

Hospice team's caring ethos is my motivation for volunteering

VOLUNTEERING has been a huge part of my life and I always saw the value of it and how it helped charities.

I'd previously been a volunteer for Macmillan but had left after 22 years and was looking to retire but my friend Ray Hales, one of the hospice's longest and well known supporters, persuaded me to join CHSW! Initially I was supporting Ray but after meeting the Fundraising Team to discuss ideas, I was asked if I would like to create a new Friend's Group for Barnstaple and take the lead on supermarket collections across North Devon.

My main role now is to sign up and co-ordinate volunteers to help at various collections and despite Ray and his fellow fundraiser, Arthur Bennett, being both in their 90s - they're usually the first ones to sign up on my collection rotas!

I also volunteer at various events the charity holds and I supported the fundraising team at the North Devon show - encouraging my dear wife to support me in supporting the hospice. I'm a member of a local garden-

Andy Jones began volunteering for Children's Hospice South West in the spring of 2023 and is now chairman of the Barnstaple Central Friends Group. Andy explains why he chose to start volunteering for his local children's hospice



ing group and I recently organised a tour to Little Bridge House to show them how amazing the children's hospice is and how it provides a huge hug for the whole family.

This support was beautifully illustrated at a recent Friends Group Conference where we heard from a parent about how Children's Hospice South West supported her family when her son Fred died at two months old. She talked about how Little Bridge House provided hospice care for him, took care of Fred during his end of life and made a horrific situation as good as it could be.



Andy Jones with Richard Smith of Barnstaple Rotary helping with a collection

She movingly spoke about how her family are forever grateful for the memories they were able to make during Fred's short and precious life and the kindness shown to them. It made me realise I'd made the right decision in supporting this wonderful charity.

My real and genuine motivation for helping CHSW is seeing the amazing work that all the staff at Little Bridge House do in supporting local children, young people and their families.

As the chairman of the Barnstaple Central Friends Group, I'm always looking for more volunteers to support the group in their fundraising, so if you can spare a few hours a month and would like to support a great charity then do get in touch with Little Bridge House and sign up to be a volunteer!

To find out more information about the various volunteering opportunities at CHSW, helping their fundraising teams, charity shops and the hospice, please visit www.chsw.org.uk/volunteering

● Children's Hospice South West operate the only three children's hospices in the South West, Little Bridge House in North Devon, Charlton Farm, near Bristol and Little Harbour in Cornwall.

Children's Hospice South West was founded in 1991 by Eddie and Jill Farwell after they experienced for themselves the urgent need for hospice care for children in the South West.

Their two eldest children had life-limiting illnesses and they had to travel for over four hours from their home in North Devon to Helen House in Oxford, then the country's only children's hospice.

Too costly to restore Barnstaple-Tiverton link

BEFORE the car became affordable, Barnstaple had three railway stations.

Victoria Road station was on the line that ran from Barnstaple to Taunton with a stop at Morebath Junction, if you wanted to change to services for Tiverton.

The Taunton line was used until 1970 and then lay redundant until being redeveloped in 1988 to become the North Devon link road.

Tiverton Parkway is a very well used railway station in Mid Devon. In fact, its car park is often full, which must make a lot of the car-using public anxious on arrival.

This Parkway is, however, not as well used as Barnstaple station. In December 2023, the non-ministerial Government department Office of Rail and Road published a list of the most used and least used railway stations in Devon.

Exeter Central topped the most used station chart with 2.61 million entries and exits. Surprisingly, Barnstaple was tenth with 536,940 users and Tiverton Parkway came 11th with 524,190 users.

Let's look at why these two stations have achieved such high numbers. For a station that is located near A roads and motorways, Tiverton Parkway is used by passengers wanting to join the rail network to London Paddington with 32.01% of station

Tim Steer

Vice-chair of the Tarka Rail Association



entries; the second destination is Bristol Temple Meads at 11.16%, and all the rest across the whole of Britain are each less than 10%.

By contrast the top destination station from Barnstaple is Exeter Central (at 33% of departing passengers), second to top is Digby & Sowton (on 17.59%), and third is Exeter St David's (at 10.72%). So 61.31% of all Barnstaple's departing passengers are destined for just those three Exeter stations.

The city of Exeter as a whole is the final destination for 62.58% of all rail passengers leaving Barnstaple and as their final destinations, exiting the rail network not interchanging within it such as at St David's.

There are many reasons Exeter is a top destination for the residents of North Devon and Torridge: employment, top-rated college and university facilities for students, shopping and of course professional football and rugby matches.

Government schemes coming forward for re-opened or new railway



Tiverton Parkway is a very well used railway station in Mid Devon. Picture: Wikipedia

lines or stations must show community population growth.

Regardless of historic decisions, they must serve a population cluster of at least 25,000 people to have reasonable prospects of being both viable and affordable.

It's all about adding significant-sized but still disconnected communities to the rail network; joining up places which are already on the network is not part of that government plan - unless they also pick up large disconnected population clusters along the way.

The good news is that the link road upgrade engineering works are going to improve journeys to and from Tiverton Parkway; these works are now in the final stages and the project is set to be complete this summer.

What the residents of North Devon and Torridge need now is a dedicated bus to the Parkway to ease the car capacity challenges and offer them a sustainable transport solution to go with the link road upgrade.

There was some social media discussion about restoring a rail link

from Barnstaple to Tiverton; that unfortunately is a much larger scale engineering proposition than the Barnstaple to Bideford rail link project.

The old Taunton line route is largely now the link road and it would require purchasing approximately 40 miles of new land and then the associated civil engineering works would bring this work into figures so high that a fast train from Barnstaple to Exeter that connects to Tiverton services would be a justifiable and economical alternative.