, for long term transition to sustainability access to railway stations by walking, cycling or public transport should be encouraged. To do this, there is scope to reopen or build new stations so that a greater portion of the population live within 10 km of a station and are more likely to access it by sustainable modes. A series of new stations are either under construction or in development across the peninsula, and stakeholders hold aspirations for further openings to extend the reach of the network." Bideford, East-the-Water, Northam, Westward Ho! and Appledore are all more than 10 km from the nearest station at Barnstaple.

The *Peninsula Rail Strategy* highlights that Exeter is, compared to other larger centres in the region, unusually attractive as a destination by rail: "At the time of the 2011 Census, 6.91% of trips into Exeter City Centre were made by rail, above the national average rail mode share of 3% and putting the city as the top in the region for rail usage as a means of travelling to work. … the city enjoys excellent rail connectivity from all directions, serving as the confluence of two branch lines, the western terminus of the long-distance services from Waterloo and a key junction for long distance services through the region from London and the North East. This situation is likely to have improved since the 2011 Census, following service frequency enhancements on the line to Barnstaple and on the Great Western Mainline, as well as improved journey times for trains to London and the east of England."

Peninsula Transport Strategic Implementation Plan

As a well as a Strategy, each STB must also produce a *Strategic Implementation Plan* (SIP) "to provide guidance to ministers on the prioritisation and sequencing of strategic transport projects and schemes for the peninsula."[26] The update paper says that a SIP is: "An Implementation plan document for the PT Strategy, which clearly sets out the regional priorities for the region and a strategic document providing advice to ministers for investment." The aim is to ensure that schemes included in an SIP are genuinely of regional rather than solely local importance.

Peninsula Transport's final SIP[27] published on 28 May 2025 includes the Bideford train service reinstatement scheme.

Devon Climate Emergency Declaration

The *Devon Climate Emergency Declaration*[28] was announced in 2019 by a consortium of public, private and voluntary organisations collaborating through a Devon Climate Emergency Response Group. Devon County Council, North Devon District Council and Torridge District Council are partners. The Declaration "sets out an ambition to tackle climate change that covers all of Devon" The Declaration recognises "that carbon emissions must reduce globally by at least 45% by 2030 from 2010 levels and reach net-zero by 2050 if we are to avoid the worst effects of climate change by keeping warming below 1.5 degrees".

The *Declaration* includes a direct reference to transport in a plan to be developed to address the climate challenge: "Travelling less and using improved walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure more often, and using electric and hydrogen vehicles".

The accompanying *Devon Carbon Plan* explains how net zero carbon could be achieved in Devon by 2050. In relation to transport, it prioritises cycling, walking, shared and public transport. The *Devon Carbon Plan* includes a set of actions to achieve the net zero carbon goal. Reflecting Devon's successes in opening new stations and rail lines, it concludes that: "Further opportunities must be taken to work with government to reopen and provide new stations and infrastructure as demand for sustainable travel options grows".

Action T21 says the partners will "work with government to improve strategic and branch line rail infrastructure and services, including reviewing the reopening of lines and increasing access to rail and integration with other modes of transport".

Alignment with National Policy

English Devolution

The Government's English devolution policy as set out in the 2024 White Paper[29] is in particular concerned with regional socio-economic development. The White Paper cites rail improvements sponsored locally by existing English authorities with devolved powers such as Transport for London and Liverpool as prime

[26] https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s48857/PTB%20240613%20Item%204%20Peninsula%20Transport%20SIP%20v.final.pdf An STB board paper explaining SIPs and the proposed approach to developing one for Peninsula Transport.

[27] https://www.peninsulatransport.org.uk/news-articles/peninsula-transport-strategic-implementation-plan-2025-2050/

[28] devonclimateemergency.org.uk. The *Devon Carbon Plan* is included on the same website.

[29] *English Devolution White Paper – Power and Partnership: Foundations for Growth*, 16 December 2024: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper

examples of the success of existing English devolution arrangements and that improved transport can be key to improving prosperity.

The White Paper (section 3.3.) states: "High quality transport infrastructure supports growth and opportunity. Bringing decisions about transport closer to people is key to improving the transport networks we rely on every day. We will therefore empower Strategic Authorities to take greater oversight of their local transport networks".

On rail specifically, the White Paper says that the new Great British Railways will be underpinned by: "A statutory role for Mayors in governing, managing, planning, and developing the rail network, to further embed collaboration and bring decision-making as close as possible to local communities.".

Devolution depends on institutional changes beyond the scope of this document, including the abolition of district councils and the creation of larger strategic authorities emulating the mayoral combined authorities already found in some parts of the country. The White Paper anticipates that most devolution will be led by Mayoral Strategic Authorities. Devon County Council and Torbay Council have already made the first steps towards the creation of such a body through combining to create a non-mayoral Combined County Authority. At the date of this document, the final geographical extent of a Strategic Authority covering the Devon area remained unresolved.

The locally-sponsored train service reinstatement scheme covered by this document is consistent with the direction of travel indicated in the White Paper.

National Infrastructure Strategy

The *UK Infrastructure: A 10 Year Strategy*[30] covers all types of infrastructure, including transport. It supports investment in improving transport infrastructure, citing in particular the economic benefits that can result (paragraph 3.4): "Better transport infrastructure boosts growth by reducing travel time for businesses, better matching workers' skills to high quality jobs, increasing the economic density of the country, enabling firms to access a wider selection of potential suppliers and customers, and supporting trade."

There is a particular emphasis on improving access to cities and larger towns (paragraph 3.15): "When towns and villages are well connected to more productive cities, this enables residents to access employment in the city and benefit from improved connectivity." While the primary focus in this document is on Northern/Mid Devon, the emphasis on the needs of cities is consistent with the Exeter's needs for better accessibility also discussed in this document.

The *Strategy* also covers the impacts of climate change on infrastructure, in particular the need for greater flood resilience: "To support a long-term vision for flood resilience, the government will also explore setting a long-term multi-decade target for flood risk management in line with prior recommendations made by the National Audit Office and National Infrastructure Commission." This is important given the largely coastal location of the proposed route and is explored further later in this document.

By way of context, Torridge and North Devon District Councils published in August 2025 *Coastal Change Management, Coastal Change Technical Evidence, 2025 Update*[31]. This includes maps of the Torridge and Taw estuaries and rivers showing the potential extent of flooding in "a theoretical 'worst-case' scenario for what might happen over the next 100 years when taking account of potential rises in sea levels associated with climate change", noting that the "maps do not take account of any existing flood defences, nor reflect any future works for protection, which have the potential to reduce the potential impacts."

While noting these important caveats, the maps do show potential impacts on significant parts of the coastal alignment of the former railway to Bideford. However, they also show the existing railway line to Barnstaple to be affected, the important B3233 road linking Barnstaple and Bideford via Fremington and Instow, together with significant parts of towns and other larger inhabited areas such as Barnstaple, Bideford and Braunton. Clearly, the Bideford railway is not the only thing affected by flooding risk. As explored elsewhere in this document, the railway could also form an important part of the answer to this issue.

[30] HM Treasury, 11 June 2025, *UK Infrastructure: A 10 Year Strategy*: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6853c5db99b009dcdcb73649/UK_Infrastructure_A_10_Year_Strategy_Web_Accessible.pdf

[31] https://consult.torridge.gov.uk/kse/folder/92719

Climate Change: Net Zero

In 2008, the UK set a legally-binding target to bring greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. The Government's climate change strategy[32] confirms this aim. The *Strategy* was published in 2021, but has been retained by the new government elected in 2024. The strategy says that "domestic transport has the largest share of UK greenhouse gas emissions of any sector across the economy, at 23% in 2019. The majority (55%) of these emissions are from passenger cars." The strategy also confirms that: "We will build extra capacity on our rail network … This includes … reopening lines closed under the Beeching cuts."

Department for Transport

The Department for Transport sets out the following three priorities on its web site[33]:

- Grow the economy by enhancing the transport network, on time and on budget;
- Improve transport users' experience, ensuring that the network is safe, reliable, and inclusive;
- Reduce environmental impacts by tackling climate change and improving air quality by decarbonising transport.

In *A railway fit for Britain's future*[34] published in February 2025, Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Transport set out six objectives for the reorganisation of the railways associated with the nationalisation of the franchises and the creation of Great British Railways:

- "**Reliable** – so that people can have confidence in their journey;
- **Affordable** – so that prices are kept, wherever possible, at a point that works for both passengers and taxpayers;
- **Efficient** – so that people know their journey will be as straightforward as possible, from booking to travel, and to provide better value for the travelling public and taxpayer alike;
- **Quality** – so that passengers have the service experience they have a right to expect;
- **Accessible** – so that our railways are available for everyone to use; and
- **Safe** – so that people do not worry about their safety on the railway and are not in fear of accidents or crime when travelling."

Reinstatement of train services to Bideford on a modern extension of the existing Exeter to Barnstaple railway line has a good fit both with the Department's wider priorities and the rail-specific objectives. In particular, it would help improve the punctuality and reliability of that route, even if no full modernisation of the Barnstaple line itself is undertaken. As explained in this document, new rail infrastructure to Bideford would promote social mobility and help tackle regional inequality and would provide a new, more sustainable transport option.

The Railways Bill[35] providing for the proposed reorganisation of the railways was introduced into Parliament in November 2025. The Bill is largely structural in nature, providing the necessary legal framework for the creation of a vertically-integrated Great British Railways, a new funding structure and permanent national ownership of train operations. Much of how the railway will be managed in the future and its wider direction and strategy will depend on things developed outside of the legislation itself under powers given by it. The current rail organisational structures with separate funding lines for infrastructure and train operations/stations may make the vision outlined in this document more difficult. It is noted that the proposed new structures for the railway involving Great British Railways, which are expressly intended to bring the management of the infrastructure and train services back together ('vertical integration'), are designed to reduce the impact of such barriers and could therefore facilitate schemes such as this one.

Summary

Drawing these strands together, there is a strong strategic focus at district, county, regional and national level on climate, socio-economic and demographic challenges. Rail is identified, as part of a wider focus on public and active transport, as a key strategic enabler. Very significant spatial disparities are identified between different parts of the county of Devon, which also has several of the localities with the lowest wages in the UK.

[32] *Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener*, UK Government, October 2021.

[33] https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/about

[34] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67b30eb94a80c6718b55bdf6/a-railway-fit-for-britains-future-print.pdf

[35] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/railways-bill

As part of a wider trend, larger towns and cities such as Exeter are growing in relative attractiveness compared to smaller towns and villages.

In county, regional and national policies, investment in reinstated railway lines is endorsed strategically as a way of addressing such spatial disparities. This allows easier access to growing employment centres in larger urban areas such as Exeter, which are also growing in importance for other services and facilities such as health care, education, training, leisure and retail. Exeter is identified as a city in which rail plays a particularly important and growing role. There is a particular focus on increasing the market share of active travel and public transport within the wider context of promotion of sustainability and tackling climate change.

At the date of this document, the Government was making changes to the wider national policy environment, in particular dropping the 'levelling up' policy. It is not clear how emerging new national policies might affect this business case, but there is a good fit between this scheme to reinstate train services to Bideford and the new Department for Transport priorities and the wider thrust in support of a greater local role in enhancing the rail network under the English devolution White Paper.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG): Local Outcomes Framework

The MHCLG has published a *Local Outcomes Framework*[36] establishing "a shared focus on the outcomes most important for achieving our collective aims and ultimately to raise living standards across England. The outcomes in the framework represent many of the most important responsibilities of local government underlining the essential part local government plays in achieving national priorities." The *Framework* sets out 16 Priority Outcomes, with the one covering Transport and Local Infrastructure expressed in terms of an ambition that: "Communities are better connected with healthier, safer, and greener transport that meets the needs of all users and drives growth." The *Framework* says that: "The transport and local infrastructure priority outcome reflects the role local authorities play in shaping local transport networks that enable the delivery of national and local ambitions, such as driving economic growth and increasing connectivity and inclusion."

The scheme discussed in this document has strong alignment with this Priority Outcome. The *Framework*'s emphasis on the role of local authorities in shaping local/regional transport ambitions and vision is consistent with the angle taken in the Management Case of this document.

The Case for Change

The Department for Transport's guidance requires the Strategic Case to determine the rationale for a transport intervention, in particular by setting out the problem that requires a solution, what can be done and what outcomes are expected to be achieved.

The need for an intervention

The *Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4, 2025-2040*[37] says that the Combined County Authority will: "work with partners and support ongoing feasibility work for the potential extension of the North Devon Line to Bideford." It cites a number of potential benefits that could ensue, but is less analytical than its predecessor LTP as to the underlying reasons supporting the options chosen.

The *Transport Strategy for the Market & Coastal Towns and Rural Areas* contained in the *Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 3*[38]*, 2011-2026* provides a more analytical description of the challenges: "the trend towards the centralization and specialisation of services and facilities mean [sic] that these towns [including Bideford][39] cannot survive without effective and reliable transport links. Whilst many were still quite self-contained in terms of employment opportunities, it was recognised that increasingly the trend for employment growth would be in areas such as Barnstaple, Exeter, Newton Abbot, Plymouth and Torbay. The road, including bus travel, and rail links to these centres are critical and should therefore form the core of the strategy."

[36] 9 February 2026: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-outcomes-framework/local-outcomes-framework#priority-outcomes

[37] https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-information/transport-planning/devon-local-transport-plan-4-2025-2040/

[38] *Local Transport Plan – Devon and Torbay Strategy 2011 – 2026*, Devon County Council and Torbay Council, April 2011.

[39] Market & Coastal Towns, the list of which in the *Strategy* includes Barnstaple, Bideford, Crediton, Great Torrington, Ilfracombe, Lynton/Lynmouth and Okehampton, all either directly served by the Exeter to Barnstaple railway line or connected to it by bus links.

The *Strategic Outline Business Case*[40] for reopening the railway to Tavistock makes the same basic argument: "patterns of growth in the South-West Peninsula have seen a steady trend towards concentration of activity at major settlements such as Plymouth and Exeter, together with expansion around subregional towns linked to the economies of the larger major regional centres."

Alongside these patterns of spatial activity, there has been a growing view that the demand for travel cannot be accommodated by unconstrained car use, which creates congestion on the highway network and reinforces the social exclusion experienced by those without access to a car. Sustainable transport connectivity is required to meet a range of national, regional and local policies.

The *Peninsula Rail Strategy*[41] says: "whilst the use of rail on a park-and-ride basis is well established, for long term transition to sustainability access to railway stations by walking, cycling or public transport should be encouraged. To do this, there is scope to reopen or build new stations so that a greater portion of the population live within 10 km of a station and are more likely to access it by sustainable modes". Bideford, East-the-Water, Northam, Westward Ho! and Appledore, which would fall within the catchment area of a reinstated station at Bideford, are all more than 10 km from the nearest current station at Barnstaple.

Why should train services to Bideford be reinstated – what problems could that help solve?

Very weak socio-economic conditions in Northern Devon: Bideford, nearby urban areas and the wider Torridge district register unusually poorly on a wide range of socio-economic indicators. The trend towards the centralisation and specialisation of services and facilities means that many people need to travel to Exeter and beyond for work, education, health care, leisure and other purposes, even with countervailing initiatives to maintain local self-containment.

The physical peripherality of Northern Devon inhibits the development of stronger areas of the local economy: The local economy has strengths in the growing sectors of defence, renewable energy, tourism and other fields. Key employers report that weaknesses in transport provision make it harder to recruit permanent staff. 'Hard-to-recruit' specialists such as sub-contractors from other parts of the country need to travel inwards to support these developing areas of the economy.

Long journey times for all transport modes result in physical peripherality: Bideford and other places in Torridge are poorly connected by all transport modes with Exeter and beyond. Car journeys are long and slow and suffer from congestion, in particular in Exeter and Barnstaple. Public transport journeys are longer and slower still, with slow, infrequent through bus services to/from Exeter. Combined bus-rail journeys are made uncompetitive with car by slow local road conditions and the need to interchange between bus and train at Barnstaple.

More sustainable transport modes have a low market share for travel within and to/from Northern Devon: Devon County Council has concluded that coastal and market towns including Bideford "cannot survive without effective and reliable transport links". Current transport provision is not a suitable basis for sustainable future growth and development. Car travel has a very high share of the local travel market. Restoring train services would allow more sustainable train, bus and active travel modes to take a higher share of that market. While restoration of train services cannot solve all the problems and issues experienced in an area alone, putting a town and its surrounding areas back on the national rail map can play an important part in addressing those issues.

SMART Objectives

To address these points, sustainable transport connectivity on the Bideford – Barnstaple - Exeter corridor needs to be improved. The following objectives are proposed, adapted from objectives listed in the Tavistock railway reopening SOBC[42]. The objectives have been drafted with a view to ensuring realisation of key elements of the local and regional strategies.

[40] Devon County Council - *Tavistock-Plymouth Line Reopening Strategic Outline Business Case – Restoring Your Railway: RYR387,* 22 September 2022: https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/outline-business-case-submitted-for-reopening-tavistock-to-plymouth-rail-line/

[41] *Peninsula Rail Strategy*, Peninsula Transport, July 2023.

[42] Devon County Council - *Tavistock-Plymouth Line Reopening Strategic Outline Business Case – Restoring Your Railway: RYR387,* 22 September 2022: https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/outline-business-case-submitted-for-reopening-tavistock-to-plymouth-rail-line/

There are also important differences between the Bideford and Tavistock schemes. The adoption of similar objectives is more a measure of alignment with, and pursuit of, the wider themes and issues identified by the Devon & Torbay Combined County Authority, Devon County Council, Peninsula Transport and the UK government and the strategic ambitions deriving from them than from a claim that these rail schemes are close at a detailed level. Equally, there is strong congruence with the objectives of the train service reinstatement scheme on the Northumberland Line between Newcastle and Ashington[43] [44], although again different in many ways from the Bideford scheme (on existing freight-only lines with new stations in former mining and industrial areas). Given the number of 'golden threads' linking the national strategies with regional and local strategies, it would be odd if there was not a strong degree of congruence in objectives between schemes across the country, even taking account of the clear differences.

Objective 1)

Improve socio-economic conditions in the Bideford and wider Torridge areas by reducing the negative impacts of peripherality, assisting in lifting productivity, prosperity and local economic growth:

- **Specific:** Deliver a better transport service that puts Bideford and Torridge on the British national rail map.
- **Measurable:** Statistics are available on business and numbers of jobs in the area, together with average wages and economic growth.
- **Achievable**: A train service allowing better accessibility to employment opportunities, a wider workforce and improved connectivity with the rest of the country with shorter journey times.
- **Realistic**: The objective realises key elements of Devon County Council and Peninsula Transport's strategies against a backdrop of strongly growing rail usage on the Barnstaple line and the South West more generally, even post-pandemic.
- **Time bound:** A monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed as outlined in the Management Case.

Objective 2)

Add low-carbon capacity, choice, resilience and reliability to the area's transport network to contribute towards decarbonising transport on the Torridge/North Devon - Exeter corridor:

- **Specific**: Modal shift from car to rail on the Torridge-Exeter corridor.
- **Measurable**: Statistics are available on modal share and rail reliability/punctuality.
- **Achievable**: Needs investment in the rail scheme and support for the new train service.
- **Realistic**: The objective realises key elements of Devon County Council and Peninsula Transport's strategies against a backdrop of strongly growing rail usage on the Barnstaple line and the South West more generally, even post-pandemic.
- **Time bound**: A monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed as outlined in the Management Case.

Objective 3)

Enable rail and more sustainable active and public transport modes to take an increased share of overall transport demand, supporting and mitigating the impacts of current and expected future demand growth, including where driven by increasing local population and planned housing expansion:

- **Specific**: This reflects the currently poor bus and bus-rail journey times compared to car based journeys.
- **Measurable**: Statistics on modal share for active and public transport are available.
- **Achievable**: Requires investment in the rail scheme. The level and structure of train service provision should be sufficient to encourage modal switch to rail.
- **Realistic**: The objective realises key elements of Devon County Council and Peninsula Transport's strategies against a backdrop of strongly growing rail usage on the Barnstaple line and the South West more generally, even post-pandemic.

[43] "1): Facilitate economic activity, employment growth and the delivery of housing sites within South East Northumberland and the wider region. 2): Create mode shift from car to public transport to improve local air quality and reduce highway congestion at key bottlenecks on the highway network between South East Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle. 3): Improve public transport accessibility for commuting, retail and leisure trips between South East Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle."

[44] https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Studies%20and%20Evidence%20Reports/Infrastructure%20Studies/Northumberland-Line-Strategic-Outline-Business-Case-March-2019.pdf

- **Time bound**: A monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed as outlined in the Management Case.

Objective 4)

Enhance access to employment opportunities, education and healthcare in Exeter and beyond for Bideford and Torridge residents and facilitate access to 'hard-to-recruit' jobs in Bideford and Torridge for people outside these areas:

- **Specific**: This reflects the currently poor bus and bus-rail journey times compared to car based journeys.
- **Measurable**: Statistics on modal share for active and public transport are available.
- **Achievable**: A train service allowing better accessibility to employment, education and healthcare in Exeter with shorter journey times.
- **Realistic**: The objective realises key elements of Devon County Council and Peninsula Transport's strategies against a backdrop of strongly growing rail usage on the Barnstaple line and the South West more generally, even post-pandemic.
- **Time bound**: A monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed as outlined in the Management Case.

Objective 5)

Improve visitor access by sustainable public transport to the natural environment, including the Tarka Trail, the South West Coast Path, the North Devon National Landscape, the UNESCO North Devon Biosphere and other coastal areas:

- **Specific**: This reflects the current dominant focus on Barnstaple as a key access point by public transport to the Tarka Trail and other visitor attractions.
- **Measurable**: Survey techniques could be used. Statistics about overnight stays and visitor spend are available.
- **Achievable**: Requires investment in the rail scheme. The level of train service provision should be sufficient to encourage modal switch to rail.
- **Realistic**: The objective realises key elements of Devon County Council and Peninsula Transport's strategies against a backdrop of strongly growing rail usage on the Barnstaple line and the South West more generally, even post-pandemic.
- **Time bound**: A monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed as outlined in the Management Case.

By way of prior word to the following analyses, this document recognises that transport improvements such as reinstated train services are fundamentally enablers to wider change: they are necessary but not sufficient in their own right. They cannot be expected to solve wider socio-economic and other issues in isolation. The Department for Transport's guidance[45] makes this clear: "Whilst it is clear that transport plays a significant role in the economy, transport interventions are unlikely to deliver transformational change in isolation."

HM Treasury defines[46] 'transformational change' as "a persisting fundamental structural change that is virtually irreversible" and adds that "planned achievement of a transformation usually requires multiple changes across many fronts organised through strategic portfolios".

Objective 1) Improve socio-economic conditions in the Bideford and wider Torridge area by reducing the negative impacts of peripherality, assisting in lifting productivity, prosperity and local economic growth

Districts alphabetical		Districts numeric		National rank out of 375 UK LAs
UK	£32,876	Exeter	£47,259	35
England	£33,809	England	£33,809	[92]
South West	£29,147	UK	£32,876	[105]
Devon CC	£24,403	South West	£29,147	[149]
East Devon	£22,480	South Hams	£27,025	177
Exeter	£47,259	North Devon	£26,765	183
Mid-Devon	£20,429	Plymouth	£25,236	223
North Devon	£26,765	Devon CC	£24,403	[241]
Plymouth	£25,236	East Devon	£22,480	278
South Hams	£27,025	Teignbridge	£22,044	286
Teignbridge	£22,044	Mid-Devon	£20,429	313
Torbay	£17,671	Torbay	£17,671	358
Torridge	£17,493	West Devon	£17,631	360
West Devon	£17,631	Torridge	£17,493	362

Torridge and indeed other adjacent parts of Devon appear very low on national rankings of economic performance. Torridge is ranked in the lowest 4% of GDP per capita for the whole of the UK. Exeter ranks much higher.

Graphic: Tim Steer, source ONS.

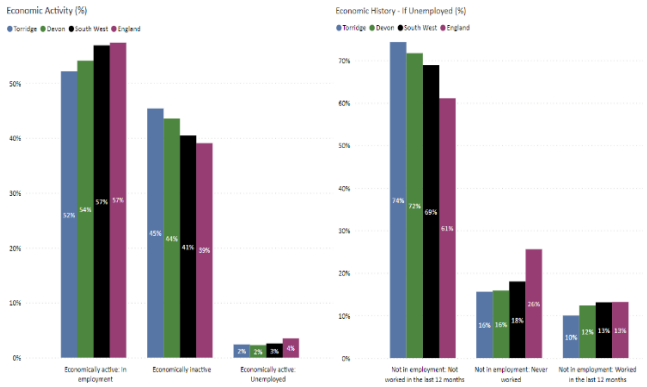
[45] Department for Transport, *Transport Business Cases: The Levelling Up Toolkit*, February 2022.

[46] Green Book Event – Levelling Up Review: ttps://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6038e8c2d3bf7f03919ad281/Green_Book_Event-_levelling_up_review.pdf

Districts alphabetical	Weekly wages		Districts numeric	Weekly wages	National rank out of 362 GB LAs
East Devon	£574.90		Exeter	£597	146
Exeter	£596.80		East Devon	£575	189
Mid-Devon	£565.80		Mid-Devon	£566	214
North Devon	£527.00		South Hams	£564	221
Plymouth	£542.40		Plymouth	£542	274
South Hams	£563.70		Torbay	£529	303
Teignbridge	£522.60		North Devon	£527	306
Torbay	£528.70		Teignbridge	£523	313
Torridge	£485.70	⟷	Torridge	£486	355
West Devon	£464.70		West Devon	£465	359

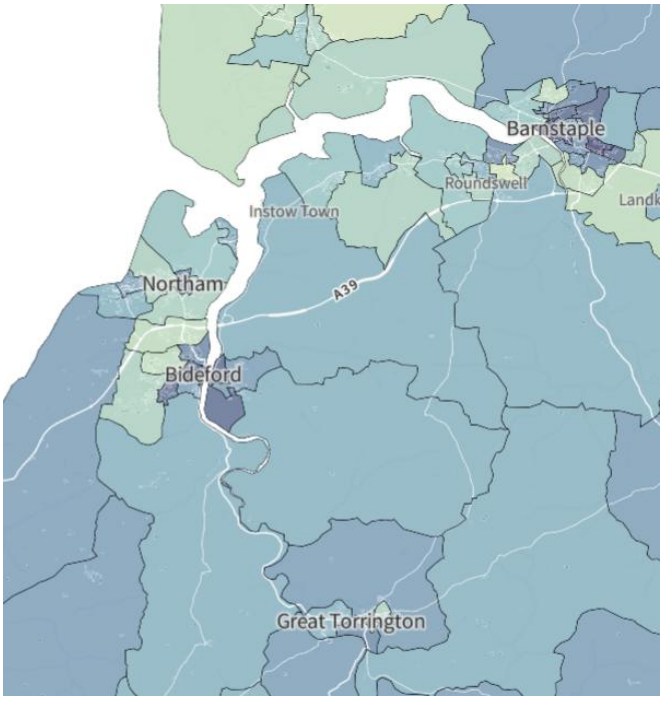
Reflecting the GDP position, Torridge ranks very low in weekly wages compared to the rest of the UK. Torridge is in the lowest 5% of districts and North Devon in the lowest 15%. Exeter ranks much higher.

Graphic: Tim Steer, source ONS.



Torridge also has lower levels of economic activity amongst its population than other parts of Devon, the South West or England more generally.

Graphic: Torridge District Council[47]



The overall picture in terms of deprivation is complex, with pockets of greater affluence (map from *English Indices of Deprivation 2025*[48] - darkest blue = most deprived, lighter blue/yellow = least deprived). However, in overall national terms, the area ranks relatively low, with some parts within the immediate area of a new Bideford station very low in national terms.

[47] www.torridge.gov.uk/profile

[48] https://deprivation.communities.gov.uk/maps?type=imd&geog=lsoa#9.99/50.9844/-4.189

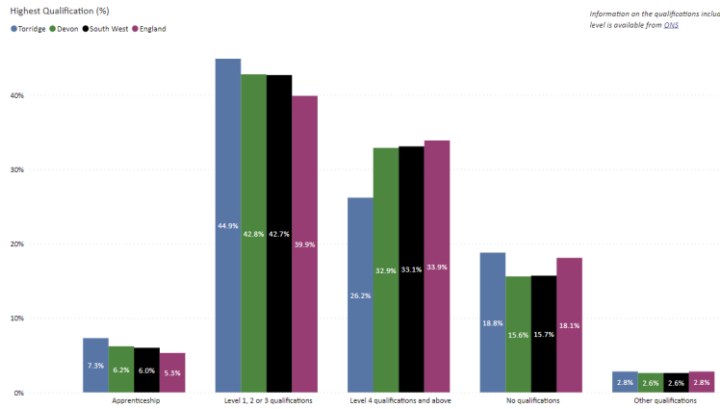
Housing affordability in Devon's 10 District & Unitary Councils, March 2021
Ratio of median house prices to median workplace-based annual earnings by LA district, England and Wales, 2021

Devon Districts, alphabetical		Districts, numeric + national rank of 331 LAs in England & Wales		
East Devon	10.88	South Hams	12.56	62
Exeter	9.22	West Devon	11.96	77
Mid-Devon	9.29	Teignbridge	11.4	91
North Devon	10.46	East Devon	10.88	104
Plymouth	7.27	North Devon	10.46	121
South Hams	12.56	Torridge	10.34	128
Teignbridge	11.4	Mid-Devon	9.29	162
Torbay	8.9	Exeter	9.22	166
Torridge	10.34	**ENGLAND**	**9.1**	**170**
West Devon	11.96	Torbay	8.9	180
ENGLAND	**9.1**	Plymouth	7.27	230

Of historic Devon County's 10 LAs, 8 have housing which is **less** affordable than the English average
Divergence in house prices compared to earnings in local authorities are becoming larger over time

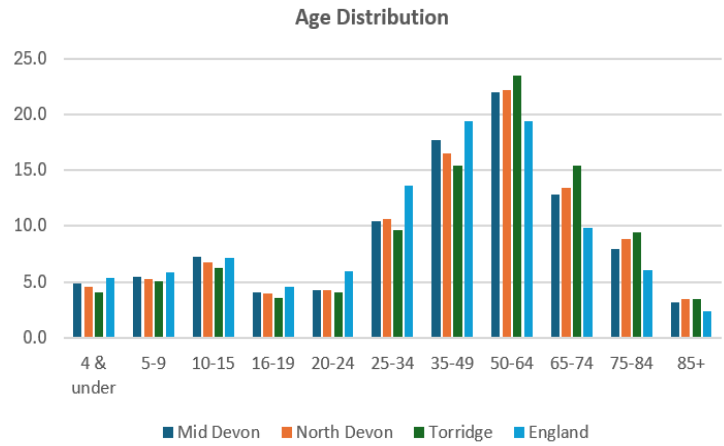
Source: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housingaffordabilityinenglandandwales/2021

Reflecting the poor earnings recorded, housing affordability in Torridge and North Devon is 15% worse than the average for England, putting Torridge and North Devon in the top 40% of least affordable districts in England. Graphic: Tim Steer



Compared to other areas, materially fewer Torridge residents have Level 4 qualifications or above, but more with Levels 1/2/3 or apprenticeships.

Source Torridge District Council from Office of National Statistics information.[49]

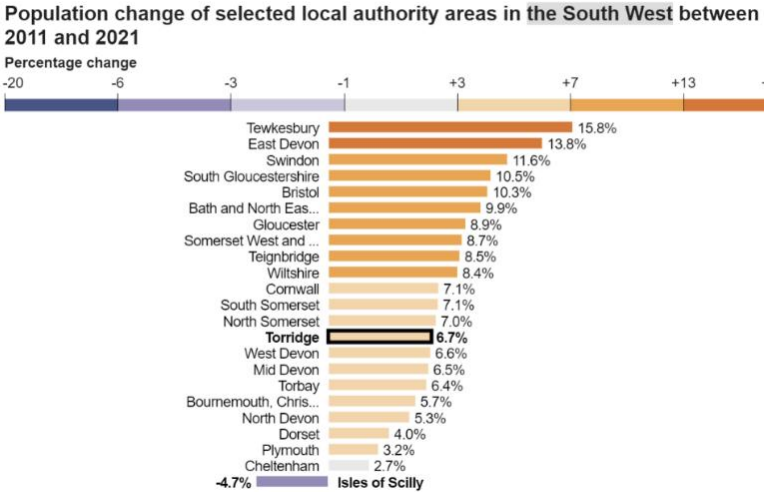


Torridge has both a smaller proportion of younger people and a much higher proportion of older people within their populations than England as a whole.

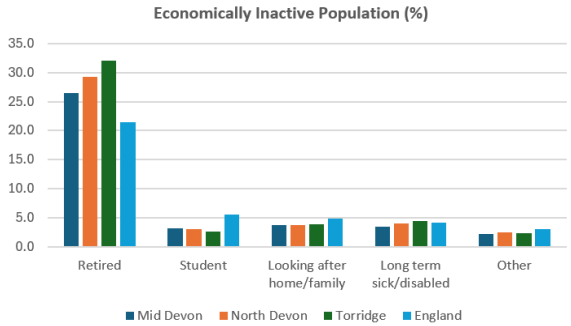
Source: chart by author using Nomis[50] 2021 Census data

[49] https://www.torridge.gov.uk/profile

[50] https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/



At 6.7%, Torridge's population increase is lower than the increase for the South West as a whole (7.8%), but is higher than for some other areas in the South West. This is a high level of population growth and suggests that many of the factors discussed in this section will continue as the number of people living in the area continues to increase, in particular with an ageing population, with many incoming residents above retirement age. There is likely to be a correlation with housing growth. Source: Office for National Statistics

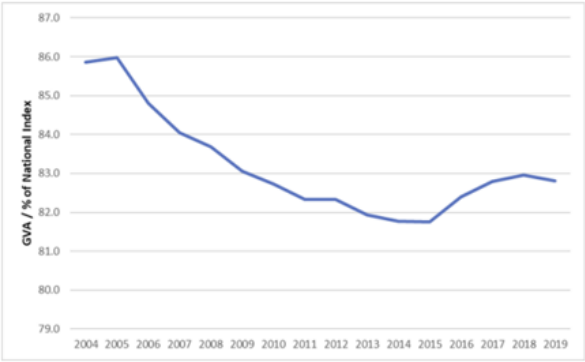


The adjacent chart shows that Torridge has a materially larger proportion of the population not economically active than both other parts of Devon and England as a whole. The higher proportion of retired people tallies with the higher age profile in Torridge. Source: Chart by author using Nomis[51] 2021 Census data

The figures in the tables above show that Torridge and North Devon rank low on a number of economic indicators directly reflecting people's everyday lives. However, they are snapshots at a particular recent time. It is also important to gain a sense of change over time and forward trend.

Two charts shown in the Tavistock railway reopening *Strategic Outline Business Case*[52] help gain that sense of change over time. Both cover Gross Value Added ("the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy"[53]), in this case for the whole of the South West. They reinforce the points made above by showing not only a productivity gap between the South West and the rest of the United Kingdom, but also that this has got materially worse over the last 20 years and that the gap is likely to continue to worsen.

Figure 2-11 - Heart of the South-West GVA/Hour - Per Cent of National Average



Source: ONS & Heart of South-West LEP

This chart shows both that there is a relative gap compared to the rest of the United Kingdom and that it has worsened considerably over nearly 20 years. Improvements since 2015 started to reverse again after 2018. It is difficult to see how it will have improved since.

[51] https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/

[52] Devon County Council - *Tavistock-Plymouth Line Reopening Strategic Outline Business Case – Restoring Your Railway: RYR387,* 22 September 2022: https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/outline-business-case-submitted-for-reopening-tavistock-to-plymouth-rail-line/

[53] Wikipedia

Figure 2-12 – Heart of the South-West GVA/Filled Job – Per Cent of National Average

Source: ONS & Heart of South-West LEP

Two important points emerge from consideration of the second chart. Firstly, for nearly 20 years new jobs filled in the South West have shown lower GVA per job than the wider position in the first chart. Secondly, that gap has been widening.

Another indicator incorporating an element of change over time and trend is the UK Competitiveness Index[54]. This is compiled by researchers at Cardiff University and Nottingham Business School and "assesses the competitiveness of local authority areas, local enterprise partnerships, cities and city regions across England, Wales and Scotland" in a time series starting in 2000. It is among the indicators recommended in the Department for Transport's guidance on levelling up.

The authors define competitiveness as: "the capability of an economy to attract and maintain firms with stable or rising market shares in an activity, while maintaining stable or increasing standards of living for those who participate in it".

The 2023 report shows Torridge very low in the rankings and declining a little since 2019: place 352 out of 362 nationally in 2023 and in place 348 out of 362 in 2019. Concerningly, the wider context is that the UK's international competitiveness dropped substantially in the same period.

The Torridge drop is part of a longer-term trend similar to the one shown for GVA, with steep drops earlier in the 2000s subsequently flattening out. The 2008 report[55] shows the area dropping from place 338 out of 407[56] nationally in 2006 to 398 out of 407 in 2008.

FIGURE 3.01: GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF COMPETITIVENESS IN 2023 (UK=100)

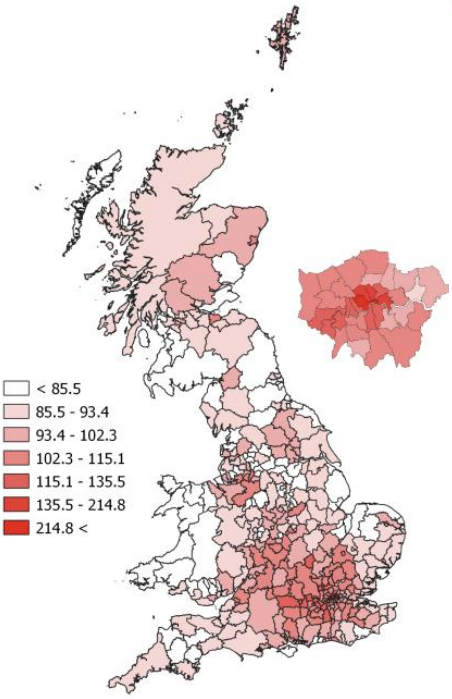
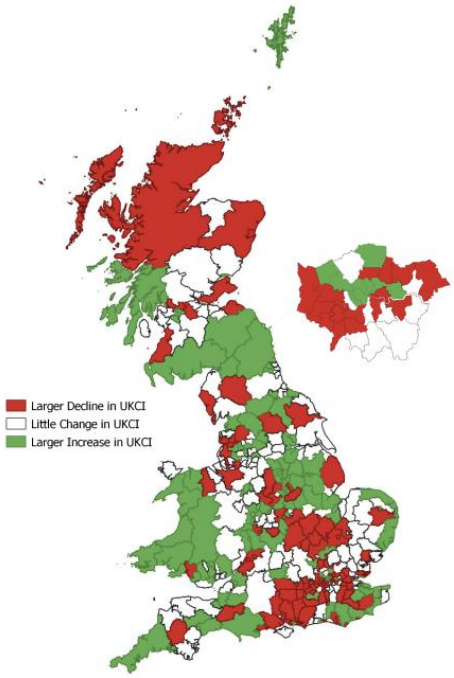


FIGURE 4.01: GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES DISPLAYING LARGER INCREASES A DECREASES IN UKCI BETWEEN 2019 AND 2023



The report does not contain graphs by local area, but does contain the two maps adjacent showing the geographical distribution of competitiveness in 2019 and 2023.

One thing the maps do not show are the rankings of individual cities smaller than the larger areas used in the maps. Exeter ranked 12 out of 47 cities in both 2023 and 2019, with an UKCI score of 100.9 in 2023

[54] https://cforic.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/UKCI-2023.pdf

[55] https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/78888655.pdf

[56] There have been some changes in the areas assessed.

notably higher than any of the surrounding areas. The 2008 report shows Exeter as ranking 19 out of 44, meaning that in contrast to its surrounding areas, it has improved significantly. This suggests a correlation with the city's 'honeypot'[57] reputation and the conclusions of the *Transport Strategy for the Market & Coastal Towns and Rural Areas* that better transport links are needed both to and from Exeter and other larger more dynamic employment areas.

This objective and the supporting analysis focus on how poor accessibility and peripherality affect businesses and wider social welfare. The backdrop is the concern expressed in parts of the literature about whether transport investments do actually stimulate regeneration. For example, the Department for Transport's economics team concludes (*What is the Impact of Transport Schemes on Economic Geography? Summary of Position in DfT Guidance, and Supporting Evidence* - November 2011[58]): "Overall, there is not enough information from ex-post studies to rigorously quantify the impact of transport improvements on economic geography. Hence, there is little that can be concluded from them in general about the scale and likelihood of location impacts. However, this does not mean the effects are not there – most of the studies have either not rigorously sought out GDP impacts, or didn't have large schemes in their samples." The same document also concludes that a transport scheme needs to be part of a wider picture to achieve the best outcome: "Overall, there is a consensus that transport schemes can help regeneration schemes achieve their aims. However, transport schemes on their own are very unlikely to lead to regeneration – they need to be part of a complementary package of regeneration measures." The Management Case explores further how this best outcome might be achieved, in particular looking at what has already been achieved on the reopened Borders Railway between Edinburgh and Tweedbank via Galashiels and what is being done for the Northumberland Line from Newcastle.

In a similar vein, it is recognised that the Department's guidance[59] highlights difficulties in identifying growth and changes to GDP resulting from transport investments. In line with the generally cautious approach adopted in this document, no claims about wider national GDP/growth effects are made, with the emphasis placed on the local growth that the area so needs. The guidance explains that GDP effects are generally captured within the wider welfare-based appraisal approach recommended: "The Department's appraisal process is based on the principles of the HM Treasury Green Book guidance, which advocates the use of cost benefit (welfare) analysis to determine value for money. Welfare analysis is used as it captures a broad range of impacts, such as economic, environmental and social. Whilst GDP and GVA are useful economic indicators of economic performance they are not a substitute for welfare based measures used to inform the assessment of Value for Money."

Disappointingly, the Department for Transport's evaluation[60] of the reopened Okehampton line (Executive Summary in Appendix K) does not directly address the impact of the reinstatement of train services to Okehampton on socio-economic conditions.

O*bjective 2) Add low-carbon capacity, choice, resilience and reliability to the area's transport network to contribute towards decarbonising transport on the Torridge/North Devon - Exeter corridor; and*

Objective 3) *Enable rail and more sustainable active and public transport modes to take an increased share of overall transport demand, supporting and mitigating the impacts of current and expected future demand growth, including where driven by increasing local population and planned housing expansion*

The graph on the following page shows how road traffic of all sorts has grown substantially since 1994. Except for the COVID pandemic period, road traffic of all sorts in Devon has shown continuous growth. Moreover, it has resumed strong growth following the COVID pandemic:[61]

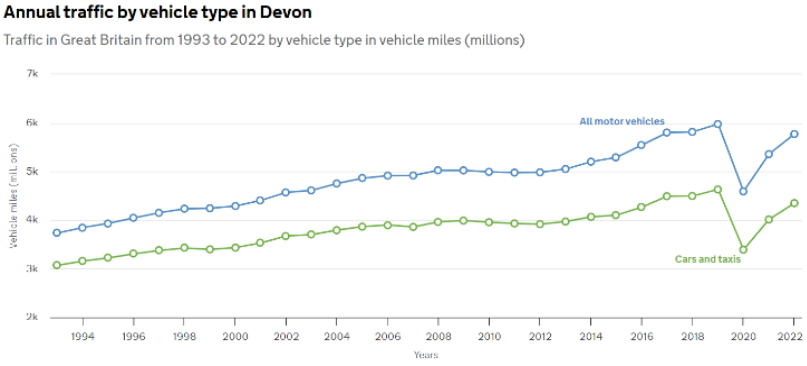
[57] The fourth highest overall score in the PWC *Good for Growth Index* among UK cities in 2025: https://www.pwc.co.uk/industries/government-public-sector/good-growth.html

[58] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7b21ef40f0b66eab99f35b/impact-transport-on-economic-geography.pdf

[59] *TAG Unit A2.1 Wider Economic Impacts Appraisal*, May 2019: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5fc8b4bdd3bf7f7f52707867/tag-a2-1-wider-economic-impacts-appraisal.pdf

[60] *Dartmoor Line Early Impact Evaluation*, Department for Transport, March 2025: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d119dce65dc716bfb1dbbc/dartmoor-line-early-impact-evaluation.pdf

[61] *Road Traffic Statistics*, Department for Transport, 2023.



Figures from the commercial INRIX[62] international traffic congestion monitoring website show that both Barnstaple and Exeter perform poorly for road traffic congestion with Barnstaple and Exeter high in both United Kingdom and international rankings.

None of this will be surprising to the local population, who have long complained about road congestion. The fact that local road networks are both congested and have little resilience is shown by the widely reported major disruption by relatively minor works to the Cedars Roundabout in Bickington in 2025, leading to long delays for all traffic, with buses unable to maintain their timetables.

Perhaps the most surprising thing for a town of only 31,000 population is that Barnstaple figures in an international comparison of this sort at all. Nearly all the other cities in the INRIX rankings are much larger cities of the sort most people might associate with serious traffic congestion. The estimates show material amounts of time and economic adverse impacts from the congestion. As with the much smaller Barnstaple, Exeter ranks high for its size (around 129,000 population), both internationally and within the UK. The estimates show material amounts of time and economic adverse impacts.

The map of approved housing development locations in the *North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2011-2031* shown earlier in this section includes substantial development in Bideford and nearby locations. Following the release of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, these existing housing targets will be increased. The *Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4, 2025-2040*[63] (LTP) says that "The large level of development in these growth areas mean they will … require new transport infrastructure to provide access and unlock sites [and] require sustainable travel choices to ensure safe and suitable access and/or mitigate the impact of new development."

The LTP says in relation to the Barnstaple/Bideford/Northam Growth Area: "This growth area represents the second largest population area in Devon, with over 10,000 homes in the plan period until 2031. … There is significant development and investment in these towns, including large residential development and the modernisation of the port in Appledore, which will support job creation and net zero-driven growth. They draw in people from a wide area for services, and significant numbers of people travel within and between these towns."

The Department for Transport's evaluation[64] of the reopened Okehampton line (Executive Summary in Appendix K) covers the question of modal shift from car to train. Although there are likely to be some similarities between Okehampton and Bideford, differences are also likely between the two routes. The *Evaluation* also finds differences depending on the survey technique used. In particular it finds an increase in car traffic on the main road between Okehampton and Exeter, while noting that that could be the result of wider regional changes unaffected by the introduction of train services to Okehampton, as the road is one of the main routes between Devon/Cornwall and the rest of the country.

Nevertheless, the *Evaluation* is important in finding some evidence of a reinstated train service leading to modal shift away from car/van and awareness of the train as a mode of transport competitive with the car and giving reasons for it: "Early evidence shows that since the reopening of the Dartmoor Line there have been self-reported changes in car travel frequency. Specifically, up to half of survey respondents report using car less frequently compared to before the reopening of the Dartmoor Line, however, this could be due a range of other factors including rising motoring costs and

[62] inrix.com

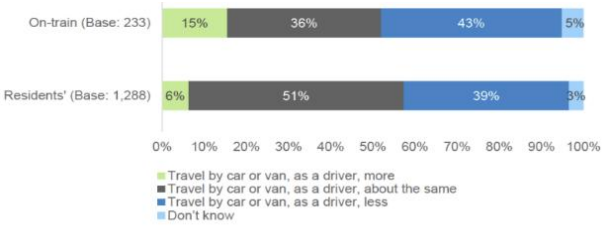
[63] https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-information/transport-planning/devon-local-transport-plan-4-2025-2040/

[64] *Dartmoor Line Early Impact Evaluation*, Department for Transport, March 2025: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d119dce65dc716bfb1dbbc/dartmoor-line-early-impact-evaluation.pdf

increased home-working following the Covid-19 pandemic." … "Despite the influence of Line on car use frequency not being clear, early evidence does show a small proportion of respondents to the residents' survey reducing the number of vehicles owned or used by their household, with around half of these respondents attributing the reopening of the Line to this decision."

Additionally, an expected outcome of the reopening of the Dartmoor Line was that a move away from car to rail would improve ease and comfort of journeys for people in the Okehampton area. Insights from stakeholder interviews suggest that this may be another factor as to why people travel by the Line rather than by car as well as the financial savings, especially when considering parking costs."

The *Evaluation* includes the adjacent graphic showing a substantial proportion of line users and residents surveyed reporting reduced car/van use.



Source: On-train and residents' survey

<u>Objective 4)</u> Enhance access to employment opportunities, education and healthcare in Exeter and beyond for Bideford and Torridge residents and facilitate access to 'hard-to-recruit' jobs in Bideford and Torridge for people outside these areas

The table on the following page from NOMIS[65] analyses ONS employment data. Key features of the local employment market include notably higher than regional or national employment levels in manufacturing and accommodation/food service, but lower levels in typically better paying professional/ scientific/technical and administrative roles.

Employee jobs (2022)

	Torridge (Employee Jobs)	Torridge (%)	South West (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total Employee Jobs	19,000	-	-	-
Full-Time	12,000	63.2	65.0	68.8
Part-Time	8,000	42.1	35.0	31.2
Employee Jobs By Industry				
B : Mining And Quarrying	20	0.1	0.1	0.2
C : Manufacturing	1,750	9.2	8.6	7.6
D : Electricity, Gas, Steam And Air Conditioning Supply	50	0.3	0.4	0.4
E : Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management And Remediation Activities	125	0.7	1.0	0.7
F : Construction	1,500	7.9	5.5	4.9
G : Wholesale And Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles And Motorcycles	3,000	15.8	13.7	14.0
H : Transportation And Storage	800	4.2	4.3	5.0
I : Accommodation And Food Service Activities	3,000	15.8	9.9	8.0
J : Information And Communication	225	1.2	3.3	4.6
K : Financial And Insurance Activities	150	0.8	2.8	3.3
L : Real Estate Activities	350	1.8	1.8	1.9
M : Professional, Scientific And Technical Activities	1,250	6.6	8.4	9.1
N : Administrative And Support Service Activities	800	4.2	7.1	9.0
O : Public Administration And Defence; Compulsory Social Security	350	1.8	4.4	4.7
P : Education	2,250	11.8	9.4	8.6
Q : Human Health And Social Work Activities	2,250	11.8	14.5	13.5
R : Arts, Entertainment And Recreation	600	3.2	2.8	2.4
S : Other Service Activities	300	1.6	1.9	2.0

Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey : open access
- Data unavailable
Notes: % is a proportion of total employee jobs excluding farm-based agriculture
Employee jobs excludes self-employed, government-supported trainees and HM Forces
Data excludes farm-based agriculture

The Navantia-owned shipyard at Appledore is one of the area's largest employers. At the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance launch on 1 March 2024, Tom Hart from Harland & Wolff (Navantia) explained that the Appledore site is winning new contracts and that the total number of employees is due to rise to 350 from 200 now. While many can be recruited locally, he explained that the location is not easy to access and that many specialists do need to come from further afield. On that basis, he supported reinstatement of train

[65] https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157364/report.aspx#tabempunemp

services: "Improved rail networks in this area especially a line from Barnstaple to Bideford is in our opinion a must to support our business. So, I am very much in favour."

Appledore's shipbuilding heritage also forms the centre of plans to focus on sustainable industries, building on Torridge's strengths in the manufacturing sector. The Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre has benefitted from a grant from the Levelling Up Fund.

Other sustainable industries are planned for the area, including wind-powered electricity generation. This wider context of future-focused industrial innovation is important, as transport improvements such as reinstated train services are enablers of successful place-making and can only fully succeed within a wider context of successful economic development policy.

At a presentation given on 9 July 2024 following the second meeting of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance, Mark Lawther from Harland & Wolff (Navantia) gave a presentation about the company's capabilities and plans for the Appledore site. The adjacent slide was presented showing how the Appledore site is seen as part of "an eco-maritime cluster where synergies will drive regional technology success".

The American academic Michael Porter has been central to the development of the concept of the economic cluster. In an article in the *Harvard Business Review*[66], he defines clusters in the following way: "Clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field. Clusters encompass an array of linked industries and other entities important to competition."

While much work can be done on-line nowadays, the importance attached in cluster theory to personal relationships born of social interaction suggests that success will be helped by transport networks that enable personal interaction. Porter picks up this theme in the article cited above, which focuses on why clusters are still critical in economic success and concludes that the strength of the strongest clusters is growing in a high tech world. One of Porter's conclusions is that: "Governments—both national and local—have new roles to play. They must ensure the supply of high-quality inputs such as educated citizens and physical infrastructure."

The cluster includes locations in Torridge, North Devon, Plymouth, Cornwall and South Gloucestershire (South West Maritime Academy), all of which could be much more easily accessed by a reinstated Bideford train service, while Bideford itself would be more easily accessed from those locations. Better connectivity resulting from reinstatement of train services would help any other attempts to include the Torridge area in business clusters.

Porter's work on economic clusters, with its emphasis on human interaction through geographical propinquity, can also if inverted explain why locations suffering from peripherality find it difficult to attract new economic activity. Several of the case studies on the Borders Railway reopening explored elsewhere in this document focus on how the railway encouraged firms to establish new bases in the Borders area because the railway allowed staff to remain in personal contact with the powerful economic centre of Edinburgh.

A presentation on the case in favour of East West Rail (EWR) made by its strategy director and heard by the author of this document explained that much of the case in favour of EWR is based on boosting the cluster effects around centres such as Oxford and Cambridge. He also explained how important travel to work opportunities for workers' life partners can be, with EWR aiming to give multiple travel and connectional opportunities: workers are often reluctant to relocate if their partner cannot find suitable work opportunities.

Bideford has state primary and secondary schools offering education to sixth form level together with the private Kingsley School. A wider range of courses and vocational training is offered by Petroc College located on Sticklepath Hill close to Barnstaple station. It offers[67]: "a wide range of courses for students of all ages and abilities including A Levels, vocational courses, T Levels, degrees, apprenticeships and adult part-time courses."

[66] https://hbr.org/1998/11/clusters-and-the-new-economics-of-competition

[67] https://www.petroc.ac.uk/about-the-college/

Exeter College[68] is located in Exeter City centre close to both Exeter St Davids and Exeter Central stations. It offers a particularly wide range of courses and apprenticeships, with a focus on job placements in the Exeter area with its strong economy and vibrant social life. It recruits students from a wide area in the South West.

Exeter College opened a public consultation[69] on a potential 'voluntary' merger between it and Petroc College on 1 September 2025. The consultation was due to end in November 2025, with a potential merger date of 5 January 2026. If the merger happens, it is hard to judge at this early stage exactly what the effect on train service demand might be. Some argue that it could reduce demand, with more students opting to stay in Barnstaple. The Principles of Exeter College and Petroc Colleges say that a merger could offer more opportunities, which might mean some Barnstaple students taking advantage of Exeter College facilities and placements and vice versa for Exeter College students: "By joining forces, each college aims to deliver even greater opportunities for learners, employers and communities across Devon; underpinned by the capacity, capability and resilience offered by being part of a larger group." (Exeter College); "This merger will give learners more choice, better progression routes and access to specialist facilities, while employers gain a single, stronger partner that is responsive to local skills needs. Above all, it will ensure that North and Mid Devon continue to have high-quality, inclusive education at the heart of their communities." (Petroc College).

Post-16 students wishing to study outside a more traditional sixth form environment therefore need to travel to Barnstaple or Exeter. Poorer transport connectivity may constrain take-up of those opportunities. Travel for these purposes is not necessarily daily and may vary according to job and other outplacements.

Bideford has the Bideford Community Hospital, which says[70]: "Many different consultant out-patient clinics are held here, including general surgery, urology, orthopaedics, ophthalmology, gastroenterology, respiratory medicine, neurology, rheumatology, geriatric medicine and gynaecology. Many nurse-led specialist clinics are also held here."

Barnstaple has the North Devon District Hospital, which says[71]: "We offer emergency and urgent care for people in North Devon and the surrounding areas. This includes our emergency department, intensive care unit (ICU), women and children's services and diagnostics as well as many outpatient clinics and specialist services."

Exeter has the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (Wonford), which says[72] it: "is our largest hospital in the Trust, where many of our acute clinical services are based. This includes our Emergency Department, Walk-in Centre and Minor Injuries Unit (MIU), along with a number of our highly acclaimed specialist units and centres. As a teaching hospital, it delivers undergraduate education for a full range of clinical professions. We are the lead partner for the University of Exeter College of Medicine and Health and a leading centre for high quality research and development in the South West peninsula." The hospital is around a mile to the south east of Exeter city centre and is connected by direct bus services to both Exeter St Davids and Exeter Central stations. Exeter is also home to other specialist clinics such as the Exeter Oncology Centre.

However, for some specialist care, it is necessary to go further still. For example, the major burns centre for the whole of the South West is at the Southmead Hospital in Bristol.

Recent years have seen an increase in the use of private health care. Again, those wanting to use such facilities need to travel. For example, in the South West BUPA[73] offers health care facilities only in Exeter and Bristol. There are no private hospitals in the areas north of Exeter served by the railway line to Barnstaple.

This place-based hierarchy of hospitals means that some patients and their visiting relatives and friends from Bideford and surrounding area need to travel to Exeter, and in some cases beyond, for

[68] https://exe-coll.ac.uk/

[69] https://exe-coll.ac.uk/public-consultation-announced/

[70] https://www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/our-sites/bideford-community-hospital/ The Minor Injuries Unit was closed at the date this document was being written.

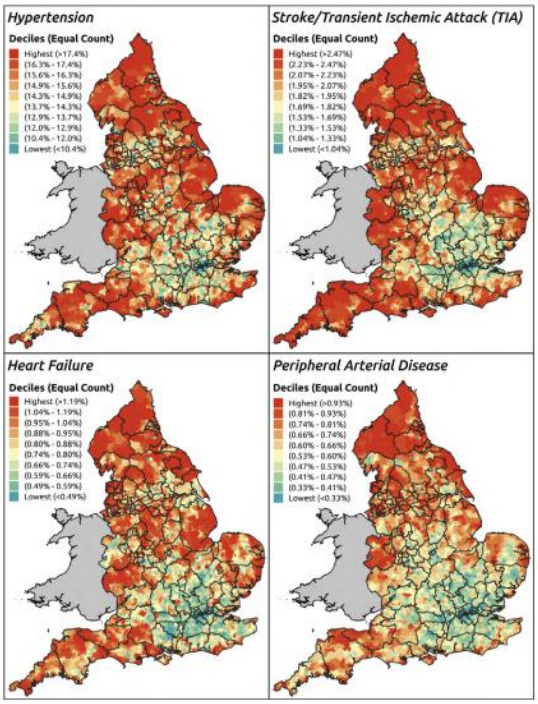
[71] https://www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/our-sites/north-devon-district-hospital/

[72] https://www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/our-sites/royal-devon-and-exeter-hospital-wonford/

[73] https://www.bupa.co.uk/

consultations and treatment. For those needing or wanting to use public transport, that involves at least two bus journeys and a train journey.

Figure 2: Crude GP QOF prevalence of hypertension & selected CVDs; LSOAs 2014/15 – 2018/19



A government health report[74] highlights that coastal communities, including the Bideford and wider Torridge area, have particularly poor health outcomes, strongly correlated both with deprivation and ageing populations. The and maps below from the report highlight four key health conditions.

A key conclusion is that areas such as Bideford and Torridge both have a greater need for health care intervention because of overall higher levels of poor health while also having an overall greater need to travel for health care.

General health

Persons

	Torridge Local Authority		South West Region		England Country	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
All usual residents	68,114	100.0	5,701,187	100.0	56,490,046	100.0
Very good health	29,852	43.8	2,713,601	47.6	27,390,829	48.5
Good health	23,713	34.8	1,950,303	34.2	19,040,735	33.7
Fair health	10,453	15.3	748,197	13.1	7,147,346	12.7
Bad health	3,216	4.7	224,985	3.9	2,248,255	4.0
Very bad health	880	1.3	64,101	1.1	662,881	1.2

In order to protect against disclosure of personal information, records have been swapped between different geographic areas and counts perturbed by small amounts. Small counts at the lowest geographies will be most affected.

Source: ONS - 2021 Census (TS037)

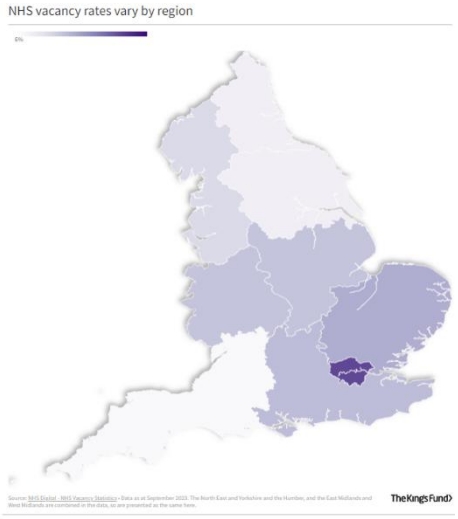
That conclusion is corroborated by the adjacent table from the Nomis[75] analysis of the 2021 census figures, showing that Torridge has a greater proportion of its population with 'fair', 'bad' or 'very bad' health than either the South West or England more generally. There is likely to be a correlation with the older age profile of people in that area shown in the charts earlier in this document.

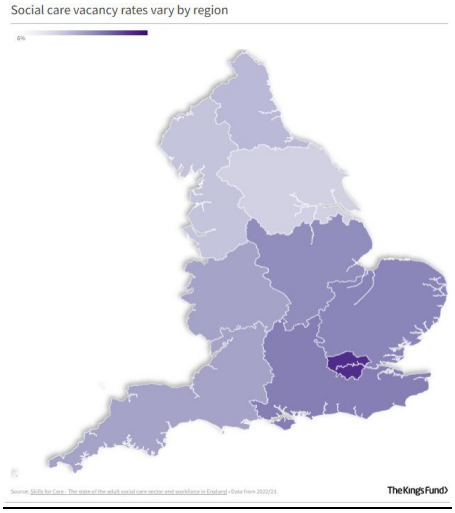
Difficulties in recruiting and retaining medical and social care staff have been reported[76]. While one of the less badly affected regions nationally, these shortages also affect the South West. The King's Fund report highlights that the South West has a vacancy rate of 6.2% compared to the national rate of 8.4%. Shortages are greater in the social care sector. The King's Fund also explains that: "There are also variations within regions, with particular difficulties in recruitment into coastal and more deprived areas [sic], for example." Better accessibility by public transport could help address this issue.

[74] *The Chief Medical Officer's Report 2021 – Health in Coastal Communities.*

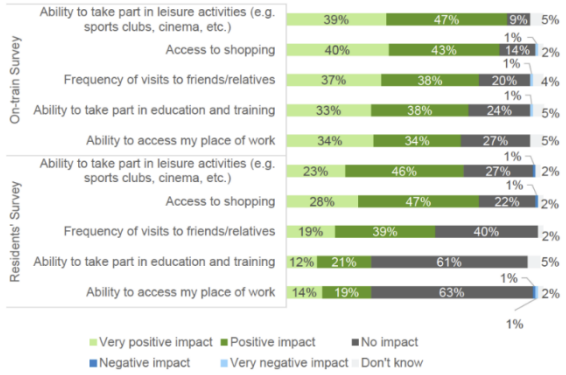
[75] https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/

[76] https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/data-and-charts/staff-shortages#vacancies-by-region





The Department for Transport's evaluation[77] of the reopened Okehampton line (Executive Summary in Appendix K) concludes: "Evidence from the on-train and residents' surveys does show that the Line is perceived to have had a positive impact on connectivity for a range of journey purposes, particularly for leisure activities."



Source: On-train and residents' survey (users only)

The *Evaluation* contains the adjacent graphic showing the distribution of responses to questions about connectivity. Okehampton and Bideford are different, but this shows the strength of positive feeling among users of a recently reopened railway in the same part of the world.

<u>Objective 5)</u> Improve visitor access by sustainable public transport to the natural environment, in particular the Tarka Trail, the South West Coast Path, the North Devon National Landscape, the UNESCO North Devon Biosphere and other coastal areas

As the NOMIS figures shown under Objective 4) show, tourism is an important part of the Torridge and Bideford economy and a key employer.

The *North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2011-2031*[78] emphasises both the importance of the tourism sector economically and that sustainability is a key objective: "In order to achieve the objective of sustainable tourism, the area's tourism "offer" must be enhanced. Sustainable tourism development in northern Devon will be focused on qualitative improvements, which could include expansion of existing facilities. Delivery of a quality product, not only through environmental safeguards but also through improved standards in the quality and range of accommodation and attractions, is an important element in achieving sustainable development. A quality rather than quantity approach is required if the sector is to keep pace with continually evolving requirements and expectations. Proposals that result in the enhancement of existing attractions and destinations will be supported." The same basic messages are contained in the *Northern Devon Tourism Strategy 2018 – 2022*[79], published jointly by Torridge District Council and North Devon District Council.

[77] *Dartmoor Line Early Impact Evaluation*, Department for Transport, March 2025: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d119dce65dc716bfb1dbbc/dartmoor-line-early-impact-evaluation.pdf

[78] https://consult.torridge.gov.uk/kse/event/33615/section/ID-5051374-3

[79] https://democracy.torridge.gov.uk/documents/s10140/Northern%20Devon%20Tourism%20Strategy%20FINAL.pdf

Figures on expenditure per visitor (*England domestic overnight trips and day visits: subnational data*[80] - three years 2017-2019) published by VisitBritain show that visitors of all sorts to Torridge on average spent £54.74 per visit. That was higher than for Devon as a whole (£50.59) and compares well with most other parts of England, but is lower than both Torbay (£57.68) and Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly (£71.85).

The same statistical source also shows that visitors travelling by train in day trips on average spent considerably more (£50.86) than those travelling by car (£33.25). This suggests that reinstatement of train services to Bideford would help drive achievement of the aim set out in the *Northern Devon Tourism Strategy 2018 – 2022* of "growing the value of the visitor economy".

Cultural activities are important for tourists as well as local people. North Devon District Council, Torridge District Council and the Arts Council have published *Flourishing Culture: The Northern Devon Culture Strategy 2022-2027*[81]. This report identifies the importance of improving cultural experiences in Northern Devon. It identifies transport as one of the "main barriers to participation in culture in northern Devon", highlighted by 37.1% of those interviewed in the public survey undertaken as part of the Strategy. The report itself says about transport that: "Public transport is restrictive in terms of frequency and routes which affects young people, old people, those with low incomes and those who can't drive."

Torridge District Council has published *Bideford Cultural Strategy: Case for Investment – Final Report* in May 2024[82]. The report includes a Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats (SWOT) analysis, which includes transport as a key weakness: "Lack of transport links from/to surrounding areas district, with travel times more than twice the national average to access the nearest Secondary School, Higher Education Institution and hospital; and more than 75% longer to reach the nearest employment centre."

Image: Tarka Trail website

The Tarka Trail[83] is a 163 miles/261 km recreational route in many places following former railway lines, including between Barnstaple and Bideford. In places it also shares the route of the South West Coastal Path. The southern section through Bideford is marketed by both VisitDevon and on the Tarka Trail's own website as being particularly suitable for cyclists.

Both the VisitDevon and the Tarka Trail websites[84] major on Barnstaple as the key centre of the route, with Bideford only mentioned in passing: "The entire route is centred around the town of Barnstaple the largest town in the region and takes in areas of Exmoor, the Valley of the Rocks and the coastline. … You can pick up the route at various points across the county, the Trail passes through the towns of Lynmouth, Barnstaple, Bideford, Torrington, Okehampton and Ilfracombe and parts of it coincide with the South West Coast Path, the Two Moors Way and the Dartmoor Way, giving you plenty of chances to explore."

While motorists have a wider choice of starting points, for those who have to or want to travel by public transport, Barnstaple is the obvious starting point as the end of the railway line from Exeter. The train between Eggesford and Barnstaple is already considered an integral part of the Trail.

Although there is a regular bus service between Bideford and Barnstaple, a through train service from Exeter, in particular if there was an intermediate station on the Tarka Trail at Instow, would form a more attractive way of accessing the route by public transport for visitors from outside Torridge and North Devon. It is telling that both the VisitDevon and Tarka Trail websites give a prominent place to connecting train services, but only include information about bus services as links deeper in the websites.

While the numbers are limited per train, cyclists are permitted to take their bikes on trains, but that is not possible on the bus services. A reinstated train service would enable single journeys by bike between Barnstaple and Bideford with return travel by train. The 18½ mile return from Barnstaple to Bideford and back

[80] https://www.visitbritain.org/research-insights/england-domestic-overnight-trips-and-day-visits-subnational-data

[81] https://www.northdevon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-10/ndcs-full-version.pdf

[82] Copy shared by another member of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance – no web address found.

[83] https://www.visitdevon.co.uk/northdevon/explore/tarka-trail/

[84] https://tarkatrail.org.uk/

is likely to be seen as too far by many not especially fit would-be cyclists. For the same reasons, a reinstated train service would also encourage more public transport-using cyclists to explore the parts of the Tarka Trail to the south of Bideford, including the town of Torrington around 8 km / 5 miles away. If an intermediate station was constructed at Instow, that would have a similar effect on usage of the Tarka Trail.

The South West Coast Path, one of Britain's most popular long-distance footpaths shares most of the route of the Tarka Trail between Barnstaple and Bideford[85]. It diverges at Bideford to follow the coastline via Appledore and Westward Ho! Direct train services to Bideford and Instow would enable walkers from outside the Torridge/North Devon area to access more of the path directly by public transport, encouraging more use overall and transfer to more sustainable modes of transport. Bideford could thus benefit from becoming another hub on the Tarka Trail.

The Wikipedia article on the coast path cites research showing significant economic and employment benefit accruing to the South West overall from the path: "In the 1990s it was thought that the path brought £150 million into the area each year, but new research in 2003 indicated that it generated around £300 million a year in total, which could support more than 7,500 jobs.[86] This research also recorded that 27.6% of visitors to the region came because of the Path, and they spent £136 million in a year. Local people took 23 million walks on the Path and spent a further £116 million, and other visitors contributed the remainder. A further study in 2005 estimated this figure to have risen to around £300 million.[8][87] Following investment through the Rural Development Programme for England, more detailed research was undertaken in 2012, and this found the annual spend by walkers to have risen to £439 million which sustains 9771 full-time equivalent jobs."

As can be seen on the adjacent map (National Landscapes Association[88]), in recognition of its natural beauty, much of the coastline in Torridge and North Devon, including many areas popular with tourists and holiday makers, is covered by the the North Devon National Landscape. Until November 2023, when the official designation changed, this was known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The UNESCO North Devon Biosphere was established in 1976. The Biosphere's own website[89] describes it thus: "A UNESCO biosphere reserve is a place where people share a way of living with nature. The North Devon UNESCO Biosphere works to promote innovative approaches to economic development that are socially and culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable." The Biosphere incorporates three bodies promoting its aims: the Biosphere Partnership brings together stakeholders, a commercial arm (North Devon Biosphere Enterprises), and a charitable organisation the North Devon Biosphere Foundation.

The Biosphere comprises three zones (map: North Devon Biosphere website):

- A Core Area of Braunton Burrows for which the Biosphere's vision is for: "Braunton Burrows and its part of the estuary to be managed and maintained as a world-class exemplary mix of dynamic coastal habitat features";
- A Buffer Zone of the Taw Torridge Estuary as far as Barnstaple and Bideford, for which the vision is: "careful management of natural and cultural resources that ensures that communities can enjoy access to the natural environment and a cultural landscape maintained by local people"; and
- A Transition Zone comprising the catchment area of the water courses draining to the North Coast of Devon. The vision

[85] At Instow it follows the road along the river rather than the former railway through a tunnel.

[86] "Unlocking our Coastal Heritage - Economic growth". *southwestcoastpath.org.uk*. Archived from the original on 4 March 2016.

[87] "Unlocking our Coastal Heritage - Economic growth". *southwestcoastpath.org.uk*. Archived from the original on 4 March 2016.

[88] https://national-landscapes.org.uk/national-landscapes

[89] https://www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/biosphere-map.html

is: “for the area to be one where the community thrives through effective participation in developing sustainable lifestyles that are reflected in the enhancement of the environment in which they live and work.”

It is noted that the preferred coastal alignment fringes the Buffer Zone and that the Biosphere praises the Tarka Trail as a valuable local asset. As discussed elsewhere in this document, both these points emphasise the importance of sustainable approaches to design and construction and maintenance/improvement of the Tarka Trail.

There are also numerous individual tourist attractions and cultural events in Bideford and surrounding area, including the Burton Art Gallery and Museum in Bideford and the Appledore Book Festival. The former railway station at Bideford houses the Bideford Railway Heritage Centre, which tells the story of the railway through Bideford and offers occasional short train trips on a section of line to the south of the station.

Bideford is one of the two ports used by the boats to the island of Lundy.

The Department for Transport’s evaluation[90] of the reopened Okehampton line (Executive Summary in Annex K) finds that the reopened rail line has had a particularly positive impact on inbound tourism to Okehampton and the Dartmoor area, with a high proportion of visitors saying they would not have visited without the train service. A third were day trippers and over 50% were staying for five or more nights, which suggests a benefit to the hospitality industry in the area.

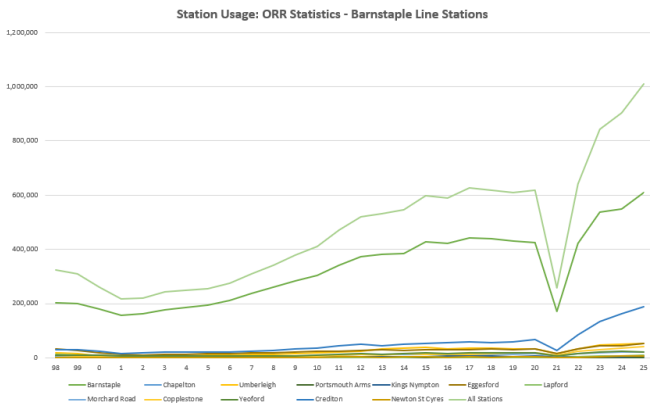
The Evaluation says in relation to the length of stay: “Of the respondents to the on-train survey, a third (32%) stated that they were a visitor to the area around the Dartmoor Line rather than someone who lives, works, or studies in the local area. Of these visitors: the majority were visiting for leisure purposes (98%) and 7% were visiting for business; a third (31%) were not staying overnight and were only in the area for a 1-day trip, a similar proportion (32%) were staying in the area for a 2 to 4-night trip, and 22% were staying for 5 nights or more. The remainder preferred not to say.”

The Evaluation says in relation to the impact the railway line on the probability of visiting: “Of the respondents to the on-train survey who reported being a visitor to the area, a high proportion stated that the presence of the Line had influenced their decision to make their trip and that they would have been unlikely to make the trip, had there been no rail service. This indicates that the Line has enabled tourism in the local area for some people.”

Current Public Transport Services

Train services

There is a regular passenger train service between Exeter and Barnstaple (full timetable in Annex C). This runs hourly seven days a week. The service has seen a number of improvements over recent years, including the removal of older, less comfortable ‘Pacer’ trains, Sunday services increased to hourly from two-hourly in December 2019 and the introduction of longer, higher capacity three-car trains following the extension of a number of shorter platforms. In November 2021, services on the southern end of the line between Crediton and Exeter increased when Okehampton to Exeter train services were reintroduced. Initially two-hourly, Okehampton train services became hourly in May 2022, resulting in a half-hourly train service between Crediton and Exeter.



The ORR station usage statistics[91] in the adjacent chart (author) show how usage of the route has grown, both over the longer term and since the COVID pandemic.

In stark contrast to many parts of the country, where usage generally remains below pre-pandemic levels, usage on the Barnstaple route far exceeds the highest pre-COVID levels.

[90] *Dartmoor Line Early Impact Evaluation*, Department for Transport, March 2025: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d119dce65dc716bfb1dbbc/dartmoor-line-early-impact-evaluation.pdf

[91] *Estimates of station usage April 2024 to March 2025*, Office of Rail & Road, December 2025

Although usage dipped heavily during the COVID pandemic, it still exceeded the numbers carried at the line's lowest ebb in 2001.

So strong has recent growth been that there are regular reports both from users, from train crew and as experienced personally by the author of severe crowding on peak hour services. That is in spite of the fact that the three-coach trains now in use represent a c 50% increase in capacity compared to the two-coach trains used until before the pandemic.

The growth in usage has also taken place during a period since June 2022 until 2025 when there have been strikes by the three main rail unions, resulting in widespread cancellation and disruption to train services. At the date of this document, all the unions involved had agreed deals to end the strikes, which is therefore also likely to be reflected in further increased annual usage figures.

Why have passenger numbers increased so strongly compared to most other parts of the country? The following points appear to be relevant:

- While there are of course office workers in Exeter, many of those commuting there by train are not office workers with the option to work at least some time from home, but work in sectors where personal attendance is required. Many users of the train service also use it for educational purposes, in particular tertiary education. Exeter College is reported as continuing to expand, offering a wide range of courses;
- The big expansion in capacity since 2019 through the introduction of three-coach trains is likely to have released some demand previously constrained by crowding on the shorter two-coach trains previously used;
- Sunday services doubled in frequency at the December 2019 timetable change: leisure traffic is reported as the fastest growing sector of rail usage more generally post-pandemic, with Sunday particularly strong nationally;
- The South West as a whole has shown generally stronger performance in terms of post-COVID usage levels compared to most other parts of the country;
- Frequency has doubled to/from Crediton following the reintroduction of Okehampton train services in November 2021, which increased from 2-hourly to hourly in May 2022; and
- In spite of the big drop in usage during the COVID pandemic, many passengers were still carried in that period. More passengers used the route during the difficult pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 with lock-downs and other restrictions on travel and socialising than travelled during 2001/2002, emphasising the route's continuing importance as a transport corridor even in the difficult pandemic times.

In spite of this strong growth in usage, usage of rail per head of population remains lower than for many other parts of Devon. Railfuture has published a 'rail-mindedness' table showing station usage per head of population based on Office of Rail & Road figures:

Devon's 'rail-mindedness' in 2022-23 - station footfall per head of local authority population

District/Unitary	Stations	Usage 4/22-03/23	Pop'n 2021	Usage per head
Exeter	9	7,203,046	130,709	**55.1**
Teignbridge	5	2,697,484	134,803	**20**
East Devon	9	1,937,720	150,828	**12.8**
Torbay Unitary	3	1,423,692	139,324	**10.2**
Mid-Devon	8	780,952	82,852	**9.4**
Plymouth Unitary	6	2,381,158	264,729	**9**
South Hams	2	788,294	88,627	**8.9**
North Devon	5	587,748	98,611	**6**
West Devon	3	270,620	57,096	**4.7**
Torridge	0	0	68,114	**0**
Totals / Average	**50**	**18,070,714**	**1,215,693**	**14.9**

Station Usage estimates from Office of Rail & Road Population data from Office of National Statistics

While some of the discrepancies in rail usage across different parts of Devon may be explained by inherent geographical or social factors[92], some is also likely to reflect the fact that journey times between Barnstaple and Exeter are long in absolute terms, long for the distance involved and that frequency is only hourly, whereas other routes such as Exmouth and Paignton have half-hourly frequency train services. Exeter St Davids to Barnstaple is 39¼ miles by rail. A typical journey time is 1 hour and 6 minutes (some, in particular at peak hours, stop at more stations and are therefore slower still), meaning an average speed of just 36 mph. However, the fastest train service[93] covers that distance in 55 minutes (43 mph). Bideford is 9¼ miles from Barnstaple.

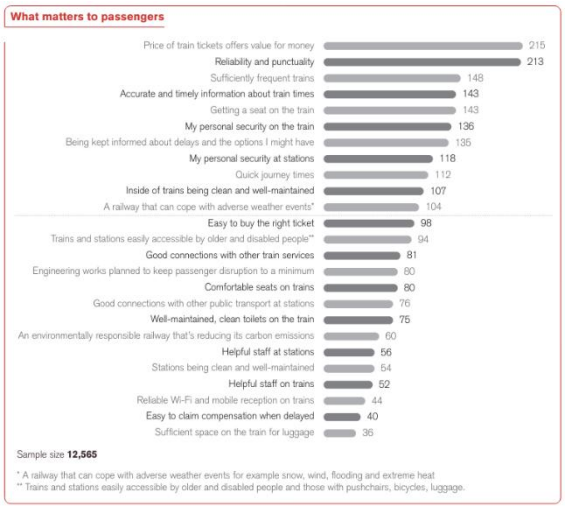
[92] For example, locations much closer to Exeter in distance and journey time may have an inherent tendency to feel the gravitational pull of a centre like Exeter more strongly.

[93] An early Saturday morning Barnstaple to Exeter journey as a return of the Fridays-only late night service from Exeter.

Modernisation of the Exeter to Barnstaple route[94], reflecting its increasing usage, to standards closer to those on main line railways, with interventions optimised to ensure that both shorter journeys and a more regular train service could be offered could have the potential to drive significant increases in usage and social benefit for the area served by the railway. The psychologically important hour threshold for all journeys would be important, both for Barnstaple and for a route reinstated beyond Barnstaple to Bideford.

This document does not attempt to make the case for interventions to improve Barnstaple-Exeter journey times, which would be a separate scheme with its own business case. Further reference is made to this in the Management Case. The *Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4, 2025-2040*[95] supports the modernisation of the existing Exeter to Barnstaple line to improve journey times, increase train service frequency and make other improvements too.

If it was possible for both schemes to be funded, better journey times between Barnstaple and Exeter would substantially improve the level of usage and social benefit on a reinstated railway to Bideford. That is a key conclusion from the work undertaken on potential usage by SLC Rail. The SLC Rail report[96] identifies improved Exeter to Barnstaple journey times as one of the key factors driving better usage and therefore an improved economic assessment: "The BCR is sensitive to three factors: rail journey times to Exeter and beyond, the quantum of future housing in the Bideford catchment and the scheme's capital cost."



The importance of punctual, reliable train services with enough capacity for comfortable journeys can be seen in the adjacent table of passengers' priorities taken from Transport Focus research in 2022[97].

The Exeter to Barnstaple route suffers from poor operational performance. That is exacerbated by the mostly very tight turn-round times at Barnstaple, which mean that trains have little or no time to catch up on delays on the outward journey.

The single line route with passing places only at Eggesford and Crediton means that a delayed train delays other trains en route. A scheme to modernise the line would address these questions. However, even if that scheme did not attract funding, the Bideford train service reinstatement scheme built on top of today's timetable results in very much longer train turn-round times at a reopened Bideford station than are possible with today's service, as shown in the indicative timetable in Annex H.

As discussed elsewhere, the additional passengers attracted to the route by train service reinstatement mean that trains longer than the current three cars would be needed in order to ensure sufficient capacity for comfortable journeys from all stations.

Long-distance coach services

National Express operates a long-distance coach service between Bideford and London. The service starts in Bideford and calls include Barnstaple, South Molton, Tiverton, Wellington, Taunton, Weston-super-Mare, Heathrow Airport and London. It also calls at Yelland, Fremington and Bickington on the outskirts of Barnstaple. All seats must be booked in advance. Two services a day depart from Bideford at 0805 and 1100, with returns from London arriving at 1655 and 1925[98]. The typical journey time to London is between 6 hours 50 minutes

[94] The Mid Cornwall Metro scheme is a good example of this, enabling faster, more frequent journeys – increased from two-hourly to hourly.

[95] https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-information/transport-planning/devon-local-transport-plan-4-2025-2040/

[96] *Bideford to Barnstaple Line Reopening Engineering Feasibility and Economic Appraisal*, SLC Rail, August 2025

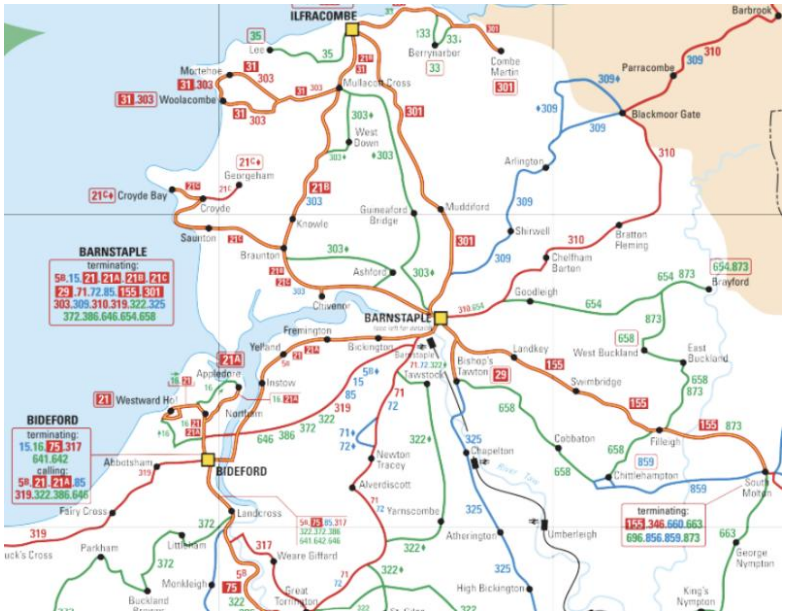
[97] https://d3cez36w5wymxj.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/08151105/Britains-railway-what-matters-to-passengers-FINAL.pdf

[98] There are some minor variations in timings depending on the day of the week.

and 7 hours 5 minutes. It is theoretically possible to travel to Exeter by changing at Taunton, but only the 0805 departure connects and, with an overall journey time of 4 hours 45 minutes, it is not a practical option.

Bus services

The map below[99] (Devon County Council) shows bus services in the Northern Devon area. A key route for the wider Bideford area is the 21/21A route operated by Stagecoach. This is the only commercially-run bus service in the area (timetable in Annex B). The basic frequency is every 20 minutes rising to every 15 minutes in the middle of weekdays on the core section of route between Barnstaple and Bideford, with buses extending to Westward Ho! or Appledore. Early mornings and late evenings see longer intervals. Other bus services run less frequently and are sponsored by Devon County Council.



A limited Monday to Saturday-only bus service (route 5B) runs between Bideford and Exeter via Great Torrington, with the route extending from Bideford to Barnstaple (timetable in Annex B). It is registered by Stagecoach as three separate legs, albeit operated by the same vehicle with through fares and passengers able to remain on board. Nevertheless, the slow journey times (two hours between Bideford and Exeter) and the limited number of journeys (2-3 hour gaps or longer) make it much less attractive than the alternatives for through Bideford-Exeter journeys except for very budget-conscious travellers (maximum fare £3 as part of the government's support for the bus industry). Source of graphic: Devon County Council

This means that journeys by public transport between Bideford and Exeter in practice involve one leg using the 21/21A route and the other leg a train from Barnstaple. While a 20/15-minute bus frequency is in practice unusual outside major cities and even though Barnstaple railway station has very good physical bus-rail integration compared to many locations in the UK where there is little or no physical integration between rail and bus[100], overall journey times between Bideford and Exeter are nevertheless extended.

Torridge and North Devon District Councils make similar points about the lack of integration between buses and trains at Barnstaple in spite of the good physical integration in their joint December 2024 response[101] to the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) Consultation and argue in favour of directly connecting bus services.

The following comparative table highlights typical comparative journey times in minutes Bideford to/from Exeter[102] (changes at Barnstaple with five minutes or less not included in the calculations):

[99] https://www.cartogold.co.uk/Devon/map.html#devon

[100] Buses stop immediately outside the station itself in a dedicated area, with clearly marked bus stops with bus shelters and decent timetable information. The railway station has toilets, a café and a staffed ticket office. At the time this document was being written, further improvements were due to be made to the bus-rail interchange facility.

[101] https://www.torridge.gov.uk/media/27644/Devon-and-Torbay-Local-Transport-Plan-4-2025-2040-1-October-to-30-November-2024/pdf/241129_Devon_and_Torbay_LTP4_consultation_response_from_TDC_and_NDC_locked.pdf?m=1733241744537

[102] Exeter St Davids for rail: typically 6 minutes extra for Exeter Central for the city centre, sometimes less, sometimes more. Some late and early trains do not serve Exeter Central direct, a change being required.

Mode	Bideford - Exeter	Difference	Exeter - Bideford	Difference
Monday - Friday				
A Car[103]	72		72	
B Train + Bus Average[104]	113	B v A: + 57%	103	B v A: + 43%
Saturday				
C Car	72		72	
D Train + Bus Average	110	E v D: + 53%	113	E v D: + 57%
Sunday				
E Car	72		72	
F Train + Bus Average	107	H v G: + 49%	110	H v G: + 53%

The following points emerge from consideration of this table:

- While itself by no means quick for the distance involved, the journey time by car from Bideford is very materially shorter than that by bus and train combined, even if congestion is taken into account. One factor in the differences is the longer distance via Barnstaple: 48 miles via Barnstaple compared to 42 miles direct by road from Bideford;
- Another key factor is the relatively slow timetabled bus journey times between Bideford and Barnstaple of between 24 and 31 minutes[105] for 9 miles depending on time of the day. This is conditioned by several things, including frequent stops (there are numerous well-used intermediate stops in Bickington, Fremington, Yelland and Instow), lower speed limits on the residential roads that make up a significant part of the distance, traffic signals, road junctions and overall traffic conditions;
- Within the average train/bus journey times shown, there is substantial variability, with the quickest and slowest journey times respectively being 94 and 131 minutes;
- In spite of the excellent bus-rail interchange facilities at Barnstaple railway station, there is a significant interchange time penalty for many journeys combining bus and rail on today's timetables. Part of the reason is the fact that the bus and train timetables have not been designed for optimal intermodal interchange, with some being rather tight and others long. Buses travel via the station, coming from other origin points and going to other destinations, with most passengers already on board not wanting to interchange to rail. Buses cannot therefore be programmed to start or finish their journeys at set times to coincide with train arrivals and departures; and
- The tight connections, road congestion and other factors affecting bus operational performance mean that many travelling to Exeter are likely to decide to travel earlier than theoretically necessary. The fact that the train service is hourly but the bus service frequency is 15/20/30/60 minutes Monday to Friday means that a long delay would result if a train is missed at Barnstaple. Predictability of arrival time on the outward journey is particularly important, as for many people being late for work or a class or a business meeting or a hospital appointment is worse than being late in their own time. The result is an extended journey time which is not only less competitive with car, but also likely to act to disincentivise travel.

Overall, a bus-rail intermodal journey between Bideford and Exeter is not competitive with car journey times, even taking account of the road congestion described above. This is caused by a combination of slow bus journey times, slow rail journey times and cases of extended interchange times. By way of contrast, the last steam train timetable on the Bideford line averaged a Barnstaple – Bideford journey time of 18 minutes, which would be bettered with today's diesel trains or likely future trains[106], which would also avoid the Barnstaple interchange penalty by offering a regular through service (the old Bideford line mostly operated as a branch with passengers changing trains).

[103] *ViaMichelin* website: https://www.viamichelin.co.uk/routes. 68 km (42 miles): 56 kph (35 mph) average speed. Given the poor traffic congestion highlighted above, many drivers are likely in practice to allow considerably longer, in particular for the outward journey. Journey direct via Great Torrington and Crediton. 78 minutes via Tiverton and M5.

[104] Stagecoach Bus 21/21A timetable, 4 January 2026. Also: gwr.com, *Timetable D2*, 14 December 2025 – 16 May 2026.

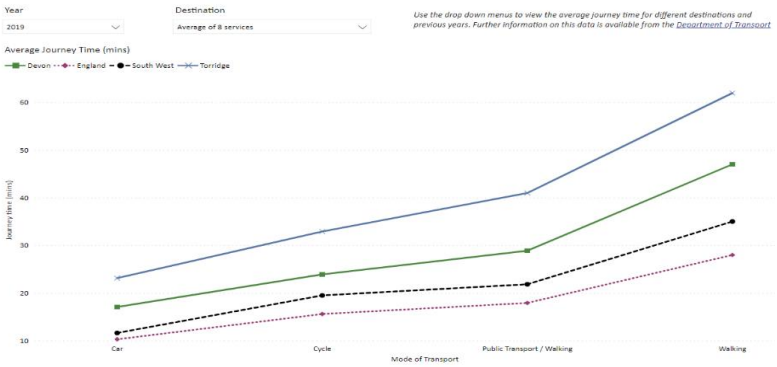
[105] Recent bus timetables have seen small increases in journey times to help with timekeeping.

[106] Initial work by GWR suggests a journey time of between 12 and 15 minutes (the shortest journey time not including a stop at Instow or other potential intermediate station) would be achievable. This document assumes a stop at Instow and takes the higher journey time in line with the generally cautious approach adopted.

Combined with today's Barnstaple to Exeter St Davids rail journey of typically 66 minutes (71 minutes Exeter Central), a 15 minute Bideford journey time would result in a typical overall journey time of 81 minutes (86 Exeter Central), which is far better than any bus-rail intermodal journey or the less frequent 5B direct bus and much more competitive with the car journey of 73 minutes, in particular given that car can suffer from journey time increases caused by road congestion in the Exeter area. Improvements to the Exeter-Barnstaple rail journey time as part of a separate scheme could result in highly competitive journey times by rail, including the potential to get close to or better the important psychological barrier of one hour. The Management Case gives further consideration to that wider combination of schemes.

While the current Barnstaple train service has a reputation for poor punctuality and reliability, the Bideford train service reinstatement scheme would provide, as described in the section on train services above, a solution to a key performance problem on the route and help provide better performing train services. A separate scheme to modernise the existing Barnstaple line has operational performance improvement as one of its key objectives, as explore further in the Management Case.

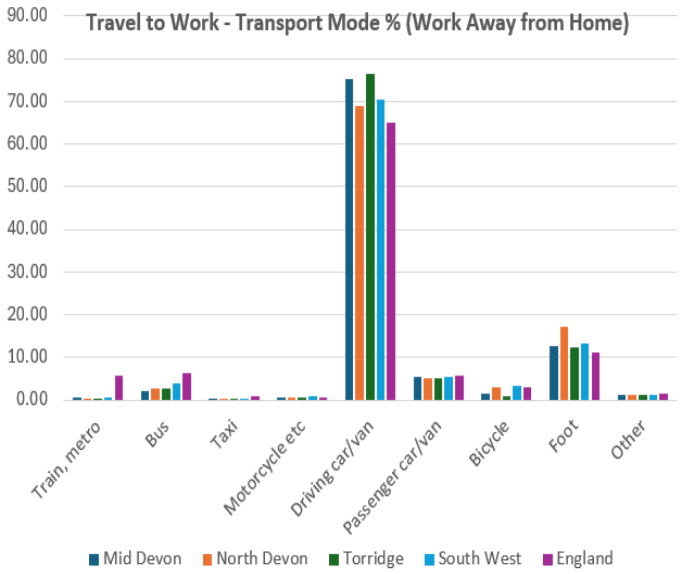
Moreover, even if journey times for the bus-rail intermodal journey were more competitive with car, car users have a low propensity to travel by bus. The Competition Commission's report into the bus market[107] included a review of whether car should be included within the scope of the report as part of the overall market and concluded that car users generally showed a low propensity to switch to bus: [Paragraph 7.64] "the propensity of individuals to use the bus rather than other methods of travel is driven by, for example, whether the individual has access to a car, their income, life stage, how close their home is to a bus stop and the frequency of bus services from that bus stop. While the propensity of individuals to use the bus is clearly important to local bus operators, many of these factors are outside of their control. As such, these aspects of customer behaviour do not act as a competitive constraint on the behaviour of bus operators."



The adjacent chart shows that residents of Torridge have longer journeys for all purposes than Devon, South West and English residents more generally. Source of graphic: Torridge District Council[108]

[107] *Local bus services market investigation - A report on the supply of local bus services in the UK (excluding Northern Ireland and London)*, 20 December 2011.

[108] www.torridge.gov.uk/profile



The adjacent chart (chart by author using Nomis[109] 2021 Census data) shows that both bus and rail have a very small share of the travel to work modes of transport in Torridge for those who do not normally work at home. The active modes of walking and cycling are bigger, but still small.

Compared to the South West and England as a whole, there is significantly greater reliance on cars and less active and public transport-based travel to work. Torridge is notably more dependent on cars than North Devon, where there is greater use of active travel modes.

Given that there are no railway lines in Torridge and that the single line to Barnstaple serves very few places within Northern Devon itself, the rail figure is not surprising. Conversely, it does mean that there is a very large non-rail market beyond buses that is potentially open for rail to capture a proportion of. If a reinstated train service to Bideford gained even a small proportion of the non-public transport / non-active travel market, that could translate into large numbers of passengers.

Long List of Options

The following long list of options has been considered:

1) Further road improvements;
2) Bus-based improvements;
3) Active travel improvements;
4) Train service reinstatement options; and
5) Do-nothing (business as usual).

Further consideration is given to each of these options in turn below, followed by a comparative strategic assessment of the options based on the table recommended in the Department for Transport guidance[110]. The options are not entirely mutually exclusive. Moreover, a number of improvements to non-rail modes would be desirable to make the most of a reinstated Bideford train service. It is noted that the most recent version of the HM Treasury *Green Book*[111] says that: "Options that do not deliver a proposal's objectives cannot represent value for money."

Option 1): Further road improvements

Large sums have been spent on the road network in Torridge and North Devon, including on the A39 and associated Torridge Bridge and on the A361 and associated Taw Bridge. The A361 North Devon Link Road was undergoing a series of upgrades at the date this document was being prepared. Likewise, there have been many works to the road system in Exeter over the years. Nevertheless, both Exeter and Barnstaple continue to suffer significant road traffic congestion (as shown elsewhere in this document, amongst some of the worst in the whole country). That has been exacerbated at the time this document was being drafted caused by relatively minor works to the Cedars Roundabout in Bickington, leading to long delays and disruption to bus timetables. Housing and other development around the Barnstaple end of the A39 are gradually turning what was designed as a by-pass into another lower speed local distributor, with traffic volumes and delays to match.

[109] https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/

[110] Department for Transport, *Transport Business Cases: The Levelling Up Toolkit*, February 2022. https://d3cez36w5wymxj.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/08151105/Britains-railway-what-matters-to-passengers-FINAL.pdf

[111] HM Treasury, 5 February 2026: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6984ac702df808759a7bd740/The_Green_Book_2026.pdf

The local, regional and national transport, levelling up and net zero strategies put considerable emphasis on the benefits of improving public transport and active travel provision. One of the key thrusts of the *Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4, 2025-2040*[112] (LTP) is to improve sustainable travel options rather than to attempt to build additional road capacity within a constrained environment. Within that wider picture, while not ignoring the possibility of further road improvements and rail-based park & ride[113], the local and regional strategies put considerable focus on the potential benefits of reinstatement of train services. *The Peninsula Rail Strategy*[114] says: "whilst the use of rail on a park-and-ride basis is well established, for long term transition to sustainability access to railway stations by walking, cycling or public transport should be encouraged. To do this, there is scope to reopen or build new stations so that a greater portion of the population live within 10 km of a station and are more likely to access it by sustainable modes." Bideford, East-the-Water, Northam, Westward Ho! and Appledore are all more than 10 km from the nearest station at Barnstaple.

The section reviewing the preferred rail-based solution reviews the needs around a reinstated Bideford railway station and concludes that some changes to the way in which the local road layout is managed for pedestrians, cyclist, buses and others using the reopened station would be beneficial. That is already being done on the Northumberland Line between Newcastle and Ashington.

Option 2): Bus-based improvements

While there are probably worthwhile improvements that could be made, the overall current picture on bus provision, in particular on the Barnstaple to Bideford corridor is actually very positive, in particular in comparison with many other parts of the country. The 21/21A route runs at an unusually high frequency and is well used, with early and late services, and generous Sunday provision compared to most parts of the country. There is very good physical integration at Barnstaple station and further improvements are already planned. Unlike in many parts of the country where local authority sponsorship of rural services has either stopped altogether or been severely reduced, both Barnstaple and Bideford see a wide range of bus services to other destinations supported by Devon County Council.

It is difficult to see how bus journey times could be materially reduced on the Bideford to Barnstaple corridor, as they are constrained by a combination of frequent stops for the many users at intermediate locations, the low permitted speeds in the built-up areas that are present on large parts of the B3233, the low maximum permitted speeds of buses on more open sections of road and traffic congestion. The road is generally quite narrow, includes localised on-street parking areas and there is little spare space on which separate bus lanes could be built in built-up areas. The reliability of the bus services suffered very badly in the recent road works at the Cedars roundabout.

A smaller number of local authority-supported buses do travel between Bideford and Barnstaple via the A39 with quicker journey times, but it is telling that Stagecoach chooses to operate its number 21/21A commercial services via the B3233, which includes stops close to Bideford station in East-the-Water, and that a large number of passengers make intermediate journeys on that road.

[112] https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-information/transport-planning/devon-local-transport-plan-4-2025-2040/

[113] For example, the 'Hub & Ride' at Umberleigh mooted in the The *Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4, 2025-2040.*

[114] *Peninsula Rail Strategy*, Peninsula Transport, July 2023.

The Competition Commission's conclusion that car users have a low propensity to switch to bus is quoted earlier. The Department for Transport's evaluation[115] of the Okehampton line reopening project contains the adjacent graphic comparing the generalised cost of time between rail and bus journeys. For the purpose of this section, the key point is the fact that bus scores a higher generalised time cost for all types of users than rail, even with lower fares. Business users and work commuters attribute a substantially higher generalised cost than leisure travellers do. This is consistent with the Competition Commission findings and also helps explain why bus alternatives find less favour with travellers, in particular those not travelling for leisure purposes.

Source: GWR fare data and rail timetables (rail), Stagecoach fare data and bus timetables (bus), TAG Databook (values of time)

Figure 19: Generalised cost by journey purpose for rail and bus Okehampton to Exeter

Moreover, a Bideford to Exeter bus service via Barnstaple would suffer from even worse journey times than the current train service. This was demonstrated during mid-November 2025 when the rail route was closed by Network Rail owing to concerns about bridge stability after heavy rainfall put the River Taw into spate. Some rail replacement buses were run, but with best timings 20 minutes slower than the trains they replaced.

A different form of bus-based option explored in the JRC report[116] was a rail-connected express bus serving Bideford via the A39 operating, initially from the existing Barnstaple station and then from a new park & ride station in the vicinity of Bishop's Tawton. While the bus would be able to get to Bideford more quickly than the 21/21A via the B3233, the service would also suffer from interchange penalties at the new connecting rail station, even if less severe than those with general bus services at Barnstaple station. It is also not clear that such a service could be run commercially.

There would be considerable cost in promoting and building the new station and it would need to be shown that the station was justified on the basis of local demand alone even if train services were later reinstated to Bideford. There may be some local demand from Bishop's Tawton itself, but for the Bideford bus service to be effective, all trains would have to call at the new station. Given the currently tight turn-round timings at Barnstaple, that may result in other existing station calls having to be given up. Where that was not possible, the extra station call would extend Barnstaple journey times when the strategic need is to reduce them and worsen performance by reducing turn-round times compared to the current tight ones.

Moreover, the option was not necessarily instead of reinstating train services to Bideford itself, which could come later. However, the timescales for promoting and constructing a new station, in particular with a large land-take for a substantial car park, are currently considerable. This option looks like a costly and time-consuming distraction from the key question that risks attracting only a low level of take-up. Special rail-connecting bus services promoted by the rail industry, as opposed to normal commercial bus services or bus services funded by local authorities, that have been introduced elsewhere in the country have generally had poor take-up and have not usually survived for long.

The section reviewing the preferred rail-based solution reviews the needs around a reinstated Bideford railway station and concludes that some changes to the way in which the local bus stops are placed could help usage of a reinstated Bideford station, in particular by ensuring that onward journeys to places such as Torrington, Westward Ho! and Appledore could be made easily and conveniently from the new station.

In summary, while there are things which could be done to improve bus services and which could be worthwhile to improve those services for local purposes, they would neither do much to address slow journey times between Bideford and Exeter by existing public transport and hence drive greater take-up of that mode, nor would they be likely to drive environmentally-desirable modal shift from the car. Nevertheless, there are potential changes to local bus services at Bideford where many currently start from/terminate at the quay on

[115] *Dartmoor Line Early Impact Evaluation*, Department for Transport, March 2025: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d119dce65dc716bfb1dbbc/dartmoor-line-early-impact-evaluation.pdf

[116] *Torridge and North Devon Connectivity Programme Report*, July 2023.

the opposite side of the River Torridge from the station that would promote intermodal interchange at a reinstated Bideford station.

Option 3): Active travel improvements

In similar fashion to Option 2), while there are worthwhile things that could be done to improve the existing provision for active travel on this corridor, in particular in the built-up areas of Yelland, Fremington and Bickington, they would do little to address slow journey times between Bideford and Exeter by public transport and hence drive greater take-up of that mode. There is a continuous well-paved cycle path (the Tarka Trail) the whole way between Bideford and Barnstaple. However, at 9¼ miles, it is too far to be used by substantial numbers of non-leisure users. Moreover, there are few access points to the Tarka Trail from locations nearer to Barnstaple in Yelland, Fremington, Bickington or Sticklepath.

These observations are corroborated by the *Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan*[117], which notes that census data show a limited number of people cycling between the two towns and which also proposes a number of new access points to the Tarka Trail from the Yelland, Fremington and Bickington areas to enable shorter-distance journeys into the Barnstaple area.

Option 4): Train service reinstatement options

An option involving reinstatement of a passenger train service avoids the issues listed above for the first three options and is the only option to provide a strong strategic fit with the local, regional and national strategic imperatives set out earlier in this document. There are several sub-options for a rail solution and these are analysed in the following section with a Preferred Option given.

The table below is modelled directly on the table and RAGG ratings recommended by the Department for Transport as explained above. The Strategic Priorities map directly to those listed in the sections above analysing alignment with local, district, county, regional and national strategies:

- "Red (R): the option opposes or creates tension with achieving the strategic priority and/or the SMART spending objective
- Amber (A): the option has a minimal impact or has a small contribution to achieving the strategic priority and/or the SMART spending objective
- Green (G): the option has a strong strategic fit to contributing to achieving the strategic priority and/or the SMART spending objective
- Grey (GY): the option has no impact on achieving the strategic priority and/or the SMART spending objective, or the strategic priority is irrelevant."

Strategic Assessment of Options					
Level of Strategy	**Strategic Priority**	**Option 1) Road**	**Option 2) Bus**	**Option 3) Active**	**Option 4) Train**
National Levelling Up Strategy	The government's commitment to uniting and levelling up the UK economy through raising living standards, spreading opportunity, and improving productivity	A	A	A	G
	Investing in infrastructure to bring more places across the UK closer to opportunity	G	A	A	G
National Net Zero Strategy	Increase the share of journeys taken by public transport, cycling and walking … Support decarbonisation by investing more than £12 billion in local transport systems over the current Parliament	R	G	G	G
Department for Transport Strategic Priorities	Improving performance on the railways and driving forward rail reform	GY	GY	GY	G
	Improving bus services and growing usage across the country	GY	G	GY	A
	Transforming infrastructure to work for the whole country, promoting social mobility and tackling regional inequality	A	A	A	G
	Delivering greener transport	R	G	G	G
	Better integrating transport networks	R	G	G	G

[117] *Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan*, Devon County Council, February 2023.

Regional and local strategies	DCC *Strategic Plan*: Make Devon Greener by prioritising sustainable travel and transport; Support Economic Recovery and Growth; Help Communities be Safe, Connected and Resilient by delivering infrastructure which will increase the range of travel choices; Improve accessibility to jobs and services, tackling social isolation in rural parts of the County	A	A	A	G
	Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority *Local Transport Plan Transport Plan 4, 2025-2040*: "work with partners and support ongoing feasibility work for the potential extension of the North Devon Line to Bideford"	R	A	A	G
	Devon County Council *Market & Coastal Towns and Rural Devon (sub) Strategy*: a vision for Devon's market and coastal towns to be "better connected to their closest urban area, for the journey to work, access to health care, education, training, leisure and retail"	A	A	A	G
	Peninsula Transport *Peninsula Rail Strategy*: for long term transition to sustainability access to railway stations by walking, cycling or public transport should be encouraged … reopen or build new stations so that a greater portion of the population live within 10 km of a station and are more likely to access it by sustainable modes	R	G	G	G
	Devon Climate Emergency Declaration: Travelling less and using improved walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure more often, and using electric and hydrogen vehicles	R	G	G	G
Scheme Objectives	1): Improve socio-economic conditions in the Bideford and wider Torridge area by reducing the negative impacts of peripherality, assisting in lifting productivity, prosperity and local economic growth	G	A	A	G
	2): Add low-carbon capacity, choice, resilience and reliability to the area's transport network to contribute towards decarbonising transport on the Torridge/North Devon - Exeter corridor	R	A	A	G
	3): Enable rail and more sustainable active and public transport modes to take an increased share of overall transport demand, supporting and mitigating the impacts of current and expected future demand growth, including where driven by increasing local population and planned housing expansion	R	G	G	G
	4): Enhance access to employment opportunities, education and healthcare in Exeter and beyond for Bideford and Torridge residents and facilitate access to 'hard-to-recruit' jobs in Bideford and Torridge for people outside these areas	A	GY	GY	G
	5): Improve visitor access by sustainable public transport to the natural environment, including the Tarka Trail, the South West Coast Path the North Devon National Landscape, the UNESCO North Devon Biosphere and other coastal areas	R	G	GY	G

Rail options

The analysis above suggests that a rail-based option should be pursued, but does not exclude improvements to other modes as part of a rail-based solution or to meet different objectives. As with the long-list of options, further consideration is given to each of these options in turn below, followed by a comparative strategic assessment of the options based on the table recommended in the Department for Transport guidance. On this basis a Preferred Option is identified.

The following short-list of rail options has been identified:

A) A new inland route leaving the existing Exeter to Barnstaple line before Barnstaple in the Chapelton area to produce the shortest route/journey time;
B) A new inland route leaving the existing Exeter to Barnstaple line before Barnstaple in the Bishop's Tawton area and shadowing the A39 road;
C) A reopened coastal route following the original rail route between Barnstaple and Bideford, potentially with some amendments to the original alignment; and
D) A light rail option following the original rail route between Barnstaple and Bideford or potentially an inland route or another route such as existing roads.

The considerations affecting the establishment of this short list and the choice of a Preferred Option are complex, in particular the choice between Options A), B) and C) and are given fuller consideration in Annex A.

The Preferred Rail Option

In summary, the Preferred Rail Option is a traditional heavy rail extension to the existing GWR hourly train service between Barnstaple and Exeter, with an intermediate stop at Instow[118], offering a typical journey time between Bideford and Exeter St Davids of around 81 minutes (Exeter Central 86 minutes). A further intermediate station to serve Yelland or Fremington is an incremental option. The journey time and passenger demand could be significantly bettered if a separate project to modernise the existing route between Exeter and Barnstaple was undertaken.

The following are key arguments against the inland railway alignment options:

- Very high construction cost based on publicly-available sources[119] for new-build railways from East West Rail noting the challenging terrain involved with significant changes in height above sea level over short distances (an envelope of between £781 million and £957 million) compared to the high but still lower cost of reinstating an old railway based on the early stage engineering assessment carried out by SLC Rail[120] in an envelope of between £305 million and £539 million. This conclusion holds true even if the coastal route estimate were to be increased substantially and the inland route estimate reduced substantially;
- East West Rail is deemed to be of national significance and should ultimately enable a wide range of through passenger and freight journeys to be made encompassing large parts of central and eastern England. It is considered to be of national significance in terms of GDP growth and has been endorsed on that basis by the Chancellor[121]. Whatever the benefits of a Bideford scheme, it could not call on the same wider national strategic importance to justify a very high level of costs. A review of other broadly comparable rail reinstatement schemes recently opened or currently under way shows that the inland route would stand out as disproportionately expensive in comparison, being in a different order of magnitude (Northumberland Line from Newcastle £299 million, Levenmouth in Scotland £117 million, Mid Cornwall Metro £57 million[122]);
- Much or all of the journey time saving from the shorter inland route of around 6 miles compared to 9¼ miles of the original coastal alignment would be lost through coupling/ uncoupling trains (or other operational options) needed to ensure that one train from Exeter can serve both Barnstaple and Bideford when the junction to Bideford leaves the Barnstaple line before Barnstaple;
- The solutions to the problem of an inland route junction necessarily being south of Barnstaple would also increase operating costs by requiring additional train crew to operate a separate train portion for Bideford, which would reduce economic benefits and also have operational performance risks;
- The best overall investment would be to combine reinstating train services to Bideford and modernising the Exeter to Barnstaple line, in particular given that that would give materially shorter Bideford to Exeter

[118] Assumed at this stage, but could potentially be included as a decremental option, and/or another station site serving Fremington or Yelland for example.

[119] The prices quoted are not intended at this stage of business case development to be an estimate of what the construction costs would actually be, but instead to show orders of magnitude for comparative purposes.

[120] *Bideford to Barnstaple Line Reopening Engineering Feasibility and Economic Appraisal*, SLC Rail, August 2025.

[121] HMT Treasury, 23 October 2025: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jobs-homes-and-better-transport-links-for-the-oxford-cambridge-growth-corridor

[122] Older rail reopening schemes are not considered here in order to avoid the difficult question of what inflation factors to apply. The Financial Case contains further comparative analysis of rail schemes including new stations.

journey times, but the very high cost of the inland route would be difficult to justify as part of an overall investment portfolio combining both schemes;
- A new railway would need to cut through open countryside and given the steepness of the climbs from the Taw and Torridge valleys would need substantial earthworks and other engineering features, potentially including tunnels, and it cannot be confirmed without a much fuller engineering study that there is a route that would not involve demolition of residential or other property. Judging by the reactions to HS2 and the eastern section of East West Rail, the location of the works could cause substantial local and wider public opposition;
- The potential difficulty in serving the original Bideford station rather than an out-of-town park & ride facility in the vicinity of the A39 Torridge Bridge means that the station would be difficult to access by active travel or public transport and would therefore counter key aims of the county and regional transport strategies and proposed objectives deriving from them for this scheme and in the eyes of the local populace the station would not actually be in Bideford itself; and
- While Barnstaple is unlikely to be the dominant passenger flow from Bideford, an inland route would mean that there could not be a direct train service between the two towns.

Network Rail assessment of Western Route new station options

Network Rail has carried out a strategic-level assessment of new station opportunities on its Western Route[123]. This study is intentionally comparative and not at an in-depth level: "This report develops a framework for assessing new station opportunities at a strategic level, and applies this framework to the largest population clusters without stations on Western Route. The report is intended to inform future strategic advice and engagement with third parties on new station proposals. The framework created can be used to assess any new proposals to provide a high level, comparable assessment. It does not imply Network Rail support, or lack of support, for any particular opportunity." Key excerpts from the report in relation to Bideford are in Annex L.

Key points, which are consistent with conclusions drawn elsewhere in this document, include:

- Of the 23 population clusters considered, Bideford ranks fifth in the top 5;
- The other four stations in the top five would all be located on existing railway lines: the increased 'complexity'/cost of the need to reinstate the rail route to Bideford is offset by a very strong strategic case score, noting in particular the high deprivation scores for the area and large population;
- "The train service would be more likely to open opportunities for employment, education and leisure activities" than existing bus/car usage;
- Even with improvements to the existing Barnstaple line, the Exeter journey time would exceed the 42 minute journey time threshold typical regular South West commuters are willing to undertake;
- The scheme is identified as being consistent with the Peninsula Transport *Peninsula Rail Strategy* and the Devon County Council *Local Transport Plan* (NB now superseded by a the new LTP explicitly naming Bideford as a scheme to be investigated for feasibility);
- Reuse of the former coastal rail route and the old Bideford station site are assumed, noting the importance of maintaining the Tarka Trail; and
- The negative impacts of road congestion on local bus services and on car travel to Barnstaple are noted.

Light rail

Some have proposed light rail as a possible alternative approach. Light rail takes a number of different forms, from very high-capacity automatically-operated urban light metros such as the Docklands Light Railway, through traditional street-running tramways to tram-trains capable of operating both on heavy rail routes and public streets. Monorails and other guided systems not using traditional track also broadly fit into this category. A new concept of 'ultra-light rail' is currently being promoted both for street running and traditional railways, though in the latter case there would be no inter-operation with traditional heavy rail passenger and freight trains[124].

[123] Network Rail, 4 November 2024: *Connecting Communities: framework assessment of new station opportunities on Western Route: https://sacuksprodnrdigital0001.blob.core.windows.net/regional-long-term-planning/Wales%20and%20Western%20region%20-%20planning%20documents/Connecting%20Communities-framework%20assessment%20of%20new%20station%20opportunities%20on%20Western%20Route-%20Final%20Report.pdf*

[124] A forerunner of this concept, the Parry People Mover, has operated for a number of years as the Class 139 DMU on the very short, operationally separate Stourbridge Town branch.

The urban metro end of the spectrum would be exceptionally hard to justify in this area because of its very high cost and the lack of need for the very high frequency and associated very high capacity that is a key benefit. Tramway-style street running would suffer from and would exacerbate the road congestion already affecting Barnstaple and places en route to Bideford, in particular given than modern tramway systems typically aim to limit the extent to which trams and other road vehicles share road surface. It could also not achieve the higher speeds that help give a heavy rail route its journey time advantage.

A different analysis might suggest that light rail could be a way of addressing some of the construction cost concerns associated with an inland route, because of light rail vehicles' better ability than heavy rail vehicles to tackle steep gradients and tight curvature. However, the key argument in favour of an inland route is shorter journey times through higher speed and that is not compatible with steep gradients or tight curvature even if physically achievable. Moreover, light rail would do nothing to address the fundamental problem of having a junction to Bideford before Barnstaple is reached, which is discussed further in Annex A or with the problems of having a small captive fleet discussed below.

One commentator has suggested a monorail above the rivers. However, it is difficult to see how that would be compatible with the high natural value of that UNESCO Biosphere-recognised sensitive environment and continued use of the river by some shipping and smaller boats. Construction of support foundations in the fast-flowing tidal waters could also be highly costly and little is understood at this stage about the technical risks involved. Moreover, that technology would still require interchange at Barnstaple, with the resulting interchange time penalties which are one of the key issues with current bus-rail intermodal journeys.

A light rail bid was made to the Restoring Your Railway programme ('Taw Link' focused on Braunton), but was not successful in attracting funding. One suggestion is that Bideford could be linked to the National Rail service at Barnstaple and also serve Barnstaple town and potentially Braunton beyond.

If it was fundable, a locally-focused tram-train light rail operation is considered for the purposes of this document to be complementary to the Preferred Rail Option to address different objectives focused on issues on the Braunton to Bideford via Barnstaple arc. In tram-train fashion it might share tracks with the preferred heavy rail option between Barnstaple and Bideford for the best speed/journey times and lowest impact on road traffic. The following are the key arguments against light rail as a solution to bringing Bideford back onto the national rail map (as opposed to the separate objective of creating a Northern Devon light rail network):

- A light rail scheme solely between Bideford and Barnstaple would suffer interchange penalties at Barnstaple, which are one of the key reasons why rail-bus intermodal journeys are less competitive with car in journey times and overall point-to-point journey times are excessive, resulting in peripherality;
- Tramway-style street running light rail would exacerbate the road congestion already affecting Barnstaple and places en route to Bideford and could not achieve the higher speeds that help give a heavy rail route its journey time advantage; and
- A Braunton-Barnstaple-Bideford tram-train operation might be an attractive answer to traffic congestion in that arc, but would not itself address the imperative reflected in this scheme's objectives of ensuring better connectivity with the major urban area of Exeter and through that with the wider national rail network.

The key benefit of tram-trains[125] is that they are able to operate on-street like a traditional tramway, which can allow them to reach town centres by on-street operation not directly accessible from many heavy rail stations. However, in order to reach central Barnstaple without causing traffic chaos on the existing road bridge, a rail bridge would need to be reinstated over the River Taw. In Bideford the ancient Bideford Long Bridge has a weight restriction of 3 tons. While heavier buses are allowed on that bridge, they are still far lighter than a tram-train, which suggests a new bridge would be needed to allow tram-trains to access the centre of Bideford.

It might be objected that Bideford to Barnstaple could be seen as the first part of the creation of a wider light rail network including ultimate town centre operation in Barnstaple. However, unless there was formal support for such a network from all the local authorities involved, it would risk becoming a sub-optimal solution between Bideford and Barnstaple station only, with the wider light rail network never completed. In contrast, a

[125] Tram-like vehicles capable of operating both on tram track with its different rail profile/very tight curves and on national rail tracks, while having safety features mitigating potential impact with pedestrians and other street users.

heavy rail solution built first would address its own objectives and could potentially be used later as part of a light rail network if that was ever funded.

One option that might address the Exeter connectivity point would be tram-train operation of the whole route from Exeter. That would be a radical option, with the following objections:

- Tram-trains operate both on national 'heavy rail' infrastructure and street-running tramways/ light rail, but there are no plans for trams or light rail in Exeter or Barnstaple and, unlike many places with tram-trains which have no city centre heavy rail station, there are several stations conveniently located in Exeter city centre;
- As a compromise between the characteristics of trams and trains, tram-trains are poorly suited to a rural regional route as long as the Exeter-Barnstaple line where higher speed and comfort than typical for tram-trains is needed to address the key problem of long journey times and provide attractive journeys competing with cars;
- For modernised or new regional rail routes with no street-running, a form of heavy rail vehicle with braking and other adaptations to allow tramway-style line-of-sight operation seems to be implied rather than a traditional tram-train, but no such vehicle appears to be currently available or under design;
- The lack of precedent for tramway-style signalling and operation on a national rail route in Britain would present material technical, operational, commercial and financial risks for the sponsor of the modernisation scheme, in particular if that was a local authority;
- Once converted to tramway-style signalling, other types of train would not be able to use the route, including occasional charter trains, could not operate; and
- Using a special class of train solely on the Bideford/Barnstaple route would cut across the material economies of scale GWR and performance benefits sought by GWR in its forthcoming procurement of trains to replace the old DMUs used across its network.

The following table repeats in respect of the rail-based options the strategic assessment shown above for the long-list options (Option A): a new inland route from Chapelton, Option B): a new inland route from Bishop's Tawton, Option C): a reopened coastal heavy route, Option D): light rail):

- "Red (R): the option opposes or creates tension with achieving the strategic priority and/or the SMART spending objective
- Amber (A): the option has a minimal impact or has a small contribution to achieving the strategic priority and/or the SMART spending objective
- Green (G): the option has a strong strategic fit to contributing to achieving the strategic priority and/or the SMART spending objective
- Grey (GY): the option has no impact on achieving the strategic priority and/or the SMART spending objective, or the strategic priority is irrelevant."

Strategic Assessment of Options					
Level of Strategy	**Strategic Priority**	**Option A)**	**Option B)**	**Option C)**	**Option D)**
National Levelling Up Strategy	The government's commitment to uniting and levelling up the UK economy through raising living standards, spreading opportunity, and improving productivity	A	A	G	G
	Investing in infrastructure to bring more places across the UK closer to opportunity	A	A	G	A
National Net Zero Strategy	Increase the share of journeys taken by public transport, cycling and walking … Support decarbonisation by investing more than £12 billion in local transport systems over the current Parliament	R	R	G	A
Department for Transport Strategic Priorities	Improving performance on the railways and driving forward rail reform	R	R	G	A
	Improving bus services and growing usage across the country	GY	GY	A	A
	Transforming infrastructure to work for the whole country, promoting social mobility and tackling regional inequality			G	A
	Delivering greener transport	A	A	G	G
	Better integrating transport networks	R	R	G	G

Regional and local strategies	DCC *Strategic Plan*: Make Devon Greener by prioritising sustainable travel and transport; Support Economic Recovery and Growth; Help Communities be Safe, Connected and Resilient by delivering infrastructure which will increase the range of travel choices; Improve accessibility to jobs and services, tackling social isolation in rural parts of the County	A	A	G	G
	Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority *Local Transport Plan Transport Plan 4, 2025-2040*: "work with partners and support ongoing feasibility work for the potential extension of the North Devon Line to Bideford"	R	R	G	A
	DCC *Market & Coastal Towns and Rural Devon (sub) Strategy*: a vision for Devon's market and coastal towns to be "better connected to their closest urban area, for the journey to work, access to health care, education, training, leisure and retail"	A	A	G	A
	PT *Peninsula Rail Strategy*: for long term transition to sustainability access to railway stations by walking, cycling or public transport should be encouraged … reopen or build new stations so that a greater portion of the population live within 10 km of a station and are more likely to access it by sustainable modes	R	R	G	A
	Devon Climate Emergency Declaration: Travelling less and using improved walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure more often, and using electric and hydrogen vehicles	R	R	G	G
Scheme Objectives	1): Improve socio-economic conditions in the Bideford and wider Torridge area by reducing the negative impacts of peripherality, assisting in lifting productivity, prosperity and local economic growth	A	A	G	A
	2): Add low-carbon capacity, choice, resilience and reliability to the area's transport network to contribute towards decarbonising transport on the Torridge/North Devon - Exeter corridor	R	R	G	A
	3): Enable rail and more sustainable active and public transport modes to take an increased share of overall transport demand, supporting and mitigating the impacts of current and expected future demand growth, including where driven by increasing local population and planned housing expansion	R	R	G	A
	4): Enhance access to employment opportunities, education and healthcare in Exeter and beyond for Bideford and Torridge residents and facilitate access to 'hard-to-recruit' jobs in Bideford and Torridge for people outside these areas	A	A	G	A
	5): Improve visitor access by sustainable public transport to the natural environment, including the Tarka Trail, the South West Coast Path, the North Devon National Landscape, the UNESCO North Devon Biosphere and other coastal areas	R	R	G	G

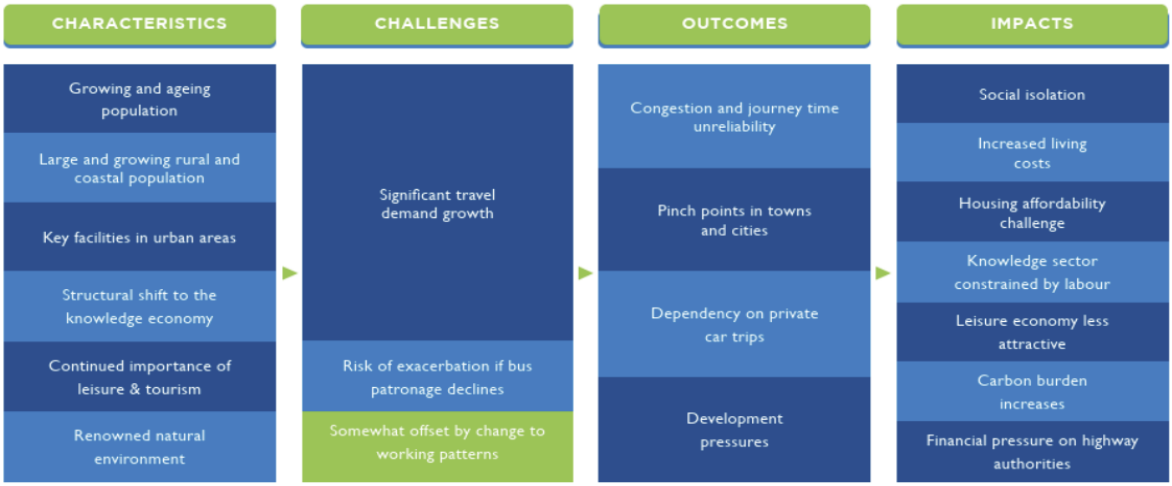
The Do-Nothing option (business as usual)

It is normal for the Strategic Case to explore the so-called 'Do-Nothing Option'. The most recent version of the HM Treasury *Green Book*[126] prefers the more precise formulation of 'business as usual', which it describes as: "the outcome that is expected if current arrangements continue and the proposal is not implemented." A more fully developed SOBC could include a series of tables and other analytical material to show how doing nothing would mean that the socio-economic and other issues the preferred option is intended to address would at best not improve or at worst might deteriorate further. In this business case at this early stage of development,

[126] HM Treasury, 5 February 2026: ttps://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6984ac702df808759a7bd740/The_Green_Book_2026.pdf

those are not included and readers are asked instead simply to interpret for themselves from their reading of the material provided earlier in this document what non-improvement of the universally poor socio-economic indicators shown earlier would mean.

One short-cut is to look at the table in the Alignment with Local, District, County and Regional Strategies section above taken from Peninsula Transport's *Peninsula Rail Strategy* sets out its general view of the impacts of not investing in rail. It is repeated here for ease of reference:



One further important point to highlight, however, is that 'Do-Nothing'/'Business as Usual' is not the same as seeking funding and failing to gain it. Others elsewhere in the country are not doing nothing, but are very actively pursuing funding for transport improvements as part of their local and regional development plans. That means that the 'status quo' for Bideford/Torridge's relative position regionally and nationally is not static. This suggests that rather than being a neutral option, deciding to do nothing by not supporting the Bideford train service reinstatement scheme could result in Torridge slipping yet further in socio-economic indicators compared to other parts of the country.

The impacts of the proposal: 'theory of change'

The Department for Transport's guidance[127] recommends that a 'theory of change' should be developed to show how the transport proposal would lead to the intended outcomes.

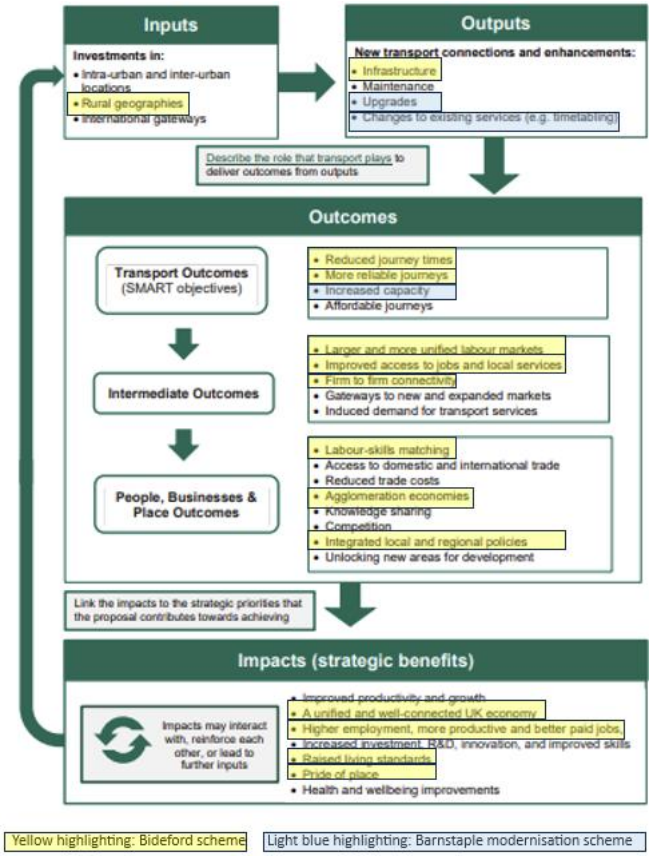
Developing a full theory of change is a substantial task and one that was not judged possible at this early stage of development of the business case. One of the issues with the theory of change approach is that in practice it can lead to a lot of repetition of arguments given elsewhere in the business case.

The diagram on the next page is taken from the DfT guidance and has been annotated to highlight some key points. The yellow boxes refer to the Bideford scheme and the light blue ones to the associated but separate potential upgrade to the Barnstaple to Exeter line that would further improve the services offered under the Bideford scheme, to the extent that it is relevant to the Bideford scheme. Key points made elsewhere in this document that a more fully developed theory of change could highlight include:

- Bideford and surrounding areas in Torridge are cut off - 'peripheral' - in public transport terms because of the lack of a direct train service. Journey times are extended as a result of the need to connect to/from bus or car in Barnstaple, as a result of the low journey speeds for the distances involved and as a result of serious road congestion in Barnstaple and Exeter;
- A direct train service would reduce the overall higher Exeter journey time contributing to peripherality both by eliminating the interchange penalty at Barnstaple and by providing a faster journey between there and Bideford than currently possible. A separate, complementary investment scheme not covered by this document to improve the existing Exeter-Barnstaple rail route would improve the overall journey time yet further;
- The *Transport Strategy for the Market & Coastal Towns and Rural Areas* contained in the *Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 3, 2011-2026* identifies that "the trend for employment growth would be in

[127] Department for Transport, *Transport Business Cases: The Levelling Up Toolkit*, February 2022.

areas such as Barnstaple, Exeter, Newton Abbot, Plymouth and Torbay. The road, including bus travel, and rail links to these centres are critical and should therefore form the core of the strategy."



- Similar concentration arguments apply to tertiary education, health care and activities such as shopping and leisure more generally. A rail scheme could facilitate the economic integration of marginalised, disadvantaged communities with their principal economic hubs, increasing rates of participation and sharing opportunities for greater socio-economic prosperity;
- Rail is preferred for these purposes because it does not suffer from the road congestion car and bus do, within the urban areas of Exeter and Barnstaple is much quicker than bus (which nevertheless still has critical roles to play as a local distributor), and because it provides a means of addressing the sustainability and decarbonisation objectives in local and regional strategies;
- Publicly available evidence of passenger journey purpose on the smallish number of reopened railway lines is relatively limited. An article in *The Herald*[128] contains a number of case studies of new businesses which set up in Galashiels and the surrounding Borders area after the reopening of the Borders Railway between Tweedbank and Edinburgh in Scotland. The case studies are of firms which set up in the Borders area or established branch offices because the railway made travel easier. This is not necessarily for daily commuting, but for business meetings, seeing clients, etc, where the train was easier than car and allowed work to be done during the journey. This is important, as the *North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2011-2031*[129] makes clear that a key element of the development strategy for Bideford is to ensure that it retains its strong character of self-containment: "Sustainable development opportunities will be secured to increase self-containment and achieve balanced development to enable the town to meet its own needs and those of the surrounding area". If for argument's sake a reinstated train service to Bideford was successful in passenger numbers, but was dominated by large numbers of daily commuters to Exeter treating Bideford as a commuter satellite with little inwards traffic, that could run counter to the *Local Plan* ambitions. While all railway lines and the geographical areas they serve are different, the Borders Railway shows how reinstated train services can support local economic development. The Management Case explores how the Borders Railway provides an example of how local authorities can act to help a reinstated train service support their economic development strategies.
- The *Dartmoor Line Early Impact Evaluation*[130] (Executive Summary in Annex K) says relatively little about economic development effects, but it does report that "Early evidence suggests that the Dartmoor Line is beginning to deliver the anticipated benefits for the local area in terms of improving tourism and access to employment and education opportunities. Eight in ten respondents to both the on-train and residents' survey felt that the Line reopening was positively impacting local tourism. This was supported by discussions with businesses and stakeholders who noted that they had observed increased footfall at local businesses such as shops, cafes, and cultural attractions, as a result of the Line. The Line reopening was also felt to facilitate leisure and tourism elsewhere, by improving access to airports and the national rail

[128] *The Herald*, 31 August 2018. A copy of the article is in Annex F.

[129] *Local Transport Plan – Devon and Torbay Strategy 2011 – 2026*, Devon County Council and Torbay Council, April 2011.

[130] Department for Transport, March 2025: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d119dce65dc716bfb1dbbc/dartmoor-line-early-impact-evaluation.pdf

network from Okehampton." In relation to tourism specifically, the *Evaluation* says: "Half (51%) of visitors to the Dartmoor Line stated that they would have been unlikely to make the trip, had there been no rail service, again suggesting that the Line has enabled tourism in the local area";

- Rail in the South West generally has not seen the same level of demand reduction resulting from increased home working seen in some other parts of the country and the Barnstaple route has seen very strong growth, with usage substantially above the best pre-pandemic level. Rail in the Exeter area continues to have unusually high levels of modal share in both regional and national terms; and
- Rail also provides direct connectivity to the wider national rail network at Exeter and can provide ways for outside specialist contractors and others working in hard-to-recruit fields in the Bideford and surrounding areas to access employment and for tourists and other leisure travellers to access the Tarka Trail and other attractions sustainably. There are indications that rail could help in building regional business sector clusters, an example being for eco-marine work with the Navantia-owned Appledore shipyard as a key Torridge participant.

Stakeholder views

The Bideford scheme is at a very early stage of development and no formal public consultation has been carried out. However, it is a scheme which has rapidly grown from the grass roots as described in the Introduction, having only started in 2021. With growing local interest, including at local authority level, the Tarka Rail Association (now North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group) and Railfuture initiated the concept of a new Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance (NDRDA) in late 2023 as a wider forum for representatives of local, regional and national stakeholder organisations.

Bideford Town Council formally became the founder member of the NDRDA in December 2023, followed by Railfuture and Tarka Rail Association (now North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group), then Barnstaple Town Council in January 2024, and Northam Town Council in February 2024, followed by Torridge District Council in April 2024. An inaugural event was held at the Royal Hotel in Bideford on 1 March 2024 with wide representation from the public and private sectors and the rail industry including at senior levels established a model for an annual Alliance forum of stakeholder organisation leaders. A copy of the leaflet for the inaugural meeting including a list of invited parties and resolutions of support from local authorities can be found in Annex E. A further meeting was held in March 2025.

At the inaugural event letters of support from both local MPs (Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Cox KC MP for Torridge and West Devon and Selaine Saxby MP for North Devon) and from the Devon County Council Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport (Cllr Andrea Davis) were read out, as all three had prior diary commitments (copies of the letters in Annex G). Statements of support were also made by a number of others, including Bideford Mayor Cllr Jamie McKenzie, Barnstaple Mayor Cllr Louisa York, South West Business Council CEO Paul Coles, Harland & Wolff (Navantia) General Manager Tom Hart, Network Rail Western Route Director Marcus Jones BEM, Network Rail Programme Director Restoring Your Railway Mike Smith and GWR Head of Strategic Service Development Matt Barnes.

More formal consultation with the wider public will be necessary as the scheme develops and consensus is reached by the sponsoring body with input from stakeholders. Such consultation would be undertaken following local authority consultation good practice and will form an essential component of the development of an application for statutory consents as described earlier in this Management Case.

A wider programme of engagement will need to be developed and implemented as the business case develops, including in connection with the drafting, assessment of responses to and development of approaches to implementing the findings of relevant impact assessments, including in relation to the environment and equality.

During implementation of the scheme, good practice from other schemes shows that targeted engagement will be important to ensure the benefits of the scheme are understood and to ensure that as the scheme approaches completion safety aspects are fully covered, including that any informal access to the future alignment is controlled for safety reasons.

Economic Case

The Department for Transport's guidance explains that the Economic Case "demonstrates the value for money and the best choice for maximising social welfare through options appraisal – the 'economic dimension'."

SLC Rail Report[131]

The author does not have the relevant expertise or access to computer models to build a properly constructed economic case. After the early drafts of this document were completed, funding was found that has enabled that work to be undertaken. SLC Rail has carried out early professional engineering, financial and economic analysis funded jointly through Torridge District Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund and from Railfuture Ltd, Bideford and Barnstaple Town Councils, and Devon County Council's Locality Budget for Bideford East. Reference should be made to that report, which includes a more detailed *Economic Dimension* section, which effectively covers the Economic Case. This section includes a summary of SLC Rail's findings relevant to the economic case.

The SLC report *Economic Dimension* section summarises the approach taken as follows: "This report is structured in such a way that it follows the typical layout of an Economic Dimension within a business case. The work follows an established procedure set by the Department for Transport (DfT) and enshrined within the Treasury's Green Book and in DfT's Transport Appraisal Guidance (TAG). Its scope includes an initial Value for Money assessment in the form of an economic Benefit Cost Ratio – BCR and a range of sensitivity tests to determine the robustness of the BCR at this early stage in the business case pathway."

The *Economic Dimension* section of the SLC Rail report includes the following *Key Findings* summary:

- "Based on current catchment populations and the existing train service specification (1 train per hour and a journey time from Bideford to Exeter of c. 85 minutes), a new station at Bideford is estimated to attract c. 343 k one-way journeys per annum with around 283 k (89%) of new-to-rail and 60 k abstracted from Barnstaple and Umberleigh.
- Early-stage, high-level capital cost estimates for the reinstatement of the line to Bideford are between £305 m and £539 m. This wide range is driven by complexities related to extent of flood defence, ground stabilisation and provision of a new rail alignment around Fremington Quay.
- The BCR is sensitive to three factors: rail journey times to Exeter and beyond, the quantum of future housing in the Bideford catchment and the scheme's capital cost.
- A 'central' case scenario which assumes mid-range capital cost, Barnstaple-Exeter journey times and train frequency as today, and significant future population growth generates a BCR of 0.23 which represents a net economic cost to society and poor value-for-money in DfT categorisation.
- An enhanced train service to Exeter and the assumption of a low-range capital cost pushes the BCR above 1.0 and towards 2.0 where traditionally a scheme would have a sufficiently strong economic case to begin to compete for public sector funding."

As reflected in the Foreword, some of the comments about BCRs made here need to be seen in the light of HM Treasury's *Green Book Review 2025: Findings and actions*[132], saying that*:* "a BCR of less than one does not automatically constitute poor value for money", in particular that strong strategic cases need to be shown. The SLC report recognises these points, saying in the *Economic Dimension* summary: "In recent years however, schemes have been granted funding with relatively low BCRs, locally the Exeter-Okehampton reopening being a good example. In such instances, social value, as demonstrated through the Strategic Dimension part of a business case, can play a strong role in helping to make the case for intervention. In the case of the Bideford catchment there would be considerable social value in, for example, improving access to jobs, training and education and medical facilities."

Other key findings of the SLC *Economic Dimension* report include:

- A substantial level of usage of Bideford station is likely: 343,000 p.a. (lower than Barnstaple, but higher than Okehampton), placing it 1,000 out of c. 2,960 stations nationally;

[131] *Bideford to Barnstaple Line Reopening Engineering Feasibility and Economic Appraisal*, SLC Rail, August 2025

[132] HM Treasury, 11 June 2025: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-book-review-2025-findings-and-actions/green-book-review-2025-findings-and-actions

- The levels of passenger usage would rise substantially with a reduction in overall journey time between Bideford and Exeter through implementation of a modernisation scheme on the existing Barnstaple to Exeter route;
- There would be low levels of abstraction from Barnstaple and Umberleigh stations (passengers already using those stations travelling from Bideford instead), with 89% of trips new to rail; and
- Exeter area stations, including Digby & Sowton, would be dominant in passenger trip numbers (c 55%), but of the other destinations, 8% would be to London and only 7% to Barnstaple.

Learning from other Train Service Reinstatement Schemes

One point that the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance would wish to see fully explored in any further work on the Economic Case is evidence from other reopening schemes about how actual usage has correlated with predicted usage in the economic modelling done for those schemes. It has become a commonplace in railway planning that the economic cases underestimate usage, in many cases substantially, with all more recent schemes appearing to reflect that trend.

It is recognised that forecasting schemes to reinstate train services presents real technical issues for economic forecasters. In particular, the well-established models used in rail circles such as MOIRA extrapolate from past experience, which is not possible for a completely new service, and also focus on smaller changes - point-elasticity - rather than larger transformational changes. There are also other genuine technical issues to be debated and resolved which depend partly on the nature of the scheme at hand such as whether to use trip rate or trip diversion modelling techniques.

Nevertheless, the Economic Case will need to address this issue. Under-forecasting or excessive conservatism may satisfy those who fear a large investment may prove to be a 'white elephant', but if an otherwise sound investment is inhibited as a result or costs and construction scope[133] are reduced beyond what might otherwise be achieved for the same reason, the beneficiaries of the scheme cannot enjoy its maximum potential benefits.

The Department for Transport's evaluation[134] (Executive Summary in Annex K) of the Okehampton line which reopened in November 2021 directly addresses the question of how usage forecasts in the business case compare with actual usage. It says: "Comparison of actual and forecast demand (as contained in the business case for the Line) on the Dartmoor Line shows that the forecasts under-estimated demand the first two full years of the Line's operation with total demand 47% higher than forecast over this period. However, since 2024/P09 (November 2024) actual demand by period has typically been lower than forecast (Figure 23). The large variance in the first two years is primarily due to the forecasting methodology assuming more conservative demand ramp-up factors."

The *Evaluation* contains the following chart showing actual compared to forecast demand.

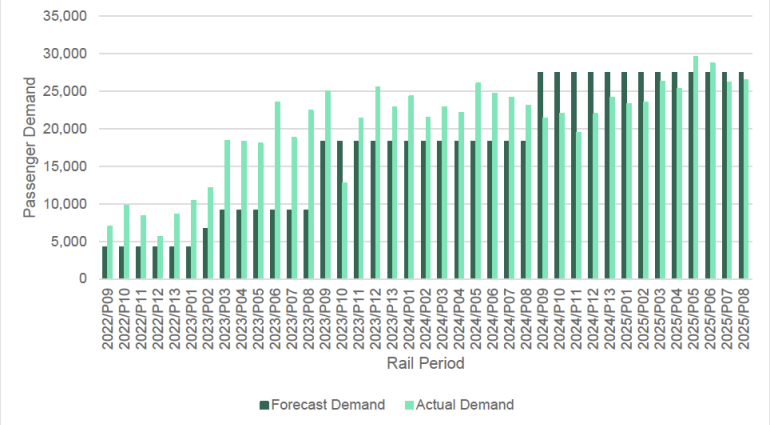


Figure 23: Comparison of actual and forecast Dartmoor Line passenger demand by rail period (2022/P09 to 2025/P08)

The *Evaluation* refers to an Appendix C containing: "A review of the forecasting methodology and assumptions has been undertaken to explore the drivers of the differences", but that appendix is not contained in the version of the report available on-line.

As the Bideford business case progresses, it is anticipated that further information will become available to supplement that from the limited number of reopenings undertaken to date, in particular the

[133] Both the reopened Borders Railway from Tweedbank and the reopened Ebbw Vale railway have encountered issues with capacity for growth and additional train services being constrained by early decisions to reduce project scope such as single track sections preventing more frequent train operation or reinstated bridges only allowing for single track.

[134] *Dartmoor Line Early Impact Evaluation*, Department for Transport, March 2025: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d119dce65dc716bfb1dbbc/dartmoor-line-early-impact-evaluation.pdf

more recent ones, the Levenmouth line which opened in June 2024 and the Northumberland Line which opened in December 2024, albeit with some of the stations opening at a later date.

One factor which could help reduce uncertainty about the level of income to be generated from ticket sales is discussed in the Commercial Case: the simple fare structures introduced on the Okehampton line and already used on the Barnstaple line. Income is both a function of the number of passengers travelling and the level and complexity of fares set. None of the routes mentioned here has both standard and first class fares, very large differences in price between peak and off-peak trains or book-ahead fares for shorter journeys making up the majority of the route usage. Those and other issues in more complex fare structures make estimating levels of income much more complicated. The Okehampton line has introduced a particularly simple fare structure with one price only between Okehampton and Exeter valid all day, with returns simply being double the single price.

Social Value

One technique which could be of considerable potential value for a rail reinstatement scheme in an area with the difficult socio-demographic characteristics of Torridge and Bideford derives from the field of social value economics. The Rail Safety & Standards Board has developed and published a 'tool' (*The Rail Social Value Tool*[135]) to help practitioners understand and maximise the social value of their schemes. It is understood that other similar tools are also available.

The RSSB explains that the tool: "supports organisations in forecasting, measuring and evaluating outcomes and social impact in a way that can be easily shared with industry and beyond. Organisations can identify opportunities to increase the benefit they offer, track outcomes of project, or review operations and to see achievements. The data generated can be used in many ways. For example, to track performance and share with stakeholders in reports, or Environmental, Social and Governance publications, or Corporate Social Responsibility publications. Similarly, the accessible nature of the information, in pounds and pence, can be easily shared directly via social and printed media. The monetised and non-monetised values enable users to monitor a range of information and provide engaging and credible stories. For consistency with industry and public sector, the monetised values are aligned with HM Treasury Green Book Principles." The tool can develop "valuations and proxies that align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals." There are 17 Goals, many of which show a strong alignment with the objectives suggested in this document, for example: "No poverty", "Good health and wellbeing", "Quality education", "Decent work and economic growth", "Industry, innovation and infrastructure", "Reduced inequalities", "Sustainable cities and communities".

[135] https://www.rssb.co.uk/sustainability/maximising-social-value/the-rail-social-value-tool

Commercial Case

The Department for Transport's guidance explains that the Commercial Case "illustrates the commercial viability and supply-side capacity for the proposal – the 'commercial dimension'".

At this early stage of business case construction it is not the intention to present a fully developed Commercial Case. That would be premature, as many of the factors to be covered depend on fuller development of other elements of the business case, in particular engineering design and the Management Case. Key elements of the Commercial Case will be for the party promoting the reinstatement of train services between Barnstaple and Bideford to decide within the governance and stakeholder management structures developed within the Management Case.

Nevertheless, consideration of other elements of the business case have helped highlight a number of early Commercial Case emerging conclusions and further factors for development, which are highlighted below.

A workable Commercial Case is likely to be capable of development

This document starts from the assumption that a workable Commercial Case can be developed. That is based on the premise that few things proposed in this business case are without recent successful precedent. The following non-exhaustive list is intended to demonstrate that point:

- The Okehampton project upgraded 14 miles of existing track, including replacing most of the track and track bed, upgrading drainage, improving earthwork stability, constructing GSMR railway radio masts and refurbishing Okehampton station and car park to enable the reintroduction of passenger train services in November 2021;
- The Barking Riverside project constructed one mile of new elevated track, a major grade separated junction and a new terminus station to enable London Overground trains to access the major development area at Barking Riverside, with train services starting in July 2022;
- The Ebbw Vale project has installed 2 miles of new track for the creation of a 7-mile passing loop and built new platforms at two stations to enable the introduction of a new through train service between Ebbw Vale and Newport in December 2023;
- The Levenmouth rail project in Scotland has completed the laying of six miles of new double track on the disused railway line to Leven, including extensive repairs to existing bridges and two new stations to permit the reintroduction of passenger train services to Cameron Bridge and Leven, which took place in June 2024;
- The East West Rail project has completed the construction of 19 miles of new double track on the mothballed alignment between Bicester and Bletchley, including substantial earthworks improvements, the creation of a new vertical alignment to allow HS2 to be crossed at Claydon, the construction of a new two-track station at Winslow and the reconstruction of the major flyover over the West Coast Main Line at Bletchley and associated additional platforms for Bletchley station, already used by freight trains, with passenger train services expected to start in 2026; and
- In the Great Western franchise area the construction and bringing into use during 2023 of three new stations in entirely new locations at Reading Green Park (two platforms on the Reading to Basingstoke line), Portway Park & Ride (one platform on the Bristol Temple Meads to Severn Beach line), Marsh Barton (two platforms on the Exeter to Newton Abbot line) and one station in 2024 at Ashley Down (two platforms on the Bristol Temple Meads to Bristol Parkway line).

The *Engineering Feasibility* section of the SLC Rail report[136] includes a number of important warnings about the engineering challenges involved in constructing in a coastal area, including the risks associated with flooding.

Engineering contracting strategy

Any major civil engineering project needs to decide how to structure the letting of the contracts for the construction of the new railway, including specialist railway disciplines such as track laying. Without limitation, key factors include:

[136] *Bideford to Barnstaple Line Reopening Engineering Feasibility and Economic Appraisal*, SLC Rail, August 2025.

- The amount of cost risk the contractor[s] should be asked to take[137];
- How the management of the contracts should be arranged (for example, whether there should a be prime contractor managing other contractors or should the client do this itself);
- The extent to which certain design elements might be considered from an early stage as potentially descopable later in the project if downside cost risks arise;
- Whether some elements should be managed separately[138] from the main scheme; and
- The extent to which the contractors should be allowed to have a say in design factors[139].

The last point about a potential role for contractors in design is important, as decisions on commercial contracting strategy should not be left until late in the project's life cycle. If they are left until later, some options such as involving contractors at an earlier stage in design to take advantage of lower cost or better value or lower risk options they might be able to identify are eliminated. More is said about this in the Management Case. For example, if sustainable/low emission/low noise construction techniques as mentioned in the Management Case are to be guaranteed to stakeholders, they need to form part of the commercial procurement process with contractors.

The Management Case identifies the most likely approach being that Network Rail[140] would take over the role of promoter at a later stage in business case development. As a very large organisation, one of whose core capabilities is the definition, letting and management of major civil and railway engineering projects, with large numbers of experienced, knowledgeable staff, Network Rail would be best placed to lead the construction commercial activity.

As a founding member of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance, Network Rail would be able to feed its experience of contracting strategies into the development of this scheme's Commercial Case. As the eventual operator and owner[141] of the new piece of railway infrastructure, Network Rail playing that role would also reduce the complexities and risks associated with it taking on responsibility for a piece of infrastructure constructed by another party.

Other organisations managing major rail construction schemes such as HS2, East West Rail, Transport for London and London Underground are not in the market to work for third parties outside their designated areas of responsibility. The Management Case looks in greater detail at the arguments in favour of who should manage a scheme such as Bideford train service reinstatement.

Fares and pricing policy

One element of commercial policy that affects both the Financial and Economic cases is the level and structure of fares to be introduced with the new train service. Fare income will be the predominant financial flow[142] offsetting construction and train/ infrastructure operating costs. It will therefore be a key determiner of the Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) and other appraisal outcomes in the Economic Case. Complex trade-offs and optimisation is involved.

If fares are set too low, overall income would be depressed compared to the potential level, even if more passengers might travel than otherwise. If set too high, overall income might be better, but the social benefits sought in the business case could be limited compared to their potential as a result of potential passengers being priced off from using the new train service.

There is also the question of the structure of fares. British rail fares are often criticised for being too complex. In the run-up to the establishment of the new Great British Railways organisation, much has been making

[137] Central Government grant funding usually provides for the recipient local authority to take the risk on out-turn cost exceeding the grant. This raises the question of risk-based trade-offs such as whether it would be better to ask contractors to take more financial risk even if that meant the initial price was higher.

[138] An example in the Tavistock scheme is the new station car park at Tavistock.

[139] The arguments in favour typically reference contractors' experience of construction issues and new construction technologies as a basis for them being able to identify potentially lower cost or higher net value alternative approaches or construction innovations that the promoter could not identify.

[140] Or Great British Railways under the rail reorganisation plans announced in July 2024.

[141] NB the caveat explained later in this Commercial Case about an alternative model of ownership.

[142] There are also likely to be small amounts of income from advertising, vehicle parking, electric vehicle charging and possibly premises letting (for example a café) at Bideford and Instow stations and any other station that might be built.

strong play of the potential benefits of fare structure simplification. It should be noted that the Okehampton rail reopening in November 2021 was the first to introduce a very simple fares structure where return fares were double single fares (so-called 'single-leg pricing') and there were no peak or off-peak fares. Neither the Okehampton nor Barnstaple routes have first class on the trains or corresponding first class fares.

Another factor is that all fares are constrained by other fares. In the case of reinstatement of train services to Bideford, fares would be constrained by the fares already in place[143]. Fares regulation under the Department for Transport's rail contract is yet another factor, as that will have a strong bearing on how fares could develop in the future[144].

Given the wider moves within the rail industry to fares simplification and the precedent of Okehampton, it is possible that a simpler fares structure for Barnstaple may already have been introduced by the time Bideford train services are reinstated. If not, reinstatement may be an opportunity for simplification of the whole Barnstaple line along the lines of Okehampton.

Pay-as-you-go tap-in-tap-out ticketing has already been rolled out across London, large areas outside London and, in the West and South West in the Bristol area and western Cornwall. There would be benefits to having this ticketing model available to Bideford/Barnstaple too. That would also have implications for the fares in connection with the pledge made that the system can always offer the best value fare to users, as it acts as a key driver towards simplification of fares structures.

South West Water sewage pipe

Annex A, which examines potential alternative rail alignments in more detail, highlights that a 14"/ 36 cm sewage pipe belonging to South West Water runs under around a third of the Tarka Trail on the former rail alignment between Yelland and a point between Bideford and Instow at Westleigh.

A pipe of this sort, together with the connections it makes to the treatment works at Yelland and other connections elsewhere are self-evidently infrastructure of critical local and regional importance. It will therefore be important that the development of the business case recognises South West Water's legitimate commercial interests in this infrastructure. Any engineering solutions for the construction and subsequent operational phases of the reinstated railway will need to recognise this, in particular ensuring continuing access for maintenance and potential enhancement under at least as favourable conditions as currently apply. A plan for developing a working commercial relationship with South West Water, including recognising its status as a regulated utility, will need to be developed as part of the development of the business case.

Ownership of sea wall/dykes

An important question is who should have longer-term ownership of the rail infrastructure. A simple answer would be that it should be Network Rail, as it owns and operates the rest of the national rail network, including the Exeter to Barnstaple railway to which a reinstated route to Bideford would connect. That was the approach adopted for the Okehampton line, which did not belong to Network Rail before the regular train service reinstatement in November 2021. It may well be that the final decision is that this should also be the model in this case. However, there are some local issues which mean it is worthwhile to look at other models first.

The underlying issue is the potentially significant costs that can crystallize as a result of transfer of ownership. It is understood that Devon County Council owns the whole of the former railway alignment[145]. A driver of the potential crystallisation of costs at ownership transfer is a result of the fact that large parts of the route have either been built alongside a river or across salt marshes.

Network Rail's report into the infrastructure risks from climate change following the Dawlish sea wall failure in 2014[146] identified the sections of route between Newton Abbot and Teignmouth and between Marsh Barton

[143] For example, fares could not be lower than the equivalent Exeter to Barnstaple fares.

[144] In the economic appraisal undertaken as part of the development of the Economic Case in line with the Department for Transport's TAG guidance, income streams and costs are discounted many years into the future.

[145] This needs full legal confirmation and other ownership issues arising include a potential diversion around Fremington Quay and any subsequently acquired rights and easements, for example for the sewage pipe discussed above and crossings used by the Royal Marines and to the former power station site at Yelland.

[146] *West of Exeter Route Resilience Study*, Network Rail, summer 2014: https://www.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/West-of-Exeter-Route-Resilience-Study.pdf

and Starcross as being at some risk from higher sea levels. Those sections of railway are similar in characteristics to large sections of the Bideford railway. However, the existing Bideford formation does not belong to Network Rail, is likely to have been subject to different maintenance standards since closure as a rail route due to carrying a lightweight cycle track rather than a railway and any record keeping may be difficult for Network Rail to assess in terms of its own technical standards.

The SLC Rail report[147] also identifies these factors. It concludes that: "There is potential for the capital costs borne by the scheme to be reduced through ongoing dialogue with other government agencies to reapportion costs associated with factors such as coastal/flood defence." The argument is that where wider benefits accrue from flood defences, it would not be appropriate for the railway scheme alone to pay for them.

Flood management is an important theme in the Infrastructure Strategy[148]: "Investing in flood risk management delivers immediate economic resilience, protecting businesses from costly disruptions and enabling faster recovery after extreme weather events. For every £1 invested in flood defences, there are around £8 of damages prevented. To support a long-term vision for flood resilience, the government will also explore setting a long-term multi-decade target for flood risk management in line with prior recommendations made by the National Audit Office and National Infrastructure Commission. The government is also consulting on a new, simpler approach to investing in flood defences, including how regional mayors can support flood resilience and also considering alternative sources of funding." The Strategy also touches on multi-agency approaches to flood management that could help address the issue identified by SLC Rail.

A further commercial issue is that when a major infrastructure asset changes hands, the new owner may seek financial coverage for future risks which are hard to estimate and which may not in practice materialize, but which of course could also happen shortly after transfer[149]. Given that the river wall also protects farmland, the B3233 road and properties in particular south of Instow and also the Tarka Trail, a cheaper and better value for money approach might be for Devon County Council to retain ownership of the underlying infrastructure and to lease the track to Network Rail in a similar way to how Somerset Council leases the Taunton-Minehead line to the West Somerset Railway or Network Rail leases the Island Line track on the Isle of Wight to the train operator.

Given that the issue is likely to arise and will affect the overall cost of the project and also raises important longer-term issues about legal and financial liability for flood defences, it is worth consideration being given to how it might be addressed at an early stage in the development of the business case.

Ultimate ownership does not necessarily affect the management approach adopted, either during construction or after entry into operation. In principle, even if Devon County Council were to retain ownership, that does not mean that Network Rail could not manage the commercial procurement, contracting and engineering aspects of the project as anticipated in the Management Case or post-construction maintenance of the track and other railway structures provided Devon County Council could have sufficient oversight of technical and other standards for sea defence purposes.

Section 106, Community Infrastructure Levy and land value capture

Until the publication of the English devolution White Paper emphasising the future importance of devolution of public sector investment decisions, the traditional most likely source of capital funding for modernising the railway between Barnstaple and Exeter beyond that potentially available through existing regulated renewal programmes was central government capital grant. Nevertheless, other sources should also be investigated. This section looks briefly at potential developer funding sources (Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy) and landowner funding sources (land allows value capture).

Section 106[150] allows a local authority to require developers to make financial contributions to infrastructure and sometimes non-capital costs. A good example is the section 106-funded car park at the planned new

[147] *Bideford to Barnstaple Line Reopening Engineering Feasibility and Economic Appraisal*, SLC Rail, August 2025

[148] HM Treasury, 11 June 2025, *UK Infrastructure: A 10 Year Strategy*: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6853c5db99b009dcdcb73649/UK_Infrastructure_A_10_Year_Strategy_Web_Accessible.pdf

[149] Network Rail's regulatory settlement at the date of transfer will not include funding for such potential liabilities.

[150] Powers derived from section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Tavistock station set out in the SOBC[151] for that rail reopening. An important point is that the requirements cannot be made retrospectively. The business case for the reopening would need to be kept in mind when planning permissions are being given. Under section 106 the contributions should relate directly to the impacts of the development, while the Community Infrastructure Levy allows wider application.

Land value capture works on the principle that landowners should not benefit from the whole of windfall increase in value of their land that results in planning permission for development being given. It is a recent technique and there is not a lot of experience of its use, though it is understood on the basis of statements by Northumberland County Council's Strategic Transport Manager[152] that it has been used to help finance the reopening for passenger trains of the previously freight-only Northumberland Line between Newcastle and Ashington.

Like section 106, land value capture cannot be applied retrospectively and its use depends on a close alignment between development of the business case for train service reinstatement and local authority planning permissions. A key part of the technique is that it involves landowners signing up to the terms in advance. If a station was to be built at Yelland or Fremington, for example, land value capture associated with further development in those areas might be a possible approach. It is unclear whether the principle could be applied more widely or whether it is a model that would appeal to the local authorities.

It is also noted that both the existing Local Plan and the new housing targets set a high level of housing development within Torridge. The SLC Report[153] makes it clear that the strongest level of passenger demand and the best economic case correlate with achievement of the higher levels of housing development. Specialist advice would be necessary.

[151] Devon County Council - *Tavistock-Plymouth Line Reopening Strategic Outline Business Case – Restoring Your Railway: RYR387,* 22 September 2022: https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/outline-business-case-submitted-for-reopening-tavistock-to-plymouth-rail-line/

[152] Quoted in an interview in *Modern Railways* magazine, March 2024.

[153] *Bideford to Barnstaple Line Reopening Engineering Feasibility and Economic Appraisal*, SLC Rail, August 2025.

Financial Case

The Department for Transport's guidance explains that the Financial Case "demonstrates the proposal is financially affordable – the 'financial dimension'."

SLC Rail Report[154]

The author does not have the relevant expertise or access to computer models to build a properly constructed economic case. After the early drafts of this document were completed, funding was found that has enabled that work to be undertaken. SLC Rail has carried out early professional engineering, financial and economic analysis funded jointly through Torridge District Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund and from Railfuture Ltd, Bideford and Barnstaple Town Councils, and Devon County Council's Locality Budget for Bideford East. Reference should be made to that work, which includes more detailed *Economic Dimension* and *Engineering Feasibility* sections providing early assessments of the likely capital/operating costs and revenues. This section includes a summary of SLC Rail's findings relevant to the economic case.

Capital cost estimate

The SLC Rail report[155] identifies capital costs in an envelope between £305 million and £539 million on the basis of an early engineering feasibility assessment building on the concept of a modified coastal route set out in this document. That is clearly a very substantial capital cost.

The lower cost estimates omit coastal flooding mitigations on the basis that: "The railway scheme should not bear the full cost of coastal defence works and further exploration is needed with other agencies to understand the apportionment of capital costs." The engineering feasibility study is at an early stage and acknowledges risks which have not been costed at this stage.

Operating cost estimate

The SLC Rail report concludes: "There is insufficient slack in the current Exeter-Barnstaple timetable to extend to Bideford without the need for an additional train set. Operating costs would therefore include fixed costs of annual lease for a 2-car train, the variable mileage-based costs and the cost of operating and maintaining the new station. Operating costs are estimated to be £976 k per annum".

SLC Rail notes that a modernisation scheme for the core Exeter to Barnstaple route might change that assumption and reduce incremental operating costs: "Should the route between Exeter and Barnstaple be upgraded with better line speeds then the extension to Bideford could be achieved within existing resources and only the mileage-based costs would accrue to the scheme."

It is noted that the Department for Transport's evaluation[156] of the reopened Okehampton line has concluded that the new train service operates at a small surplus, requiring no subsidy: "The Dartmoor Line annual operating costs and generated revenue are estimated to be £1.74m and £2.59m respectively in 2023/24. This indicates that the Dartmoor Line is creating an estimated annual operating surplus of approximately £0.85m with no requirement for operating subsidy."

Comparative Schemes – capital costs

By way of comparison, the following locally-promoted schemes (omitting nationally promoted schemes such as HS2, East West Rail and Transpennine Route Upgrade) were either under construction or had recently completed at the date this document was being drafted. The SLC Rail capital cost estimates place the Bideford scheme at the upper end of this list of schemes:

- Northumberland Line: £299 million[157] to reinstate train services on an upgraded freight line with five new stations, the first trains running in December 2024, with some stations opening later (promoter: Northumberland County Council);

[154] *Bideford to Barnstaple Line Reopening Engineering Feasibility and Economic Appraisal*, SLC Rail, August 2025.

[155] SLC Rail report, ibid.

[156] *Dartmoor Line Early Impact Evaluation*, Department for Transport, March 2025: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d119dce65dc716bfb1dbbc/dartmoor-line-early-impact-evaluation.pdf

[157] https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/News/2024/Aug/Major-milestones-reached-as-rail-scheme-nears-fina.aspx

- Leven Line in Scotland: £117 million[158] to reinstate train services on six miles of mostly double track and two new stations, including mast foundations for later electrification, supporting an hourly train service to Edinburgh (later half-hourly) serving a population of around 30,000, on which train services started on 2 June 2024 (promoter: Transport Scotland);
- Portishead Line: £182 million[159] to reinstate Bristol to Portishead train services, with two new stations, three miles of new track and upgrading existing freight line including a new double track passing place, planned to open 2027 (promoter: West of England Combined Authority);
- Mid Cornwall Metro: £57 million[160] for the upgrade of the Par to Newquay line allowing an hourly through train service between Newquay and Falmouth via St Austell and Truro, with a second platform at Newquay, with train services upgraded in 2026 (promoter: Cornwall Council);
- Cambridge South station: £93 million[161] for a third station in Cambridge serving a large science park, with four platforms, additional double track loop and alterations to road layouts, due to open in 2026 (promoter: Network Rail); and
- Beaulieu Park station: £252 million[162] for a second station in Chelmsford serving a large urban extension, with three platforms, additional track, 700 car parking spaces, 500 cycle parking spaces, new access road, which opened in October 2025 (promoters: Essex County Council, Chelmsford City Council and private developers).

Some road schemes in the South West by way of comparison include:

- North Devon Link Road upgrade: £67 million budget[163] (promoter: Devon County Council); and
- A30 in Cornwall Carland Cross to Chiverton dualling: £330 million[164] (promoter: Highways England).

Sources of funding

Traditionally, the most likely source of capital funding for reinstating the railway between Barnstaple and Bideford was central government capital grant. The 'enhancement' pot in the Network Rail 5-yearly Control Period settlement was seen as the natural source of capital funding for rail capital investment schemes. However, many influential voices in Network Rail and elsewhere argue that RNEP should be used for upgrading the capabilities of the existing network, not increasing its size.

Network Rail published its Control Period 7 *Enhancements Delivery Plan England and Wales* in September 2024[165]. The schemes included focus on projects with wide area impacts such as the Transpennine Route Upgrade or which pave the way for major national change such as the East Coast Digital Programme or which support the the implementation of nationally important schemes such as HS2 and East West Rail.

The Restoring Your Railway Fund financed the reopening of the Okehampton line in Devon, but has been cancelled by the Government. Other central government funding pots have become open to rail projects in recent years, even when not sponsored by the Department for Transport. Typically, only local authorities could apply and were required to bid competitively. For example, the Mid Cornwall Metro has been funded by the Levelling Up Fund. The Levelling Up Fund has also been cancelled.

The Government's English devolution policy set out in the 2024 White Paper[166] criticises such centrally controlled funding pots and cites rail improvements sponsored locally by existing English authorities with devolved powers such as Transport for London and Liverpool as prime examples of the success of existing devolution arrangements. The White Paper (section 3.3.) states: "High quality transport infrastructure supports

[158] https://www.transport.gov.scot/news/transport-minister-marks-significant-milestone-on-leven-rail-link/

[159] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portishead_railway_station

[160] https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/transport-parking-and-streets/sustainable-transport/mid-cornwall-metro/

[161] https://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/news/cambridge-south-station-main-construction-contract-awarded

[162] https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/our-routes/anglia/improving-the-railway-in-anglia/beaulieu-station/

[163] https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/council-agrees-to-amend-north-devon-link-road-plans-due-to-rising-costs/

[164] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/businesses-sign-up-to-play-a-part-in-highways-englands-a30-upgrade-in-cornwall

[165] https://www.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Enhancements-Delivery-Plan-England-and-Wales-September-2024.pdf

[166] *English Devolution White Paper – Power and Partnership: Foundations for Growth*, 16 December 2024: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper

growth and opportunity. Bringing decisions about transport closer to people is key to improving the transport networks we rely on every day. We will therefore empower Strategic Authorities to take greater oversight of their local transport networks".

Devolved funding led by a new Strategic Authority therefore seems at the date of the document one of the more likely routes forward for funding for the scheme. However, much remains to be clarified and timescales in particular may be considerable. In particular, devolution as set out in the White Paper depends on institutional changes beyond the scope of this document, including the abolition of district councils and the creation of larger strategic authorities emulating the combined authorities already found in some urban parts of the country.

The White Paper anticipates that most devolution will be led by Mayoral Strategic Authorities. Devon County Council and Torbay Council have already made the first steps towards the creation of such a body through combining to create a non-mayoral Combined County Authority. At the date of this document, the type and final geographical extent of a Strategic Authority covering the Devon area remained unresolved.

The Commercial Case briefly touches on potential private sector funding in the form of section 106 funding from developers, Community Infrastructure Levy and the relatively recent approach of land value capture.

Management Case

Developing management arrangements for the scheme

So far the scheme to reinstate train services to Bideford has run as a local campaign led initially by ACE Rail and now by the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance. It is recognised that more formal arrangements for the management of the scheme will need to be instituted as the business case develops.

While in the author's experience many early-stage business cases tend to be light on the development of management arrangements, considerable weight is attached to them here. Numerous reports suggest that key failings in major schemes originate in insufficient attention being given to scheme management, in particular at the early stages of a scheme.

The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DTCCA) assumed responsibility for transport matters in Devon and Torbay from Devon County Council and Torbay Council during the course of 2025. The DTCCA adopted the *Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4, 2025-2040*[167] (LTP) in July 2025. The new LTP says the DTCCA will: "work with partners and support ongoing feasibility work for the potential extension of the North Devon Line to Bideford." If this initial exploratory work were to lead to a decision to give formal support to the scheme, the DTCCA would need to become formal sponsor of the scheme.

One model for the sponsorship management arrangements are those used for the reopening of the railway line to Tavistock, as described in the Management Case of the Tavistock SOBC[168] and set out in Annex J (references to Tavistock changed to Bideford). In summary, there is a Project Board to provide strategic direction and stakeholder input, with a Steering Group to provide a governance framework of formal decision-making. A key feature of the management arrangements is that at the decision to design stage, they provide for Network Rail to take over the scheme as main Project Sponsor, with support from GWR on the train service arrangements.

While in principle it might be possible for the DTCCA to deliver the physical construction element of the scheme itself, the severe difficulties encountered on a well-known earlier example of this approach has dissuaded other local authorities from that approach. The reopening of the disused freight-only route to Ebbw Vale in South Wales was initially managed by Blaenau Gwent Council and other local authorities with funding from the Welsh Assembly Government, but later transferred to Network Rail management, sponsored by the Welsh Government.

As well as the question of whether local authorities have sufficient technical capability and resources in terms of sufficient staff to manage these sorts of projects, there is also a key question of financial risk if Network Rail decides not to accept the new asset once construction is complete without further changes or work. Effectively, the local authority can maintain its influence by being a key part of the project management arrangements while mitigating its risks by ensuring Network Rail implements the project working with other key stakeholders.

A further critical argument in favour of Network Rail leading scheme implementation is that it is one of the few organisations in the country[169] with the procurement/contract management capability, in-depth engineering/railway operating knowledge and of sufficient size and experience of dealing both with major civil engineering contractors and specialist rail contractors. Given that ownership[170] and operation of the new railway are likely to transfer to Network Rail and that it will need to approve that work has been carried out to technical and other standards acceptable to it, Network Rail will need to have a role in the management of the project. The same applies to Great Western Railway as future operator of the train services and stations[171].

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[167] https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-information/transport-planning/devon-local-transport-plan-4-2025-2040/

[168] Devon County Council - *Tavistock-Plymouth Line Reopening Strategic Outline Business Case – Restoring Your Railway: RYR387,* 22 September 2022: https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/outline-business-case-submitted-for-reopening-tavistock-to-plymouth-rail-line/

[169] Others with the relevant capabilities such as London Underground, TfL, HS2 or East West Rail would not be available for a scheme such as Bideford.

[170] NB, however, the caveat explored in the Commercial Case about ownership.

[171] Including any successors to Network Rail and GWR under the Government's rail reorganisation plans.

It is recognised that the management arrangements proposed for Tavistock might change in the light of experience. It is therefore anticipated that the arrangements for the Bideford train service reinstatement scheme would follow relevant developments in the management approach taken on the Tavistock project and/or other projects promoted by the DTCCA and/or other projects within the wider Network Rail enhancements portfolio. Given its recent implementation, feed-back from the Mid Cornwall Metro project could be especially beneficial. At the date this document was being drafted, Okehampton Interchange station was under construction, sponsored locally in Devon and managed by Network Rail. Again, useful lessons could be learned from that scheme. Due recognition would need to be taken of recommendations made by the National Audit Office or other reports into the progress of rail and other relevant projects.

Another factor to be taken into account is the pace at which the DTCCA develops its capabilities in line with the expectations set out in the Devolution White paper. Decisions would also be needed on the final geographical extent of the authority as one of the new strategic authorities under the White Paper and whether the DTCCA became a mayoral authority: the White Paper indicates that non-mayoral authorities would have fewer powers and funding devolved to them.

The central Government grant funding usually used for schemes outside the metropolitan areas to date provides for the recipient local authority to take the risk on out-turn cost exceeding the grant. Conversely, the devolution White Paper indicates a move towards greater financial devolution. Whichever way things fall, it would be important for the DTCCA to have a strong role in the governance of the scheme, including whether it prefers to manage some discrete aspects separately[172] and take other elements of cost risk to its overall portfolio. Some elements of scope might purposely be designated for potential descoping and possible later attention.

Should central funding continue, another role of the management case is to give confidence and assurance to any central Government department[s] which may decide to fund it that the scheme is well managed and that the money is therefore likely to be spent effectively and properly.

Relationship with the Department for Transport

In the shorter term, one body the scheme governance arrangements will need to cover is the Department for Transport in its statutory role as sponsor and funder of train services through its legal agreements with the train operators.

The agreement with the train operator will need to specify that it must operate any additional train services and funding for additional rolling stock, train crew and net operational costs will need to be agreed. One of the reasons for the rapid implementation of the Okehampton scheme was that these matters had been dealt with early. The governance arrangements therefore need to take account of the need for discussion with and representation of the relevant part of the Department from a suitably early stage.

Future organisational changes to rail

In line with the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act of 28 November 2024, the Government is nationalising the rail franchises as they come to natural term. As set out in its consultation on the future restructuring plans[173] the Government is aiming to set up Great British Railways as an arm's length body to provide leadership for the industry and to take over both the train operators and Network Rail and integrate them vertically. There is a risk that such major reorganisation distracts key players or that a new organisation such as the Great British Railways takes a different or less sympathetic view of regional rail investment[174]. In the absence of evidence at this stage, the impact is assumed to be neutral. However, the current rail organisational structures with separate funding lines for infrastructure and train operations/stations may make the integrative approach of the improvement vision outlined in this document more difficult. It is noted that the proposed new structures for the railway involving Great British Railways, which are expressly intended to bring the

[172] An example in the Tavistock scheme is the new station car park.

[173] *A Railway Fit for Britain's Future*, February 2025: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67b30e36b56d8b0856c2fd49/a-railway-fit-for-britains-future.pdf

[174] The short-lived Strategic Rail Authority, for example, at first favoured smaller local investment schemes through its Rail Passenger Partnership fund and then, under changed leadership, cut the Rail Passenger Partnership and decided to reduce funding for local train services.

management of the infrastructure and train services back together ('vertical integration'), are designed to reduce the impact of such barriers and could therefore prove to be positive for this scheme.

The future organisational structure and policy priorities for rail remain to be determined. It is therefore recommended that, as the scheme progresses through the business case stages, continued horizon scanning be used to check for potential impacts on the scheme from wider changes.

Post-implementation benefits management: monitoring and evaluation

The Tavistock SOBC Management Case also describes arrangements for post-construction monitoring and evaluation and says it should be included early in the development of the business case. This plan needs to fully 'live' and evolve as the project develops.

The Tavistock SOBC includes the following HM Treasury definitions[175]:

- "Monitoring – seeks to check progress against planned targets and can be defined as the formal reporting and evidencing that spend and outputs are successfully delivered, and milestones met; and
- Evaluation – is the assessment of the initiative's effectiveness and efficiency during and after implementation. It seeks to measure the causal effect of the scheme on planned outcomes and impacts and assessing whether the anticipated benefits have been realised, how this was achieved, or if not, why not."

A key element of the post-implementation monitoring plan will need to be the SMART objectives set out in the Strategic Case.

It is noted that the Department for Transport, building on a Major Projects Authority requirement, implements its own benefits management review system for its own major projects. Given that the new DTCCA Local Transport Plan supports a wide range of other rail improvements, a feed-back loop of learning from a scheme to reinstate Bideford train services could be highly beneficial to the wider portfolio should it be one of the earlier schemes to be implemented. The Department for Transport has already published a shorter term evaluation[176] of the reopening of the Okehampton line to train services. The report explains a number of areas covered that would benefit from ongoing review and further evaluation.

While monitoring and evaluation are important, there are likely to be benefits from implementing a more active approach to benefits management as well. The large numbers of passengers using it mean that the Borders Railway between Edinburgh and Tweedbank in Scotland is usually seen as a particular success. A key lesson from the Borders Railway reopening is that the local authorities promoting the Borders Railway reopening worked to ensure that it was a success for the local towns and economy too, developing the 'Borders Railway Blueprint' programme to achieve that goal.

A report on the Blueprint[177] explains that: "In November 2014 a document entitled *Borders Railway – Maximising the Impact: A Blueprint for the Future* was published by the 'Blueprint Group' of partners … The document sets out the ambitions of the partners 'to realise fully the economic benefits of the new Borders Railway', particularly to stimulate the growth of businesses, generate employment and boost tourist visitor numbers. The Blueprint is structured around three key themes; Great Locations for Working and Investing, Great Communities for Living and Learning, and Great Destinations to Visit. Using these themes the Blueprint Leadership Group has established a more detailed programme of activity and investment, and the Leadership Group meets regularly to oversee the implementation of that programme."

The Northumberland Line between Newcastle and Ashington has taken a broadly similar approach, with Northumberland County Council setting up the 'Northumberland Economic Corridor' to "understand how rail could unlock a host of wider benefits for the region"[178].

[175] *The Magenta Book*, HM Treasury, 2011.

[176] *Dartmoor Line Early Impact Evaluation*, Department for Transport, March 2025: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d119dce65dc716bfb1dbbc/dartmoor-line-early-impact-evaluation.pdf

[177] Scottish Borders Council: *BORDERS RAILWAY BLUEPRINT - UPDATE* Report by Corporate Transformation & Services Director EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 2 February 2016.

[178] Stuart McNaughton, Northumberland County Council Strategic Transport Manager quoted in *Modern Railways* magazine, March 2024.

It is therefore recommended that the management arrangements instituted for the reinstatement of train services to Bideford should also explicitly include a post-reopening benefits management system emulating the best aspects of the Blueprint and any emerging lessons from the Northumberland Line.

Management of sustainability

Given that sustainability is a key objective of the scheme and may be a key factor in funding, it is important to include this in the management arrangements. The Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) has recently published its *Sustainable Rail Blueprint*[179]. This document follows the *Blueprint*'s key recommendations. The RSSB explains that "The Sustainable Rail Blueprint (*The Blueprint*) is the industry-wide framework for realising sustainable rail. It's rail's first unified plan, providing a whole-industry view as far as 2050."

The Culture for Sustainability section of the *Blueprint* says that "making sustainability part of everything we do must be a core pillar of the culture of the rail industry." The aim would be to ensure through the Steering Group set up to manage the scheme that Network Rail and Great Western Railway as train operator (and successors to those organisations under any rail reorganisation) took forward key elements of the sustainability strategy developed for the scheme. The *Blueprint* contains the following diagram:

An important part of achieving sustainability through the Bideford scheme is ensuring existing sustainable travel options are maintained where possible during construction. A key point would be to ensure that construction works allowed the popular Tarka Trail cycle/walking route to continue to be accessible as much as possible and, where not, that suitable temporary alternatives were found. This would need to be developed through later stage business cases and to become embedded as a key issue for the scheme Steering Group during delivery.

One option, for example, might be to phase construction works outside the summer months when leisure use is at its greatest. Whatever option is chosen, the management of the scheme will need to take explicit account of it, as loss of this popular and well-used trail could damage support for the scheme and cause economic damage, in particular to the tourism sector. As mentioned elsewhere in this document, improvements to the Tarka Trail should be included as part of the overall scope to help offset inconvenience during construction.

Another sustainability factor is logistics for the construction phase of the reopening scheme. The Strategic Case highlights that Barnstaple already suffers from congestion and the road between Barnstaple and Bideford is narrow and busy. Large numbers of heavy trucks bringing ballast and other construction materials would run contrary to a key purpose of the train service reinstatement.

Rail-based logistics would be one possible solution. Some materials such as continuously welded rail can only in practice be delivered by rail. For ballast and other large-volume material requirements, a rail-based solution with construction proceeding from the Barnstaple end of the line is an obvious solution too, with the additional benefit that rail freight is substantially greener than road-based freight. Modern rail construction techniques of the sort used on the Okehampton reopening mean rail-based material delivery could be undertaken from the route itself as it progresses towards Bideford. Similar rail-based logistics have been used for the construction of the new Goss Moor passing loop on the Newquay line as part of the Mid Cornwall Metro scheme. For other

[179] *Sustainable Rail Blueprint,* Rail Safety and Standard Boards, November 2023.

materials such as spoil a rail logistics centre might be established in the Barnstaple area to receive materials for onward transport.

Water-based logistics such as coastal shipping might also be a potential option for further investigation, subject to suitable environmental assessment, given the coastal location.

Further factors in sustainable construction include reducing 'embedded carbon' and sustainable construction techniques. Consideration should be given to how embedded carbon could be reduced, for example by reuse of old materials from elsewhere. Sustainable/low emission/low noise construction techniques include the use of electricity-powered rather than diesel-powered plant and machinery. Both are increasingly in use on non-rail projects and are starting to be used on rail.

Ecological considerations such as the need to protect rarer species such as dormice and the views and requirements of Natural England would also need to built into the management arrangements for the scheme.

The *Blueprint* includes a social value component. This document has a considerable focus on the potential high social value of the new train services once operating. However, a large construction scheme such as this should also aim to maximise the social value during the construction phase. Guidance from the Department for Transport[180] makes clear that construction is not seen as contributing to the regeneration of a local economy and the creation of new jobs or increased employment because they are usually temporary and filled by outside labour. An exception is made where they are recruited locally:

"The guidance identifies that transport improvements might contribute to the regeneration of a local economy and the creation of new jobs or increased employment in the following ways:

- Jobs associated with construction of the scheme;
- Jobs associated with operating and maintaining the scheme;
- Jobs arising as a result of the improved travel conditions the scheme delivers; and
- Increased employment by giving residents of the RA access to jobs that were previously inaccessible.

The guidance indicates that the first of these should not be included. Construction jobs are temporary, often using outside labour, and are therefore unlikely to contribute to local employment in the longer term. Jobs which may be filled primarily by residents of the RA associated with operating or maintaining the scheme may be included as a regeneration benefit. The third and the fourth categories are likely to be the ones of greatest interest and relevance in a regeneration report, and where much of the focus of effort in the analysis will lie."

Effort should therefore be made to identify construction-stage jobs which could be filled locally and which might, for example, help expand the local skills base and provide a starting point for young people's careers, such as apprenticeships and other education-linked schemes.

Statutory Duties

MH Treasury's *Green Book*[181] sets out three statutory duties to be formally covered in appraisal and management of schemes:

- "Duty to have due regard to the environmental principles policy statement (EPPS): The Environment Act 2021 places a duty on Ministers of the Crown to have due regard to the EPPS when making policies. The EPPS sets out five environmental principles that ministers need to consider when making policy. Practitioners need to identify the potential environmental effects, either positive or negative, of options and apply the five principles as appropriate to inform the design of the proposal. The EPPS should be considered throughout the appraisal process, as the duty extends to making, developing, adopting, revising or repealing policy. Chapter 8 of the Green Book contains more information on assessing impacts on nature and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Biodiversity duty: The biodiversity duty requires public authorities in England to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Defra has produced guidance on complying with the biodiversity duty.
- Public sector equality duty (PSED): The PSED requires decision makers to have due regard to the need to eliminate conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, advance equality of opportunity and foster good

[180] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7b21ef40f0b66eab99f35b/impact-transport-on-economic-geography.pdf

[181] HM Treasury, 5 February 2026: ttps://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6984ac702df808759a7bd740/The_Green_Book_2026.pdf

relations for those sharing protected characteristics. The general duty ensures that public authorities consider how their functions will affect people with different protected characteristics. Practitioners should assess whether those sharing such characteristics would be expected to be differentially impacted compared to the general population by different options and whether the identified impacts would make a difference to the assessment of those options. Where there are negative impacts, practitioners should consider whether there is scope for mitigating those impacts."

A fuller appraisal of each requires specialist input and is beyond the scope of this early document. It is noted that many rail schemes typically score positively or at least neutrally on all three areas. If negative outcomes are noted, for example the potential negative impact of infrastructure works on adjacent biodiversity, appropriate responses would need to be developed as the business case progresses.

Rail freight potential

With careful design, including in relation to local roads and housing and ensuring that the existing Barnstaple railway is capable of taking regular heavy freight trains, a construction logistics centre might have a further life after construction of the railway as a rail freight centre, for example for building aggregates, which is one of rail freight's strongest markets. Given the currently constrained track capacity between Barnstaple and Exeter, freight movements on that route would need to be before or after the first and last passenger trains. Other options for freight movement from Exeter might emerge if a separate project to upgrade the route were to be implemented.

Although Red Star, the national rail parcels network disappeared in the early years of privatisation, the railway network is already being used in a limited way for small, time-critical consignments. At the date of this document, there were a number of trials of express logistics by train. That could potentially be another rail freight market for investigation in later stages of business case development, in particular given that derivatives of passenger trains with the goods transhipped in passenger stations have been the basis of these trials.

Delivery programme and project resourcing

It is too early in the scheme's development to produce a detailed delivery programme. That will be a task for those managing the scheme and writing later business cases to develop, including in the light of the approach taken by the Tavistock project (its SOBC says relatively little about the expected structure of the delivery programme).

By way of background information, it is worth noting that Northumberland County Council has published an outline of the delivery programme for the Northumberland line passenger train service reinstatement scheme for an upgraded freight line with six new stations, on which the first public trains operated in December 2024. A full copy of the programme is in Annex I.

The outline shows a period of around five years between the first public consultation and the first trains running, with some stations expected to be delivered later. Compared to many schemes elsewhere, that is rapid progress, but it does show that it is possible for rail schemes to be delivered more quickly than often assumed. This is an important conclusion, as it would be misleading to say that reinstating train services to Bideford would be relevant to addressing the current socio-economic and other difficulties of that area if implementation necessarily took very many years.

Even at this early stage, the following can be said about roles and responsibilities:

- Network Rail will play a key role throughout and is likely to take on final delivery if the model adopted by the Tavistock scheme is followed. Network Rail manages large numbers of different types of rail investment projects. It does so through its internally mandated and highly developed project delivery models and systems, implemented by staff trained and experienced in the application of those models and systems;
- Network Rail is best placed to lead the definition of the 'Minimum Viable Product' and any 'Value Engineering' processes that may be necessary during the detailed design phase;

- After implementing Project SPEED[182] in 2020, Network Rail has moved to its new PACE[183] delivery model to avoid the inflexibility of its earlier GRIP[184] model; and
- PACE has the following stages, albeit capable of more flexible deployment as described by Network Rail above than the simple linear listing below might imply:
  - Project initiation;
  - Development and project selection;
  - Project design;
  - Project delivery; and
  - Project close.

The Department for Transport's evaluation[185] of the reopened Okehampton line concludes that Network Rail's use of Project SPEED had facilitated that scheme being delivered at below the cost estimates in the Final Business Case: "At the FBC stage, the Dartmoor Line was forecast to take 8 months to deliver and cost £56.6m. The Line was actually delivered in under 8 months and the final cost is expected to be approximately £51m. The project was therefore completed on time and within budget. This has been largely attributed to the first use of innovative Project SPEED principles and cross-industry collaboration."

The *Evaluation* says the scheme stakeholders attribute this success to:

- "Following Project SPEED principles …;
- Development of a minimal viable product (a key principle of the SPEED approach) …;
- Streamlining of the business case process …;
- Reduced procurement timescales …;
- Partnership approach: seamless partnership and cross-industry collaboration seen as key … and;
- Local expertise: the presence of scheme partners with railway knowledge at a local level …."

Management of relationships with other schemes – portfolio management

The *Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4, 2025-2040*[186] establishes a wider programme of transport improvement proposals and ultimately projects, within which rail projects are one element among several.

Within that programme, a key issue for the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority is establishing priorities and managing any competition for funding and other resources which might emerge. A further question at this portfolio level is the extent to which individual schemes might work best in combination with others: so-called 'synergy effects'.

Five complementary schemes with potential synergy effects with the scheme in this document have been identified:

- Modernising the existing railway line between Exeter and Barnstaple;
- New trains;
- Improved digital connectivity;
- Digital ticketing; and
- Extension of Barnstaple line train services beyond Exeter Central as part of an Exeter Metro.

Of these five schemes, new trains, improved digital connectivity and digital ticketing are integral to the scheme to reinstate train services to Bideford set out in this document. As discussed elsewhere, the potentially material reductions in overall journey time between Bideford and Exeter achievable as a result of modernising the existing Exeter to Barnstaple railway and delivering new trains mean that delivering the schemes together or in sequence would result in the highest usage and benefits from the Bideford train service reinstatement. The extension of Barnstaple line train services beyond Exeter Central as part of an Exeter Metro concept is not

[182] Network Rail: "SPEED (Swift, Pragmatic and Efficient Enhancement Delivery) has two core principles at its heart – to halve the time and slash the cost of project delivery, helping us provide a better service for passengers and freight users."

[183] Project Acceleration in a Controlled Environment.

[184] https://www.networkrail.co.uk/industry-and-commercial/supply-chain/existing-suppliers/rail-speed/

[185] *Dartmoor Line Early Impact Evaluation*, Department for Transport, March 2025: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d119dce65dc716bfb1dbbc/dartmoor-line-early-impact-evaluation.pdf

[186] https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-information/transport-planning/devon-local-transport-plan-4-2025-2040/

presented as an integral part of that vision, but would have the potential to strengthen the benefits offered by the reinstatement of train services to Bidford and to drive passenger usage yet further.

Portfolio management: modernising the existing railway line between Exeter and Barnstaple

For the Bideford train service reinstatement scheme, a key synergy is with a scheme to modernise the existing rail line between Exeter and Barnstaple. As explored in the Strategic Case, the overall journey time between Bideford and Exeter depends on the best journey time achieved between Exeter and Barnstaple. Faster daytime journeys are currently inhibited by a range of factors including a combination of low maximum permitted line speeds, the need to pass other trains on the mainly single track route, old/ slow signalling technology and the need to serve intermediate stations with individually lower levels of usage but which jointly represent a significant proportion of total usage.

For example, the best journey time currently achieved between Barnstaple and Exeter St Davids is 54 minutes when no other trains are running, but typical daytime journey times are 66 minutes, with some peak hour trains with the most stops taking up to 80 minutes. Even if no further journey time reductions were achieved between Barnstaple and Exeter, assuming 15 minutes between Barnstaple and Bideford, a 70 minute overall journey time for all trains would be substantially better than the 81 and 100 minutes that would apply with Bideford trains as an extension of the current timetable. A combination of infrastructure improvements and modern, faster accelerating trains could potentially improve these journey times further still.

While it is considered for the purposes of this document that these are two separate projects, having different objectives, potentially different types of funding source and different technical and commercial challenges, each would support the other in achieving a jointly better overall outcome:

- Extending the existing line beyond Barnstaple to Bideford would increase the overall number of passengers using the common trunk section between Barnstaple and Exeter and therefore revenue using the whole line; and
- Improving journey time between Exeter and Barnstaple and potentially allowing an increase in frequency to half-hourly in line with all the other busier branch lines in Devon and Cornwall would maximise usage on a reinstated Bideford line and hence income.

The challenges include how funding might be achieved and, perhaps most importantly if both schemes were to be adopted by the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority, ensuring that each one took account of the other. That is too important a point to be left to softer programme management and may be best achieved by ensuring that the scheme management arrangements for each scheme included a specific requirement to consider the needs of the other scheme. In particular each scheme would need to consider what it needed to do in terms of scope definition to ensure overall success if they were implemented in sequence rather than simultaneously.

Potentially relevant approaches include ‘passive provision’ in physical design and early consideration of how train service timetable structures would work under both schemes. By way of illustrative example, in the case of passive provision, if the Exeter to Barnstaple scheme came first, it might conclude that no passing place was needed at Barnstaple, but the train service timetable study could well show it was needed for Bideford, in which case any design decisions in relation to Barnstaple station area would not fund or build the passing place but would ensure that nothing was done which made it more difficult or costly or prohibited its straightforward later achievement.

Similar principles would apply to the potential operation of tram-trains between Barnstaple and Bideford in line with continuing local aspirations for a rail-based solution to traffic congestion on the Braunton-Barnstaple-Bideford corridor.

Portfolio management – new trains

As part of a separate, complementary scheme, GWR is reviewing options for replacing the older diesel multiple unit trains (DMU) of three classes that currently operate secondary and branch line services in the South West as part of a wider replacement of its older DMUs (‘Green Railway for Growth’ – previously called ‘Project Churchward’). Given the importance of new trains in providing or contributing to many of the benefits of the Bideford to Barnstaple train service reinstatement scheme, it will be critical for the management of the two schemes to be closely aligned with each other. This is particularly true in relation to capacity. The Class 175 trains acquired by GWR during 2025 will provide an interim increase in capacity. However, the high level of

potential passenger demand forecast by SLC Rail combined with continuing strong growth of the existing Barnstaple route suggests that it will be critical for capacity on the existing Barnstaple to Exeter line to increase substantially too in order to avoid unacceptable levels of crowding and passengers left behind at stations.

This new trains scheme has a far wider geographical remit than that Barnstaple/Bideford line alone, covering all parts of the GWR operational area where the older diesel multiple unit trains remain in operation. A key task will be to maximise the synergistic effects while minimising dependencies and downside risks that they drive. Physical infrastructure and rolling stock projects have very different risk drivers.

Under the current industry structure, the procurement and bringing into service of new trains is a matter for train operators: GWR in this case. Under current plans train operators will be integrated into a single organisation managing both infrastructure and train services. The scheme management arrangements will therefore need explicitly take account of these planned changes.

Portfolio management – improved digital connectivity and digital ticketing

If the vision for modernising the Exeter to Barnstaple line were to be implemented alongside or before reinstatement of Bideford train services, two elements of the digital improvement outcome vision would need to taken into account for Bideford: improved wireless connectivity and digital ticketing. If both were available between Exeter and Barnstaple, it is difficult to see how they could be ignored for the Bideford scheme. Improved wireless connectivity and at-station wi-fi could give rail an important competitive advantage over other transport modes: the ability to use the journey for work and/or social purposes.

Improved wireless connectivity would need careful coordination as part of a wider scheme beyond the Barnstaple/Bideford route alone. If undertaken as part of the Project Reach[187] public-private partnership involving Network Rail, it would be a small part of the a much larger national scheme. If undertaken more locally emulating the Scottish approach of fitting Starlink 4G/5G satellite equipment to the trains or the 'hybrid' approach combining land-based 5G with satellite connectivity as recently successfully tested on a GWR-operated IET train sponsored by Peninsula Transport[188], a portfolio management approach would still be needed, as the trains used on the Barnstaple/ Bideford line are (and are likely to continue to be) used on other lines in the South West, so a large fleet-wide approach to fitting the equipment would be needed.

Digital ticketing would in technical terms be feasible to implement on the Barnstaple/Bideford route alone, but that would make little commercial sense, as digital ticketing schemes have been shown across the country to have the best take-up when implemented across a wider area. London and areas beyond are the key example. Destinations beyond Exeter are important, with Digby & Sowton on the Exmouth line being a key destination from Barnstaple, for example.

Portfolio management – increasing frequency of train services across central Exeter

An increase in frequency of the service across the city to Digby & Sowton from two trains an hour to four is including in the new *Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4, 2025-2040* adopted in July 2025[189]. This says: "The 'Devon Metro' rail network will be made more attractive by improving connectivity between Exeter and surrounding towns. The aspirations include: … A 15-minute rail frequency between Exeter Central and Digby & Sowton stations delivered by extending the Barnstaple service route across Exeter."

Such a scheme is not integral to the success of train service reinstatement to Bideford. That said, if funding could be found to progress both schemes, they could help reinforce each other's business cases, in particular the Bideford scheme, which could benefit from an increase in destinations served by direct train services. Digby & Sowton in particular is already an important destination for Exeter College students and many other users from Barnstaple, including for sporting events, so is likely to be popular among Bideford train users too.

[187] 26 June 2025: "a public-private partnership between Network Rail and telecoms companies Neos Networks and Freshwave "to kickstart economic growth with ultra fast fibre optic cable across 1,000 kilometres of major rail lines.": https://www.gov.uk/government/news/on-track-and-online-landmark-deal-dead-zones

[188] Peninsula Transport post on Linkedin, 18 November 2025: Peninsula Transport presents UK's first 'next generation' Superfast Wi-Fi Pilot. Peninsula Transport, in partnership with Motion Applied (formerly McLaren Applied), Great Western Railway (GWR)… | Peninsula Transport

[189] https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-information/transport-planning/devon-local-transport-plan-4-2025-2040/

Management of statutory and other consents

Public railways in the United Kingdom have normally been constructed under special legal powers that among other things allow compulsory purchase of land, permit roads and other rights of way to be closed or altered and give certain protections against actions for nuisance. One of the things that happens at formal closure of a railway is that the remaining rights and protections post-construction phase granted by the original enabling legislation lapse. That has happened on the route between Barnstaple and Bideford, so all the rights and protections would be needed again for reinstatement of a Bideford route, including where the route might divert from the original route, for example at Fremington Quay.

Traditionally powers were mostly acquired through private Acts of Parliament. Nowadays, routes include a Hybrid Act of Parliament, a Transport & Works Act Order or a Development Consent Order (DCO). Based on the analysis in the Tavistock line reopening SOBC[190], and subject to further legal analysis, the DCO approach may seem to be the most appropriate for the Bideford scheme. It is noted, however, that the Northumberland Line passenger train service reintroduction scheme has used the Transport & Works Act approach to reintroduce passenger services on an existing freight line, with track upgrades and new stations, which emphasises the need for legal advice[191].

An official Fact Sheet about Development Consent Orders is available[192], which explains that applications are considered by the Planning Inspectorate, who consider the application and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State. A timescale of around 15 months is given. In Annex D is an extract from the Tavistock SOBC, which includes an analysis of the scheme against the relevant DCO criteria. The Annex extract also includes information about how the DCO and Transport & Works Act Order processes compare.

One point which needs to be emphasised at this stage is that the DCO process is extremely intensive and conducted at a highly detailed level. That is clear from the comments made by the authors of the Tavistock SOBC in the extract. It also fits with what has been made public about the application to reopen the railway between Bristol Temple Meads and Portishead, only 3½ miles/5½ km of which between Pill and Portishead are on routes not already used by regular passenger or freight trains.

Strong management of the scheme would be necessary, together with high levels of consultation with stakeholders to ensure that all relevant issues are identified. This reinforces the need for the management of the scheme to be professional and sufficiently resourced, as discussed in this Management Case.

Professional advice would be needed on how to ensure that the scheme fully covers any requirements which might otherwise be covered by a separate Environmental Impact Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment or by any other form of consents or permissions not so far discussed in this section. Failure to identify a necessary consent[s] could have a material impact on both timescale and costs.

Management of risk

The International Standards Organisation defines risk as[193]: 'effect of uncertainty on objectives'. Given the large number of elements and variables in a large scheme such as a rail reopening and the fact that it plays out over an extended period of time means that careful management of risk is essential.

The proposed scheme management arrangements described above and the Network Rail PACE delivery model put sharp focus on the sorts of variability compared to expected outcome that is central to risk management. Among the specific risk management tools used in schemes of this sort, a risk register is usual. At this early stage the risk register cannot aim to capture all risks, as the nature of risk is that it is something that is not easily anticipatable. Nevertheless, a risk register provides a standard method for collating identified risks and ensuring that the management of the scheme addresses them.

The following initial risk register has been constructed on a qualitative basis based on:

[190] Devon County Council - *Tavistock-Plymouth Line Reopening Strategic Outline Business Case – Restoring Your Railway: RYR387,* 22 September 2022: https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/outline-business-case-submitted-for-reopening-tavistock-to-plymouth-rail-line/

[191] https://www.northumberlandline.uk/background

[192] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk.

[193] ISO 31000 and ISO Guide 73. Note that, compared to older definitions, this now includes 'upside risk' as well as the more traditional 'downside risk' only.

- Issues identified in this document;
- Issues identified in the Tavistock reopening SOBC;
- More general issues identified by the author from his experience with projects; and
- Early stage round-table discussions held with GWR and Network Rail in relation to the separate scheme to modernise the existing Exeter to Barnstaple line.

The risk register has been constructed with a clear view to the scheme objectives as set out in the Strategic Case. The risks are not put in a particular order for emphasis and no conclusions should be drawn from their position in the table.

Risk Register			
Risk Descriptor	**Impact**	**Probability**	**Mitigation**
One or more scheme objectives cannot be met because close adherence to rail industry standards results in excessive cost / low value for money compared to the funding available, with one or more interventions not taken forward, for example passenger lifts being deemed necessary at lower usage stations	High	Medium	- Learn lessons from other schemes, for example the innovative way in which rail and highway standards were used where appropriate to create a fully accessible new station at Marsh Barton - Keep this risk as a key matter for review by the scheme management arrangements, including using techniques such as Network Rail's Minimum Viable Product approach
Trains are overcrowded because of underestimation of likely passenger numbers and it is not possible to run longer trains on the existing route to Barnstaple resulting in objectives not being met	High	High	- Learn lessons from other reopening schemes, including Okehampton and the Northumberland Line (higher passenger numbers experienced than forecast) - Careful consideration of relevant technical issues such as Trip Rate v Trip Diversion modelling - Ensure that the Bideford scheme does not depend on a separately funded and implemented Barnstaple route improvement scheme to ensure long enough trains
Rail-specific funding sources such as RNEP and Restoring Your Railway dry up, so the Bideford scheme cannot progress and meet its objectives	High	High	Explore all alternative sources of funding and make the case that the economic indicators mean Bideford should be a priority
Construction costs exceed forecasts due to continuing high inflation in the construction sector or for currently unforeseen reasons before DCO and construction commencement so the scheme cannot progress and meet its objectives	High	Medium	- Ensure sufficient contingency and optimism bias is applied to initial estimates, even if they initially make the scheme seem less attractive - Explore contracting options to reduce risk to the promoter/funder
Construction costs exceed forecasts due to continuing high inflation in the construction sector or for currently unforeseen reasons after DCO and construction commencement and put scheme objectives at risk	High	Medium	- Apply previously identified descoping options - Seek alternative sources of funding - Review priorities within the overall DCC (or successor body) programme of schemes
Construction costs exceed forecasts due to multiple individually smaller risks arising together either before DCO or after construction commencement so the scheme cannot progress and meet its objectives	High	Medium	- Ensure sufficient contingency and optimism bias is applied to initial estimates, even if they initially make the scheme seem less attractive - Explore contracting options to reduce risk to the promoter/funder
Land ownership issues and easements not resolved prior to DCO application resulting	High	Low	Effective stakeholder relationships and proposals fully meeting any potential

in DCO failure or unforeseen cost and time pressures			objections built into scheme development at an early stage
The planned shorter journey times, improved operational performance, higher capacity, greater comfort, better accessibility and greater environmental friendliness elements of the scheme are not achieved or are only partly achieved because modern rolling stock such as battery or alternative power trains does not become available to GWR, for example because the London-focused elements of a combined GWR-SWR-Chiltern procurement are deemed to have a stronger case	High	Medium	- Portfolio management seeks to maximise synergies and minimise dependencies - Lobby GWR and central Government/ any new central body under the Rail Review emphasising the importance of the West of England element of the GWR DMU replacement scheme
Continued public access to the Gaia Trust at Home Farm Marsh and other areas of natural environment across a reinstated rail route cannot be accommodated at a fundable cost	High	Low	Consider design solutions from the earliest stage, including best practice from elsewhere, with improvement as well as status quo an aim
Other access needs across a reinstated rail route, including to the Royal Marines locations near Instow cannot be accommodated at a fundable costs	High	Low	Consider design solutions from the earliest stage, including best practice from elsewhere
No effective design solution can be found which allows the Tarka Trail (including any further planned access routes to it) to coexist with a reinstated rail route on the former coastal alignment	High	Low	- Consider design solutions from the earliest stage, including best practice from elsewhere, with improvement as rather than status quo an aim - Effective public consultation
Loss of key personnel, capability and focus at Network Rail and/or GWR due to organisational changes under the Rail Review	High	Low	- Lobby central Government - Consider other ways of securing the necessary contributions
Climate change-induced sea level rises risk flooding of lower lying sections of the track bed at high tide and/or during severe weather	High	High	- Consider design solutions from the earliest stage, including best practice from elsewhere - Effective consultation with the public and relevant statutory bodies
Difficulties in reconciling the needs of the Tarka Trail / the South West Water pipe / flood defences / North Devon UNESCO Biosphere requirements	High	Medium	Develop a close working relationship with the relevant bodies from an early stage of scheme development

Stakeholder engagement management

Although at an early stage, the Bideford train service reinstatement scheme already has an organised approach to stakeholder engagement. It is anticipated that this will continue to develop through the management arrangements described in this Management Case.

The Bideford scheme has its origins in 2021 with a free-standing local ACE Rail campaign, subsequently affiliated with both the national Railfuture organisation and the local Tarka Rail Association (TRA - now North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group). With growing local interest, including at local authority level, the TRA and Railfuture initiated the concept of a new Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance (NDRDA) in 2023 as a forum for representatives of local, regional and national stakeholder organisations.

Bideford Town Council formally became the founder member of the NDRDA in December 2023, followed by Railfuture and the Tarka Rail Association (now North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group), then Barnstaple Town Council in January 2024, Northam Town Council in February 2024, followed by Torridge District Council in April 2024. An inaugural event was held at the Royal Hotel in Bideford on 1 March 2024 with wide senior level representation from the public and private sectors and the rail industry established a model for an annual Alliance forum of stakeholder organisation leaders. A copy of the leaflet for the inaugural meeting including a list of invited parties and resolutions of support from local authorities can be found in Annex E.

At the inaugural event letters of support from both then local MPs (Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Cox KC MP for Torridge and West Devon and Selaine Saxby MP for North Devon) and from the Devon County Council Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport (Cllr Andrea Davis) were read out, as all three had prior diary commitments (copies of the letters in Annex G). Statements of support were also made by a number of others, including Bideford Mayor Cllr Jamie McKenzie, Barnstaple Mayor Cllr Louisa York, South West Business Council CEO Paul Coles, Harland & Wolff (Navantia) General Manager Tom Hart, Network Rail Western Route Director Marcus Jones BEM, Network Rail Programme Director Restoring Your Railway Mike Smith and GWR Head of Strategic Service Development Matt Barnes.

More formal consultation with the wider public will be necessary as the scheme develops and consensus is reached by the sponsoring body with input from stakeholders. Such consultation would be undertaken following local authority consultation good practice and will form an essential component of the development of an application for statutory consents as described earlier in this Management Case.

A wider programme of engagement will need to be developed and implemented as the business case develops, including in connection with the drafting, assessment of responses to and development of approaches to implementing the findings of relevant impact assessments, including the assessments of environmental and equality impacts.

During implementation of the scheme, good practice from other schemes shows that targeted engagement will be important to ensure the benefits of the scheme are understood and to ensure that as the scheme approaches completion safety aspects are fully covered, including that any informal access to the future alignment is controlled for safety reasons.

Annex A

Status of Annex A

This document was therefore originally planned as a 'lite' version of a Strategic Outline Business Case, omitting substantive economic and financial cases. This Annex was intended to start the process of identifying a preferred route option, in particular given that earlier work had preferred an inland route, but that key issues with that route had not been identified. Since then, SLC Rail has carried out early professional engineering, financial and economic analysis, funded jointly through money from Torridge District Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund, from Railfuture Ltd and from Bideford and Barnstaple Town Councils.

The SLC Rail report *Engineering Feasibility* section builds on the analysis in this Annex A and supplements it with much more up-to-date cost information than was available publicly to the author of this document and professional engineering assessment of issues and risks. That results in a higher capital cost envelope than in this Annex (but note the heavy caveats included in this Annex, which does not claim the envelope as an actual cost estimate, instead it was intended to provide an order of magnitude estimate to help in comparing the two basic route options, and which also identifies issues and risks that could result in substantially lifting the Tavistock-based costings): "mid-range cost estimate of £422 million, with an upper and lower range of £305 million to £539 million reflecting the route's engineering challenges and has been benchmarked against industry data". As with this Annex, the SLC Rail report identifies risks around flooding and existing civil engineering structures.

Choosing the Infrastructure for Reinstated Bideford Train Services

There are two obvious basic options for the infrastructure for a new train service to/from Bideford:

- Reinstating the old alignment, including potentially with some local modifications; or
- Creating an entirely new alignment.

The analysis of both options below includes some very early stage cost analysis based on publicly available rail construction comparators. No inflation has been included in the prices. With the future so uncertain, to do so would give a spurious sense of accuracy. It is noted that it is standard in major projects to quote overall costs in standardised year base prices. Both comparators already include optimism bias as mandated for public sector major projects.

Given the highly volatile levels of inflation currently being experienced in the construction industry, together with material differential levels of inflation between different elements of construction cost, the main intention at this very early stage of business case development has been to compare and contrast the two main alignment options for a restored railway in terms of orders of magnitude in order to help inform an early choice of Preferred Option. It is not the intention to suggest a point estimate of what construction would cost in actual terms, which would need far higher levels of engineering design and a reduction in inflation uncertainty.

Using recent cost estimates from the Tavistock reopening business case for reinstatement of an old railway alignment[194] and East West Rail eastern new build section estimates[195] (from 2022 and 2019 respectively), the following broad levels of cost could result:

- Using the old alignment: in an envelope between £160 million and £319 million (applying optimism bias[196] at 56% as required by the relevant guidance[197] at SOBC level to baseline costs of between £102 million and £205 million); or

[194] Devon County Council - *Tavistock-Plymouth Line Reopening Strategic Outline Business Case – Restoring Your Railway: RYR387,* 22 September 2022: https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/outline-business-case-submitted-for-reopening-tavistock-to-plymouth-rail-line/

[195] East West Rail - Central Section options - Central section capital cost estimate August 2019.

[196] 'Optimism bias' is described in the guidance as: "Optimism bias is the demonstrated systematic tendency for appraisers to be overly optimistic about key parameters. Theories on cost overruns suggest there are several means by which optimism bias could be caused, including the psychological tendency for humans and organisations to favour optimism, the economic rationale of advancing projects in which organisations have interests in, and the strategic behaviour of stakeholders involved in the planning and decision-making processes."

[197] Department for Transport - *TAG Unit A1.2 Scheme Costs*, May 2024 (published March 25): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/673e0010b3f0df6d2ebaef4b/tag-unit-a1-2-cost-estimation-may-2025.pdf

- Building a new inland alignment in an envelope of between £781 million and £957 million.

Conclusions on the preferred option for the alignment

On this basis, subject to further investigation and engineering design should the scheme progress, this document concludes that the old alignment, with some local modifications, is not only strongly preferable but is likely to be the only practicable option:

- Very high construction cost based on publicly-available sources[198] for new-build railways from East West Rail noting the challenging terrain involved with significant changes in height above sea level over short distances (an envelope of between £781 million and £957 million) compared to the much lower cost of reinstating an old railway based on the Tavistock reopening business case in an envelope of between £160 million and £319 million. This conclusion holds true even if the coastal route estimate were to be increased substantially and the inland route estimate reduced substantially to reflect respectively under-estimation and over-estimation of costs;
- East West Rail is deemed to be of national significance and should ultimately enable a wide range of through passenger and freight journeys to be made encompassing large parts of central and eastern England. Whatever the benefits of a Bideford scheme, it could not call on the same wider national strategic importance to justify a very high level of costs. A review of other broadly comparable rail reinstatement/upgrade schemes recently opened or currently under way shows that the inland route would stand out as disproportionately expensive in comparison, being in a different order of magnitude (Levenmouth in Scotland £117 million, Northumberland Line from Newcastle £299 million, Mid Cornwall Metro £57 million[199]);
- Much or all of the journey time saving from the shorter inland route of around 6 miles compared to 9¼ miles of the original coastal alignment would be lost through coupling/ uncoupling trains (or other operational options) needed to ensure that one train from Exeter can serve both Barnstaple and Bideford when the junction to Bideford leaves the Barnstaple line before Barnstaple;
- The solutions to the conundrum of the inland route junction being south of Barnstaple would also increase operating costs by requiring additional train crew to operate a separate train portion for Bideford, which would reduce economic benefits and also have operational performance risks;
- The best overall investment would be to combine reinstating train services to Bideford and modernising the Exeter to Barnstaple line, in particular given that that would give materially shorter Bideford to Exeter journey times, but the very high cost of the inland route would be difficult to justify as part of an overall investment portfolio combining both schemes;
- A new railway would need to cut through open countryside and given the steepness of the climbs from the Taw and Torridge valleys would need substantial earthworks and other engineering features, potentially including tunnels, and it cannot be confirmed without a much fuller engineering study that there is a route that would not involve demolition of residential or other property. Given the reactions to HS2 and the eastern section of East West Rail, the location of the works could cause substantial local and wider public opposition;
- The potential difficulty in serving the original Bideford station rather than an out-of-town park & ride facility in the vicinity of the A39 Torridge Bridge means that the station would be difficult to access by active travel or public transport and would therefore run contrary to key aims of the county and regional transport strategies and proposed objectives deriving from them for this scheme and in the eyes of the local people the station would not be in Bideford itself; and
- While Barnstaple is unlikely to be the dominant passenger flow from Bideford, an inland route would mean that there would not be a direct train service between the two towns.

Preferred Rail Option: Reinstating the Old Rail Alignment

This option would reinstate the railway to modern standards on the former alignment, with some potential modifications as discussed below. Options for adopting a different 'coastal' alignment beyond some possible local widening of the limits of deviation for purposes of ensuring the Tarka Trail is fully protected are severely

[198] The prices quoted are not intended at this stage of business case development to be a point estimate of what the construction costs would actually be, but instead to show orders of magnitude for comparative purposes.

[199] Older rail reopening schemes are not considered here in order to avoid the difficult question of what inflation factors to apply. The Financial Case contains further comparative analysis of rail schemes including new stations.

limited by the fact that south of Instow the railway is bounded immediately by the River Torridge on the western side and the B3233 and rapidly rising hills on the eastern side. North of Instow, options are limited by the sewage works and farm immediately to the south of the former railway line at Yelland and by residential development in the Hollowcombe area. A deviation at Fremington Quay is discussed below.

Capital costs – early indicative figures

Reinstating rail routes is costly. Using figures from the 2022 business case for the Tavistock line reopening in Devon[200], with a per kilometre cost of £6.9 million (£11.1 million per mile) for a reinstated Barnstaple to Bideford railway on the former alignment would result in a project cost of around £102 million for the 14.9 km (9¼ miles) long alignment, increasing to £160 million applying the 56% optimism bias mandated by government guidance and £319 million if doubled to cover all additional factors and risks additional to the Bideford scheme compared to the Tavistock scheme.

The Tavistock reopening proposal includes many features similar to those for a Bideford reopening:

- Both lines are substantially in Devon County Council ownership;
- Both lines would be single track;
- Neither line requires residential or other property acquisition and demolition[201];
- Both lines would need to re-establish a connection to the Network Rail network (at Bere Alson for Tavistock and at Barnstaple for Bideford, in both cases some upgrades to the existing network would be needed);
- Both require station works (a single new station needs to be constructed at a new location in Tavistock, while for Bideford the station already exists as does Instow station, but both need upgrading to modern standards) – neither include costs for car parks, as nothing substantial is possible at the current Bideford station site and the Tavistock car park is funded by developer section 106 moneys and the costs for that are taken outside the project costings;
- Both need to tackle only a small number of crossings; and
- Both are likely to need some refurbishment and improvement to existing infrastructure: there is a tunnel on the Tavistock route which will need some refurbishment and some of the sections of the Bideford route next to tidal rivers may need upgrading.

Differences in scope of the schemes which could lift the average cost per kilometre/mile for a reinstated Bideford railway line compared to the route to Tavistock include:

- Bideford would require a sewage pipe laid under around a third the route length to be moved[202];
- On the Bideford route, a short deviation from the old alignment with a shallow cutting and bridge over the Fremington Pill tidal inlet are likely to be needed at Fremington Quay;
- New road overbridges are likely to be required at Fremington Quay, at Yelland and at the Royal Marines Instow bases;
- Mitigation measures both in design and during construction will be needed for the Tarka Trail cycle/walking route[203] to ensure the scheme objectives of its retention and improvement;
- Mitigation measures both in design and during construction will be needed to address maintaining and improving the biodiversity of the Bideford coastal route and to address the net biodiversity gain legal requirements being introduced in April 2024 but not referenced in the earlier Tavistock business case;
- A potentially complex piece of engineering may be required for the reinstated Bideford railway to traverse the A361 – A3125 Barnstaple bypass roads, bus access road and Barnstaple station car park;

[200] Devon County Council - *Tavistock-Plymouth Line Reopening Strategic Outline Business Case – Restoring Your Railway: RYR387,* 22 September 2022: https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/outline-business-case-submitted-for-reopening-tavistock-to-plymouth-rail-line/

[201] The old railway line through the centre of Tavistock has been built over, but a new alignment with further route protection from development that could potentially also enable ultimate reinstatement of through trains to Okehampton has been identified.

[202] In practice, probably a new pipe laid in the new location and connected after being laid rather than moving the old pipe.

[203] Reconstruction of the Tarka Trail as part of a Bideford train service reinstatement scheme would reduce the costs of maintenance of the Trail in the shorter term and would mean that the cost of replacing the metalled surface would be pushed considerably into the future. Both would represent savings for the body responsible for the Trail.

- Environmental mitigation[204] is becoming increasingly common in construction projects – it is not mentioned for Tavistock, but given the environmentally sensitive areas traversed by the Bideford line, may be needed for that route;
- Additional car parking at a location not part of the existing Bideford station site may be needed;
- Changes to roads, pavements and traffic light systems may be necessary at Bideford to improve accessibility of the station site for pedestrians;
- Additional track and reinstatement of a second platform and associated new lift bridge would be needed at Barnstaple[205]; and
- A footbridge with lifts (and/or ramps) would be needed for Instow station whether or not the station was reopened for passenger use if, as seems likely, it was not possible to retain the road level crossing[206].

However, even if the £160 million cost based on the Tavistock figures with optimism bias was doubled to £319 million to account for these differences and for other factors and risks so far not identified, the cost would still be a small fraction of the alternative inland alignment cost, even if that reduced substantially. Moreover, it would remain within the order of magnitude of other locally promoted schemes as discussed elsewhere here.

An alignment well suited to a railway

In many ways the planners of the original railway chose an ideal alignment for a railway. It is largely flat and of moderate curvature. The book *Branch Lines to Torrington*[207] has a historic gradient profile of the old railway showing that all but around 1½ miles (2.4 km) of the around 9¼ overall route miles (14.9 km) are completely level, with the rest being as easy as 1 in 2000 at Barnstaple, 1 in 314 at Fremington, 1 in 450 south to Instow and 1 in 320 south from Instow and a short section of 1 in 90 to Bideford. Those are all gradients that would cause no concern to railway operators and would have no practical impact on train speed.

No development across the former railway line and line in continuous ownership

Unlike many closed railways, there has been no development of housing or other buildings across the track bed. That means that there would be no need for costly and contentious demolition[208] and associated compulsory purchase orders. This results from the fact that the whole of the alignment is in the ownership of Devon County Council[209].

While there could be commercial issues associated with that ownership which are further explored in the Commercial Case, it means that costs associated with establishing ownership of numerous small parcels of land, negotiation with the relevant landowners, etc, would be avoided. A single commercial negotiation would enable a land ownership outcome for the vast majority of a reinstated railway to be established[210].

Few road level crossings or other types of crossings

Compared to many other historic railways including the Exeter to Barnstaple railway, the fact that the old alignment for much of its way follows the banks of the Rivers Taw and Torridge means that there are few public road level crossings or private occupation crossings.

That is important because the railway safety approval body the Office of Rail & Road (ORR) no longer generally permits level crossings on new railways because it has identified such crossings as a key safety risk.

Eliminating such crossings through the construction of bridges or negotiating closure/combination can be very costly for rail reopening projects. Public footpaths can generally be dealt with through cheaper bridges than is possible for vehicular traffic, or by diversion. Subject to full physical and legal analysis at later stage of business

[204] For example, tree planting and/or other mitigations to offset loss of trees from construction areas.

[205] A lower cost Penryn-style crossing place with a single platform is discussed later as a decremental option.

[206] It may be worth testing the ORR's view on a level crossing at this location in the light of the proposed train service, but the provisional view is based on other locations such as Portishead where new or reinstated level crossings have been proposed and rejected recently.

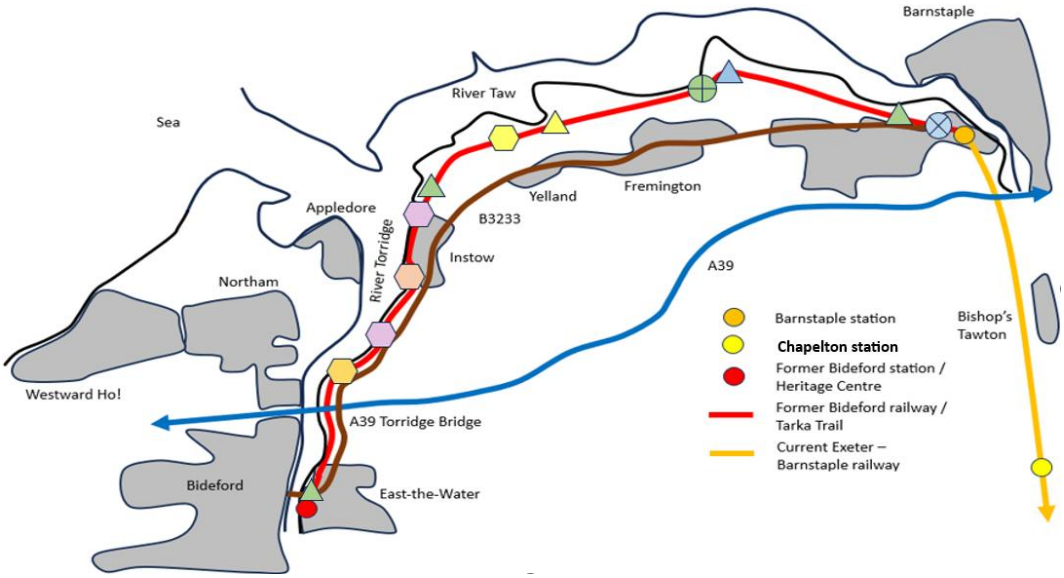
[207] Middleton Press, 1994.

[208] The proposed demolition of residential properties in Bedford for the new East West Rail northern alignment new-build route to Cambridge was proving highly controversial at the date this document was being drafted.

[209] That is understood to be the case, but as explained in the Commercial Case, would need to be validated at a a detailed level as the business case develops. A deviation at Fremington Quay is almost certain to need land not in Devon County Council ownership.

[210] If changes to the route of the Tarka Trail were made or the railway limits of deviation widened to accommodate the Trail in places, additional land may be needed for those purposes.

case development, the following crossing points have been identified by reference to the Ordnance Survey 1:25000 map and personal inspection: (sketch map by author of this document)



- A361-A3125 Barnstaple bypass interchange. This was constructed across the former railway formation. The Maunsell Report feasibility study carried out for Devon County Council, North Devon District Council and Torridge District Council in 1999 states that the A361 road was constructed with sufficient height to enable reinstatement of a rail line. A fuller engineering study would be needed to establish construction options and methodologies for taking a reinstated railway line through:

Photo: Tim Steer

- Fremington Quay (Photographs: by author) A former station and dock for train to ship transfer of clay and other goods, which was the original terminus of the line from Barnstaple. It has become a popular leisure destination, with the former dock now a riverside walk and grassy picnic area and has a café located on the old station platform. To the west of the former station, the former railway bridge takes the Tarka Trail across Fremington Pill, a tidal inlet. To the east of the station, there is access to dwellings across the former railway formation.

The original station saw very light passenger use, being a considerable distance from Fremington along a narrow track. If a station were to be built for Fremington, a location further west giving shorter, direct access would be better.

It is very difficult to see how Fremington Quay could retain its current public amenity value if a reinstated railway followed the former alignment (the right hand carriage way of the road shown in the adjacent photograph). Subject to fuller engineering studies, a solution could be to build a deviation inland from the original track bed, with public access retained via an over bridge. The ground level rises a little on the inland side of Fremington Quay,

meaning that the realigned railway would be in a shallow cutting. This would allow the new road overbridge to be built more simply without the need for long rising sections either side.

Rerouteing the railway would have the additional advantage of avoiding the cutting to the north of Fremington Quay where part of the cutting side is managed as a wild flower refuge, with large numbers of orchids.

- Instow former station site and level crossing (photographs by author)

This is the only public road level crossing on the former railway alignment between Barnstaple and Bideford. If, as seems likely given developments elsewhere in Britain, retention of the level crossing was not permitted because of safety concerns, one option may be closure. This recognises that there are four road overbridges giving grade-separated access to Instow from the B3233 in only around half a kilometre and that little vehicular traffic in any case uses the riverside road through the village. Pedestrian access would be maintained through a footbridge at a reopened Instow station with lifts and/or ramps, whether or not the station reopened for passenger use. Again, subject to fuller engineering studies, the alternative of a new road overbridge appears difficult because of the buildings in the close vicinity, closeness to the river and the visual intrusion on the attractive historic village centre.

With the hills behind Instow rising to 88 m in less than a kilometre, a diversion of the railway inland would require an extremely expensive tunnelled solution as a surface railway would result in impracticable gradients[211] and heavy earth works. There is also the question of how the railway would cross the B3233 either side of Instow to access the new inland alignment. Moreover, it would not be possible for Instow to have a station with that solution.

A further point is that the Tarka Trail currently follows the former railway cutting through the centre of Instow village. This limits the space available for the Tarka Trail to share the alignment with a reinstated railway, in particular where one of the road bridges is constructed in the form of a short tunnel.

In practice, most leisure users appear to prefer the river and picturesque village views and cafés and other refreshment facilities available from the quiet riverside road to the less interesting section through the deep cutting and tunnel. The *Tarka Trail Guide* recommends this route too. While this would result in the Tarka Trail being diverted for a little under a kilometre to an on-road alignment, careful design of improvements could help overcome objections. The South West Coast Path walking route already follows that route. Photographs: author

- Royal Marines Facilities

The Royal Marines have private access to the River Torridge across the former railway formation at two locations: 1) from the Royal Marines Instow Arromanches Camp to the north of the village and 2) to a jetty opposite Appledore shipyard to the south of the village. Discussions with the Royal Marines would be necessary as the business case develops to understand the nature and extent of access

[211] 1 in 23 or worse.

requirements so that suitable solutions could be developed. Photograph: author

The former East Yelland power station site (photograph: author)

This is currently used as a light industrial site and there is an access track across the former railway alignment. There are plans to develop the site as a luxury housing development. At the date this document was being prepared, outline planning permission had been given on appeal, but no construction had started. The safest working assumption is that road access via a bridge will be required. Even if the housing development was never built, access would continue to be required for the former power station site and there are presumably easements for electricity supply and other utilities to the current light industrial site.

A number of vessels used as houseboats have been noted near Westleigh, apparently using the Tarka Trail as an access route. It is unclear what the legal status of these boats and their access is. This would need to be clarified as the business case progresses. Photograph: author

Two public footpaths are noted at Sticklepath to the west of Barnstaple station and a little north of the Royal Marines Instow site. A bridge might be the solution for the former and diversion to share whatever solution was agreed for the Royal Marines site might be the solution for the other path. Further work would be needed as the business case develops. Another public footpath crosses the formation close to the northern end of Bideford station.

A bridleway (horse and cycles as well as pedestrians), combined with a private farm occupation crossing, crosses the former railway alignment a little to the east of the former Fremington station. If the reinstated railway was diverted at this point to avoid Fremington Quay, the creation of a lower cost crossing with the railway in a cutting would be facilitated, as the land rises to the north of Penhill where the bridleway originates.

There is a private occupation crossing from Lower Yelland Farm to Home Farm Marsh, which is also used by the public to access the Gaia Trust's site on Home Marsh Farm. A further Gaia Trust site access point is to the north of the former railway near Saltpill Duck Pond. Further work would be needed as the business case develops.

As a scheme with a strong focus on sustainability, it will be important for a reinstated railway line to be compatible with other sustainability schemes such as the Gaia Trust. Photos: author

Tarka Trail cycle/walking route

The whole of the former railway is now used as part of the Tarka Trail cycling/walking route. The South West Coast Path also shares the same route except at Instow, where it follows the more scenic coastal road through the village. The Trail and Path are of high value for leisure and active travel purposes and important to the local tourism economy. Torridge and North Devon District Councils set out the need to retain the Tarka Trail in the

event of train services being reinstated to Bideford in their joint December 2024 response[212] to the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) Consultation.

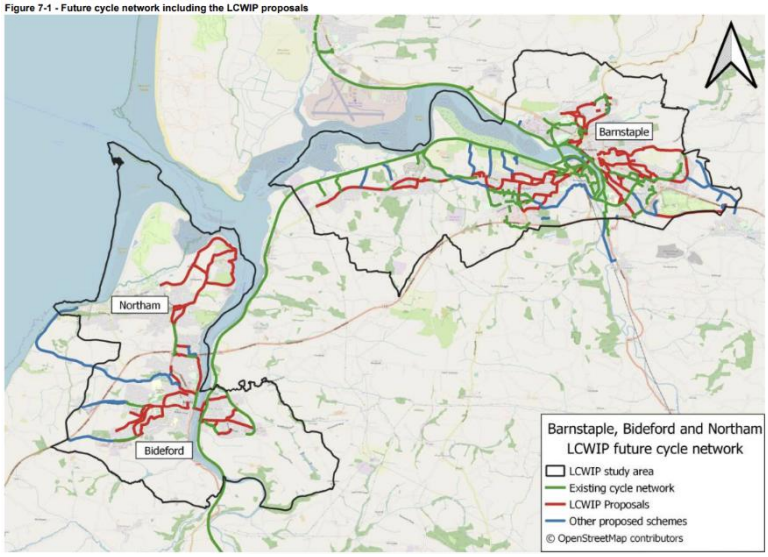
The new railway would therefore need to co-exist with the Tarka Trail. The limits of deviation of the railway are relatively generous in most places, helped by the fact that it was originally built to the Great Western Railway broad gauge. Examples exist elsewhere where cycle ways exist alongside railways. Examples include the Granite Way near Okehampton, the Exe Estuary Trail near Exmouth and the Brampton Valley Way near Lamport in Northamptonshire: (Photo source: Tim Steer)

The aim would be not solely to retain the cycle track, but where possible to upgrade it in recognition of the unavoidable disruption during construction. An area for further review of improvement options is access points. In many cases these are less well constructed than the path itself, appearing as areas of unmade ground or gravel. There is currently no access available on the long section between Barnstaple in the Sticklepath area and Fremington Quay, which limits the used of the path for active travel purposes. The large area of housing to the north of the Cedars Roundabout has no easy access to the path. Particular attention would need to be paid to the phasing and management of construction works to limit the impact on users. The Management Case looks further at this important point.

Given that a number of formal access points to the Tarka Trail are from the inland side of the route, one option would be for a restored railway formation to be laid to the river/seaward side of the formation. Sympathetic fencing of the sort shown above should mean that the amenity value of the trail would be preserved. As can be seen from the photograph above, that is how the Exe Trail is laid out. However, the river and wider landscape views are to the river/seaward side of the formation and laying the restored railway to the inland side would mean that the fact that the Tarka Trail had been made into a shared used way would be less obvious to users, resulting in a higher amenity value.

Some key points of access to the Tarka Trail, for example in Instow and Fremington Quay, if a short inland railway diversion were to be made there, are on that side and it would also mean that easier access to the Gaia Trust site could be maintained. No decision is needed at this early stage. Options, including the possibility of different orientations at different parts of the route would be a key point for later consultation. 3-D simulation of key access points could be made as part of constructing the consultation materials.

Figure 7-1 - Future cycle network including the LCWIP proposals



It should also be noted that the *Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan*[213] proposes several new access routes to the Tarka Trail from the Yelland, Fremington and Bickington areas. A map from the *Plan* is adjacent.

It is not yet clear whether any of these will be funded, but these proposals will need to be taken account of in deciding where to position a reinstated railway line.

One possibility, which could considerably reduce cycling distances

[212] https://www.torridge.gov.uk/media/27644/Devon-and-Torbay-Local-Transport-Plan-4-2025-2040-1-October-to-30-November-2024/pdf/241129_Devon_and_Torbay_LTP4_consultation_response_from_TDC_and_NDC_locked.pdf?m=1733241744537

[213] *Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan*, Devon County Council, February 2023.

on the proposed connections from the Bickington, Cedars and Hollowcombe areas, would be to relocate the Tarka Trail between Barnstaple and Fremington inland to a location closer to the residential areas. There are currently no connections to the Tarka Trail from those areas.

South West Water pipe

South West Water laid a sewage pipe on the former railway alignment between Yelland and a point between Bideford and Instow at Westleigh. This affects around one third of the former railway alignment (around 3 miles of 9¼ miles). It is understood that South West Water has strong legal rights over the alignment of this pipe and that it has also confirmed in writing that it would object to restoration of the railway.

Sewage piping is critical Infrastructure and any reinstatement of the railway would need to ensure that South West Water's pipe was relaid in a way that ensured it remained accessible for maintenance purposes and did not hinder the continued provision of sewerage services. More detailed engineering assessment would be necessary. For the purposes of this document, it is assumed that the pipe would be relocated to a position under a reconstructed Tarka Trail path. The ways in which that might be achieved are examined in the Commercial Case.

Former rail alignment as a river wall

For around 1½ kilometres south of Instow, for a short distance north of Bideford and for around two kilometres to the west of Barnstaple the former railway line acts as a wall to the tidal Rivers Torridge and Taw. Elsewhere, with the exception of the cutting through the centre of the village of Instow and at Fremington Quay, the former railway line is mostly constructed on a low embankment across low-lying farmland. This raises separate points about engineering integrity and about resilience to rising sea levels. Both would need to be addressed in more detailed engineering studies as the business case progresses.

It is noted that similar issues affect railways elsewhere in the South West of England, for example, Network Rail's main line railway between Exeter and Dawlish Warren, between Teignmouth and Newton Abbott and between Marazion and Penzance. Commercial issues also arise and these are addressed in the Commercial Case.

Connection to the Network Rail network at Barnstaple

The nearest crossing place for trains to Barnstaple is at Eggesford. While a fuller timetabling study would be needed to understand exactly how trains would operate, on the basis of early discussions with GWR, it appears almost certain that a new crossing place would be needed at Barnstaple. Eggesford is 17½ miles from Barnstaple. That long single line section already presents severe operational issues. Without the ability to cross trains at Barnstaple, reopening to Bideford would create a very long single line section of 27 miles. Even if it proved possible to timetable this, it would create severe operational inflexibility and performance risks.

The most obvious solution would be to reinstate a second track and platform. The second platform at Barnstaple still exists and has been restored and tidied up by the Tarka Rail Association (now North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group) and Barnstaple in Bloom volunteers. There is an operational piece of point work leading towards it, albeit only available for very occasional use. As well as reinstated track, further point work to the north of the second platform would be needed to allow trains using the second platform to access the route to Bideford. Platform lighting, a waiting shelter and an accessible lift footbridge would be needed to access the new platform. The current sidings at Barnstaple are operated by a ground frame and physical key. A suitable signalling and control system would need to be designed and installed to ensure the safe operation of the additional track, as north of Eggesford the current system only allows one train at a time to operate.

An alternative option could be to emulate the crossing place provided at Penryn when the Falmouth branch was upgraded to enable half-hourly train operation. This is a lower-cost solution that enables trains to serve only a single platform and therefore avoids the cost and inconvenience to passengers of requiring a lift bridge to the second platform. However, this approach may produce operational performance risks. Also, Barnstaple and Penryn stations are differently configured and further engineering design and operational assessment would be necessary before it could be confirmed that such an approach was either feasible or desirable.

Bideford and Instow stations

Both Bideford and Instow stations remain substantially intact, together with platform buildings. Only one platform would be required at both stations. At Bideford a decision would be needed as to which of the

platforms would be used for reinstated National Rail services and which would be retained as a rail centre/museum. The case of Okehampton, where one of the platforms has been retained as a museum and the building on the other has been sympathetically modernised while preserving the historic Southern Railway features shows how that could work at both Bideford and Instow.

As this document was being drafted, planning permission was sought and given for the building on the eastern side of Bideford station to be converted to additional hotel accommodation. With the owner's longer-term intentions unclear, it is assumed at this stage that this building would remain out of railway use and that the platform opposite would be better used for reinstated train services. However, it is also noted that several stations on the existing Exeter to Barnstaple line have the former station buildings in private ownership on operational platforms.

Use of the platform on the platform on the eastern side with the building would provide easier level access direct from the public road. Whichever platform is chosen, it seems likely that a new route across the tracks of the Bideford Railway Heritage Centre instead of the current crossing on the northern side of the station (which would block the reinstated track to/from Barnstaple) would be necessary to enable continued access from the other platform:

- For continued direct access from the western river side of the station in the event that the eastern platform with the building is used; or
- For level access for disabled people and others if the platform on the river side of the station is chosen (the access route avoiding the railway lines is steep).

If the station building remains in private use, its potential use as a café or other third party user that could provide facilities to passengers while also bringing some rental income, as at Okehampton, would need to be discounted. Options for Instow would also need to be further investigated. Unusually, the Royal Hotel at Bideford had an entrance direct onto one of the platforms. Discussions would be needed with the hotel about its preferences.

Both stations would most appropriately be small unstaffed Category F facilities and provide the following in line with normal GWR standards as set out in the Tavistock reopening business case[214]:

- Platform length suitable for 5-car trains of 23 m car length (147.5 m)[215];
- Platform shelters;
- CCTV and lighting to modern standards ensure passenger safety;
- Live passenger information screens;
- Ticket machine, pay-as-you-go tap-in point[216] and passenger help points;
- Secure cycle parking (particularly important given the prominence of active travel and sustainability in the scheme objectives);
- Electric vehicle (EV) charging points for any car parking provided (see below)[217]; and
- Fully level access access for disabled people and those with heavy luggage, small children, etc.

As the end of a route with a return running time of over two hours to/from Exeter, one element of scope for Bideford station to be agreed with GWR is whether any toilets or other facilities would be needed for train crew.

Some stakeholders have expressed concern about the noise associated with diesel trains running to Bideford, in particular given that the station is closely surrounded by housing. This business case generally takes a neutral

[214] Devon County Council - *Tavistock-Plymouth Line Reopening Strategic Outline Business Case – Restoring Your Railway: RYR387,* 22 September 2022: https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/outline-business-case-submitted-for-reopening-tavistock-to-plymouth-rail-line/

[215] A shorter platform if it proved necessary might be possible, in particular at Instow, with selective door opening (SDO). It is understood that the existing platforms at Bideford and Instow are 107 m and 91 m long respectively. While only very limited forms of SDO are available on the trains currently used on the Barnstaple route, they are getting old and new trains with full SDO capability are likely to be available by the time the Bideford route is reinstated. GWR has indicated that its initial thoughts are that SDO is likely to be acceptable.

[216] Not mentioned in the Tavistock scope definition, but seen as a future standard and referenced in both Devon and Peninsula Transport strategies.

[217] Not mentioned in the Tavistock scope definition, but now becoming standard for new car parking and explicitly referenced in Peninsula Transport's *Strategic Implementation Plan* criteria.

approach to which train technology would be used, noting that the direction of travel is towards alternative fuel trains.

This section aims to show that even now battery could realistically be used for the Barnstaple to Bideford leg, with another power type potentially for the Exeter to Barnstaple leg. With a turn-round time of around 30 minutes, there would be plenty of time for a train using battery technology to flash charge. GWR has brought into service a battery train using a specially developed flash charging system on the Greenford branch in London following a trial period. In August 2025 it achieved a new world record of 200 miles on batteries alone. GWR's experience with its battery train on the Greenford branch have been published: *Fast-charge battery technology: A viable option for regional rail?*[218]. GWR Managing Director Mark Hopwood says in the Foreword: "We've shown that the technology works" and that such trains could have substantial cost and reliability benefits over the diesel trains they replace".

The battery train uses a special charging device between the rails that can give a substantial charge to the train's batteries in a few minutes. Unlike traditional third rail electrification, the charging rails are only live when a train is stopped above them, avoiding the safety issues associated with live conductors. A shipping container with batteries adjacent to the track allows slow charging from normal domestic supply between train visits without the need for high voltage industrial-scale electrical supply. The adjacent photographs (author) show the equipment at West Ealing station. Use of a battery or alternative fuel train on the Barnstaple to Bideford route would also mean that there would be no visually intrusive overhead wires or masts, which could also cause clearance issues in the tunnel at Instow.

It is assumed at this early stage of development that both stations would be based on refurbishing an existing platform. Compared to the costs of brand new construction and the Schedule 4 track access compensation payments needed for closing track to allow new construction on the existing network, that should result in substantially lower costs than even the cheapest of recent new station openings on the national network. If it was considered necessary as a result of scheme cost pressures, Instow station could be treated as a decremental option. It should, however, be noted that later construction on a live railway would entail higher costs than during reinstatement of the rail route, in particular because of the disruption to train services caused during construction.

Car parking

Both stations are closely surrounded by development. It seems unlikely that substantial additional car parking could be provided directly at either. The old Bideford station forecourt currently provides parking for around 20 cars for the adjacent Royal Hotel.

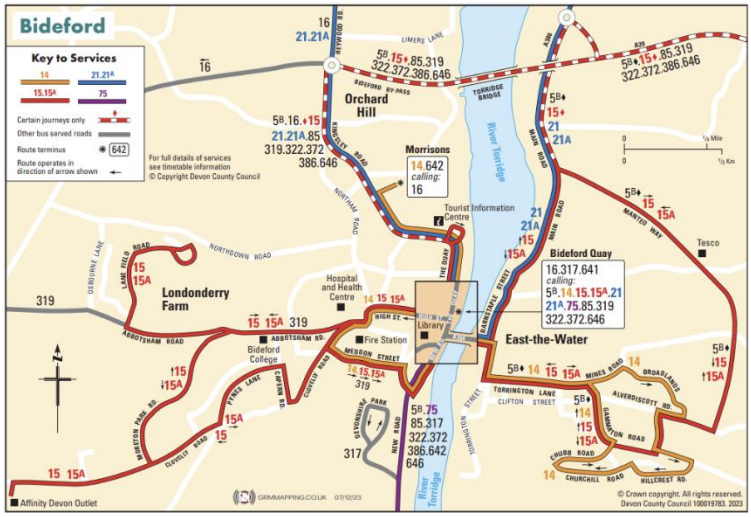
It is noted that the Devon County Council-sponsored new stations at Newcourt and Marsh Barton both feature little car parking other than a small number of spaces for disabled users, instead focusing on more sustainable active travel options. Options for 'kiss & ride' (passengers being dropped by car at the station by a friend or family member) and taxis need to be reviewed.

Nevertheless, there are risks to providing too little car parking, including less rail patronage and that rail users park their cars illegally in the vicinity of the station. It is noted that there is an industrial area a short distance to the south of the station in the vicinity of Torrington Street. It is recommended that further work be undertaken as designs develop to see whether there would be any potential for some car parking to be provided, for example as part of a relocation funded through the scheme. It is also noted that the development of the Brunswick Wharf[219] residential/commercial scheme diagonally opposite the Bideford station site provides for public car parking spaces. It would be worth investigating whether some of those spaces might be available for rail use.

[218] https://www.gwr.com/-/media/gwr-sc-website/files/about-gwr/what-you-can-expect/sustainability/GWR-fast-charge-whitepaper-010725.pdf

[219] https://brunswickwharf.co.uk/

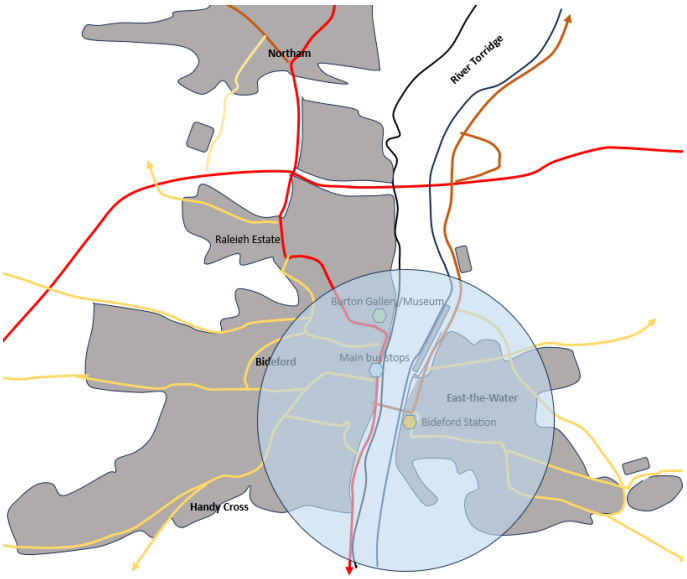
Accessibility by bus



Accessibility by bus would also benefit from improvement (adjacent map: Devon County Council).

The 21/21A route, which would provide important connectivity to the Northam, Westward Ho! and Appledore areas does stop in East-the-Water, but the stop is around 150 m to the north of the station entrance. Buses serving the Torrington and Clovelly areas and most other parts of the Torridge hinterland currently terminate on Bideford Quay on the opposite side of the River Torridge across the Long Bridge. There would be clear connectivity benefits for passengers connecting by rail from those area if they could also serve the new station site directly. A thorough redesign of the way in which buses serve Bideford would also apply to the existing 15/15A route serving East-the-Water. That route does run via Station Hill, but the stops are currently inconveniently located.

Accessibility by walking



The Bideford station site is reasonably well sited for access by foot. The adjacent sketch map (author) shows a walking catchment area for Bideford derived from the guidelines issued by the Chartered Institute of Highways & Transportation[220]: "The power of a destination determines how far people will walk to get to it. For bus stops in residential areas, 400 metres has traditionally been regarded as a cut-off point and in town centres, 200 metres (DOENI, 2000). People will walk up to 800 metres to get to a railway station, which reflects the greater perceived quality or importance of rail services". The whole of Instow is within the 800 m radius for walking from a station there.

Improvements to pedestrian access to Bideford station across Bideford Long Bridge and at the road junction adjacent to the station would need to be investigated in order to ensure that the active travel elements of the objectives are not under-delivered as a result of difficulty of pedestrian access. Equally, the new station would need to be clearly identified to those approaching it as being the station. The CIH&T recommends: "People travelling on foot want routes that are direct, as level as possible, enjoyable and have destinations in sight. Safe road crossings are an essential element of routes."

The *Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan*[221] was developed without reference to the potential for a new railway station at Bideford. It focuses on Bideford town centre and does not make any proposals for improvements in East-the-Water or access to the Bideford station site.

[220] *Planning for Walking*, Chartered Institute of Highways & Transportation, April 2015. The guidance defines walking more widely than a lay person might expect: ""Walking" is best thought of as a non-vehicle movement including all forms of assistance, such as sticks, wheelchairs, baby buggies and pavement vehicles. Good provision for users requiring such forms of assistance helps everybody."

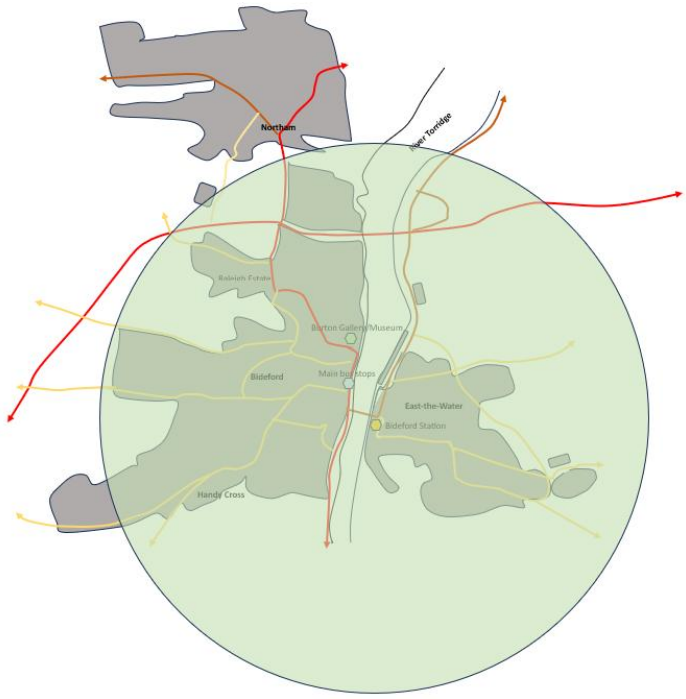
[221] *Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan*, Devon County Council, February 2023.

The road junction between the bridge and other roads close to Bideford station in East-the-Water are currently poorly laid out for pedestrians. Larger numbers of pedestrians using the route following the station reopening means there would be substantial benefit from redesign.

Accessibility by bicycle

The Bideford station site is reasonably well sited for access by bicycle.

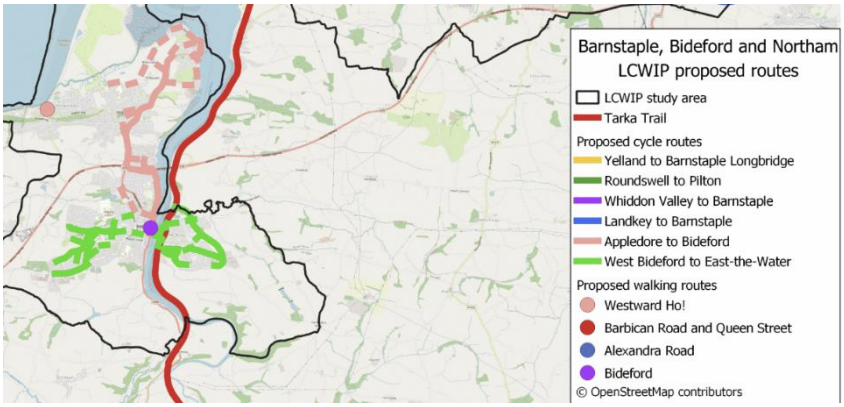
The following sketch map (author) shows a cycling catchment area for Bideford showing a 3 kilometre catchment area around Bideford station:



A literature review suggests greater potential variability of distance that cyclists are prepared to travel compared to pedestrians. Analysis by Transport for London[222] says "cyclable trips are predominantly short trips, with an average length of 3.15 km." For simplicity purposes and also to reflect the fact that many parts of the Bideford area are hilly and routes rarely completely direct, the sketch map shows a radius of around 3 km to illustrate the sort of catchment area that could be achieved for cycle trips. Clearly, some keener, fitter cyclists would be prepared to travel further.

As with pedestrian access, improvements to cycle access would help improve take-up. The Department for Transport has issued comprehensive guidance on good and bad practice[223]. A good standard of secure cycle parking for sufficient bikes would also be needed at Bideford and Instow stations, building on understanding gained by GWR and others in the rail industry about the best locations and security arrangements to encourage usage of station-based bike parking.

The *Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan*[224] was developed without reference to the potential for a new railway station at Bideford (map from the plan below). Even if it does not address the localised issues within the immediate vicinity of Bideford station, it does, however, propose a number of improvements to the cycling cycling infrastructure within Bideford that appear to be relevant in the event that the station was reopened, in particular for the areas towards the edge of or outside the 3 km catchment area.



Torridge and North Devon District Councils' joint December 2024 response[225] to the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) Consultation includes a recommendation that

[222] *Strategic Cycling Analysis*, Mayor of London, June 2017.

[223] *Cycle Infrastructure Design*, Department for Transport, July 2020.

[224] *Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan*, Devon County Council, February 2023.

[225] https://www.torridge.gov.uk/media/27644/Devon-and-Torbay-Local-Transport-Plan-4-2025-2040-1-October-to-30-November-2024/pdf/241129_Devon_and_Torbay_LTP4_consultation_response_from_TDC_and_NDC_locked.pdf?m=1733241744537

improvements should be made to the cycling infrastructure in Bideford, including across the bridge connecting the station site to Bideford town.

Other intermediate stations

As well as Instow, the route originally also had a station at Fremington. Passenger usage was very light, as the location was originally chosen for the purposes of building a rail-ship transhipment point rather than access for passengers. Access was only available along a long lane on the eastern side of Fremington Pill and then the B3233, nearly a mile in total to the centre of Fremington.

There is a balance to be struck between the additional catchment areas for passengers that can be gained from additional stations and the longer journey times resulting from additional stops and the higher capital costs that result from construction. New stations can also attract further development and it would be necessary to confirm with North Devon District Council and the parish councils whether they would support such a development. Equally, a station could help to reduce the traffic impact of further housing development if that is in fact likely. It may also be possible for additional development to attract funding through the land value capture approach or other approaches discussed further in the Commercial and Management Cases.

While neither Fremington nor Yelland are immediately adjacent to the former railway route, it would in principle be possible to build a simple single platform station at moderate cost. Given the uncertainty at this stage about local support, one option would be to include the potential for an additional intermediate station as a decremental/incremental option for later discussion, with engineering design allowing passive provision. It is noted that the Okehampton Interchange new station in Okehampton has been developed and financed separately from the earlier reinstatement of passenger train services to Okehampton.

'Gold-plating' of specification?

One accusation often thrown at railway and other public sector projects is that they are 'gold-plated', in particular that they cost far more than they should because too many elements of scope are included in their specification and that significant elements of scope are added to allay local objections. This has been a particular accusation made of the HS2 project, which has long sections of high cost tunnelled route.

As explained in the Foreword, this document aims to form a sober assessment. Some might object that some elements of construction scope suggested here are 'gold-plating', for example the proposal that the Tarka Trail should not just be reinstated but also upgraded or that historic elements of Bideford and Instow stations should be sympathetically restored. It is argued here that such things are both integral to achievement of the scheme's objectives (promotion of active travel and sustainable tourism) and to ensuring full local support for the scheme. However, it should also be noted that compared to the core elements of the scheme such as building new track or relocating the sewage pipe, they are minor items of cost. In contrast, placing large sections of HS2 in tunnel has resulted in very high incremental cost for that project.

Nevertheless, the management arrangements described in the Management Case could decide to descope them or seek alternative funding or different construction phasing if it was felt that such items or others were excessive or if cost pressures during further development of the scheme meant they had to be reviewed to bring scheme cost down.

However, the key is to ensure that value for money is achieved. That is not necessarily the same as the cheapest scheme or the one with the lowest specification that might not meet future needs optimally, for example by providing no springboard for further improvement. The National Audit Office defines 'value for money' as "the optimal use of resources (economy, efficiency and effectiveness) to achieve the intended outcomes"[226]. These terms are further defined as:

- "Economy: minimising the cost of resources used or required (inputs) – spending less;
- Efficiency: the relationship between the output from goods or services and the resources to produce them – spending well; and

[226] *Successful Commissioning Toolkit*, National Audit Office: https://www.nao.org.uk/successful-commissioning/

- Effectiveness: the relationship between the intended and actual results of public spending (outcomes) – spending wisely."

Types of train to be used

Rapid developments are being made in rail traction at the moment. At the date this document was being drafted, battery trains operating a short distance beyond the core third rail electric network had already started operation on the Merseyrail network and GWR had brought into service a battery train using a specially developed flash charging system on the Greenford branch in London following a trial period. Porterbrook had the HydroFLEX hydrogen train on trial. Both battery-electric and hydrogen-powered trains are in operational use in mainland Europe. Electric, hydrogen and diesel hybrid power trains have been in use in the bus sector for a number of years. It is noted that 'green hydrogen' has been identified as a potential economic growth sector for Torridge.

It is therefore not the intention to debate exactly what form of train might in practice be used for a reinstated Bideford train service, though it is noted that GWR is developing plans[227] for the replacement of its ageing local/regional diesel fleet. It seems likely to be a fair assumption at this stage that for a route of only 9¼ miles an electrically-operated train drawing power from batteries[228] or powered by an alternative power source such as hydrogen could be used by the time the railway is reopened. It is not necessary to state at this stage what the power source would be between Exeter and Barnstaple. That should help address environmental and neighbour concerns about air, ground and noise pollution and the visual intrusion of overhead line equipment, in particular given that both Bideford and Instow stations and the route through Instow and on the approaches to Bideford station are closely built-up areas.

Train services

The proposal would be for through train services between Bideford and Exeter, not the services at closure where most trains ran as a branch from Barnstaple connecting to Exeter to Ilfracombe via Barnstaple services, with through passengers required to change train at Barnstaple.

All modern rail planning tools such as PDFH and Moira show that changing train is a strong disincentive to travel. Changes extend journey times because of the need to accommodate some delay in connecting services. They also increase operating costs through requiring more trains and train crew. Quick, easy, reliable journeys are necessary if car users in particular are to switch to train in larger numbers.

An illustrative timetable for reinstated Bideford train services based on today's GWR is in Annex H. This is based on some simple assumptions, including that today's Barnstaple timetable remains unchanged and that the 1 minute / 3 minute passing times used at Penryn on the Falmouth branch could also be used at a remodelled Barnstaple station. In practice, longer passing times might be used to give some additional performance robustness even if slightly longer overall journey times result. Equally, further work might show that a shorter journey time is possible with robust performance between Bideford and Barnstaple, as the illustrative timetable is based on the upper end (15 minutes) of GWR's initial estimates.

If a separate scheme to modernise the line between Exeter and Barnstaple to reduce journey times and increase train service frequency were to be implemented, these journey times could be bettered. For example, the best journey time currently achieved between Barnstaple and Exeter St Davids is 54 minutes when no other trains are running, but typical daytime journey times are 66 minutes, with some peak hour trains with the most stops taking up to 80 minutes. If the trains between Barnstaple and Exeter which extended to Bideford all managed the Barnstaple to Exeter leg of the journey in 54 minutes, a 70 minute overall journey time for all Bideford trains would be achievable. Further betterments might be achievable if further journey time improvements were implemented between Exeter and Barnstaple.

Could the train service frequency be increased in the future?

Some rail reinstatement schemes such as the Borders Railway and the Ebbw Vale line have been criticised for decisions on project scope that limit the potential for train service expansion in the future or where expansion could only be achieved at the significant additional cost of further construction works. For example, some

[227] GWR is considering the future of its diesel multiple unit fleet used on local and regional services in the Thames Valley and in the West and South West of England, which were built between the mid-1980s and early 1990s.

[228] The battery train being trialled by GWR has already achieved a world record 200 miles in August 2025.

bridges have been built on the Borders Railway only capable of accommodating single track (the route was originally a full double-track main line). On the Ebbw Vale railway, the expansion of services to include direct trains to Newport was only possible by building an additional loop. Construction of that sort is more costly on a live operating railway than one being rebuilt.

The most obvious train service increment would be from the proposed hourly service to half-hourly. The first point to note is that, unless the additional service was solely a local one between Barnstaple and Bideford, the whole route between Exeter and Barnstaple would also need to be upgraded, as that can currently only accommodate one train an hour maximum. As noted in the Management Case, that scheme is a related but separate project.

The second point relates to the Bideford scheme itself. The illustrative timetable shows a conservative journey time between Barnstaple and Bideford of 15 minutes. Providing that could be reduced a little, for example with faster accelerating new trains and/or the second train per hour missing out Instow or any other intermediate station, it would in principle be possible to accommodate the higher frequency train service. The key requirement would be for the second platform at Bideford to be reinstated to allow two trains to be in the station at the same time. That would require the Bideford Railway Heritage Centre to move. It should also be noted that the lack of longer lay-over at Bideford allowed for in the illustrative timetable would mean that performance could be less robust.

It is recommended that, as the scheme progresses, an operational feasibility study be undertaken together with an engineering study into options for double track at Bideford. A decision could then be taken on whether to fund any or all of the work as part of the initial scheme.

It would also be necessary to understand the implications for the Development Consent Order application for powers to construct and operate the railway, in particular whether any additional scope would be necessary.

Non-Preferred Rail Option: a New Inland Alignment

For new rail services, it is always sensible to investigate alternative options beyond simple reinstatement of a closed railway line, as the aim is to create train services that meet today's and future needs, not to recreate an old railway in historical terms. Because of this, funding decision-makers want to see that a full range of options have been considered.

In principle, it would be possible to identify multiple options. However, in order to keep analysis within manageable proportions, this document identifies two basic corridors, recognising that the built-up corridor comprising Sticklepath, Bickington, Fremington and Yelland imposes limitations on where in practice it is likely to be practicable to develop a rail route. One option is based around the old railway route, with variations around its alignment identified. The other corridor is an inland alignment leaving the existing railway from Exeter south of Barnstaple, with two options based on different approaches to building new railways adopted elsewhere.

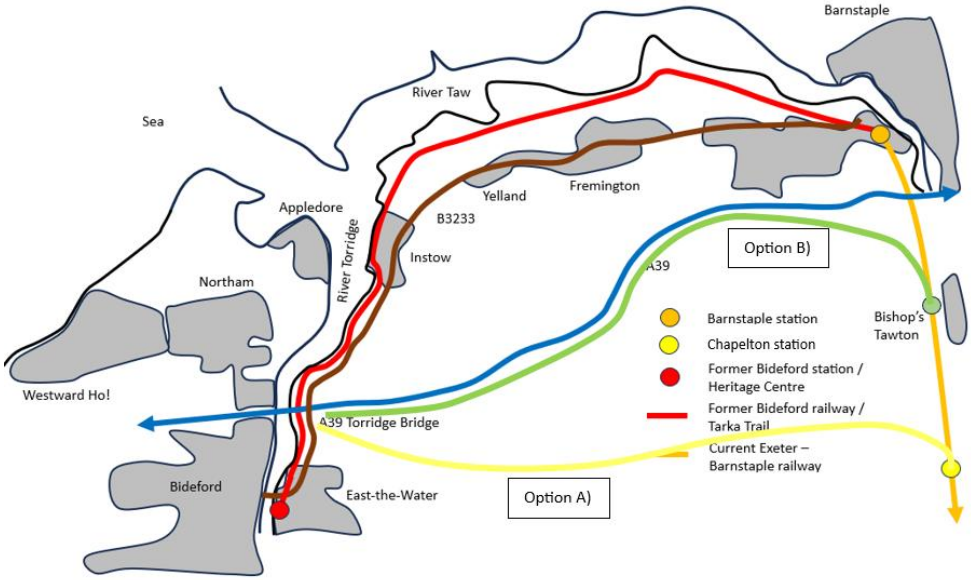
A hybrid of the two basic corridors might in principle be possible, but is not developed further here, as it appears to have the key disadvantages of both options. If it was considered worthwhile pursuing that approach, it could be revisited at a later stage of business case development.

The *Torridge and North Devon Connectivity Programme Report* commissioned by Railfuture and the Tarka Rail Association (now North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group) and GWR in summer 2022 contrasted what was considered would be more modest passenger carryings on a reinstated old alignment with higher carryings achieved as a result of faster journey times on a new inland alignment between Chapelton on the existing Barnstaple railway line and Torridge Bridge to the north of East-the-Water via Newton Tracey: here 'Option A)'.

This document also considers an alternative new inland alignment that might shadow the A39 road from a junction with the existing Barnstaple railway near Bishop's Tawton: Option B).

The Option A) route from Chapelton would be closer to the HS2 or East West Rail design precepts in adopting an entirely new alignment through undeveloped countryside. Option B) would follow the approach taken with the HS1 high speed railway in shadowing existing motorways in Kent. (Sketch map by author of this document):

This document identifies highly material capital cost, operating cost/railway operating, social benefit, social acceptability and sustainability issues with both Option A) and Option B).



Capital cost

Entirely new rail routes are costly, both in their promotion and construction. The most recent estimates for a non-high speed new railway appear to be East West Rail's cost estimates for the new build eastern section between Bedford and Cambridge[229]. Overall prices are not given. Instead sections are costed separately, with figures per kilometre of between £71 million and £87 million. Using those figures for the Bideford inland route options would result in a hugely costly project of between £781 million and £957 million for the around 11 km (6.8 mile) long alignments of both Option A) and Option B).

Lower cost might be achieved for a single track to Bideford as opposed to EWR's double track. However, that could be more than offset by the fact that the terrain between the the River Taw and River Torridge is much more challenging than the much flatter terrain traversed by East West Rail in central and eastern England, requiring bigger and therefore more costly civil engineering features such as deep cuttings, high embankments and bridges and potentially even tunnels[230].

The existing Barnstaple railway south of Barnstaple follows the course of the River Taw. South of Barnstaple in the area where an inland route would diverge, it is very easily graded, rising to only 14 m above sea level at Chapelton. In contrast the land between both Chapelton and Bishop's Tawton rises rapidly. For Option A) the watershed between the two river valleys appears to be at around 55 m at Bartridge Bridge near Newton Tracey. For Option B), the highest point appears to be 117 m near Holmacott adjacent to the A39. The River Torridge valley has steep sides. This was less of a problem when the A39 was built, as the intention was to span the river with a high bridge, with the primary access being on the west side of the river on the high ground between Northam and Bideford. Rubber-tyred road vehicles can also manage much steeper gradients than rail vehicles.

Simple calculations, based on contour lines and spot heights adjacent in the relevant locations taken from the Ordnance Survey 1:25000 Explorer map, show that either option would result in severe gradients if built as a surface railway. For Option A), the average gradient appears to be much easier between Chapelton and the

[229] *East West Rail - Central Section options - Central section capital cost estimate*, August 2019.

[230] HS2 has produced *HS2: A Guide to Tunnelling Costs*, which includes a costed example of a 7 kilometre tunnelled section of route "in a rural location with hilly topography", which quotes the apparently more modest costs of around £33 million per single tunnel kilometre. However, this is solely for the tunnel civil engineering and associated safety systems, and does not include railway fit-out costs. Moreover, there are some substantial additional one-off costs such as acquisition of the tunnel boring machines and construction of the tunnel portals which mean that the cost per kilometre can rise substantially for shorter tunnels. While it discusses options for more difficult geological conditions, the worked example assumes more straightforward tunnelling conditions using a cheaper 'slurry tunnel boring machine'. Without a geological survey, it is not possible to say which type of tunnelling technology would be appropriate or whether it would even be practical to use a tunnel boring machine. Additional costs would include a new station for Bideford and the connection to the existing Barnstaple route.

lowest point at Newton Tracey, but stream from that watershed follows a convoluted course that would be impractical for a railway. The initial climb out of the River Taw valley is steep (up to 1 in 25). For Option B) from Bishop's Tawton to Lovacott the average gradient would be 1 in 40 and 1 in 33 from Eastleigh to Bideford if the old station was used.

None of these gradients would be acceptable on a brand new railway, as they are as bad or worse than the notorious 'South Devon banks' between Newton Abbott and Plymouth, which continue to cause significant operating issues, and are unlikely to be acceptable to Network Rail or train operator GWR. Most importantly, they would not accommodate the materially shorter journey time from much higher speeds that might be the main advantage of an new inland alignment compared to reinstatement of the original alignment. Attempting to build a railway hugging the contours of the terrain would therefore act contrary to a key benefit and argument in favour of a new inland route.

The gradients quoted above are averages over the distance and a line of route may experience worse shorter-distance gradients. The main mitigations for severe gradients on a railway are to make cuttings and embankments or tunnels in the worst cases. Heavy earthworks of these types increase the amount of land needed[231] and therefore increase cost through increased amounts of land purchase as well as civil engineering costs in the building of the structures. Irrespective of gradient, there are many roads, tracks and public rights of way crossing either alignment. Level and footpath crossings are rarely allowed on new or upgraded railways because of their safety risks, so whatever the terrain, many costly bridges and/or closures and deviations would also be needed. Longer-term maintenance costs are also increased as a result of more civil engineering structures.

The intention of this section is not to give definitive figures, but to give a sense of the scale of challenge and ensuing costs that an inland route could entail. More detailed engineering studies, including a detailed route selection analysis would be needed to confirm costs if it was considered that an inland route was worth pursuing in later stage business cases. A range of cost estimates reflecting different confidence levels, including optimism bias adjustment as required by the Department for Transport would need to be developed.

East West Rail is deemed to be of national significance and the extension eastwards from Bedford to Cambridge should ultimately enable a wide range of through passenger and freight journeys to be made encompassing large parts of central and eastern England, while also providing capacity relief to parts of the existing network. One of the strongest cases made by East West Rail is the economic growth derived from supporting mobility for those employed by the internationally competitive science and technology-based industries in the Cambridge area. Whatever the benefits of a Bideford rail reopening, it could not call on the same wider national strategic importance to justify the very high level of costs of an inland alignment.

Bideford station location

As the map shows, any inland alignment would approach Bideford from the east rather than the from the north as the old railway did following the river bank. That poses the question of where a new station for Bideford would be located. One answer would be for it to be in the vicinity of the A39, accessed from that road as a primarily park & ride station. Alternatively, it would need to descend steeply and on a tight curvature, crossing the B3233 to access the former railway formation at a location between the A39 Torridge Bridge and East-the-Water.

While an out-of-town park & ride station might attract car users, very few would in practice access that location by foot or cycle[232] and it would limit onward connectivity by bus to Northam, Westward Ho!, Appledore and other locations in Torridge. It could encourage car usage and do nothing to reduce it, while producing a solution in practice unusable by those without access to a car. It is also noted that the most recent post-COVID usage figures show many park & ride stations performing far worse in usage compared to town/city centre stations.

[231] In order to ensure stability, the base of an embankment or the widest part at the top of a cutting are substantially wider than the width needed solely for the railway track itself. Modern engineering understanding of soil mechanics means that cuttings and embankments are now made far wider than was traditionally the case in Victorian times with far less steep gradients of the soil at the side of the cutting or embankment. The many land slips experienced recently on many existing railways on cuttings and embankments show that the traditional practices have resulted in longer-term instability and both safety risk and higher maintenance costs.

[232] Even if some housing were to be developed in the vicinity in the future, it would still be remote from Bideford's historic town centre.

As a result, the first option would be inconsistent with the active and sustainable travel objectives of the county and regional transport strategies and the objectives proposed for the Bideford rail scheme and in the eyes of the local populace the station would not actually be in Bideford itself.

It is also noted that the Okehampton Interchange new station in eastern Okehampton is not only intended to act as a park & ride facility for a wide catchment area as far as North Cornwall, but is also located where there will be a significant catchment of passengers able to access the station on foot and by bicycle, as well as serving an existing industrial estate. It is also intended to become the main bus interchange point, allowing buses to avoid the steep, narrow residential roads leading to the existing Okehampton station.

For the second option, the lower speeds associated with steep gradients and tight curvature and the approaches to those would be inconsistent with the basic benefit claimed for an inland route of higher speeds and shorter journey times.

Operating cost/railway operating issues

The existing railway in Barnstaple is orientated towards the north west, with Bideford to the south west. The land rises steeply directly to the west of the current Barnstaple station and this higher ground around Sticklepath, Roundswell and Bickington is heavily developed. This is why any inland alignment to Bideford would need to leave the Barnstaple railway line south of the current Barnstaple station.

Options A) and B) would involve a new railway junction near Chapelton or near Bishop's Tawton respectively. Other locations might be possible, but none of them would overcome the fundamental issues resulting from the creation of a new junction, namely that the same train could not serve both Barnstaple and Bideford without incurring significant journey time penalties.

Four possible solutions have been identified. All these solutions have highly material downsides, in particular through counteracting the journey time benefit of a shorter inland route compared to the original alignment and/or through impairing improvements to capacity/potential frequency improvements on the existing route to Barnstaple and/or increasing operating cost. All but one of them mean that a new rail service to Bideford could not also provide local connectivity between Bideford and Barnstaple. It would also not be possible to call at Instow or other potential new stations such as Yelland or Fremington.

a) *Trains to divide and join at the new junction station*

   Splitting and joining of trains ('permissive working[233]') does occur elsewhere on the rail network. However, in most cases this is a longstanding historic practice or has been newly introduced because no other option was immediately possible, for example the splitting and joining of 5-car portions of GWR Intercity Express Trains at Plymouth[234]. With the exception of the GWR IET example, the trend in the rail industry has been to reduce this form of train working. This is driven by some of the same concerns that would also apply in this case, in particular negative impacts on performance and safety concerns.

   Performance impacts arise if one of the train portions is delayed but the other part is not delayed or if there are problems with coupling or uncoupling. Safety concerns arise in particular but not exclusively in coupling moves. In April 2016, for example, there was a collision between trains at Plymouth station during a permissive move, even though not part of a planned coupling move. As an exception to normal working principles, authorisation would need to be gained for new permissive working. It cannot be confirmed at this stage that it would be given.

   One of the most significant concerns, however, is that coupling/uncoupling moves are time-consuming. This applies both to the actual coupling/uncoupling process and the time taken for the first train to clear the line to allow the second train to proceed. Given that the key argument in favour of an inland route to Bideford is saving journey time and that same imperative also applies to the currently longer than ideal Exeter to Barnstaple journey times, this is a major objection to this approach. Indeed, a substantial spend on the existing route would be necessary simply to make up for the additional journey time to/from

[233] So-called because the normal rules prohibiting more than one train in any single signalling block section are lifted ('permitted') through the application of special rules to reduce the safety risks.

[234] GWR IET trains can operate in 5-car, 9-car or coupled 10-car formations. The coupling/uncoupling moves at Plymouth were introduced because of the current difficulties in accommodating 9-car and 10-car trains at Penzance.

Barnstaple resulting from the additional journey time caused by the permissive working at the new junction station introduced solely for the purposes of reinstating train services to Bideford.

Standard times for attachment and uncoupling are given in Network Rail's *Timetable Planning Rules* (TPR). The TPR section covering Network Rail's Western & Wales Route[235] shows standard minimum times for each type of move according to class of train involved. For diesel multiple units of the types currently used by GWR on this route, the minimum attachment time is five minutes and four minutes for detachment. That is ⅓ of the total coastal route journey time and suggests without any further detailed modelling that this type of operational move would nullify any potential journey time benefits of an inland route.

Moreover, because in this case splitting would involve both halves of the train operating separately beyond the junction station to both Barnstaple and Bideford, it would impose substantial additional operational cost compared to other options because an additional set of train crew would be needed. As well as worsening the cost position, this would also create performance risk in the event that some of the additional train crew were not available (cancellation of the Bideford or Barnstaple portion). Unless the substantial cost of a new train crew depot in the Barnstaple area was incurred, one set of train crew would waste around two hours of each day's work travelling between Exeter and the new junction station before they could start work and at the end of each shift.

The impact on the economic case would be reduced patronage and revenue from additional journey time in existing journeys to Barnstaple, suboptimal patronage and revenue from Bideford and increased costs from the need for additional, suboptimally diagrammed train crew. Moreover, a separate scheme to modernise the existing Exeter to Barnstaple line for which journey time improvement is likely to be a key objective would require substantial spend simply to make up the journey time on Barnstaple journeys lost as a result of the permissive moves.

b) *Bideford trains to run as a separate branch, connecting to Barnstaple trains at the junction*

This would effectively recreate the position at the time of closure, albeit with the further disadvantage that the junction station would not be at the major destination of Barnstaple, so no local connectivity between Bideford and Barnstaple would be achieved. This solution would both eliminate much of the time gain from the inland route, as additional time would be needed to ensure that connections worked robustly and would limit the number of users, as the rail industry's planning tools show strong passenger disinclination to make connections. The need for additional train crew would also make it a high cost solution.

An example from the GWR timetable of a branch from a branch where connections are required for a through journey is the Maidenhead to Marlow branch, where train operating considerations mean that the half-hourly peak service can only be operated through a connection at Bourne End[236]. The absolute minimum time allowed for the connection is four minutes compared to a minute for a normal station stop, and less for a request stop such as Chapelton currently is. As with Option a), this option would also increase journey time between Barnstaple and Exeter when a key strategic aim of a separate scheme to modernise that route is to reduce it.

A compromise with the alternating trains or dividing/joining trains options might be possible. While that would enable some through journeys to/from Bideford, it would have the worst characteristics of both options. It is impossible to see how that could be acceptable to stakeholders in North Devon and would therefore create considerable opposition to a Bideford scheme in that area.

c) *Bideford trains to reverse at Barnstaple*

If the new junction faced south, it could be possible for a train from Exeter to travel first to Barnstaple and then reverse back to the junction to proceed to Bideford and vice versa.

[235] https://sacuksprodnrdigital0001.blob.core.windows.net/operational-rules/Operational%20Rules/TPR/TPR%202024/V4/TPR%202024%20V4%20WW.pdf

[236] Unlike the Bideford/Barnstaple example, the connectional point is itself an important destination and is more like the situation where a connection was made at Barnstaple rather than at a point to the south.

While avoiding some of the downsides of the other two options, this would nullify any journey time benefit from the inland alignment (it would produce an alignment with a mirror image of the coastal route) and result in high levels of occupancy of the track between Barnstaple and the junction station, necessitating an upgrade of that section. Reversing a train itself takes time compared to a simple stop, as the driver has to change ends. Time would also be lost by covering the same section of route twice[237]. With this option, it would not be possible to serve Instow or to provide options for a further intermediate station for Yelland and/or Fremington.

Standard times for reversal of direction en route are given in Network Rail's *Timetable Planning Rules* (TPR). The TPR section covering Network Rail's Western & Wales Route[238] shows standard minimum times for reversal according to class of train involved. For diesel multiple units of the types currently used by GWR on this route, the minimum is three minutes or four minutes for trains of four cars or longer. Trains of at least four or five cars are likely to be needed, as peak hour services to/from Barnstaple are already crowded and Bideford would increase the number of passengers.

It is very hard to see that any train operator would willingly agree to the reversal option, as it builds operational inflexibility and performance risk into the railway as well as unnecessarily increasing journey times: the reversal alone would nullify all or most of the journey time benefit of an inland route, let alone the time taken to travel to and from Barnstaple, which taking the timings shown above added to the reversal timings would result in journey times well above the coastal route timings.

d) *Trains to/from Exeter to serve Barnstaple and Bideford alternately*.

This appears to be the only option that would allow an inland route to offer the full journey time benefit of a shorter route. However, because the Exeter to Barnstaple line is currently operating at its maximum capacity, it would reduce the frequency of trains to/from Barnstaple compared to now from hourly to two-hourly. Given that loadings on the Barnstaple route are at a record historic high level, this would result in material capacity issues at Barnstaple. It would also force a choice of departure and arrival times, in particular at peak times.

In practice, it would be very hard to argue in favour of Barnstaple losing its key departures in favour of Bideford. Moreover, much of the strongest demand to/from Bideford is likely to be at similar times to Barnstaple, resulting in Bideford not achieving its best patronage. The economic case would suffer accordingly, with patronage loss from Barnstaple and suboptimal patronage from Bideford acting as very material downsides in the appraisal.

Alternatively, if the line between Exeter and Barnstaple was upgraded to allow more frequent train services, there would be no loss of capacity or frequency compared to now and it would be possible to even out departure/arrival times at both stations. However, this would still deprive Barnstaple of the capacity and demand/revenue benefits of a more frequent service compared to now and it is very difficult to see how the substantial capital costs of both an inland alignment to Bideford and the costs of upgrading the existing route could be justified for such limited incremental benefits. It would require both projects to be funded jointly or make reinstatement of Bideford train services dependent on following on from the Barnstaple line to Exeter being upgraded first. The implications are explored further in the Management Case.

This solution also means that a reinstated Bideford rail service could not provide local connectivity between Bideford and Barnstaple, again negatively affecting the level of patronage and therefore income and social benefit.

Social acceptability issues

A new-build railway line with large civil engineering structures and associated temporary worksites cutting through swathes of farmland is likely to lead to substantial public opposition, including nationally outside North Devon if the opposition to HS2, the eastern new build part of East West Rail and certain new road schemes can be a basis for judgement. Option B) might limit that opposition to some extent, but probably not

[237] Chapelton to Barnstaple is 9 minutes and Bishop's Tawton would be around half that.

[238] https://sacuksprodnrdigital0001.blob.core.windows.net/operational-rules/Operational%20Rules/TPR/TPR%202024/V4/TPR%202024%20V4%20WW.pdf

greatly. Until detailed engineering studies were complete, it would not be possible to confirm that no property acquisition and demolition would be needed, that nobody would have a new-build railway close to their home, that no ancient woodlands would need to be felled, etc, etc.

In that phase, the public support for reinstatement of train services to Bideford could easily decline substantially, in particular when it became clear that the trains would not actually stop in or close to the centre of Bideford and that railway operational issues meant the potential journey time benefits were not achieved. Local politicians would find themselves forced to choose and political support could also dissipate.

Sustainability Issues

A new alignment compared to a restored route is that a heavily engineered new route is likely to include a much higher level of 'embedded carbon' than a restored route, both in materials such as concrete and in the power used for construction. Given the weak arguments in favour of such an alignment, this would run contrary to the wider sustainability objectives.

Annex B

Stagecoach Bus Route 21/21A / 5B Timetables[239]

Barnstaple - Westward Ho!/Appledore via Fremington and Bideford 21/21A

From Sunday 4th January 2026

MONDAYS TO FRIDAYS except Public Holidays

		21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A
Barnstaple Bus Station		0555	0630	0705	0720	0740	0800	0820	0840	0905	0925	0945	1000	1015	1030	1045	1100	1115	1130
Railway Station		0559	0634	0709	0724	0744	0804	0824	0844	0909	0929	0950	1005	1020	1035	1050	1105	1120	1135
Bickington Garage		0604	0639	0716	0731	0751	0811	0831	0851	0916	0936	0958	1013	1028	1043	1058	1113	1128	1143
Fremington Taw View		0607	0642	0719	0734	0754	0814	0834	0854	0919	0939	1001	1016	1031	1046	1101	1116	1131	1146
Yelland Rectory Lane		0613	0648	0726	0741	0801	0821	0841	0901	0926	0946	1008	1023	1038	1053	1108	1123	1138	1153
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Arr	0623	0658	0737	0752	0812	0832	0852	0912	0937	0957	1019	1034	1049	1104	1119	1134	1149	1204
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Dep	0625	0700	0739	0754	0814	0835	0855	0915	0940	1000	1022	1037	1052	1107	1122	1137	1152	1207
Northam Swimming Pool				0747			0843			0948	1008		1045		1115		1145		1215
Appledore Seagate Hotel				0753			0849			0954	1014		1051		1121		1151		1221
Northam Square		0632	0708		0802	0822		0903	0923			1030		1100		1130		1200	
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens		0637	0713		0807	0827		0908	0928			1035		1105		1135		1205	

		21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21
Barnstaple Bus Station		1145	1200	1215	1230	1245	1300	1315	1330	1350	1410	1430	1455	1520	1535	1555	1615	1630	1645
Railway Station		1150	1205	1220	1235	1250	1305	1320	1335	1355	1415	1435	1500	1525	1540	1600	1620	1635	1650
Bickington Garage		1158	1213	1228	1243	1258	1313	1328	1343	1403	1423	1443	1508	1534	1549	1609	1629	1644	1659
Fremington Taw View		1201	1216	1231	1246	1301	1316	1331	1346	1406	1426	1446	1511	1537	1552	1612	1632	1647	1702
Yelland Rectory Lane		1208	1223	1238	1253	1308	1323	1338	1353	1413	1433	1453	1518	1545	1600	1620	1640	1655	1710
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Arr	1219	1234	1249	1304	1319	1334	1349	1404	1424	1444	1504	1531	1558	1613	1633	1653	1708	1723
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Dep	1222	1237	1252	1307	1322	1337	1352	1407	1427	1447	1507	1534	1601	1616	1636	1656	1711	1726
Northam Swimming Pool			1245		1315		1345		1415			1515			1625			1720	
Appledore Seagate Hotel			1251		1321		1351		1421			1522			1632			1727	
Northam Square		1230		1300		1330		1400		1435	1455		1543	1610		1645	1705		1735
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens		1235		1305		1335		1405		1440	1500		1548	1615		1650	1710		1740

		21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21
Barnstaple Bus Station		1700	1715	1740	1810	1840	1940	2040	2140	2240	2325
Railway Station		1705	1720	1745	1815	1845	1944	2044	2144	2244	2329
Bickington Garage		1714	1729	1752	1822	1852	1950	2050	2150	2250	2335
Fremington Taw View		1717	1732	1755	1825	1855	1953	2053	2153	2253	2338
Yelland Rectory Lane		1725	1739	1802	1832	1902	2000	2100	2200	2300	2345
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Arr	1738	1750	1813	1843	1912	2010	2110	2210	2310	2355
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Dep	1741	1753	1816	1846	1915	2013	2113	2213	2313	2358
Northam Swimming Pool		1749		1824		1922		2120		2320	
Appledore Seagate Hotel		1756		1831		1927		2125		2325	
Northam Square			1801		1854		2020		2220		0005
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens			1806		1859		2025		2225		0010

Westward Ho!/Appledore - Barnstaple via Bideford and Fremington 21/21A

From Sunday 4th January 2026

MONDAYS TO FRIDAYS except Public Holidays

		21	21	21	21	21A	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21A	21	21A	21	21A
Appledore Seagate Hotel						0700		0800			0900			1001	1026		1101		1131
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens				0605	0637		0713		0807	0827		0908	0928			1035		1105	
Westward Ho! Car Park	Arr			0608	0640		0716		0810	0830		0911	0931			1038		1108	
Westward Ho! Car Park	Dep			0608	0643		0728		0813	0833		0918	0940			1040		1115	
Northam Memorial				0616	0651	0709	0739	0809	0824	0844	0909	0929	0949	1009	1034	1049	1109	1124	1139
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Arr			0622	0657	0717	0747	0817	0832	0852	0917	0937	0957	1017	1042	1057	1117	1132	1147
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Dep	0515	0545	0625	0700	0720	0750	0820	0835	0855	0920	0940	1000	1020	1045	1100	1120	1135	1150
Instow Marine Parade		0523	0553	0633	0708	0728	0758	0828	0843	0903	0928	0948	1008	1028	1053	1108	1128	1143	1158
Fremington New Inn		0532	0602	0642	0718	0738	0808	0838	0853	0913	0938	0957	1017	1037	1102	1117	1137	1152	1207
Bickington Garage		0536	0606	0646	0723	0742	0813	0842	0858	0917	0942	1001	1021	1041	1106	1121	1141	1156	1211
Opp Railway Station		0543	0613	0653	0731	0750	0821	0850	0906	0922	0950	1009	1029	1049	1114	1129	1149	1204	1219
Barnstaple Bus Station		0548	0618	0658	0744	0756	0834	0856	0919	0933	0956	1015	1035	1055	1120	1135	1155	1210	1225

		21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A
Appledore Seagate Hotel			1201		1231		1301		1331		1401		1431			1531			1636
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens		1135		1205		1235		1305		1335		1405		1440	1500		1548	1615	
Westward Ho! Car Park	Arr	1138		1208		1238		1308		1338		1408		1443	1503		1551	1618	
Westward Ho! Car Park	Dep	1145		1215		1245		1315		1345		1415		1450	1511		1558	1621	
Northam Memorial		1154	1209	1224	1239	1254	1309	1324	1339	1354	1409	1424	1439	1459	1519	1539	1606	1629	1644
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Arr	1202	1217	1232	1247	1302	1317	1332	1347	1402	1417	1432	1447	1507	1527	1547	1614	1637	1652
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Dep	1205	1220	1235	1250	1305	1320	1335	1350	1405	1420	1435	1450	1510	1530	1550	1617	1640	1655
Instow Marine Parade		1213	1228	1243	1258	1313	1328	1343	1358	1413	1428	1443	1458	1518	1538	1558	1625	1648	1703
Fremington New Inn		1222	1237	1252	1307	1322	1337	1352	1407	1422	1437	1452	1507	1527	1548	1608	1635	1658	1713
Bickington Garage		1226	1241	1256	1311	1326	1341	1356	1411	1426	1441	1456	1511	1531	1552	1612	1639	1702	1717
Opp Railway Station		1234	1249	1304	1319	1334	1349	1404	1419	1434	1449	1504	1519	1538	1559	1619	1646	1709	1724
Barnstaple Bus Station		1240	1255	1310	1325	1340	1355	1410	1425	1440	1455	1510	1524	1543	1604	1624	1651	1714	1729

		21	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A
Appledore Seagate Hotel				1733		1801		1838		1930		2130		2327
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens		1650	1710		1740		1806		1859		2025		2225	
Westward Ho! Car Park	Arr	1653	1713		1743		1809		1902		2028		2228	
Westward Ho! Car Park	Dep	1656	1717		1748		1813		1908		2030		2230	
Northam Memorial		1704	1725	1740	1755	1808	1820	1845	1915	1937	2037	2137	2237	2334
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Arr	1712	1732	1747	1802	1815	1827	1852	1921	1943	2043	2143	2243	2340
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Dep	1715	1735	1750	1805	1818	1830	1855	1925	1945	2045	2145	2245	2341
Instow Marine Parade		1723	1742	1757	1812	1825	1837	1902	1932	1952	2053	2153	2253	2347
Fremington New Inn		1733	1751	1806	1821	1834	1846	1910	1940	2000	2101	2201	2301	2354
Bickington Garage		1737	1755	1810	1825	1838	1850	1914	1944	2004	2105	2205	2305	2357
Opp Railway Station		1744	1801	1816	1831	1844	1856	1920	1950	2010	2111	2211	2311	0003
Barnstaple Bus Station		1749	1806	1821	1836	1849	1901	1925	1955	2015	2116	2216	2316	0008

[239] stagecoachbus.com – *Live Bus Times and Timetables*

Barnstaple - Westward Ho!/Appledore via Fremington and Bideford 21/21A

From Sunday 4th January 2026

SATURDAYS

		21	21A	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21
Barnstaple Bus Station		0630	0705	0735	0800	0820	0840	0905	0925	0945	1000	1020	1040	1100	1120	1140	1200	1220	1240
Railway Station		0634	0709	0739	0804	0824	0844	0909	0929	0950	1005	1025	1045	1105	1125	1145	1205	1225	1245
Bickington Garage		0639	0716	0746	0811	0831	0851	0916	0936	0958	1013	1033	1053	1113	1133	1153	1213	1233	1253
Fremington Taw View		0642	0719	0749	0814	0834	0854	0919	0939	1001	1016	1036	1056	1116	1136	1156	1216	1236	1256
Yelland Rectory Lane		0648	0726	0756	0821	0841	0901	0926	0946	1008	1023	1043	1103	1123	1143	1203	1223	1243	1303
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Arr	0658	0737	0807	0832	0852	0912	0937	0957	1019	1034	1054	1114	1134	1154	1214	1234	1254	1314
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Dep	0700	0739	0809	0835	0855	0915	0940	1000	1022	1037	1057	1117	1137	1157	1217	1237	1257	1317
Northam Swimming Pool			0747		0843			0948			1045			1145			1245		
Appledore Seagate Hotel			0753		0849			0954			1051			1151			1251		
Northam Square		0708		0817		0903	0923		1008	1030		1105	1125		1205	1225		1305	1325
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens		0713		0822		0908	0928		1013	1035		1110	1130		1210	1230		1310	1330

		21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21
Barnstaple Bus Station		1300	1320	1340	1400	1420	1440	1500	1520	1540	1600	1620	1640	1700	1720	1740	1810	1840	1940
Railway Station		1305	1325	1345	1405	1425	1445	1505	1525	1545	1605	1625	1645	1705	1725	1745	1815	1845	1944
Bickington Garage		1313	1333	1353	1413	1433	1453	1513	1534	1554	1614	1634	1654	1714	1734	1752	1822	1852	1950
Fremington Taw View		1316	1336	1356	1416	1436	1456	1516	1537	1557	1617	1637	1657	1717	1737	1756	1825	1855	1953
Yelland Rectory Lane		1323	1343	1403	1423	1443	1503	1524	1545	1605	1625	1645	1705	1725	1744	1802	1832	1902	2000
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Arr	1334	1354	1414	1434	1454	1514	1537	1558	1618	1638	1658	1718	1738	1755	1813	1843	1912	2010
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Dep	1337	1357	1417	1437	1457	1517	1540	1601	1621	1641	1701	1721	1741	1758	1816	1846	1915	2013
Northam Swimming Pool		1345			1445			1549			1650			1749		1824		1922	
Appledore Seagate Hotel		1351			1451			1555			1656			1755		1830		1927	
Northam Square			1405	1425		1505	1526		1610	1630		1710	1730		1806		1854		2020
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens			1410	1430		1510	1531		1615	1635		1715	1735		1811		1859		2025

		21A	21	21A	21	21	21	21	21
Barnstaple Bus Station		2040	2140	2240	2325	0000	0100	0200	0300	0400
Railway Station		2044	2144	2244	2329					
Bickington Garage		2050	2150	2250	2335	0007	0107	0207	0307	0407
Fremington Taw View		2053	2153	2253	2338	0010	0110	0210	0310	0410
Yelland Rectory Lane		2100	2200	2300	2345	0016	0116	0216	0316	0416
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Arr	2110	2210	2310	2355	0027	0127	0227	0327	0427
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Dep	2113	2213	2313	2358					
Northam Swimming Pool		2120		2320						
Appledore Seagate Hotel		2125		2325						
Northam Square			2220		0005					
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens			2225		0010					

SUNDAYS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS except Christmas day, Boxing day and New years day

		21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A
Barnstaple Bus Station		0740	0810	0840	0910	0940	1010	1040	1110	1140	1210	1240	1310	1340	1410	1440	1510	1540	1610
Railway Station		0744	0814	0844	0914	0944	1014	1044	1114	1144	1214	1244	1314	1344	1414	1444	1514	1544	1614
Bickington Garage		0750	0820	0850	0920	0951	1021	1051	1121	1151	1221	1251	1321	1351	1421	1451	1521	1551	1621
Fremington Taw View		0753	0823	0853	0923	0954	1024	1054	1124	1154	1224	1254	1324	1354	1424	1454	1524	1554	1624
Yelland Rectory Lane		0759	0829	0859	0929	1000	1030	1100	1130	1200	1230	1300	1330	1400	1430	1500	1530	1600	1630
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Arr	0809	0839	0909	0939	1010	1040	1110	1140	1210	1240	1310	1340	1410	1440	1510	1541	1611	1641
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Dep	0812	0842	0912	0942	1013	1043	1113	1143	1213	1243	1313	1343	1413	1443	1513	1544	1614	1644
Northam Swimming Pool			0849		0950		1051		1151		1251		1351		1451		1551		1651
Appledore Seagate Hotel			0854		0956		1057		1157		1257		1357		1457		1557		1657
Northam Square		0818		0918		1019		1119		1219		1319		1419		1519		1621	
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens		0823		0923		1024		1124		1224		1324		1424		1524		1626	

		21	21A	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21A	21
Barnstaple Bus Station		1640	1710	1740	1810	1840	1940	2040	2140	2240	2325
Railway Station		1644	1714	1744	1814	1844	1944	2044	2144	2244	2329
Bickington Garage		1651	1721	1751	1821	1851	1950	2050	2150	2250	2335
Fremington Taw View		1654	1724	1754	1824	1854	1953	2053	2153	2253	2338
Yelland Rectory Lane		1700	1730	1800	1830	1900	2000	2100	2200	2300	2345
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Arr	1711	1741	1811	1841	1910	2010	2110	2210	2310	2355
Bideford Quay (Stop C)	Dep	1714	1744	1814	1844	1913	2013	2113	2213	2313	2358
Northam Swimming Pool			1750		1850			2120		2320	
Appledore Seagate Hotel			1756		1856			2125		2325	
Northam Square		1721		1821		1918	2020		2220		0005
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens		1726		1826		1923	2025		2225		0010

Westward Ho!/Appledore - Barnstaple via Bideford and Fremington 21/21A

From Sunday 4th January 2026

SATURDAYS

		21	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21
Appledore Seagate Hotel				0700		0800		0900			1000			1100			1200		
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens			0605		0713		0823		0908	0928		1013	1035		1110	1130		1210	1230
Westward Ho! Car Park	Arr		0608		0716		0826		0911	0931		1016	1038		1113	1133		1213	1233
Westward Ho! Car Park	Dep		0608		0729		0829		0919	0937		1019	1039		1119	1139		1219	1239
Northam Memorial			0615	0708	0738	0808	0838	0908	0928	0946	1008	1028	1048	1108	1128	1148	1208	1228	1248
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Arr		0621	0715	0745	0815	0845	0915	0935	0955	1017	1037	1057	1117	1137	1157	1217	1237	1257
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Dep	0545	0624	0718	0748	0818	0848	0918	0938	0958	1020	1040	1100	1120	1140	1200	1220	1240	1300
Instow Marine Parade		0553	0632	0726	0756	0826	0856	0926	0946	1006	1028	1048	1108	1128	1148	1208	1228	1248	1308
Fremington New Inn		0602	0641	0736	0806	0836	0906	0936	0956	1016	1038	1058	1118	1138	1158	1218	1238	1258	1318
Bickington Garage		0606	0645	0741	0811	0841	0910	0941	1001	1021	1043	1103	1123	1143	1203	1223	1243	1303	1323
Opp Railway Station		0612	0651	0749	0819	0849	0915	0948	1008	1028	1050	1110	1130	1150	1210	1230	1250	1310	1330
Barnstaple Bus Station		0617	0656	0755	0825	0855	0919	0955	1015	1035	1057	1117	1137	1157	1217	1237	1257	1317	1337

		21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21A
Appledore Seagate Hotel		1300			1400			1500			1602			1702			1803		1838
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens			1310	1330		1410	1430		1510	1531		1615	1635		1715	1735		1811	
Westward Ho! Car Park	Arr		1313	1333		1413	1433		1513	1534		1618	1638		1718	1738		1814	
Westward Ho! Car Park	Dep		1319	1339		1419	1439		1522	1542		1622	1642		1722	1743		1818	
Northam Memorial		1308	1328	1348	1408	1428	1448	1508	1530	1550	1610	1630	1650	1710	1730	1750	1810	1825	1845
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Arr	1317	1337	1357	1417	1437	1457	1517	1537	1557	1617	1637	1657	1717	1737	1757	1817	1832	1852
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Dep	1320	1340	1400	1420	1440	1500	1520	1540	1600	1620	1640	1700	1720	1740	1800	1820	1835	1855
Instow Marine Parade		1328	1348	1408	1428	1448	1508	1527	1547	1607	1627	1647	1707	1727	1747	1807	1827	1842	1902
Fremington New Inn		1338	1358	1418	1438	1458	1518	1537	1557	1617	1637	1657	1717	1737	1756	1816	1836	1851	1911
Bickington Garage		1343	1403	1423	1443	1503	1522	1541	1601	1621	1641	1701	1721	1741	1800	1820	1840	1855	1915
Opp Railway Station		1350	1410	1430	1450	1510	1529	1548	1608	1628	1648	1708	1728	1748	1807	1827	1847	1902	1921
Barnstaple Bus Station		1357	1417	1437	1457	1517	1534	1553	1613	1633	1653	1713	1733	1753	1812	1832	1852	1907	1926

		21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21	21	21
Appledore Seagate Hotel			1930		2130		2327				
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens		1859		2025		2225					
Westward Ho! Car Park	Arr	1902		2028		2228					
Westward Ho! Car Park	Dep	1908		2030		2230					
Northam Memorial		1915	1937	2037	2137	2237	2334				
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Arr	1921	1943	2043	2143	2243	2340				
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Dep	1925	1945	2045	2145	2245	2341	0030	0130	0230	0330
Instow Marine Parade		1933	1953	2053	2153	2253	2347	0036	0136	0236	0336
Fremington New Inn		1942	2002	2101	2201	2301	2354	0046	0143	0243	0343
Bickington Garage		1946	2006	2105	2205	2305	2357	0046	0146	0246	0346
Opp Railway Station		1952	2012	2111	2211	2311	0003				
Barnstaple Bus Station		1957	2017	2116	2216	2316	0008	0056	0156	0256	0356

SUNDAYS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS except Christmas day, Boxing day and New Years day

		21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A	21	21A
Appledore Seagate Hotel			0904		1003		1103		1203		1303		1403		1503		1603		1703
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens		0823		0923		1024		1124		1224		1324		1424		1524		1626	
Westward Ho! Car Park	Arr	0826		0926		1027		1127		1227		1327		1427		1527		1629	
Westward Ho! Car Park	Dep	0829		0933		1033		1133		1233		1333		1433		1533		1633	
Northam Memorial		0836	0911	0940	1010	1040	1110	1140	1210	1240	1310	1340	1410	1440	1510	1540	1610	1640	1710
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Arr	0842	0917	0947	1017	1047	1117	1147	1217	1247	1317	1347	1417	1447	1517	1547	1617	1647	1717
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Dep	0845	0920	0950	1020	1050	1120	1150	1220	1250	1320	1350	1420	1450	1520	1550	1620	1650	1720
Instow Marine Parade		0853	0928	0958	1028	1058	1128	1158	1228	1258	1328	1358	1428	1458	1528	1558	1628	1658	1728
Fremington New Inn		0903	0938	1007	1037	1107	1137	1207	1237	1307	1337	1407	1437	1507	1537	1607	1637	1707	1737
Bickington Garage		0907	0942	1011	1041	1111	1141	1211	1241	1311	1341	1411	1441	1511	1541	1611	1641	1711	1741
Opp Railway Station		0914	0949	1018	1048	1118	1148	1218	1248	1318	1348	1418	1448	1518	1547	1617	1647	1717	1747
Barnstaple Bus Station		0919	0954	1023	1053	1123	1153	1223	1253	1323	1353	1423	1453	1523	1552	1622	1652	1722	1752

		21	21A	21	21A	21	21	21A	21	21A
Appledore Seagate Hotel			1803		1903			2130		2327
Westward Ho! Swanswood Gardens		1726		1826		1923	2025		2225	
Westward Ho! Car Park	Arr	1729		1829		1926	2028		2228	
Westward Ho! Car Park	Dep	1733		1833		1931	2030		2230	
Northam Memorial		1740	1810	1840	1910	1937	2037	2137	2237	2334
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Arr	1747	1817	1847	1916	1943	2043	2143	2243	2340
Bideford Quay (Stop B)	Dep	1750	1820	1850	1919	1945	2045	2145	2245	2341
Instow Marine Parade		1758	1828	1858	1927	1953	2053	2153	2253	2347
Fremington New Inn		1807	1837	1907	1935	2001	2101	2201	2301	2354
Bickington Garage		1811	1841	1911	1939	2005	2105	2205	2305	2357
Opp Railway Station		1817	1847	1916	1944	2010	2111	2211	2311	0003
Barnstaple Bus Station		1822	1852	1921	1949	2015	2116	2216	2316	0008

Exeter - Crediton - Torrington - Bideford - Barnstaple 5B

From Sunday 4th January 2026

MONDAYS TO FRIDAYS except Bank Holidays

Exeter Bus Station		0830	1000	1400	1645	1740	2015	
Exeter St Davids Station		0840	1010	1410	1655	1750	2023	
Duryard, Cowley Bridge		0846	1016	1416	1701	1756	2028	
Newton St Cyres, Crown and Sceptre		0853	1023	1423	1708	1803	2035	
Crediton Railway Station		0643	0859	1029	1429	1714	1809	2041
Crediton Lloyds Bank		0648	0904	1034	1434	1719	1814	2046
Copplestone Stone	Arr	0656	0912	1042	1442	1727	1822	2054
		‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
Copplestone Stone	Dep	0656	0912	1042	1442	1727	1822	2054
Bow, Iter Park		0703	0919	1049	1449		1829	2101
North Tawton, The Square		0713	0929	1059	1501		1839	2111
Morchard Road, Devonshire Dumpling						1731		
Winkleigh Turn		0724	0940	1110	1514	1743	1850	2121
Dolton Barfield Road		0735	0951	1121	1527	1754	1901	2131
Beaford Bus Shelter		0744	1000	1130	1536	1803	1909	2139
Little Torrington, Rosemoor RHS Gardens		0750	1006	1136	1542	1809	1915	2145
Great Torrington Church	Arr	0756	1012	1142	1548	1815	1921	2151
		‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
Great Torrington Church	Dep	0757	1013	1143	1549	1816	1921	2151
Landcross Chapel		0807	1023	1153	1559	1826	1931	2201
Bideford Quay (Stop D)		0814	1030	1200	1606	1833	1938	2208
Instow The Quay			1039	1209	1615	1842	1947	2217
Fremington New Inn			1047	1217	1623	1850	1954	2224
Bickington Garage			1050	1220	1626	1853	1957	2227
Roundswell, Gratton Way		0830						
Opp Barnstaple Railway Station		0836	1057	1227	1633	1900	2003	2233
Barnstaple Bus Station		0845	1103	1233	1639	1905	2008	2238

SATURDAYS

Exeter Bus Station		0830	1000	1400	1630	1740	2015	
Exeter St Davids Station		0840	1010	1410	1640	1750	2023	
Duryard, Cowley Bridge		0846	1016	1416	1646	1756	2028	
Newton St Cyres, Crown and Sceptre		0853	1023	1423	1653	1803	2035	
Crediton Railway Station		0643	0859	1029	1429	1659	1809	2041
Crediton Lloyds Bank		0648	0904	1034	1434	1704	1814	2046
Copplestone Stone	Arr	0656	0912	1042	1442	1712	1822	2054
		‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
Copplestone Stone	Dep	0656	0912	1042	1442	1712	1822	2054
Bow, Iter Park		0703	0919	1049	1449	1719	1829	2101
North Tawton, The Square		0713	0929	1059	1459	1729	1839	2111
Morchard Road, Devonshire Dumpling								
Winkleigh Turn		0724	0940	1110	1510	1740	1850	2121
Dolton Barfield Road		0735	0951	1121	1521	1751	1901	2131
Beaford Bus Shelter		0744	1000	1130	1530	1800	1909	2139
Little Torrington, Rosemoor RHS Gardens		0750	1006	1136	1536	1806	1915	2145
Great Torrington Church	Arr	0756	1012	1142	1542	1812	1921	2151
		‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
Great Torrington Church	Dep	0757	1013	1143	1543	1813	1921	2151
Landcross Chapel		0807	1023	1153	1553	1823	1931	2201
Bideford Quay (Stop D)		0814	1030	1200	1600	1830	1938	2208
Instow The Quay			1039	1209	1609	1839	1947	2217
Fremington New Inn			1047	1217	1617	1847	1954	2224
Bickington Garage			1050	1220	1620	1850	1957	2227
Roundswell, Gratton Way		0830						
Opp Barnstaple Railway Station		0836	1055	1225	1625	1855	2001	2231
Barnstaple Bus Station		0845	1101	1231	1631	1901	2006	2236

‖ This bus continues as a through service with through tickets available and passengers can remain on the bus

Barnstaple - Bideford - Torrington - Crediton - Exeter 5B

From Sunday 4th January 2026

MONDAYS TO FRIDAYS except Bank Holidays

Barnstaple Bus Station		0520	0615	0900	1200	1400	1650	2245
Barnstaple Railway Station		0525	0620	0906	1206	1406	1656	2250
Bickington Garage		0529	0624	0912	1212	1412	1702	
Fremington New Inn		0532	0627	0915	1215	1415	1705	
Instow The Quay		0538	0633	0923	1223	1423	1713	
E-t-W Cliveden Road								2308
Bideford Quay (Stop A)		0548	0643	0933	1233	1433	1723	2315
Landcross Chapel		0553	0648	0938	1238	1438	1728	2320
Torrington Opposite Church	Arr	0603	0658	0949	1249	1449	1739	2330
		‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	
Torrington Opposite Church	Dep	0605	0700	0952	1252	1452	1742	
Little Torrington, Rosemoor RHS Gardens		0608	0703	0956	1256	1456	1746	
Beaford Bus Shelter		0616	0711	1004	1304	1504	1754	
Dolton Barfield Road		0624	0719	1015	1315	1515	1805	
Winkleigh, The Old Parsonage		0637	0732	1027	1327	1527	1817	
North Tawton, Clock Tower				1043	1343	1543	1829	
Bow, The Square				1053	1353	1553	1839	
Morchard Road, Devonshire Dumpling			0649	0744				
Copplestone Stone	Arr	0655	0750	1101	1401	1600	1846	
		‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	
Copplestone Stone	Dep	0655	0750	1101	1401	1600	1846	
Crediton opp Tesco Metro		0705	0800	1111	1411	1610	1855	
Crediton Railway Station		0710	0805	1116	1416	1615	1900	
Newton St Cyres, Crown and Sceptre		0716	0811	1122	1422	1622	1906	
Duryard Cowley Bridge		0725	0820	1130	1430	1630	1913	
Exeter St Davids Station		0730	0825	1135	1435	1635	1918	
Exeter Bus Station		0737	0832	1142	1442	1642	1924	

SATURDAYS

Barnstaple Bus Station		0520	0615	0900	1200	1400	1645	2245
Barnstaple Railway Station		0525	0620	0906	1206	1406	1651	2250
Bickington Garage		0529	0624	0912	1212	1412	1657	
Fremington New Inn		0532	0627	0915	1215	1415	1700	
Instow The Quay		0538	0633	0923	1223	1423	1708	
E-t-W Cliveden Road								2312
Bideford Quay (Stop A)		0548	0643	0933	1233	1433	1718	2315
Landcross Chapel		0553	0648	0938	1238	1438	1723	2320
Torrington Opposite Church	Arr	0603	0658	0949	1249	1449	1734	2330
		‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	
Torrington Opposite Church	Dep	0605	0700	0952	1252	1452	1737	
Little Torrington, Rosemoor RHS Gardens		0608	0703	0956	1256	1456	1741	
Beaford Bus Shelter		0616	0711	1004	1304	1504	1749	
Dolton Barfield Road		0624	0719	1015	1315	1515	1800	
Winkleigh, The Old Parsonage		0637	0732	1027	1327	1527	1811	
North Tawton, Clock Tower				1043	1343	1543	1823	
Bow, The Square				1053	1353	1553	1833	
Morchard Road, Devonshire Dumpling			0649	0744				
Copplestone Stone	Arr	0655	0750	1101	1401	1600	1840	
		‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖	
Copplestone Stone	Dep	0655	0750	1101	1401	1600	1840	
Crediton opp Tesco Metro		0705	0800	1111	1411	1610	1850	
Crediton Railway Station		0710	0805	1116	1416	1615	1855	
Newton St Cyres, Crown and Sceptre		0716	0811	1122	1422	1622	1901	
Duryard Cowley Bridge		0725	0820	1130	1430	1630	1908	
Exeter St Davids Station		0730	0825	1135	1435	1635	1913	
Exeter Bus Station		0740	0835	1145	1445	1645	1922	

‖ This bus continues as a through service with through tickets available and passengers can remain on the bus

Annex C

Great Western Railway Train Timetables Exeter - Barnstaple[240]

EXETER TO OKEHAMPTON AND BARNSTAPLE (THE DARTMOOR AND TARKA LINES)

MONDAYS TO FRIDAYS

Exmouth	d	·	·	0551	0615	0655	0724	0754	0824	0854	0924	1000	1025	1057	1123	1157	1223	1257	1323	1357	1423	1457	1523	1555
Topsham	d	·	·	0601	0627	0708	0737	0807	0837	0907	0936	1011	1037	1108	1135	1208	1235	1307	1335	1408	1435	1508	1535	1607
Digby & Sowton	d	·	·	0608	0634	0714	0743	0813	0843	0913	0943	1017	1044	1114	1142	1214	1242	1314	1342	1414	1442	1514	1542	1614
Exeter Central	d	·	·	0616	0642	0724	**0804**	**0834**	**0914**	**0934**	**1014**	**1032**	**1114**	**1132**	**1214**	**1232**	**1312**	**1332**	**1414**	**1432**	**1514**	**1532**	**1613**	**1632**
Exeter St Davids ⑥	d	**0522**	**0612**	**0633**	**0707**	**0738**	**0810**	**0839**	**0919**	**0939**	**1019**	**1037**	**1119**	**1137**	**1219**	**1237**	**1319**	**1338**	**1419**	**1437**	**1519**	**1537**	**1618**	**1637**
Newton St Cyres	d	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	**1044x**	·	·	·	·	·	**1345x**	·	·	·	·	**1624x**	·
Crediton	a	**0532**	**0622**	**0643**	**0716**	**0748**	**0820**	**0849**	**0929**	**0949**	**1029**	**1051**	**1129**	**1147**	**1229**	**1247**	**1330**	**1351**	**1429**	**1447**	**1529**	**1547**	**1630**	**1647**
Crediton	d	**0532**	**0624**	**0644**	**0718**	**0749**	**0828**	**0850**	**0931**	**0951**	**1031**	**1051**	**1131**	**1151**	**1231**	**1251**	**1331**	**1352**	**1431**	**1450**	**1531**	**1549**	**1631**	**1649**
Yeoford	d	·	**0631x**	·	**0725x**	·	**0834x**	·	**0937x**	·	**1037x**	·	**1137x**	·	**1237x**	·	**1337x**	·	**1437x**	·	**1537x**	·	**1637x**	·
Okehampton	a	·	·	**0712**	·	**0817**	·	**0918**	·	**1019**	·	**1119**	·	**1219**	·	**1319**	·	**1420**	·	**1518**	·	**1617**	·	**1717**
Copplestone	d	·	**0636**	·	**0730**	·	**0839**	·	**0942**	·	**1043**	·	**1143**	·	**1242**	·	**1343**	·	**1443**	·	**1543**	·	**1643**	·
Morchard Road	d	·	**0640x**	·	**0733x**	·	**0842x**	·	**0945x**	·	**1045x**	·	**1145x**	·	**1245x**	·	**1345x**	·	**1445x**	·	**1545x**	·	**1645x**	·
Lapford	d	·	·	·	**0738x**	·	·	·	**0949x**	·	·	·	·	·	**1249x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	**1650x**	·
Eggesford	a	**0553**	**0650**	·	**0748**	·	**0854**	·	**0959**	·	**1057**	·	**1157**	·	**1259**	·	**1357**	·	**1457**	·	**1557**	·	**1700**	·
Eggesford	d	**0554**	**0653**	·	**0755**	·	**0902**	·	**1004**	·	**1101**	·	**1201**	·	**1304**	·	**1401**	·	**1501**	·	**1601**	·	**1702**	·
Kings Nympton	d	·	·	·	**0801x**	·	**0907x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	**1407x**	·	·	·	·	·	**1707x**	·
Portsmouth Arms	d	·	·	·	**0806x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·
Umberleigh	d	**0608x**	**0707x**	·	**0811x**	·	**0918x**	·	**1018x**	·	**1115x**	·	**1215x**	·	**1318x**	·	**1417x**	·	**1515x**	·	**1615x**	·	**1718x**	·
Chapelton	d	·	·	·	**0816x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·
Barnstaple	a	**0619**	**0717**	·	**0825**	·	**0928**	·	**1029**	·	**1125**	·	**1225**	·	**1329**	·	**1427**	·	**1525**	·	**1626**	·	**1728**	·

Notes										**A**	FO
Exmouth	d	1623	1657	1725	1756	1826	1856	1925	2024	**2054**	2156e
Topsham	d	1636	1709	1737	1808	1839	1907	1937	2036	**2106**	2210e
Digby & Sowton	d	1643	1716	1744	1815	1845	1914	1944	2043	**2113**	2217e
Exeter Central	d	**1715**	**1735**	**1815**	1824	**1917**	1923	**2019**	2052	**2122**	**2250**
Exeter St Davids ⑥	d	**1719**	**1740**	**1821**	**1845**	**1922**	**1942**	**2023**	**2117**	**2129**	**2255**
Newton St Cyres	d	**1726x**	·	·	·	**1928x**	·	·	**2124x**	**2136x**	**2304x**
Crediton	a	**1731**	**1750**	**1831**	**1856**	**1934**	**1953**	**2035**	**2130**	**2142**	**2308**
Crediton	d	**1732**	**1751**	**1835**	**1856**	**1937**	**1955**	**2035**	**2131**	**2143**	**2309**
Yeoford	d	**1738x**	·	**1841x**	·	**1943x**	·	**2041x**	·	**2149x**	**2315x**
Okehampton	a	·	**1819**	·	**1924**	·	**2023**	·	**2159**	·	·
Copplestone	d	**1744**	·	**1846**	·	**1949**	·	**2047**	·	**2154**	**2320**
Morchard Road	d	**1746x**	·	**1849x**	·	**1951x**	·	**2049x**	·	**2156x**	**2323x**
Lapford	d	**1751x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	**2200x**	**2328x**
Eggesford	a	**1801**	·	**1901**	·	**2003**	·	**2102**	·	**2210**	**2338**
Eggesford	d	**1803**	·	**1907**	·	**2008**	·	**2109**	·	**2211**	**2339**
Kings Nympton	d	**1808x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	**2217x**	**2345x**
Portsmouth Arms	d	**1814x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·
Umberleigh	d	**1819x**	·	**1921x**	·	**2022x**	·	**2123x**	·	**2227x**	**2355x**
Chapelton	d	**1824x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·
Barnstaple	a	**1833**	·	**1931**	·	**2032**	·	**2133**	·	**2237**	**0006**

EXETER TO OKEHAMPTON AND BARNSTAPLE (THE DARTMOOR AND TARKA LINES)

SATURDAYS

Exmouth	d	·	·	·	·	0655	0725	0755	0825	0855	0925	0955	1024	1057	1124	1157	1224	1257	1324	1357	1424	1457	1525	1555
Topsham	d	·	·	·	·	0708	0738	0807	0838	0907	0937	1008	1037	1109	1137	1209	1238	1309	1340	1409	1437	1509	1538	1607
Digby & Sowton	d	·	·	·	·	0714	0744	0814	0845	0914	0944	1014	1043	1115	1143	1215	1244	1315	1346	1415	1443	1515	1545	1614
Exeter Central	d	·	·	·	0629	0724	**0813**	**0835**	**0915**	**0934**	**1014**	**1032**	**1114**	**1131**	**1214**	**1233**	**1313**	**1330**	**1414**	**1433**	**1514**	**1531**	**1614**	**1632**
Exeter St Davids ⑥	d	**0524**	**0616**	**0630**	**0710**	**0736**	**0818**	**0839**	**0921**	**0939**	**1019**	**1037**	**1119**	**1136**	**1219**	**1238**	**1319**	**1335**	**1419**	**1438**	**1520**	**1538**	**1619**	**1637**
Newton St Cyres	d	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	**1044x**	·	·	**1226x**	·	·	**1343x**	**1425x**	·	·	·	·	**1644x**
Crediton	a	**0534**	**0626**	**0640**	**0720**	**0747**	**0828**	**0850**	**0931**	**0949**	**1029**	**1050**	**1129**	**1146**	**1231**	**1248**	**1329**	**1349**	**1431**	**1448**	**1530**	**1548**	**1629**	**1650**
Crediton	d	**0534**	**0627**	**0641**	**0724**	**0749**	**0831**	**0850**	**0931**	**0950**	**1031**	**1051**	**1131**	**1152**	**1232**	**1252**	**1331**	**1351**	**1432**	**1451**	**1531**	**1550**	**1631**	**1652**
Yeoford	d	**0540x**	**0633x**	·	**0730x**	·	**0837x**	·	**0937x**	·	**1037x**	·	**1137x**	·	**1238x**	·	**1337x**	·	**1438x**	·	**1537x**	·	**1637x**	·
Okehampton	a	·	·	**0709**	·	**0817**	·	**0918**	·	**1018**	·	**1119**	·	**1220**	·	**1320**	·	**1419**	·	**1519**	·	**1618**	·	**1720**
Copplestone	d	**0546**	**0638**	·	**0735**	·	**0842**	·	**0942**	·	**1042**	·	**1142**	·	**1243**	·	**1342**	·	**1443**	·	**1542**	·	**1642**	·
Morchard Road	d	**0548x**	**0641x**	·	**0738x**	·	**0845x**	·	**0945x**	·	**1045x**	·	**1145x**	·	**1246x**	·	**1345x**	·	**1446x**	·	**1545x**	·	**1645x**	·
Lapford	d	·	·	·	**0743x**	·	·	·	**0949x**	·	·	·	·	·	**1251x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	**1650x**	·
Eggesford	a	**0600**	**0653**	·	**0753**	·	**0857**	·	**1000**	·	**1057**	·	**1157**	·	**1301**	·	**1357**	·	**1458**	·	**1557**	·	**1700**	·
Eggesford	d	**0602**	**0657**	·	**0759**	·	**0904**	·	**1002**	·	**1101**	·	**1201**	·	**1302**	·	**1401**	·	**1501**	·	**1601**	·	**1705**	·
Kings Nympton	d	·	·	·	**0805x**	·	**0909x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	**1407x**	·	·	·	·	·	**1711x**	·
Portsmouth Arms	d	·	·	·	**0810x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·
Umberleigh	d	**0615x**	**0711x**	·	**0815x**	·	**0919x**	·	**1015x**	·	**1115x**	·	**1214x**	·	**1316x**	·	**1416x**	·	**1514x**	·	**1614x**	·	**1721x**	·
Chapelton	d	·	·	·	**0820x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·
Barnstaple	a	**0628**	**0723**	·	**0830**	·	**0931**	·	**1027**	·	**1126**	·	**1226**	·	**1327**	·	**1429**	·	**1526**	·	**1626**	·	**1732**	·

Exmouth	d	1626	1655	1725	1758	1828	1857	1925	2024	·
Topsham	d	1638	1707	1738	1812	1840	1909	1939	2037	·
Digby & Sowton	d	1645	1714	1745	1818	1847	1916	1946	2044	·
Exeter Central	d	**1714**	**1732**	**1818**	1828	**1917**	1923	**2019**	2053	**2120**
Exeter St Davids ⑥	d	**1720**	**1737**	**1824**	**1845**	**1922**	**1933**	**2024**	**2112**	**2124**
Newton St Cyres	d	**1726x**	·	**1830x**	·	**1928x**	**1940x**	·	**2119x**	**2131x**
Crediton	a	**1732**	**1749**	**1836**	**1856**	**1934**	**1946**	**2035**	**2125**	**2138**
Crediton	d	**1733**	**1750**	**1838**	**1857**	**1941**	**1956**	**2037**	**2127**	**2139**
Yeoford	d	**1739x**	·	**1844x**	·	**1947x**	·	**2043x**	·	**2145x**
Okehampton	a	·	**1818**	·	**1925**	·	**2024**	·	**2155**	·
Copplestone	d	**1744**	·	**1849**	·	**1952**	·	**2047**	·	**2150**
Morchard Road	d	**1747x**	·	**1852x**	·	**1955x**	·	**2050x**	·	**2153x**
Lapford	d	**1752x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	**2156x**
Eggesford	a	**1802**	·	**1904**	·	**2007**	·	**2103**	·	**2206**
Eggesford	d	**1808**	·	**1913**	·	**2009**	·	**2108**	·	**2208**
Kings Nympton	d	**1813x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	**2213x**
Portsmouth Arms	d	**1819x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·
Umberleigh	d	**1824x**	·	**1926x**	·	**2022x**	·	**2121x**	·	**2222x**
Chapelton	d	**1829x**	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·
Barnstaple	a	**1839**	·	**1938**	·	**2034**	·	**2133**	·	**2235**

[240] gwr.com, *Timetable D2*, 14 December 2025 – 16 May 2026.

SUNDAYS

Exmouth	d	·	·	·	0855	·	0955	1021	1055	1122	1157	1226	1257	1324	1357	1424	1457	1524	1557	1624	1658	1724	1758	1825
Topsham	d	·	·	·	0907	·	1007	1033	1105	1135	1210	1238	1310	1336	1408	1436	1509	1536	1608	1636	1708	1737	1810	1837
Digby & Sowton	d	·	·	·	0914	·	1013	1040	1112	1141	1217	1245	1316	1343	1414	1443	1515	1543	1614	1643	1715	1743	1816	1844
Exeter Central	d	·	0838	0912	0932	1013	1031	1114	1133	1214	1231	1314	1332	1414	1432	1514	1532	1611	1632	1714	1732	1814	1839	1914
Exeter St Davids ⑥	d	0834	0843	0920	0937	1018	1037	1119	1138	1219	1239	1319	1338	1419	1438	1522	1538	1619	1638	1720	1743	1819	1849	1919
Newton St Cyres	d	·	·	0927x	·	1023x	1044x	·	·	1225x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1626x	·	·	·	·	·	1925x
Crediton	a	0844	0853	0932	0949	1029	1050	1129	1150	1230	1252	1328	1349	1428	1447	1531	1549	1631	1649	1730	1753	1829	1858	1931
Crediton	d	0845	0853	0933	0951	1032	1051	1132	1150	1232	1252	1330	1350	1429	1450	1531	1550	1632	1651	1730	1754	1830	1859	1932
Yeoford	d	·	·	0939x	·	1038x	·	1138x	·	1238x	·	1336x	·	1435x	·	1537x	·	1638x	·	1736x	·	1836x	·	1938x
Okehampton	a	·	0922	·	1019	·	1119	·	1218	·	1320	·	1418	·	1518	·	1618	·	1719	·	1822	·	1927	·
Copplestone	d	·	·	0944	·	1043	·	1143	·	1243	·	1341	·	1440	·	1542	·	1643	·	1741	·	1841	·	1943
Morchard Road	d	·	·	0946x	·	1045x	·	1146x	·	1246x	·	1343x	·	1443x	·	1545x	·	1645x	·	1744x	·	1843x	·	1946x
Lapford	d	·	·	0951x	·	·	·	·	·	1250x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1650x	·	·	·	·	·	·
Eggesford	a	0906	·	1001	·	1057	·	1158	·	1300	·	1355	·	1455	·	1557	·	1700	·	1756	·	1855	·	1958
Eggesford	d	0910	·	1004	·	1104	·	1205	·	1302	·	1402	·	1503	·	1600	·	1702	·	1803	·	1903	·	2002
Kings Nympton	d	·	·	1009x	·	·	·	·	·	1307x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1708x	·	·	·	·	·	·
Portsmouth Arms	d	·	·	1014x	·	·	·	·	·	1312x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1713x	·	·	·	·	·	·
Umberleigh	d	·	·	1020x	·	1118x	·	1219x	·	1318x	·	1416x	·	1517x	·	1613x	·	1718x	·	1817x	·	1917x	·	2016x
Chapelton	d	·	·	1024x	·	·	·	·	·	1322x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1723x	·	·	·	·	·	·
Barnstaple	a	0932	·	1033	·	1128	·	1229	·	1331	·	1426	·	1527	·	1624	·	1732	·	1827	·	1927	·	2026

Exmouth	d	1859	·	1959
Topsham	d	1911	·	2012
Digby & Sowton	d	1917	·	2018
Exeter Central	d	1924	2011	2040
Exeter St Davids ⑥	d	1947	2017	2120
Newton St Cyres	d	·	2024x	·
Crediton	a	1957	2030	2131
Crediton	d	1958	2031	2131
Yeoford	d	·	2037x	·
Okehampton	a	2026	·	2159
Copplestone	d	·	2042	·
Morchard Road	d	·	2045x	·
Lapford	d	·	2049x	·
Eggesford	a	·	2059	·
Eggesford	d	·	2102	·
Kings Nympton	d	·	2107x	·
Portsmouth Arms	d	·	2112x	·
Umberleigh	d	·	2118x	·
Chapelton	d	·	2122x	·
Barnstaple	a	·	2131	·

BARNSTAPLE AND OKEHAMPTON TO EXETER (THE TARKA AND DARTMOOR LINES)

MONDAYS TO FRIDAYS

Notes																				B		
Barnstaple	d	0625	·	0722	·	0835	·	0935	·	1035	·	1135	·	1235	·	1335	·	1435	·	1535	·	1631	·	1733
Chapelton	d	·	·	0727x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1738x
Umberleigh	d	0633x	·	0732x	·	0843x	·	0943x	·	1043x	·	1143x	·	1243x	·	1343x	·	1443x	·	1543x	·	1639x	·	1743x
Portsmouth Arms	d	·	·	0739x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1749x
Kings Nympton	d	·	·	0744x	·	·	·	0953x	·	·	·	·	·	1254x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1650x	·	·
Eggesford	a	0649	·	0753	·	0859	·	1002	·	1059	·	1159	·	1302	·	1359	·	1459	·	1559	·	1658	·	1801
Eggesford	d	0652	·	0754	·	0901	·	1003	·	1100	·	1200	·	1303	·	1400	·	1500	·	1600	·	1703	·	1804
Lapford	d	0657x	·	0800x	·	0906x	·	·	·	1106x	·	·	·	·	·	1406x	·	·	·	1606x	·	·	·	1809x
Morchard Road	d	0701x	·	0804x	·	0910x	·	1011x	·	1110x	·	1208x	·	1311x	·	1410x	·	1508x	·	1610x	·	1711x	·	1814x
Copplestone	d	0704	·	0807	·	0913	·	1015	·	1112	·	1212	·	1315	·	1412	·	1512	·	1612	·	1715	·	1816
Okehampton	d	·	0723	·	0823	·	0925	·	1023	·	1125	·	1225	·	1325	·	1424	·	1523	·	1623	·	1723	·
Yeoford	d	0709x	·	0813x	·	0918x	·	1019x	·	1117x	·	1216x	·	1319x	·	1417x	·	1516x	·	1617x	·	1719x	·	1822x
Crediton	a	0718	0748	0821	0848	0927	0950	1028	1048	1126	1150	1225	1250	1328	1350	1426	1449	1525	1548	1626	1648	1728	1748	1831
Crediton	d	0718	0750	0822	0850	0929	0952	1029	1051	1129	1151	1229	1253	1329	1353	1429	1451	1529	1551	1629	1651	1731	1750	1836
Newton St Cyres	d	·	·	0825x	·	·	0955x	·	1054x	·	·	·	·	·	1356x	·	1455x	·	·	·	1655x	·	·	1839x
Exeter St Davids ⑥	a	0730	0801	0835	0900	0943	1004	1041	1104	1140	1201	1241	1303	1341	1405	1441	1503	1541	1603	1640	1703	1743	1800	1851
Exeter Central	a	0735	0805	0839	0905	0947	1008	1045	1108	1145	1206	1245	1307	1346	1409	1446	1508	1545	1607	1645	1707	1752	1805	1856
Digby & Sowton	a	0757	0829	0859	0928	1003	1028	1100	1127	1200	1227	1300	1327	1400	1427	1500	1527	1600	1628	1702	1728	·	1831	·
Topsham	a	0804	0836	0906	0935	1010	1035	1107	1134	1207	1234	1307	1334	1407	1434	1507	1534	1607	1635	1709	1735	·	1838	·
Exmouth	a	0819	0849	0919	0949	1020	1049	1117	1147	1217	1247	1317	1347	1417	1447	1517	1547	1617	1648	1721	1751	·	1851	·
Train continues to																					AXM			

Notes			C				FX	FO			FX	FO	SM
Barnstaple	d	·	1838	·	1942	·	2041	2041	2141	·	2241	2313	0009
Chapelton	d	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·
Umberleigh	d	·	1846x	·	1950x	·	2049x	2049x	2149x	·	2249x	2321x	·
Portsmouth Arms	d	·	·	·	·	·	2056x	2056x	·	·	·	·	·
Kings Nympton	d	·	1856x	·	·	·	·	·	2200x	·	·	·	·
Eggesford	a	·	1905	·	2006	·	2106	2106	2207	·	2305	2337	0031s
Eggesford	d	·	1906	·	2007	·	2108	2108	2212	·	2306	2340	·
Lapford	d	·	1912x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·
Morchard Road	d	·	1916x	·	2015x	·	2116x	2116x	2220x	·	·	·	·
Copplestone	d	·	1919	·	2019	·	2120	2120	2224	·	2316	2350	·
Okehampton	d	1828	·	1929	·	2028	·	·	·	2217	·	·	·
Yeoford	d	·	1924x	·	2023x	·	2124x	2124x	2228x	·	2320x	2354x	·
Crediton	a	1853	1933	1954	2032	2053	2133	2133	2237	2243	2329	0004	0051s
Crediton	d	1855	1934	1956	2038	2054	2142	2142	2237	2250	2329	0004	·
Newton St Cyres	d	·	·	2000x	2041x	·	2145x	2145x	2240x	·	2332x	0007x	·
Exeter St Davids ⑥	a	1906	1946	2009	2053	2106	2155	2157	2252	2301	2343	0018	0103
Exeter Central	a	1917	1951	2014	·	2123	2228	2202	2309	2343	·	·	·
Digby & Sowton	a	1926	2000	2027	·	2131	2256	2256	·	2352	·	·	·
Topsham	a	1933	2007	2035	·	2138	2303	2303	·	2359	·	·	·
Exmouth	a	1949	2019	2048	·	2151	2315	2315	·	0012	·	·	·
Train continues to					PGN								

SATURDAYS

Barnstaple	d	0009	0631	·	0726	·	0834	·	0935	·	1035	·	1135	·	1232	·	1335	·	1435	·	1535	·	1639	·		
Chapelton	d	·	·	·	0731x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·		
Umberleigh	d	·	0639x	·	0736x	·	0842x	·	0943x	·	1043x	·	1143x	·	1240x	·	1343x	·	1443x	·	1543x	·	1647x	·		
Portsmouth Arms	d	·	·	·	0742x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·		
Kings Nympton	d	·	·	·	0748x	·	0853x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1251x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·		
Eggesford	a	0031s	0655	·	0757	·	0901	·	0959	·	1059	·	1159	·	1259	·	1359	·	1459	·	1559	·	1703	·		
Eggesford	d	·	0656	·	0758	·	0903	·	1003	·	1100	·	1200	·	1303	·	1400	·	1500	·	1600	·	1704	·		
Lapford	d	·	0702x	·	0804x	·	0908x	·	·	·	1106x	·	·	·	·	·	1406x	·	·	·	1606x	·	·	·		
Morchard Road	d	·	0705x	·	0808x	·	0913x	·	1011x	·	1109x	·	1208x	·	1311x	·	1409x	·	1508x	·	1609x	·	1712x	·		
Copplestone	d	·	0709	·	0811	·	0915	·	1015	·	1113	·	1212	·	1315	·	1413	·	1512	·	1613	·	1716	·		
Okehampton	d	·	·	0723	·	0823	·	0923	·	1023	·	1125	·	1225	·	1324	·	1424	·	1523	·	1623	·	1724		
Yeoford	d	·	0713x	·	0816x	·	0921x	·	1019x	·	1117x	·	1216x	·	1319x	·	1417x	·	1516x	·	1617x	·	1720x	·		
Crediton	a	0051s	0723	0748	0825	0848	0930	0948	1028	1048	1127	1150	1225	1250	1328	1349	1427	1449	1525	1548	1627	1648	1729	1749		
Crediton	d	·	0724	0749	0829	0852	0930	0950	1030	1050	1129	1152	1231	1252	1329	1350	1431	1450	1530	1549	1629	1651	1731	1750		
Newton St Cyres	d	·	·	·	0832x	·	·	0953x	·	1053x	·	·	·	·	·	1353x	·	1453x	·	·	·	1654x	·	·		
Exeter St Davids	⑥ a	0103	0736	0759	0844	0903	0942	1003	1041	1103	1139	1205	1241	1302	1339	1402	1441	1501	1542	1559	1644	1704	1742	1801		
Exeter Central	a	·	0740	0804	0852	0907	0954	1007	1046	1107	1144	1209	1246	1306	1344	1406	1446	1506	1554	1604	1655	1708	1746	1805		
Digby & Sowton	a	·	0758	0829	·	0926	·	1029	1101	1129	1201	1230	1301	1332	1401	1429	1501	1531	·	1630	·	1731	1804	1831		
Topsham	a	·	0805	0836	·	0933	·	1036	1108	1136	1208	1237	1308	1339	1408	1436	1508	1538	·	1637	·	1738	1811	1838		
Exmouth	a	·	0820	0851	·	0950	·	1050	1120	1150	1220	1251	1320	1353	1420	1450	1521	1551	·	1651	·	1753	1824	1852		

Barnstaple	d	1736	·	1843	·	1942	·	2040	2140	·	2240
Chapelton	d	1741x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·
Umberleigh	d	1746x	·	1851x	·	1950x	·	2048x	2148x	·	2248x
Portsmouth Arms	d	·	·	1858x	·	·	·	2055x	·	·	·
Kings Nympton	d	1756x	·	1902x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·
Eggesford	a	1805	·	1911	·	2006	·	2105	2204	·	2304
Eggesford	d	1807	·	1912	·	2010	·	2107	2209	·	2305
Lapford	d	1812x	·	1918x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·
Morchard Road	d	1817x	·	1922x	·	2018x	·	2115x	2217x	·	2313x
Copplestone	d	1819	·	1925	·	2022	·	2119	2221	·	2317
Okehampton	d	·	1828	·	1929	·	2028	·	·	2224	·
Yeoford	d	1825x	·	1930x	·	2026x	·	2123x	2224x	·	2320x
Crediton	a	1834	1853	1939	1954	2035	2053	2132	2233	2249	2329
Crediton	d	1836	1856	1946	1955	2038	2054	2139	2235	2250	2330
Newton St Cyres	d	1839x	·	·	1958x	2042x	·	·	2238x	·	2333x
Exeter St Davids	⑥ a	1850	1906	1956	2006	2054	2104	2151	2249	2300	2344
Exeter Central	a	1855	1919	2004	2011	2101	2121	2220	2303	2316	·
Digby & Sowton	a	·	1929	·	2029	·	2130	2229	·	2326	·
Topsham	a	·	1936	·	2036	·	2137	2236	·	2333	·
Exmouth	a	·	1950	·	2050	·	2152	2251	·	2346	·

SUNDAYS

Notes			D																						
Barnstaple	d	·	0936	·	1038	·	1133	·	1236	·	1336	·	1431	·	1532	·	1630	·	1737	·	1832	·	1936	·		
Chapelton	d	·	·	·	·	·	1138x	·	·	·	·	·	1437x	·	·	·	1636x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·		
Umberleigh	d	·	0945x	·	1046x	·	1143x	·	1244x	·	1344x	·	1441x	·	1540x	·	1640x	·	1745x	·	1840x	·	1944x	·		
Portsmouth Arms	d	·	·	·	·	·	1149x	·	·	·	·	·	1447x	·	1547x	·	1646x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·		
Kings Nympton	d	·	·	·	·	·	1154x	·	·	·	·	·	1452x	·	·	·	1651x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·		
Eggesford	a	·	0957	·	1059	·	1200	·	1257	·	1358	·	1459	·	1555	·	1658	·	1759	·	1854	·	2000	·		
Eggesford	d	·	1001	·	1103	·	1203	·	1303	·	1401	·	1502	·	1559	·	1701	·	1802	·	1902	·	2001	·		
Lapford	d	·	1007x	·	·	·	1210x	·	·	·	·	·	1508x	·	·	·	1707x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·		
Morchard Road	d	·	1011x	·	1111x	·	1214x	·	1311x	·	1410x	·	1512x	·	1607x	·	1712x	·	1810x	·	1910x	·	2009x	·		
Copplestone	d	·	1013	·	1114	·	1217	·	1313	·	1414	·	1514	·	1609	·	1713	·	1813	·	1912	·	2013	·		
Okehampton	d	0924	·	1024	·	1124	·	1224	·	1324	·	1424	·	1523	·	1623	·	1724	·	1832	·	1931	·	2030		
Yeoford	d	·	1017x	·	1118x	·	1222x	·	1317x	·	1417x	·	1519x	·	1614x	·	1718x	·	1818x	·	1917x	·	2017x	·		
Crediton	a	0950	1024	1049	1125	1149	1228	1249	1324	1349	1423	1449	1525	1548	1620	1648	1724	1749	1824	1857	1923	1956	2026	2055		
Crediton	d	0951	1028	1050	1129	1150	1232	1252	1328	1350	1427	1453	1530	1549	1631	1649	1729	1753	1829	1858	1930	1957	2029	2056		
Newton St Cyres	d	·	1032x	·	·	·	1236x	·	1332x	1353x	1432x	·	·	·	·	·	1734x	·	·	·	·	·	·	·		
Exeter St Davids	⑥ a	1001	1040	1100	1142	1200	1245	1304	1341	1401	1441	1504	1541	1559	1641	1700	1741	1805	1840	1909	1941	2007	2041	2107		
Exeter Central	a	1006	1049	1105	1146	1205	1249	1309	1347	1405	1446	1508	1546	1604	1646	1705	1746	1819	1845	1928	1947	2028	2055	2128		
Digby & Sowton	a	1025	1055	1127	1203	1229	1302	1327	1400	1427	1501	1529	1600	1628	1701	1729	1803	1828	1904	·	2004	·	2104	·		
Topsham	a	1032	1102	1134	1210	1236	1309	1334	1407	1434	1508	1536	1607	1635	1708	1736	1810	1835	1911	·	2011	·	2111	·		
Exmouth	a	1047	1116	1150	1220	1251	1319	1350	1420	1450	1519	1550	1617	1650	1719	1750	1820	1850	1924	·	2024	·	2126	·		

Barnstaple	d	2036	·	2136
Chapelton	d	·	·	2141x
Umberleigh	d	2044x	·	2146x
Portsmouth Arms	d	·	·	2152x
Kings Nympton	d	·	·	2158x
Eggesford	a	2100	·	2207
Eggesford	d	2103	·	2208
Lapford	d	·	·	2214x
Morchard Road	d	2111x	·	2218x
Copplestone	d	2115	·	2221
Okehampton	d	·	2203	·
Yeoford	d	2119x	·	2226x
Crediton	a	2128	2228	2235
Crediton	d	2132	2229	2238
Newton St Cyres	d	2136x	·	2242x
Exeter St Davids	⑥ a	2145	2240	2250
Exeter Central	a	2156	·	2301
Digby & Sowton	a	2205	·	2311
Topsham	a	2212	·	2318
Exmouth	a	2226	·	2330

Annex D

Extract from Tavistock SOBC on the Development Consent Order Process

6.4 STATUTORY PROCESSES

Primary Consent Routes

6.4.1. At a high level the Primary Consent Route would provide the project with the powers to:

- Construct, operate and maintain an operational railway;
- Amendments to, or exclusion of, other legislation;
- provide powers to compulsorily acquire land and rights for the benefit of the proposed scheme; and
- may include a request for the required planning permission (referred to as deemed planning permission).

6.4.2. There are two potential Primary Consent Routes.

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project - Development Consent Order

6.4.3. To be considered a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) where a Development Consent Order (DCO) would be the necessary Primary Consent Route, the proposed scheme would need to meet the qualification criteria as set out in Section 25 (1) of the Planning Act 2008.

Table 6-3 – Qualification Criteria of S25 (1) of the Planning Act 2008

S25(1)	… consists of the construction of a railway.	✓
S25(1) (a)	… is wholly in England	✓
S25(1) (b)	… will be part of a network operated by an approved operator	✓ - the railway would be assumed to become part of Network Rails national railway network
S25(1) (ba) (i)	… includes a stretch of track that is a continuous length of at least 2 km.	✓ - noted to be 8.3km
S25(1) (ba) (ii)	… is not on land that was operational land of a railway undertaker immediately before the construction work began or is on land that was acquired at an earlier date for the purpose of constructing the railway.	✓- It is understood that the land is not operational railway and is not held by a railway undertaker so meets this element of the criteria. ? - Devon County Council has purchased a number of land parcels with some earlier

		agreements being for the purpose of constructing a cycleway and latter agreements broadening the purpose to also include a railway. Further consideration should be given to the existing land position with full detail of freehold and any rights remaining relating to the surface or subsoil land referenced.

6.4.4. The DCO is single document that provides a composite authorisation for a project, which in effect grants planning consent, compulsory purchase powers (if required) and other statutory consents to enable it to proceed such as rights to discharge water or the stopping up and diversion of highways and public rights of ways. It is granted following an extensive pre-application consultation process followed by an examination of the application which is conducted by the Planning Inspectorate.

6.4.5. It is considered that the proposed scheme may be considered a NSIP for the purposes of the Planning Act 2008 Act and so a DCO is the likely Primary Consent Route for the proposed scheme. A precedent for this would be the Portishead Branch Line (MetroWest Phase 1) DCO where North Somerset District Council applied for a DCO for the construction of a new railway line in an area of disused track bed. The Planning Inspectorate agreed that the scheme was an NSIP and so the DCO route was followed. However the principle of the proposed scheme must also be contained within the relevant National Policy Statement (NPS) and so this should be given further consideration.

Transport and Works Act Order

6.4.6. If the DCO route was not considered applicable (not fully meeting the qualification criteria set out in Section 25 (1) or its principle not being contained within the relevant NPS) the proposed scheme could consider a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) via the Transport and Works Act 1992.

6.4.7. There are no qualification criteria for a TWAO and it is the standard route for new transport infrastructure projects, such as railways, tramways and other guided transport systems.

6.4.8. A similar range of powers to a DCO as well as the ability to request deemed planning permission can be provided by this route.

6.4.9. The TWAO route when compared to a DCO is less prescribed, more flexible and less intensive. A TWAO potentially offers greater flexibility in accommodating design change and experience suggests that there is less pressure to commit to design detail early on than under the DCO route.

6.4.10. The overall timelines for a TWAO and a DCO are considered similar – (experience suggest 33 to 34 months in total). It is advised that advice from a parliamentary agent is sought on the final Primary Consent Route at an early stage as the DCO route has a more front-loaded design, environmental assessment and application process with greater emphasis on early consultation with prescribed bodies.

6.4.11. A high-level comparison of the different routes is provided in Table 6-4 below.

Table 6-4 – Comparison of Consenting Routes

	DCO	TWAO
Public Consultation	Pre-application consultation with local communities and local authorities is a statutory requirement. Applicants are required to: • produce a Statement of Community Consultation; • carryout iterative phase consultation, and prepare a Consultation Report.	The nature of pre-application consultation is not prescribed. In practice it is advised to mirror the DCO consultation requirements should the DCO route be required at a later stage.
Information requirements	The principle of the development should be contained in National Policy Statement (NPS). Applicants are required to submit Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI) prior to submission of the DCO (this may be a draft of the ES) – this can lead to design change.	The principle of the development needs to be demonstrated. Only a draft of the Order is submitted 28 days prior to the submission of the TWAO.
Examination	Multiple rounds of written representations and 'hearings', which are inquisitorial examinations of topics led by the Examining Authority. The examination stage is completed in 6 months.	Written representations and an intense period of public inquiry where proofs of evidence are presented and expert witnesses cross examined. This can last up to 3 months from experience
Flexibility	Parameters/'limits of deviation' may be used as a practical way to address uncertainty and provide flexibility. Research suggests there has been an increase in the level of detailed information requested during examination. Formal procedures for non-material and material amendments.	Authorises development within 'limits of deviation', offering a degree of flexibility and can include options. Potentially offers greater flexibility in accommodating design change and experience suggests that there is less pressure to commit to design detail early on.
Timescales	The process from start of examination to a decision being issued should be completed within 12 months. However, this is being stretched; decisions on A303 Stonehenge, Wylfa nuclear power station, A63 delayed. Average time for determination of a DCO Non Material Amendment is 5-6 months and up to 8 months if examination is required for agreeing Material Amendments.	No fixed statutory decision timescale. However the timelines for a TWAO and a DCO, from experience, are generally considered similar e.g. approximately 31 months.

Annex E

Leaflet for Inaugural Meeting of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance

Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance

To secure a new rail link between Bideford and Barnstaple and upgrade of the North Devon (Tarka) Line between Exeter and Barnstaple, championing their transformational benefits for communities and businesses and advocating to decision-makers the economic, social and environmental case for developing and investing in the project.

Participants invited to inaugural event on Friday 1st March 2024 in Bideford, Torridge, Devon
Sponsored by Bideford and Barnstaple Town Councils, Tarka Rail Association and Railfuture

Barnstaple Town Council - Mayor of Barnstaple – Cllr Louisa York
Barnstaple Town Council - Town Clerk – Rob Ward
Bideford Town Council - Mayor of Bideford – Cllr Jamie McKenzie
Bideford Town Council - Town Clerk – Paul Swan

Devon County Council - Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport – Cllr Andrea Davis
Devon County Council - Deputy Director for Planning – Jamie Hulland

Great Western Railway - Managing Director – Mark Hopwood CBE
Great Western Railway - Business Development Portfolio Director – Tom Pierpoint
Great Western Railway - Head of Strategic Service Development – Matt Barnes
Great Western Railway - Regional Growth Manager (West) – David Whiteway

Harland & Wolff - General Manager, Appledore – Tom Hart

MP for Torridge & West Devon – Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Cox KC
MP for North Devon – Selaine Saxby
MP for Central Devon – Rt Hon Mel Stride
MP for North Cornwall – Scott Mann

Network Rail - Western Route Director – Marcus Jones
Network Rail - Western Route Business Manager – Victoria Storey
Network Rail - Devon and Cornwall Director – Chris Fuoco
Network Rail - Industry Programme Director – Bogdan Lupu
Network Rail - Restoring Your Railway Programme Director – Mike Smith
Northam Town Council - Mayor of Northam – Cllr Peter Hames
Northam Town Council - Town Clerk – Jane Mills
North Devon District Council - Chair of North Devon DC – Cllr Julie Hunt
North Devon District Council - Leader of North Devon DC – Cllr Ian Roome
North Devon District Council - Chief Exec – Ken Miles
North Devon District Council - Head of Place Property & Regeneration – Sarah Jane Mackenzie-Shapland

Petroc College - Vice Principal Finance, Resources & Regional Affairs – Bill Blythe

Railfuture - Policy Director and Devon & Cornwall liaison – Ian Brown CBE
Railfuture - Infrastructure & Networks Director – Roger Blake

South West Business Council - Tim Jones – Chairman
South West Business Council - Paul Coles – Chief Executive; also newly-appointed Chair of Torridge Place Board

Tarka Rail Association - Chair – Mike Day
Tarka Rail Association - co-Vice Chair and ACE Rail project campaign lead – Tim Steer
Tarka Rail Association - co-Vice Chair – David Northey
Tarka Rail Association - Vice-President – Peter West OBE
Torridge District Council - Chair of Torridge DC – Cllr Doug Bushby
Torridge District Council - Leader of Torridge DC – Cllr Ken James
Torridge District Council - Chief Exec – Steve Hearse
Torridge District Council - Head of Communities & Place – Sean Kearney

Lewis Clarke – South West region reporter, Reach

Paul Crockett - Managing Director, The Voice FM

Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance

To secure a new rail link between Bideford and Barnstaple and upgrade of the North Devon (Tarka) Line between Exeter and Barnstaple, championing their transformational benefits for communities and businesses and advocating to decision-makers the economic, social and environmental case for developing and investing in the project.

Inaugural event on Friday 1st March 2024 – in Bideford, Torridge, Devon.

Minute of the **Bideford Town Council** Decarbonisation and Environment Committee meeting on 8 February 2022:
29. ACE RAILWAY – ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FUNDING SUPPORT
RECOMMENDED that: £3,000.00 is provided from the Climate Change budget to support the Environmental aspect of the Economic Report and the benefits to the decarbonisation of Bideford. (approved at Town Council meeting on 3 March 2022).

Minute of the **North Devon District Council** Strategy and Resources Committee on 4 April 2022:
127. Reinstatement of Bideford to Barnstaple Rail Link. RESOLVED that motion to support the re-instatement of Bideford to Barnstaple rail link for passenger and other services, as proposed by ACE Rail be supported and the Council agrees:
(a) That the inclusion of this policy aim within the revised joint local plan be referred to the Joint Planning Policy Committee for consideration;
(b) To work with partners and organisations to explore this idea and where necessary to lobby those who may contribute to making this happen including Great British Railways, Devon County Council, Peninsula Transport, and the Government.

Minute of the **Torridge District Council** meeting on 13 June 2022:
Minute 12a Written Notice of Motion. That TDC, following on from the presentation made at the last Full council meeting, do support the extension of the railway line from Barnstaple to Bideford and that this aspiration is embedded in the new Joint Local Plan. Extension of the railway line from Barnstaple to Bideford also be embedded in the Economic Development Business Plan.

Minute of the **Joint Planning Policy Committee of North Devon and Torridge District Councils** on 15 July 2022:
16. Reinstatement of Bideford to Barnstaple Rail Link. RESOLVED that the Bideford to Barnstaple rail link is considered as part of the People and Place project (the revised joint Local Plan).

Minute of the **Bideford Town Council** meeting on Thursday 7 December 2023:
98. NOTICE OF MOTION. That this Council joins the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance as a founding member. Bideford Town Council recognises the importance of multiple transport links to the rest of the country and aims to see Bideford reconnected to the national rail network for the benefit of the local economy and community as soon as practically possible.
This Council therefore Resolves (extract)
a. To join the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance as a founding member.
b. To call on other public bodies, voluntary and business stakeholders and others to take an active role in the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance.
c. Support ACE Rail 'Reconnection 2040' to see Bideford fully reconnected to the national rail network by 2040.

Minute of the **Torridge District Council** meeting on Monday 11 December 2023:
214. Draft Strategic Plan 2024-29. Under the 'Local Economy' theme, 'Actions by us and in partnership' now includes:
"Investigate with the relevant partner organisations (North Devon Council, DCC, ACE Rail and Network Rail) the appetite to jointly commission and fund a study to evaluate the economic and environmental benefits and impacts of re-establishing the rail link."

Draft Minute of the **Barnstaple Town Council** meeting on 22 January 2024:
107. The Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance is promoting a rail link between Bideford and Barnstaple. This council believes that such a link contributes to a sustainable transport strategy for the northern Devon area.
This Council therefore RESOLVES (extract):
1) To join the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance as a founding Member
2) To call on other public bodies, voluntary and business stakeholders and others to support sustainable transport options for northern Devon and to take an active role in the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance
3) To support an integrated sustainable transport strategy for northern Devon, including proposals to see Bideford fully reconnected to the national rail network, by 2040.

Draft Minute of the **Torridge District Council** meeting on 22 January 2024:
231. Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan 2024/25. Resolved: That the revised Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan priorities for 2024 – 2025 intervention themes for delivery be approved.
Economic Development Manager's report: Proposed increases / changes for 2024 / 2025 –
E31: Feasibility studies (3) including "Bideford railway study (to work alongside other key stakeholders)" - £105,000 revenue.

Annex F

Copy of Article from *The Herald* About the Borders Railway

Borders Railway breathing new life into local economies

31st August 2018

BUSINESS

TRANSPORT

Tweedbank to Edinburgh takes under an hour, with a service every 30 minutes

More businesses are being encouraged to start, relocate and expand in the Scottish Borders, Midlothian and Edinburgh, where the Borders Railway is breathing new life into local economies.

It's nearly three years since the line opened, and already independent research has shown that the route is a major factor in attracting residents, workers and tourists.

However, the work to stimulate business growth in the area continues, with the Borders Railway Blueprint Group's 'More Connected' campaign highlighting the many opportunities in the line's catchment for new and expanding enterprises.

Led by public sector agencies, and working with the private sector, the Blueprint group is aiming to maximise the economic and social benefits of the railway.

For example, the line has connected to Edinburgh city centre with significant new developments including the new town of Shawfair, which will have 4,000 homes, new schools, community facilities and a new town centre beside the existing Shawfair railway station. And towards the southern end of the line, there is to be a permanent home for the Great Tapestry of Scotland in Galashiels, which is expected to create a property and tourism boost in the area.

Danny Cusick, chairman of the Borders Railway Blueprint Leaders Group, said: "I'm confident we can convince more businesses to relocate and expand. The railway is bringing economic, social and environmental benefits across the region but there is much more potential to attract investment, create jobs, and make it easier for people to grow or locate businesses in the area.

"But new and growing businesses need great support. The area has a thriving entrepreneurial spirit, four outstanding universities and fantastic support for start-ups, entrepreneurs and small businesses. The catchment also offers excellent links to support networks including Scottish Enterprise, European assistance, and Business Gateway – helping businesses to get set up, as well as providing access to training."

The route is a major factor in attracting residents, workers and tourists

A number of business are making the most of the Borders Railway. Andy Drane, partner at Edinburgh-based legal firm Davidson Chalmers, is one of them. He said: "With so many SMEs in the Scottish Borders and so much potential for growth, the decision to open in the region was easy once we knew that the line was opening. As well as being better-able to service our existing clients and saving travel time for our staff, we have been instructed by several other Borders-based businesses who would not otherwise have chosen us if we hadn't had a presence.

"For those staff who live locally it has been a real boon in terms of significantly enhancing the journey experience into Edinburgh and further afield. For instance, the lead partner working from the office will routinely travel to other parts of Scotland including to the Central Belt and the Highlands by train, whereas before he would have driven.

"We are still measuring the precise impact on fee income but anecdotally it looks like fee income from Borders based clients has doubled over the period since the railway opened. Much of that is related directly or indirectly to the opening of the local office which in turn only opened because of the new railway."

Shawfair will have 4,000 homes, new schools, community facilities and a new town centre

Six reasons to start, relocate and expand in the Borders, Midlothian and Edinburgh:

- New markets – you can travel from Tweedbank to Edinburgh in under an hour every 30 minutes. Superfast broadband connection makes flexible working and online conferencing easy.
- Talent – there is a highly educated and skilled workforce - more than 40 per cent of people who live in the region are university education.
- Competitive Advantage – the average commercial and housing costs are very favourable compared to other areas.
- Growth sectors – the railway catchment is home to industry hubs in many thriving sectors, from financial services to life sciences and food and drink.
- Work/life balance – working and living in Midlothian and the Scottish Borders means less time commuting. More affordable house and office prices and fantastic schools and facilities are just a stone's throw from the buzz of Edinburgh.
- Scotland and beyond – the railway connects businesses to Edinburgh's Waverley and Haymarket stations, with onward destinations to the rest of Scotland and high speed links to London. A journey from Galashiels into Kings Cross could take as little as six hours.

Fast facts

- 71% of tourists chose to visit the region as a result of the railway line
- 25% of tourists said they would not have made the trip had the line not been in place
- 17% of people have moved house since the re-opening of the line with 58% saying the reopening of the line was a factor in their decision
- 29% of people who moved house said that they would not have moved to their current address in the absence of the railway
- 52% of people who have moved employment said the re-opening of the line had been a factor in their decision

The Great Tapestry of Scotland will have a permanent home in the Borders

Listen to a number of business owners who have gained from investment in the new line.

- John Mackenzie, Chief Executive Officer of the Roslin Innovation Centre explains why Midlothian is a great place to base your business. http://www.bordersrailway.co.uk/case-studies/roslin-innovation-centre/
- Lynn Mann, owner of SuperNature Oils says the railway was significant in helping to establish and grow her business. http://www.bordersrailway.co.uk/case-studies/supernature-oils/
- Giles Etherington, owner of Brand Satellite, a brand consultancy based in Melrose, says the line has made it easy to travel for business meetings, with the added bonus that work can be done on the train. http://www.bordersrailway.co.uk/case-studies/brand-satellite/
- John Hawkins of Spark Energy, a small start-up company in 2007 has grown to be one of the largest employers in the Borders with over 300 staff after moving to Selkirk from Edinburgh in 2008. http://www.bordersrailway.co.uk/case-studies/spark-energy/
- Husband and wife team Annika and Gavin Meiklejohn of craft beer brand Tempest Brewing Co said being a six minute walk from Tweedbank Station has helped them to attract staff from the Central Belt that wouldn't have considered the company previously due to its location. http://www.bordersrailway.co.uk/case-studies/tempest-brewing-co/

If you want to talk to someone about starting, expanding or relocating to the Scottish Borders or Midlothian contact: Stuart Kinross, Economic Development Officer, E: stuart.kinross@scotborders.gov.uk, T: 01835 826505.

Annex G

Letters of Support Read Out at the Inaugural Meeting of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Cox KC MP, Torridge and West Devon

Firstly, I'd like to thank all of you in this organisation. You are embarking on a very worthwhile cause. It is to my regret that existing diary commitments prohibit me from attending, as I otherwise would have done.

I support the reopening of rail communications to Torridge and West Devon wherever possible. Last year, I held an extremely informative and constructive meeting with GWR at the old Bideford Station who advised me the extension was at the top of their list of achievable projects in the South-West.

There is substantial support in Torridge for exploring the viability and economic case for this important railway connection to Barnstaple. Housing and population growth are likely to require improved communication links in the future. Such a link would no doubt require the upgrading of the line between Barnstaple and Exeter, and that too would have incalculable benefits for Torridge.

In West Devon, the Government has recently announced that it will “fund to delivery” the Tavistock to Bere Alston railway line. I wish to see a similar success in the Torridge part of this constituency.

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Cox KC MP, Torridge and West Devon 01.03.2024

Selaine Saxby MP, North Devon

My apologies for not being with you today, but I wholeheartedly support the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance’s ambition to restore the rail link between Bideford and Barnstaple, and to upgrade the existing Tarka Line between Barnstaple and Exeter.

As many of you in the local area will have seen recently following the Cedars Roundabout traffic disruption, commuting via the roads in North Devon can sometimes be difficult and frustrating.

In the summer seasons especially, the roads around North Devon and Torridge can become gridlocked from an influx of tourists coming to enjoy our beautiful beaches and countryside. Whilst we welcome and appreciate tourists and the benefits they bring to our economy, our roads often bear the brunt with an uplift in traffic that can be difficult to manage for everyone.

Therefore, the proposal to re-establish the old railway line between Barnstaple and Bideford, although not necessarily a replica of the former route, would be a huge advantage for locals and tourists alike. Providing visitors with an ease of access between the two would both encourage more tourists to come here by train, reducing the number of cars on the roads and therefore making daily commutes less stressful and erratic for locals. Students and workers will also have increased opportunities to travel safely to additional learning or employment centres, allowing more people to get involved in projects for their own personal or professional development. Improved access and reduced road traffic will reflect positively on the economic prosperity of both Barnstaple, Bideford and the wider region.

Re-establishing this rail link will be the next natural progression on upgrading the Tarka Line, increasing the number of trains and carriages particularly for the early morning journeys. Exeter, our nearest City is never getting physically closer and serves as the gateway to the national rail network with easy links to places like Bath and London, and with its own renowned universities and research centres in the city centre. An upgraded line would therefore enable students and workers to commute daily or travel beyond with greater ease and efficiency. Equally important is the likely positive effect improved access will have on the local economy. It may even encourage young professionals into Barnstaple and the surrounding area, which could serve to alleviate some of the difficulties my constituents are facing from the lack of workforce in critical industries such as dentistry and social care. Indeed, a dental practice cited concerns from prospective employees about the lack of public transport infrastructure as a reason they could not recruit.

In that regard, enhancing and extending our rail network couldn't be a more important step in our ambition to level up North Devon and enhance the Taw and Torridge economic area. I therefore offer the Alliance my full support on their ambition.

Selaine Saxby MP, North Devon 01.03.2024

Andrea Davis, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport, Devon County Council

My sincere apologies for not being with you today, previous diary commitments preclude me from being with you in person. I am however very much with you in spirit.

Devon County Council and Peninsula Transport are committed to decarbonising the transport system, improving connectivity and giving genuine transport choice for our residents, visitors and businesses.

In Devon we have a track record for re-opening rail links, opening stations and integrating transport modes. Improving connectivity for residents in Northern Devon, supporting new development with transport infrastructure and creating healthy, connected communities for the future is key to our future wellbeing and prosperity.

We thank you for the work done so far and look forward to working with you in the future.

Andrea Davis, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport, Devon County Council
01.03.2024

Annex H

Illustrative Timetable Bideford and Barnstaple to Exeter Based on Extended Current GWR Barnstaple Timetable (Intermediate stations Barnstaple-Exeter and connections omitted for clarity)

Illustrative Timetable Bideford and Barnstaple to Exeter Based on Extended Current GWR Barnstaple Timetable (Intermediate Stations Barnstaple-Exeter Omitted for Clarity)

BIDEFORD AND BARNSTAPLE TO EXETER																				
Notes																	FX	FO		FX
MONDAYS TO FRIDAYS	Bideford	d	0609	0706	0819	0919	1019	1119	1219	1319	1419	1519	1615	1717	1822	1926	2025	2025	2125	2215
	Instow	d	0613	0710	0823	0923	1023	1123	1223	1323	1423	1523	1619	1721	1826	1930	2029	2029	2129	2229
	Barnstaple	a	0624	0721	0834	0934	1034	1134	1234	1334	1434	1534	1630	1732	1837	1941	2040	2040	2140	2240
	Barnstaple	d	0625	0722	0835	0935	1035	1135	1235	1335	1435	1535	1631	1733	1838	1942	2041	2041	2141	2241
	Exeter St Davids	a	0730	0835	0943	1041	1140	1241	1341	1441	1541	1640	1743	1851	1946	2053	2155	2157	2251	2243
	Exeter Central	a	0735	0839	0947	1045	1145	1245	1346	1446	1545	1645	1752	1856	1951	PGN	-	2202	-	-
				FX	FO	SM							AXM		EXM					
	Bideford	d	2125	2225	2258	2352														
	Instow	d	2129	2229	2302	2356														
	Barnstaple	a	2140	2240	2312	0007														
	Barnstaple	d	2141	2241	2313	0009														
	Exeter St Davids	a	2252	2343	0018	0103														
	Exeter Central	a	-	-	-	-														

BIDEFORD AND BARNSTAPLE TO EXETER																				
Notes																				
SATURDAYS	Bideford	d	2352	0615	0710	0818	0919	1019	1119	1216	1319	1419	1519	1723	1720	1817	1926	2024	2124	2224
	Instow	d	2356	0619	0714	0822	0923	1023	1123	1220	1323	1423	1523	1727	1724	1831	1930	2028	2128	2228
	Barnstaple	a	0007	0630	0725	0833	0934	1034	1134	1231	1334	1434	1534	1738	1735	1842	1941	2039	2139	2239
	Barnstaple	d	0009	0631	0726	0834	0935	1035	1135	1232	1335	1435	1535	1639	1736	1843	1942	2040	2140	2240
	Exeter St Davids	a	0103	0736	0844	0942	1041	1139	1241	1339	1441	1542	1644	1742	1850	1956	2054	2151	2249	2344
	Exeter Central	a	-	0740	0852	0954	1046	1144	1246	1344	1446	1554	1655	1746	1855	2004	2101	-	-	-

BIDEFORD AND BARNSTAPLE TO EXETER																				
Notes																				
SUNDAYS	Bideford	d	0920	1020	1117	1220	1320	1415	1516	1614	1721	1816	1920	2020	2120					
	Instow	d	0924	1024	1121	1224	1324	1419	1520	1618	1725	1820	1924	2024	2124					
	Barnstaple	a	0935	1035	1132	1235	1335	1430	1531	1629	1736	1831	1935	2035	2135					
	Barnstaple	d	0936	1038	1133	1236	1336	1431	1532	1630	1737	1832	1936	2036	2136					
	Exeter St Davids	a	1045	1142	1245	1341	1441	1541	1641	1741	1840	1941	2041	2145	2250					
	Exeter Central	a	1051	1146	1249	1347	1446	1546	1646	1746	1845	1947	-	-	-					

EXETER TO BARNSTAPLE AND BIDEFORD																				
Notes																			EXM	FO
MONDAYS TO FRIDAYS	Exeter Central	d	-	-	-	0804	0914	1014	1114	1214	1312	1414	1514	1613	1715	1815	1917	2019	2122	2250
	Exeter St Davids	d	0522	0612	0707	0810	0919	1019	1119	1219	1319	1419	1519	1618	1719	1821	1922	2023	2127	2255
	Barnstaple	a	0619	0717	0825	0928	1029	1125	1225	1329	1427	1525	1626	1728	1833	1931	2032	2133	2237	0006
	Barnstaple	d	0622	0720	0828	0931	1033	1128	1228	1332	1430	1528	1629	1731	1836	1934	2035	2136	2240	0009
	Instow	a	0633	0731	0839	0942	1044	1139	1239	1343	1441	1539	1640	1742	1847	1945	2046	2147	2251	0020
	Bideford	a	0637	0735	0843	0946	1047	1143	1243	1347	1445	1543	1644	1746	1851	1949	2050	2151	2255	0024

EXETER TO BARNSTAPLE AND BIDEFORD																				
Notes																				
SATURDAYS	Exeter Central	d	-	-	-	0813	0915	1014	1114	1214	1313	1414	1514	1614	1714	1818	1917	2019	2120	
	Exeter St Davids	d	0524	0616	0710	0818	0921	1019	1119	1219	1319	1419	1520	1619	1720	1824	1922	2024	2124	
	Barnstaple	a	0628	0723	0830	0931	1027	1126	1226	1327	1429	1526	1626	1732	1839	1938	2034	2133	2235	
	Barnstaple	d	0631	0726	0833	0934	1030	1129	1229	1330	1432	1529	1629	1735	1842	1941	2037	2136	2238	
	Instow	a	0642	0737	0844	0945	1041	1140	1240	1341	1443	1540	1640	1746	1853	1952	2048	2147	2249	
	Bideford	a	0646	0741	0848	0949	1045	1144	1244	1345	1447	1544	1644	1750	1857	1956	2052	2151	2233	

EXETER TO BARNSTAPLE AND BIDEFORD																				
Notes																				
SUNDAYS	Exeter Central	d	-	0912	1016	1114	1214	1314	1414	1514	1611	1714	1814	1914	2011					
	Exeter St Davids	d	0834	0920	1018	1119	1219	1319	1419	1522	1619	1720	1819	1919	2017					
	Barnstaple	a	0932	1033	1128	1229	1331	1426	1527	1624	1732	1827	1927	2026	2131					
	Barnstaple	d	0935	1036	1131	1232	1334	1429	1530	1627	1735	1830	1930	2029	2134					
	Instow	a	0946	1047	1142	1243	1345	1440	1541	1638	1746	1841	1941	2040	2145					
	Bideford	a	0950	1051	1146	1247	1349	1444	1545	1642	1750	1845	1945	2044	2149					

Annex I

Milestone dates for the Northumberland Line:[241]

- Autumn 2019 – Public consultation.
- November / December 2020 – Public consultation period.
- January 2021 – £34 million awarded from DfT.
- January 2021 – January 2022 - Planning applications submitted.
- January 2021 – Network Rail early enabling works start on site.
- May 2021 – Application for Transport and Works Act Order submitted to Secretary of State.
- June 2021 - Chase Meadows footbridge approved at Planning Committee.
- August 2021 – Morgan Sindall appointed as Stations contractor.
- September 2021 - Northumberland Park station approved at Planning Committee.
- November 2021 - Seaton Delaval station approved at Planning Committee.
- November 2021 - Bedlington station approved at Planning Committee.
- November 2021 – Transport and Works Act Order Inquiry held in Blyth.
- December 2021 – Network Rail early enabling works complete.
- September 2022 - Ashington station approved at Planning Committee.
- January 2022 - Blyth Bebside station approved at Planning Committee.
- January 2022 – Palmersville Dairy station underpass approved at Planning Committee.
- March 2022 - Newsham station approved at Planning Committee.
- June 2022 - Secretary of State approved the Northumberland Line Transport and Works Act Order.
- June 2022 - Transport and Works Act Order challenge period begins.
- Summer 2022 - Construction on stations begins subject to Transport and Works Act Order and other planning approvals being secured.
- August 2022 - Transport and Works Act Order challenge period
- March 2023 - Secretary of State announcement on line opening
- June 2023 - Palmersville Dairy Underpass installed
- July 2023 - Track works to install new points at Ashington completed & Hospital foot crossing closed
- August 2023 - Track renewals at Bedlington completed, including the return of Furnace Way sidings
- September 2023 - Community Rail Partnership event held in Blyth
- November 2023 - Footbridge & Road Bridge installed at Newsham
- January 2024 - New level crossing equipment installed at Bedlington & crane installed at Northumberland Park
- January 2024 - Phased approach to opening announced with stations at Ashington, Newsham & Seaton Delaval opening in Summer 2024
- February 2024 - Northumberland Line branded buses launched on 434 route
- March 2024 - Rail Minister visits the Northumberland Line
- March 2024 - Community Rail Partnership event held in Ashington
- March 2024 - Integrated fares with Tyne & Wear Metro announced
- April 2024 - Track renewals at Bedlington North & digital signalling installed from Bedlington to Ashington
- December 2024 – Current expected start of passenger services

[241] https://www.northumberlandline.uk/background

Annex J

Management Arrangements for the Tavistock Line Reopening

- "The Project Board, acting as the Senior Stakeholder Forum, meeting on a regular basis will provide strategic direction and oversight in the development of the project. Key roles and responsibilities of the Project Board are listed below:
  - Champion the [scheme to reinstate train services to Bideford] ~~Tavistock Line reopening scheme~~, its delivery and reporting to respective corporate management teams and elected members to ensure corporate support and buy-in;
  - Facilitate and promote joined up delivery and to engage with and secure support at a strategic level from key stakeholders and partners;
  - Endorse the overall direction of the project whilst working within the framework of Restoring your Railway principles;
  - Provide a point of escalation for the Steering Group should this be needed for matters outside the railway boundary;
  - Make decisions/recommendations on strategic issues and resolve showstoppers; and
  - Provide 'upwards' high-level liaison with Government bodies.
- The Steering Group will be the forum where formal decisions are made, providing promoter/cross industry leadership and oversight for the development and delivery of the [scheme to reinstate train services to Bideford] ~~reopening of the Tavistock to Plymouth Line~~. The Steering Group will implement the Project Plan and focus on the day-to-day project management of the continuing development of the PACE objectives and drive forward the project. The Steering Group will identify and oversee the project working groups. To do so effectively is likely to require regular meetings to generate and maintain momentum in the project. The Steering Group will report to the Project Board (Senior Stakeholder Forum). Key roles and responsibilities are listed below:
  - Oversee the project development (including the work undertaken by either consultants or contractors) up to the end of PACE 2 and the enabling elements of PACE 3. This work will include areas of project development such as resourcing, programme and budget;
  - Review and monitor the project progress against the milestones agreed with DfT;
  - Review and monitor project cost against forecast and authorise change control in line with proposed change control process;
  - Review and monitor the land strategy plan and progress to programme;
  - Provide a forum for discussion of any material input from any of the stakeholders, for example related to land use planning, transportation, rail industry standards, etc;
  - Review and monitor risk and opportunities and detail where support may be needed to support scheme progress;
  - Provide co-ordination of input from partner organisations and draw in technical expertise as required.

The Project will be delivered in partnership between Devon County Council, Network Rail and GWR. In line with similar schemes in Devon, the project will adopt a 'one team' approach for delivery. It is anticipated that Devon County Council will be the main scheme promoters up to the end of PACE 1 (previously GRIP3). At this point, the Decision to Design[242], it is assumed that Network Rail will take over the scheme as main Project Sponsor, with support from Devon County Council on the highways and cycle infrastructure delivery, and GWR on the station operation and rail service arrangements."

[242] In the business case stages described in this document, effectively at Outline Business Case stage.

Annex K

Department for Transport: *Dartmoor Line Early Impact Evaluation*: Executive Summary

"An early impact evaluation has been undertaken of the Dartmoor Line which reopened in 2021 and was the first scheme to be delivered through the Restoring Your Railway (RYR) programme. The objective of the evaluation has been to identify, and where possible quantify, the early consequential changes of the reopening of the Line. Assessment of the extent to which the Line has delivered benefits for transport users has been the focus of the evaluation, but socio-economic benefits to the local area have also been considered.

The evaluation findings have been informed by multiple research methods and data sources to develop a comprehensive picture of the early impacts of the Line's reopening. This has involved primary data collection in autumn 2023 (on-train surveys, residents' surveys, and interviews with stakeholders and local businesses) and analysis of secondary data sources including rail and bus demand data, and traffic counts.

The evaluation has identified evidence of a range of positive impacts of the Dartmoor Line for transport users, local residents and businesses:

- The majority of local residents and rail users perceive the Line to have improved connectivity between Okehampton, Crediton and Exeter for a range of journey purposes, particularly for leisure activities.
- Door-to-door public transport journey times between Okehampton, Crediton and Exeter have reduced due to the Line. The journey time saving between Okehampton and Exeter by rail compared to bus is up to 10 minutes for large parts of the Okehampton area, with areas close to Okehampton station benefitting by up to 40 minutes.
- The Line has increased accessibility of public transport with over 10,000 people in the Okehampton area now within a 20-minute walk of a railway station.
- A majority rail users (81%) and residents (67%) surveyed report that they now travel by rail more frequently. There are also high levels of passenger satisfaction with the Line with over nine in ten rail users and residents rating it as 'good' or 'very good'.
- There is evidence of modal shift with a reported reduction in the frequency of use of car since the Line reopened with up to half of survey respondents reporting they now use car less. Local bus demand has decreased which may be related to passengers now using the Line instead of bus, however, this evaluation was not able to control for other potential factors affecting this reduction.
- There is evidence that the Line has positively affected tourism in the Okehampton area, potentially benefitting the local economy via an increase in patronage of retail and Executive Summary Dartmoor Line Evaluation 8 hospitality businesses. Over 80% of survey respondents reported a positive impact of the Line reopening on tourism.
- Access to employment and education in Exeter for Okehampton residents has been improved by the Line by enabling faster and more affordable journeys. This includes Exeter College which offers a wider range of A-level courses than local institutions. The evaluation also finds evidence of potential negative impacts:
- The Line may be one of the reasons for the observed reduction in bus demand between Okehampton and Exeter, which has led to a marginal reduction in off-peak service frequency. However, it has not been possible to separate this from wider COVID-19 impacts on travel demand, and new bus timetables have also been designed to align with rail services at Okehampton station.
- Improved access to Exeter is perceived to have increased the range of educational institutions for young people in Okehampton. This may, however, be linked to falling enrolments and has financial implications for the further education college in Okehampton.

Comparison of actual and forecast passenger demand (as contained in the business case for the Line) on the Dartmoor Line shows that the forecasts under-estimated demand the first 2 full years of the Line's operation with total demand 47% higher than forecast over this period. However, since November 2023 actual demand by period has typically been marginally lower than forecast. The large variance in the first two years is primarily due to the forecasting methodology assuming more conservative demand ramp-up factors. It is currently too early to draw conclusions, and a focus needs to be maintained on growing demand if the business case forecasts are to be achieved in the long-term.

The financial performance and sustainability of the Line has also been considered. An assessment of operating costs and revenue generated in 2023/24 indicates that the Dartmoor Line is creating an estimated annual operating surplus of around £0.85m implying there is no subsidy requirement. However, whilst this provides an

early indication of the financial sustainability of the Line, there are significant caveats to this conclusion. These include the analysis being based on a single year and uncertainty around certain costs some of which may increase significantly in future e.g. rolling stock lease costs. As with the assessment of demand, it is too early to draw conclusions regarding the long-term financial performance of the line. This will only be known when the costs and revenue associated with the Line can be assessed over an extended time period and when demand has fully matured.

Further evaluation in 2026/27 is proposed to assess demand and financial performance over the longer-term, as well as to evaluate wider socio-economic outcomes that may have occurred as a result of the Line's re-opening.

Finally, the delivery of the Line has been examined. This has established that the Line was delivered in just under the forecast 8-month construction period and at an expected final cost of approximately £51m, lower than the forecast cost of £56.6m as set out in the Full Business Case. Stakeholders involved in the delivery of the Line have attributed this achievement largely to the application of Project SPEED principles and strong partnership working including involvement of local stakeholders. Best practice and key learning points from the delivery of the Dartmoor Line are now being shared across the wider rail industry."

Annex L

Excerpts from Network Rail report: *Connecting Communities: framework assessment of new station opportunities on Western Route*

Wales and Western

NetworkRail

Executive summary

Many opportunities have been identified for new stations at various locations across Western Route, including through submissions to the Restoring your Railway programme.

Assessment of opportunities typically follows a bespoke process, with each opportunity reviewed in isolation. Insights emerging from the data generated for the Restoring your Railway programme provide the opportunity for a consistent and integrated approach.

This report develops a framework for assessing new station opportunities at a strategic level, and applies this framework to the largest population clusters without stations on Western Route.

The report is intended to inform future strategic advice and engagement with third parties on new station proposals. The framework created can be used to assess any new proposals to provide a high-level, comparable assessment. It does not imply Network Rail support, or lack of support, for any particular opportunity.

The largest population clusters greater than 5 kilometres from a railway station are assessed against categories resulting in a score for 'strategic case' and 'likely complexity'. A ranking for each population cluster is presented, representing the strength of the opportunities relative to one another.

Case studies are presented for each of the five highest scoring clusters:

- Plympton, Devon
- Corsham, Wiltshire
- South of Gloucester, Gloucestershire
- Royal Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire
- Bideford, Devon

The case studies describe the scoring for each of the categories, including analysis of previous development work undertaken and a description of challenges and strategic alignment. Case studies were consulted with local stakeholders to augment the information available and understand the strategic fit of any development of this work.

This report concludes this workstream, which does not include recommendation of further actions or development of specific interventions for any of the population clusters identified. Instead, this report and the framework developed is intended to inform discussions with third parties considering investment in the rail network to address strategic transport issues.

Wales and Western

NetworkRail

Assessment

Table 3 presents the score for each population cluster against the strategic case and likely complexity analyses, and the total score. Clusters are ranked by the total score. Figure 2 plots the strategic case and likely complexity scores for each population cluster.

Rank	Cluster	Strategic Sub-Total	Complexity Sub-Total	Total
1	Plympton, Devon	56	-15	**41**
2	Corsham, Wiltshire	52	-20	**32**
3	South of Gloucester	37	-10	**27**
4	Royal Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire	48	-25	**23**
5	Bideford, Devon	52	-35	**17**
6	East of Cheltenham	31	-20	**11**
7	Tiverton, Devon	43	-35	**8**
8	Witney, Oxfordshire	46	-40	**6**
9	Wantage, Oxfordshire	26	-20	**6**
10	Calne, Wiltshire	36	-35	**1**
11	East Bristol	35	-40	**-5**
12	Woolacombe and Braunton, Devon	37	-45	**-8**
13	Helston, Cornwall	27	-35	**-8**
14	Clevedon, Somerset	31	-40	**-9**
15	Bude, Cornwall	30	-40	**-10**
16	Cirencester, Gloucestershire	20	-30	**-10**
17	Glastonbury and Street, Somerset	34	-45	**-11**
18	Ilfracombe, Devon	34	-45	**-11**
19	Martock, Somerset	31	-45	**-14**
20	Wells, Somerset	20	-35	**-15**
21	Carterton, Oxfordshire	48	-65	**-17**
22	Sidmouth, Devon	23	-45	**-22**
23	Midsomer Norton and Radstock, Somerset	19	-45	**-26**

Table 3: Overview of scoring for the clusters

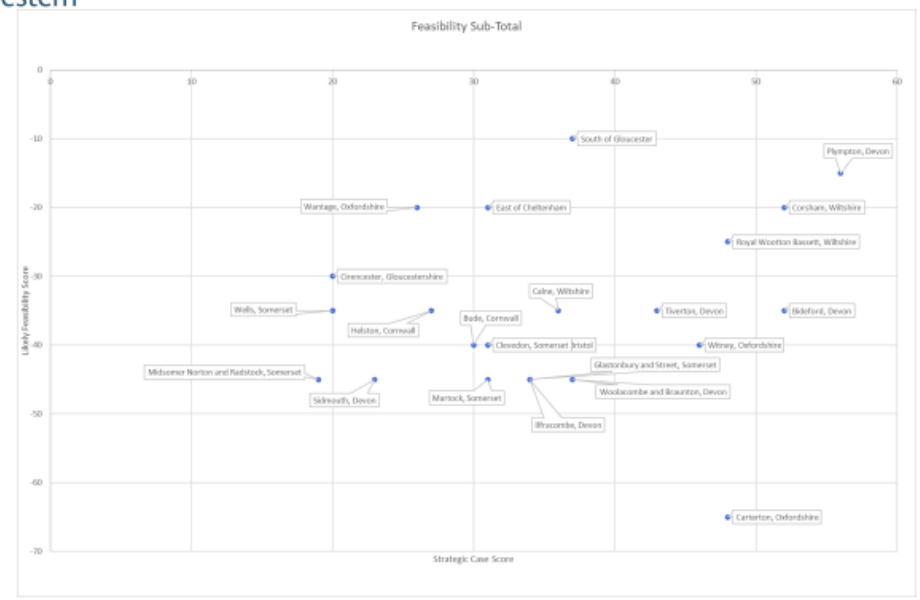


Figure 2: Scatter chart of scoring of new station opportunities

Figure 2 evidences two important and intuitive principles relating to likely complexity:

1. The need for new track significantly impacts the score. This is intuitive given the fact that capital costs for infrastructure tend to run into the tens or hundreds of millions and requiring very strong economic benefits to offset.
2. The assumption on service is significant. Where a new station would require a new service it must carry the large operational costs associated with this. Where the need for a service to provide calls aligns with established strategic recommendations in the area this impact on the scoring is reduced (e.g. Plympton).

Whilst in general there is clearly a correlation between population size (which is a close proxy for station catchment) and potential demand this is far from the only relevant factor in the strategic case score. The largest clusters, such as Plympton and Carterton, have commensurately high strategic case scores, but employment catchments, likely links to regional hubs, and demographic factors strongly influence strategic case scores.

It is notable that the large majority of the highest scoring clusters have previously been proposed or developed in some form, suggesting alignment between this framework and existing approaches to identifying new station opportunities

The population cluster with the highest scoring strategic case is Plympton, which has strong employment, population and public transport usage statistics, as well as featuring in a Network Rail Strategic Study and greatly improving access to the regional hub from the area. Relative to some of the other highest scoring opportunities, such as Corsham and Royal Wootton Bassett, Plympton scored slightly better in complexity, due to the ability to add calls in an existing service.

The next highest scoring population clusters in terms of strategic case are Corsham and Bideford. Bideford has a poorer likely complexity score due to new track and service requirements. Bideford's strategic case suitability is driven by opportunities to level up (from the Index of Multiple Deprivation) and population numbers.

The lowest scoring population clusters in terms of strategic case include Sidmouth, Wells, and Midsomer Norton and Radstock. Overarching issues for all of these opportunities include: low population, employment and public transport usage figures, as well as insignificant levels of improvement to access of the regional hub (based on the assumptions made), often due to requirements to change trains in order to access them.

Carterton, in the bottom right-hand corner of Figure 2, presents an interesting case. Its strategic case score is among the highest, but it scores lowest in likely complexity (i.e. it is the most complex of all opportunities studied). This reflects the need for a long section of new railway and a new service. It should be noted that the proposal for Carterton includes a station at Witney (a separately identified cluster) so the Carterton strategic case and likely complexity scores include Witney.

Bideford

Location

Bideford is a port town on the estuary of the River Torridge in North Devon, situated roughly 8 miles south-west of Barnstaple and 35 miles north-west of Exeter. The town is at the crossroads of the A39 and A386 roads connecting it to other regional towns such as Barnstaple, Tavistock and Bude.

Figure 12: Map showing the location of Bideford, relative to Barnstaple and Exeter and the railway in the area. (Source: Merritt Cartographic British Railways Maps)

Population

According to ONS 2019 estimates, the cluster around Bideford that is greater than 5km away from the nearest mainline railway station has a population of 31,000. Of these, only 11,000 are in employment, with an unemployment rate of 3.1 %, suggesting a large proportion of the population are outside of working age and potentially a more leisure-focussed rail market.

Previous Work

The group ACE (Atlantic Coast to Exeter) Rail, supported by Bideford Town, Torridge District and North Devon councils has been investigating and campaigning for the reinstatement of the line and service since it was established in 2021.

The route was mentioned in a nationwide new stations study in 2009 by the Association of Train Operating Companies, which concluded that it was likely to have a Benefit-Cost-Ratio of less than one at the time.[7]

The original Bideford Station, which closed to passengers in 1965, was located on the current site of the Bideford Heritage Railway Centre. Most of the work to reopen the station so far has assumed the reinstatement of the line in the original location, with a new station to the north of the original, which has been retained by the Bideford Railway Heritage Centre. The former rail alignment is now part of the Tarka Trail, an important regional active travel route.

Existing Transport Options

Bus Route	Regularity	Journey Time to Barnstaple (minutes)	Journey Time to Exeter (minutes)
21	every 30 mins	32	
5B	7 per day	31	112

Table 16: Relevant bus services in Bideford

As demonstrated in Table 16, existing bus routes between Bideford and Barnstaple are reasonable, with at least two services an hour and journey times of just over half an hour. There are also other local services, to destinations that aren't connected to the rail network and for which some of the commuting flows align. However, services to Exeter are limited and slow. It should also be noted that the lack of alternative road options outside of the A39 between Barnstaple and Bideford, means buses regularly get caught up in congestion alongside cars on this key road artery. As a result, a rail service would likely offer competitive journey times compared to the bus offering.

Journey Flows

[7] Rail Delivery Group (2009) Expanding access to the rail network. Available at: https://www.raildeliverygroup.com/about-us/publications/archive/299-2009-06-connecting-communities/file.html (Accessed: 05 October 2023).

Commute datashine (based on 2011 travel to work census data) shows dominant commuting flows from Bideford to Barnstaple, with a small number of longer distance flows to Crediton and Exeter. These could all be served by a railway service, albeit with not particularly competitive journey times compared with cars. The train service would be more likely to open opportunities for employment, education and leisure activities as well.

Figure 13: Map showing travel to work flows from the Bideford Lower-Level Super Output Area. (Source: Commute Datashine)

Existing Rail Access

The closest station to Bideford is Barnstaple, around 10 miles away by road. The journey takes roughly 20 mins, both by car or by bus and involves mostly following the A39 between the two.

Based on latest research on commute time, people in the South West would on average be willing to commute 42 minutes to work.[8] No other hub than Barnstaple could be reached in this time, nor even if relaxed to one hour. Barnstaple can already be reached by public transport within this threshold, which may limit the effectiveness of the reinstatement of the rail link to improving commuting opportunities.

[8] Jackson-Stops (2023) The reverse race for space: 38 Minutes is the new golden hour commute: Jackson-stops. Available at: https://www.jackson-stops.co.uk/articles/the-reverse-race-for-space-38-minutes-is-the-new-golden-hour-commute#:~:text=While%2038%20minutes%20was%20the,for%2015%20minutes%20or%20less.

Existing Rail Services

Operator	Service Type	Origin	Destination	tph	tpd	Call Before	Call After
GWR	Local	Exeter Central	Barnstaple	1	17	Terminates	Terminates

Table 17: Existing rail services on the section of line closest to Bideford

The closest line is the Barnstaple Branch, which has services between Exeter and Barnstaple, as shown in Table 17. The assumed train service to Bideford would be an extension of the current Barnstaple service from Exeter, along a new or reinstated section of line from Barnstaple. Without massive changes to infrastructure and service patterns this is likely the only option. Potential enhancements on the Barnstaple Branch could see an increased service level, potentially including extensions as far as Axminster or even London Waterloo.

Development work is currently being undertaken to understand the case for investment on the Barnstaple Branch, with the line currently suffering from poor performance and significant capacity issues at certain times of day. Extension to Bideford would result in further sections of single line which would likely not deliver acceptable performance given existing constraints.

With the assumption of an extension of the Barnstaple branch service, speculative journey times to the local and regional hubs are shown in Table 18.

Destination	New Journey Time (mins)	Existing PT Journey Time (mins)
Barnstaple	15	31
Exeter	81	112

Table 18: Speculative and existing journey times by public transport

Indicative Complexity

Given the assumed service for a new station at Bideford, a new station would be a simple one platform design, recent examples of which have cost around £3m. Whilst, much of the former station infrastructure is still in place, which could allow for a lower cost assumption, the desire to retain this means assumptions around cost do not reflect a specific site. Recent inflationary pressures would also likely see a higher cost to any scheme than previous examples.

The cost for the reinstatement of the roughly 9 miles of track has not been estimated at this stage. However, it is assumed that this, alongside any associated signalling interventions, would account for the majority of the cost of scheme to reconnect Bideford to the railway network. Any track reinstatement work would entail significant engineering to forge a new alignment from Barnstaple station under the A361 Barnstaple Western Bypass roundabout to join the previous (or a new)

alignment beyond.

In addition to the civils and railway systems costs there may be costs associated with securing all necessary land and consents, including providing replacements for current functions elsewhere.

Strategic Alignment

One of Peninsula Transport's goals (from their 2021 Vision statement) is the improvement of connections between people, businesses and places through the enablement of more people accessing public transport options across the Peninsula.

Devon County Council list one of their priorities as improving rail and bus connections from the towns into the main urban areas, a new station at Bideford with a service into Exeter via Barnstaple would provide a more efficient method of transport to access these employment and leisure centres and the rest of the country than currently exists with the current bus offering. However, it is recognised that improving the service offering on the Barnstaple branch is a key driver of this and should be prioritised over the extension of a rail service to Bideford.

As already highlighted, the former rail alignment is now occupied by a strategically important active-travel route and it should be noted that the MP for North Devon, Selaine Saxby, has emphasised the need to retain this, advocating for a new track alignment.

Now, more than ever, the importance of consensus on local support, including funding, is paramount. Parties most likely to be interested in, and benefit from, a new station at Bideford include:

- Devon County Council
- Peninsula Transport
- ACE Rail

There may also be opportunities for land value capture, and any potential future Restoring Your Railway or specific funding schemes focussed on addressing regional disparities.

Key Challenges

Any new station proposal faces the challenges of demonstrating value for money, financial affordability, and alignment with industry strategic plans. The analysis for this case study identifies the following specific challenges for Bideford:

- Costs
- Service capacity
- Role alongside existing public transport provision
- Relationship with Barnstaple Branch enhancements
- Choice of alignment including relocation of existing land use

Western Ranking	Cluster name	Population	Employment Number	Unemployment Rate	PT Usage	IMD	Strategic Studies	Attractor	IoA to Hub	Service Requirements	Track Requirements	Station Requirements	Total
1	Plymouth: Plympton	9	10	6	7	4	1	0	3	1	0	2	41
2	WILTSHIRE: Corsham, Bowerhill & Lacock, Box, Colerne & Rudloe,	5	7	8	9	3	1	0	3	2	0	2	32
3	STROUD: GLOUCESTER: Upton St Leonards & Hardwicke, Quedgeley North, Quedgeley South,	6	4	5	2	5	0	0	3	0	0	2	27
4	WILTSHIRE: Royal Wootton Bassett Outer & Lyneham, Royal Wootton Bassett Town,	6	7	8	9	3	0	0	3	2	0	3	23
5	Torridge: Bideford, Northam	8	8	6	5	10	0	0	3	1	5	1	17
6	TEWKESBURY: CHELTENHAM: Bishop's Cleeve, Prestbury & Racecourse, Cleeve Hill, Gotherington & Apperley,	8	4	0	3	1	0	0	3	1	3	0	11
7	MID DEVON: Tiverton East, Tiverton North & Outer, Tiverton West,	6	7	8	3	9	0	0	2	3	3	1	8
8	West Oxfordshire: Witney	8	8	5	8	2	0	0	3	3	4	1	6
9	VALE OF WHITE HORSE: Wantage Town, Grove,	3	0	6	7	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	6
10	WILTSHIRE: Calne South, Derry Hill & Hilmarton, Calne North,	7	5	2	6	6	0	0	2	3	3	1	1
11	SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE: Mangotsfield, Pucklechurch & Westerleigh, Emersons Green, Kingswood North East, Staple Hill North,	4	4	0	7	5	0	0	3	3	4	1	-5
12	NORTH DEVON: Woolacombe, Georgeham & Croyde, Braunton,	1	5	3	5	3	0	1	3	3	5	1	-8
13	CORNWALL: Helston, Porthleven, Breage & Praa Sands,	4	3	7	0	8	0	1	0	3	3	1	-8
14	NORTH SOMERSET: Clevedon Central, Clevedon North & Walton,	6	2	1	5	2	0	1	2	3	4	1	-9
15	CORNWALL: Bude & Stratton, Poundstock & Kilkhampton,	3	5	7	0	10	0	1	0	1	5	2	-10
16	COTSWOLD: Cirencester South, Cirencester Central, Cirencester East & Stratton,	2	8	0	1	4	0	0	1	3	2	1	-10
17	MENDIP: Street Village, Glastonbury Town, Glastonbury West & Street South,	8	8	4	1	8	0	1	0	3	5	1	-11
18	NORTH DEVON: Ilfracombe East, Ilfracombe West,	0	2	3	4	10	0	0	3	3	5	1	-11
19	SOUTH SOMERSET: South Petherton, Seavington & Kingsbury, Martock,	0	0	10	0	6	0	0	3	3	5	1	-14
20	MENDIP: Wells Town, Draycott, Westbury & Wookey,	2	6	4	2	6	0	0	0	3	3	1	-15
21	WEST OXFORDSHIRE: Carterton South, Carterton North, Burford & Brize Norton,	10	9	5	7	2	0	0	3	3	6	4	-17
22	EAST DEVON: Sidmouth Sidford, Sidmouth Town,	0	2	5	4	2	0	0	2	3	5	1	-22
23	MENDIP: BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET: Stratton, Holcombe & Highbury, Westfield, Midsomer Norton Redfield, Peasedown & Bathavon West, High Littleton & Paulton, Radstock, Midsomer Norton North,	2	2	2	3	5	0	0	1	3	5	1	-26