

Hourly services going ahead on Dartmoor line

May 13, 2022



From Sunday 15 May, services on the recently reinstated Dartmoor line will be doubled – with the implementation of hourly trains.

The line was reopened in November as part of the programme of Beeching Cuts reversals.

The line was the first to reopen under the flagship programme and was fully restored in just nine months, and delivered £10 million under budget, transforming a mothballed former freight railway to regular passenger services.

The restored line has been popular, with more than 50,000 journeys undertaken in the first 20 weeks since the line reopened, more than double the number predicted. Passenger numbers at Crediton have also increased by 39% against pre-pandemic levels.

Work has since taken place on the line to make it suited for the more regular services.

Over the past 15 days, Network Rail's team of engineers has been upgrading parts of the 14-mile stretch of Dartmoor Line. Along the line, at Fatherford and Coleford, engineers have completed further improvements to the drainage and track bed to enable faster line speeds ready for the increase to hourly

services.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: “The huge success of the Dartmoor Line shows that when you get the service right the public will respond with increased demand.

“This is one example of the bright future in store for our railways as we begin to reform the sector in the run-up to the creation of Great British Railways. Put the customer first and you’ll get the results.”

The Department for Transport, Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR) alongside project partners Devon County Council, Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership and Dartmoor Railway Association (DRA), have worked together to reopen this line ahead of time and under budget. Benefitting from the application of Rail Project SPEED approaches, the Dartmoor Line has been transformed into a successful, full seven days a week passenger operation.

Now benefitting from a doubling of services from this Sunday, the Dartmoor Line offers links for work, study and leisure travel. It benefits students heading to the colleges in Exeter as well as tourists travelling to Dartmoor, easing congestion on local roads and helping boost the local economy.

Rail Minister Wendy Morton said: “I am so proud to be here today to see the amazing work completed on the Dartmoor line and the beginning of a new hourly service between Okehampton and Exeter.

“After speaking with regular users of the service, it’s clear how central it already is to the community, residents and businesses.

“By not only restoring this great railway but doubling the number of daily services, it will bring even greater benefits to local people for generations to come.

The Restoring Your Railway Fund was launched in January 2020 to reinstate axed local services and restore closed stations, many of which were cut following Dr Beeching’s report on ‘The Reshaping of British Railways’ in 1963. The fund is focused on delivering schemes that can level up the country, reconnect cut-off communities, improve access to jobs, homes and education and boost opportunity across the country, with a further £16m being committed to Restoring Your Railway projects in the south-west peninsula. This includes;

- £5m towards Wellington & Cullompton stations
- £7.88m towards Edginswell station (Torbay)
- £3.11m towards Marsh Barton station (Exeter)
- £50,000 towards Tavistock to Plymouth
- £50,000 towards Mid Cornwall Metro

Michelle Handforth, Network Rail’s Wales & Western regional managing director, said: “I’m delighted our recent upgrades have enabled the Dartmoor Line services to increase to hourly which will undoubtedly bring a further boost to tourism, the local community and regional economy for many years to come.

“This Sunday will mark another momentous milestone in the history of the Dartmoor Line as we celebrate

the return of the first hourly services in nearly 50 years and I am extremely proud that we have delivered on this promise we made to the Government.”

Mark Hopwood, GWR managing director, said: “Delivered £10 million under budget and within nine months, ahead of time, since opening the line has averaged around 2,000 journeys made every week – supporting local businesses, greater access to education and work for thousands who live locally, and providing a gateway to explore Dartmoor for visitors

“This increase to hourly services will further increase the benefits from the reopening of this railway line, and I am delighted we are able to mark the occasion.

“The demand for services shows just how important good rail connections are for the community they serve.”

To make the restoration possible, Network Rail’s team of engineers worked tirelessly to deliver a huge programme of work to physically reopen the line in nine months, including laying 11 miles of new track and installing 24,000 concrete sleepers and 29,000 tonnes of ballast in a record-breaking 20-day period.

GWR identified suitable rolling stock and developed a robust timetable with franchise funding ahead of funding being agreed for the infrastructure elements of the project. The project has also hugely benefitted from strong local support spearheaded by Devon County Council, without which it would have taken far longer to reach the point where regular year-round services can be restored after almost 50 years.

GWR, Dartline Coaches and Devon County Council have also made sure that local transport is all coordinated, ensuring easy bus and train connections to the rest of the country are easily accessible from the Dartmoor Line. This includes better bus links to Tavistock, seven days a week direct from Okehampton station, as well as the existing facilities for cycling and walking, enabling more people to explore this wonderful area. More work is currently being undertaken on the station buildings to enable the restoration of the cafe and other facilities.