

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024

## **Motion – For Barnstaple Town Council to join the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance**

Barnstaple Town Council recognises the importance of a sustainable transport network to the health and wellbeing of our community, to the local economy and to contributing to net zero carbon emissions targets. The Town Council has already demonstrated its commitment through sponsorship of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), and initiatives to support the retention of Barnstaple Bus Station. One strand of a sustainable transport network is the aspiration to see better sustainable transport links between Bideford and Barnstaple and to the rest of the main line rail network. This initiative directly aligns with the Town Council's strategic objectives in a number of areas.

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**:

- 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
- 4) Include rail development plans and other sustainable transport plans in any future Barnstaple Town Council Neighbourhood Planning process
- 5) Urge North Devon District Council's Local Plan Committee to reflect this desire in any plans they bring forward for public consultation
- 6) To attend the inaugural meeting (hosted by Bideford Town Council) of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance, and work with its other members to promote the reconnection of Bideford to the national rail network.

## **Benefits:**

The benefits of a better sustainable transport network between Barnstaple and Bideford are potentially very significant:

- Reduced traffic congestion and harmful vehicle emissions from our roads in the Town Centre, Sticklepath, Bickington, Fremington and beyond to support our Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- Improved access to our town would increase footfall and provide benefits to the daytime and evening economies.
- Commuters who live in Bideford and work in Exeter or beyond, will no longer need to drive to Barnstaple to catch the train.
- Increased appetite for a connection from Bideford will help to improve the whole Tarka Line by means of track and train upgrades. Evidence of need is already there, with record numbers of station users (844,000) on the Tarka Line last year. Barnstaple alone exceeded half-a-million users for the first time ever, a 27% increase on the previous year which was the second-highest rise in Devon.  
(Devon's Tarka rail line breaks passenger records - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-67727984>)
- In joining the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance as a founding member, we get the most influence in shaping any ideas and options being explored that may no longer be possible once larger authorities and Government departments have fully taken the project on for completion.

Cllrs Louisa York, Peter Leaver and Marsh Pullen