

Devon County Council appeal to government to restore local railway

November 14, 2022



The Strategic Outline Business Case has been submitted to the government's Restoring Your Railway programme, and suggests reinstating five miles of track, as well as delivering a new single platform station at Tavistock.

If approved, the new service would serve around 21,000 residents of Tavistock, Horrabridge, Lamerton, and Mary Tavy, providing an hourly service from Tavistock to Plymouth, and maintaining the existing two-hourly service between Plymouth and Gunnislake.

Encouraging people to travel by rail will help ease traffic congestion on the A386 between Tavistock and Plymouth, reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality. It will improve access to jobs, education and healthcare and will support economic growth, which is constrained by the increasing journey times on the A386.

Travel by rail to Tavistock as a gateway to Dartmoor National Park will also help boost tourism opportunities and minimise the impacts of traffic on a sensitive environment.

Councillor Andrea Davis, cabinet member for climate change, environment and transport, said: “This is the next major milestone in this project and we’re urging the Government to back us in making further progress. There is a strong case for this rail link to be reinstated. It will provide value for money and will be key in tackling congestion on the A386.

“Establishing sustainable transport options between Tavistock and Plymouth offers huge benefits for the environment and will help meet our carbon reduction targets while supporting the economy and local communities.”

The reinstatement of the line to Tavistock is identified in the 20-year plan of the Peninsula Rail Task Force, and the County Council has received letters of support for the scheme from four in local MPs in Devon, and a further two in Cornwall.

Councillor Philip Sanders, county councillor for Yelverton Rural (Devon), said: “This project has long been one of the aspirations of those people who live and work in the area it will serve. It is pleasing to see it move forward and I strongly support the plea to government to do all it can to see the reinstatement of this vital link become a reality.

“Once complete it will provide a key artery for those commuting and for recreational purposes whilst at the same time reducing the need for the use of the private motor vehicle. It will be a positive step forward in the reduction of carbon emissions in the area.”

Councillor Jonathan Drear, Plymouth City Council cabinet member for Transport, said: “The reopening of the rail line will deliver many benefits for Plymouth – it will relieve pressure on the congested A386 offering an attractive alternative for commuters and school children living north of the city.

“With a £2 billion rebuild programme at Devonport, it would benefit many of the 6,000 workers at the Dockyard and increase the potential pool of workers it could attract. Importantly, the line would also double the frequency of local rail to boost accessibility for the communities of St Budeaux, Keyham and Devonport where we know car ownership is low. I hope it would also open up further opportunities for more freight to be transferred to rail so that we can reduce the number of HGVs using this busy route.”

The County Council is currently seeking £3 million to develop the next stage of the business case.