

Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance



Making the North Devon line a 21st-century railway

An alliance of rail groups and specialists meets on Friday to devise a masterplan for the North Devon line, also known as the Tarka line. The Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance will meet for its second annual convention in Barnstaple. Its twin objectives are to modernise the line and then extend it to Bideford.

Raifuture's Roger Blake, who convened the meeting said "*The line is so popular that it's usually standing room only, including on weekends. We must find ways to increase capacity so that everyone can get a seat.*"

Sponsored this year by Raifuture, the event brings together around three dozen invited representatives from among the Alliance's two dozen partner and stakeholder organisations. They are gathering to hear and discuss updates on the work being done to secure faster journey times and twice-hourly services on the line, as the necessary foundation for extending them over a new link from Barnstaple to Bideford. The event also sees the launch of a new campaign banner (image below).

The initial 'ACE Rail' campaign to extend and modernise the Barnstaple-Exeter line, which led to the creation of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance in December 2023, was sparked just four years ago. A coincidence in 2021 of government funding being committed to reopen the Dartmoor Line to Okehampton, only 20 miles to the south, plus the return to Bideford of the number and name-plates of the eponymous steam locomotive, ignited renewed interest in improving rail services for northern Devon too.

This year's event will be opened by the Mayor of Barnstaple Janet Coates, then the Managing Director of Great Western Railway Mark Hopwood CBE will give an introductory welcome by video, and new member organisations from along the North Devon (Tarka) Line will be welcomed.

Representatives present will note that some partners are at a Department for Transport 'roadshow' in Falmouth for the planned Integrated National Transport Strategy, where they are pressing the case to officials for investing in the modernisation and extension of the North Devon (Tarka) Line as one of the fastest-growing in Britain.

In Barnstaple, representatives will be reviewing how getting the line modernisation and extension proposals adopted by the new Devon & Torbay Local Transport Plan 2025-40, and Peninsula Transport's Strategic Implementation Plan 2025-50, have been essential building blocks.

Equally-essential Strategic Outline Business Cases are being drafted, with the benefit of collaboration with industry partners GWR and Network Rail, each of whom are addressing the gathering to explain their roles in supporting the development of the case for investment in modernising and extending the line.

www.raifuture.org.uk www.raifuturescotland.org.uk www.raifuturewales.org.uk
www.railwatch.org.uk

Harland & Wolff's Appledore shipyard, now part of Navantia UK, are also represented, as a vital business in the local economy which thankfully is emerging from a period of uncertainty with renewed confidence.

The convention will wind up with a brief overview of the multiple policy and institutional changes happening and still to come in the spheres of transport, housing, local government, and devolution, with a keen eye on possibilities for new partnerships and opportunities for new audiences to convince of the economic, social and environmental case for investment in modernising and extending rail services for northern Devon.

Railfuture Vice-President and Policy Director Ian Brown CBE FCILT commented "*I attended last year's event in Bideford where the Alliance was set up against the background of much enthusiasm for the project. Much work is in progress as a result to turn this potential into a live project meeting transport, economic, environmental and social needs in Devon, including education and work access, in addition to sustainable tourism. This year's event in Barnstaple represents the opportunity for everybody involved to get together, share experiences and establish a firm base on which to take the project forward. Really looking forward to witnessing the output from the day's event as an exemplar in mounting strong business case arguments for reopening and developing key strategic rail routes.*"

The Alliance's 24 partner and stakeholder organisations are:

Great Western Railway
Network Rail
County Council - Devon
District Councils - Mid-Devon, North Devon, Torrington
Town Councils - Barnstaple, Bideford, Northam
Parish Councils - Burrington, Chittlehamholt Satterleigh & Warkleigh, Chulmleigh, King's Nympton, Lapford
Sub-national transport body Peninsula Transport
Peninsula Rail Task Force
Petroc College
Navantia UK (Harland & Wolff, Appledore)
South West Business Council
TravelWatch SouthWest
Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership
Friends of Barnstaple Railway Station
North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group (formerly Tarka Rail Association)
Railfuture

Railfuture is Britain's leading independent organisation campaigning for better rail services for both passengers and freight.

More information on Railfuture's website at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Devon-and-Cornwall-Branch#Campaigns>

Follow Railfuture on X/Twitter: twitter.com/Railfuture & twitter.com/RailfutureDC

For further information and comment please contact Roger Blake, Director for Infrastructure & Networks
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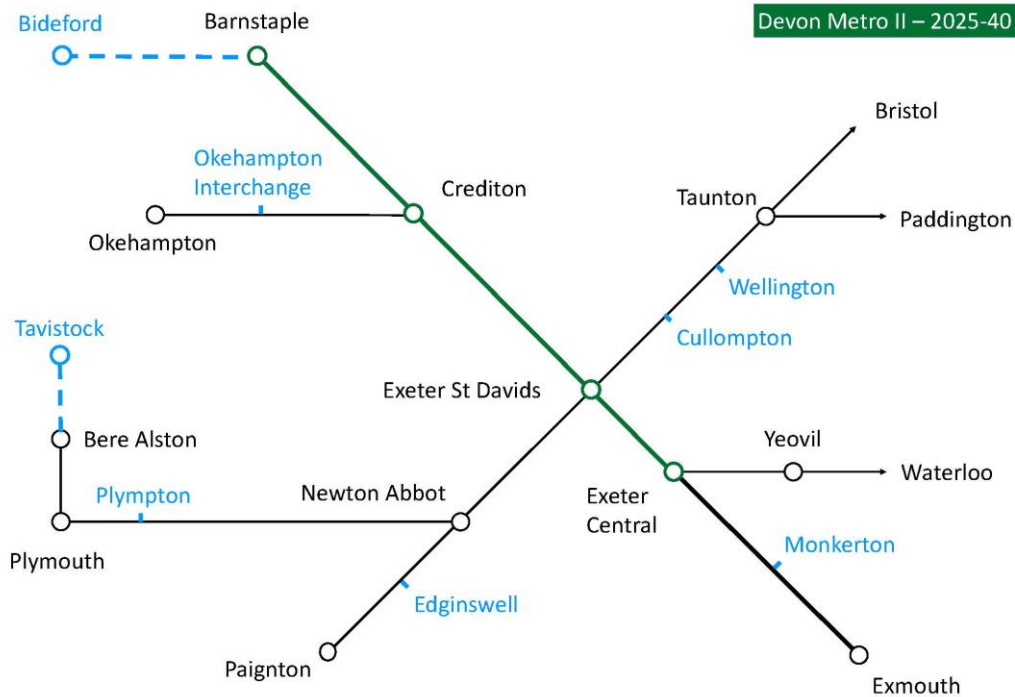
Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance

Modernising the North Devon (Tarka) Line - fit for the 21st Century

Find out more, then register your support:



www.railfuture.org.uk/Devon-Metro



ACE Rail: Reconnecting Bideford to the rail network

railfuture

Campaigning for a bigger better railway