



Christmas Message from the Chair and President
North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group

As we come to the close of another remarkable year on the North Devon line, we want to take a moment to reflect, to thank, and to look ahead with confidence.

For over 40 years — in its various guises as NDRUG, the Tarka Rail Association, and now the North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group — the organisation has represented the voice of passengers along the line between Barnstaple and Exeter. Throughout that time, the railway has never been far from the thoughts of those who rely on it — for work, education, family, leisure, and the wider life of our communities.

The railway continues to operate day in, day out, and this year has carried close to 900,000 passengers along the route. While headlines have understandably focused at times on peak-time overcrowding, weather-related disruption, and the legacy of infrastructure and equipment installed during the rationalisation era of the 1990s, these challenges are not unique to our line. What is unique is the sustained growth we are seeing — with the millionth passenger now firmly in sight.

That growth reinforces why our campaigning work matters as much today as it did 40 years ago.

Over the decades we have seen profound change:
from just seven trains a day to the seventeen we have now;
earlier Sunday services;
the replacement of Pacer trains with Class 158s;
improvements to infrastructure;
and the North Devon line taking its rightful place in local and regional transport plans.

Looking ahead to the coming year, the introduction of longer trains will be a hugely important step. This will bring welcome relief on busy services and help unlock growth that has been constrained by capacity for too long.

We are also entering a period of wider change. GWR will become part of the new nationalised railway under Great British Railways, and local government reform will reshape decision-making across our area. In that context, our role as an independent, constructive voice for passengers becomes more vital than ever.

President: Cllr Andrea Davis

Vice Presidents:

Roger Blake, Peter West OBE

NORTH DEVON LINE RAIL PROMOTION GROUP



Left to right: The President of the North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group Andrea Davis and its Chair David Northey at the new Okehampton Interchange station currently under construction.

We would like to thank the continued support of our local politicians, from Devon County Council through to our Members of Parliament, who have been — and continue to be — supportive and vocal in current campaigns to improve the railway. We also extend our thanks to local councillors across the route, representing both Mid Devon and North Devon, together with the many town and parish councils who consistently champion the railway on behalf of their communities.

We would also like to thank the Northern Devon Development Rail Alliance for its ongoing support in the development of the North Devon line, and for the collaborative work being undertaken to strengthen the case for investment, capacity improvements, and long-term growth.

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We are particularly grateful for the support given over many years by Mark Hopwood and his team at GWR — from the train crew and station staff we see every day, to those working behind the scenes to shape the future of the line. Alongside them, we thank the dedicated teams at Network Rail who maintain and care for the infrastructure that keeps the railway running safely and reliably, often in challenging conditions.

We also want to recognise the wider railway community. Local businesses such as the Station Masters Café at Barnstaple, run by Mike Day, Turning Tides at Crediton, and the Eggesford Grill along the line — along with many others across the region — are part of the railway's success story, supported day-to-day by rail passengers.

Most importantly, we thank the volunteers who give their time and energy to make stations along the line welcoming and attractive — from Copplestone to Crediton, Barnstaple to Newton St Cyres — and the local councillors, parish groups, and campaigners in Yeoford, Lapford, Umberleigh, Kings Nympton, and Eggesford who continue to champion their railway.

Your support, commitment, and belief in the line make a real difference.

On behalf of the North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

With best wishes,

David Northey

Andrea Davis

Chair

President

and the North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group Committee

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