


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Celebrating railway's past on line for better services



» Campaigners voice need for rail line improvements as they mark history of station. [See page 3](#)

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Calls for future rail improvements as station marks 170 year history

by LEWIS CLARKE
 lewis.clarke@reachplc.com
 @DevonLiveNews

A GROUP of campaigners gathered at Kings Nympton station to celebrate its 170-year history – and to demand more reliable and frequent train services on the busy Tarka Line.

The event marked the original name of the station – South Molton Road – but was just as much about the future as the past.

Rail campaigners joined local councillors and the area's MP last month to call for improvements, arguing that current services fail to meet the needs of the rural communities the station serves.

Martin Pailthorpe, who leads the Friends of Kings Nympton Station, said the campaign had struck a chord with residents. "We picked up 200 members on Facebook saying we would like all trains to stop here on request," he said. "Not every train stops at Kings Nympton even when requested, and that's a huge problem for people in Kings Nympton, Burrington, Chittlehamholt and parts of Chulmleigh. You can't reliably leave your car here and expect to get back to it."

Mr Pailthorpe added that the limited service has a real-world impact on families and the environment, explaining he regularly drives his daughter to Eggesford to catch the train to college in Exeter. "That twice-a-week trip over the school year is the equivalent of me driving to John O'Groats," he said.

North Devon MP, Ian Roome backed the calls, saying: "The Tarka Line is getting extremely busy. I've asked Network Rail and GWR for a more frequent service, particularly to help students and during the tourist season. The line needs more passing places and more carriages. It's one of the few rail lines in the country where



North Devon Railway Development Alliance, campaigners and supporters say Kings Nympton Railway Station needs more trains stopping there in the future and more should serve the Tarka Line

passenger numbers are increasing month by month."

Mr Roome also renewed calls for a direct daily train from Barnstaple to London, something he said would bring huge benefits to North Devon. "We need investment now so North Devon does not get left behind like some other places," he said.

David Northey, chair of the North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group, said the station's past and future were deeply intertwined. "Today we're commemorating the station's original name, South Molton Road, which was dropped in 1951. South Molton lost its railway in 1966, but this gives it a small symbolic connection back to the network."

David said discussions with GWR were under way to explore whether more trains could stop at Kings Nympton, particularly to help students returning from Exeter in the evenings. He urged residents to continue sharing their feedback: "We want to hear from people about parking issues, missed connections and capacity problems. This is vital information we can take to meetings."

Among the other speakers was Ed Tilsley, county councillor for Chulmleigh and Landkey. "This line is crucial," he said. "Most of my students go to Exeter College. Without this train, they simply wouldn't be able to get there. The people near South

Molton don't even have a bus to the train line, so they're stuck with fewer options for further education."

Railfuture's Devon and Cornwall branch chair, Tim Steer, said the event was not only a celebration but also a serious push for progress. "We need two services per hour and more stops here to serve the community," he said. "Kings Nympton is a good station with a growing population and deserves better services."

He confirmed funding had been secured for a strategic outline business case through the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance, with hopes to deliver plans by the autumn.

Despite its picturesque rural setting and rich railway heritage, Kings Nympton remains one of the Tarka Line's lesser-used stations – a fact many here believe could be reversed with a more consistent service and improved infrastructure.

For now, campaigners are urging local residents to lobby their MP, join the station's Facebook group and make their voices heard.

Martin Pailthorpe concluded: "We shouldn't have to drive past a perfectly good station because the trains can't stop here."



Local councillors joined campaigners and North Devon's MP at Kings Nympton Railway Station recently to highlight its 170 year history and its former name and to call for better services in the future with more trains stopping at the station to serve commuters, students and the community

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