

Campaign to re-instate train line gathers steam

Support continues to grow for plans to re-instate the railway line between Bideford and Barnstaple after Torridge councillors signalled their backing.

The line to Bideford was a victim of the infamous Beeching axe in the 1960s that slashed the rail network in Britain.

The last timetabled passenger service was in 1965 but freight continued to use the line until the early 1980s.

A campaign to re-instate the line is gathering steam, buoyed by the recent success of the newly reopened Exeter to Okehampton line as part of the Government's 'Restoring Your Railway Fund'.

Following a presentation in April describing why the town should have its railway link restored by Tim Steer, director of the Bideford Railway Heritage Centre, Torridge councillors this week supported a motion for it to be part of its local plan.

Speaking at a full meeting on Monday, June 13, the council's vice chair, Councillor Peter Christie said since Mr Steer's presentation, North

OLLIE HEPTINSTALL
Local Democracy Reporting Service

Devon Council, Torridge MP Geoffrey Cox and transport secretary Grant Shapps had all indicated their support.

Cllr Christie added that £5,500 has also been raised to pay a consultant to draw up details for a reopening.

"It is an aspiration, I realise that," he said, "and I suspect there are many problems along the line, but I hope that you were impressed with [Mr Steer] - I know I was.

"What he's looking for now is basically support from this council to match other bodies.

"There are going to be massive problems - we all know that - but it is an aspirational thing and he would like it put in our local plan."

At the start of the year, Mr Steer also made his pitch to Bideford Town Council.

He was quoted as saying: "If it was brought back, a Bideford for Exeter railway service would take just over an hour, and lead onto services to Waterloo via Axminster."



The Tarka Train Line

Credit: DAVID SMITH

Help bees plea

North Devon residents are being urged to keep a look out for some of the rarest bumblebees in the country and help preserve these valuable insects.

The West Country Buzz Project is working to raise awareness, funds and recruit volunteers to help create habitat and protect all bumblebees but especially the rare brown-banded carder bee and the moss carder bee.

Once widespread in Devon, they are now only found on fragments of the North Devon coastline, which is the area the project is focusing on, in particular Braunton Burrows and its surrounds.

The project is part of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, but it is also working with landowners to try and create the right habitat for bumblebees and other pollinators.

They would also like to receive sightings and pictures of bumblebees, as well as recruit volunteers to become beewalkers to monitor a particular area they visit regularly.

West Country Buzz project officer Jamie Buxton-Gould said bumblebees were far more important than many people realised.

She said: "They are quite a good indication of a healthy eco-system and use many habitats from wetlands and hedgerows to grasslands and gardens. They are prolific pollinators and play a very important role."

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