

Route Prospectus

For the line between Barnstaple and Cowley Bridge Junction (The Tarka Line) and the train service between Barnstaple and Exeter Central

The line between Barnstaple and Cowley Bridge Junction is one of the routes listed in the DfT Community Rail Development Strategy as having potential for line designation. The principal passenger train service on the line operates between Barnstaple and Exeter Central.

Pilot projects have started to demonstrate how the Community Rail Development approach can increase revenue, manage down costs and encourage greater community involvement in the local railway.

The key measures of success will be:

- The contribution of Community Rail Development in achieving locally set objectives such as reducing road congestion and increasing accessibility in its widest sense.
- Reducing the call on taxpayers' funds for the service;
- Establishing the effectiveness of different methods for reducing the net financial loss of Community Rail lines by increasing revenue and reducing costs where practicable.

A remit for the project has been agreed with the Community Rail Partnership. This remit forms the basis for this Route Prospectus. Like the remit, it is expected that the route prospectus will be a flexible document that will evolve (in format and substance) as the project develops. The Community Rail Partnership referred to - the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership which consists of Cornwall & Devon County Councils, Plymouth City Council, the University of Plymouth, the Countryside Agency, First Great Western. Locally, the Rail Partnership's Working Party for the Tarka Line is made up of the County Council, Mid Devon District Council, Barnstaple Town Council, North Devon Rail Users Group and a range of other partners.

The prospectus has also been discussed with Network Rail consists of and the DfT Rail Group.

Designation of the line between Barnstaple and Cowley Junction as a 'Community Rail line' will assist in these aspects of the remit:

- Identification of the costs of operating the Tarka Line and identify the revenue attributable to the line.
- Showing how Train Operating Company costs might be reduced on the line by changes to franchise management (including the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement arrangements), working practices and operation

- Exploration of opportunities of alternative fares structures to ensure the line is allocated a fair contribution of all through rail fares and that fares are appropriate to the local market.
- Evaluation of options for increasing the frequency of the service to hourly on weekdays, with additional later evening services with a view of achieving the overall aims of the Community Rail Development Strategy (i.e. better value for money services).
- Development of the railhead policy on the line, with provision of improved car parking at railhead stations (Umberleigh, Eggesford, Copplestone and Yeoford).
- In conjunction with the Bus Operator and Unitary Council provide and demonstrate the impact of quality bus links at all locations on the line to connect with other parts of the Island. Improving links to the bus network to improve accessibility to the area and particularly to provide better links between the rail network and Ilfracombe, Bideford and other North Devon towns.
- Exploration of innovative ticketing and marketing schemes with the aim of making it easier to buy tickets away from staffed stations and in rural areas and also ensuring effective collection of revenue.
- Demonstrate the scope for station adoption and co-operation with local business and others with the aim of further tapping into the tourism market .and developing retail and commercial activities
- Assisting Dartmoor Railway with their ambition of operating a passenger service between Okehampton and Yeoford allowing passengers to connect with Tarka Line services so providing sustainable access into the Devon Heartlands

In taking this work forward, it is intended to build on the work already in hand on the Tarka Line led by the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership.

Designation is not intended to inhibit the running of special locomotive hauled or High Speed Train worked charter services or freight workings. Local partners are keen to investigate further freight opportunities on both the Okehampton and Tarka Lines.

Without designation the project will not be able to deliver its aims and objectives. The project is expected to last up to 5 years. Designation is intended to be a permanent arrangement, but it can be reviewed periodically to assess whether the designation is still appropriate.

During the time of the project the designation may be reviewed and if there is a significant demand, then the consultation on designation can be repeated. This review process will enable designation to be reversed if there is significant demand once the pilot project has finished.

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