

# More than 550,000 journeys made in first two years of Dartmoor Line reopening

November 21, 2023



A special community celebration has taken place to mark the second anniversary of the reopening of the Dartmoor Line.

The previously mothballed rail line, which runs between Okehampton and Exeter, was restored in just nine months and delivered £10 million under budget, opening two years ago to the day today. Since then, more than 550,000 passenger journeys have been made on the line, far exceeding expectations.

In partnership with [Great Western Railway \(GWR\)](#) and local rail support group Okerail, the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership (DCRP) held a special birthday party along with cake to celebrate the positive impact the reopening has had on the local community.

In attendance was the Mayor of Okehampton, Cllr Allenton Fisher; the Mayor of West Devon, Cllr Lynn Daniels; representatives from OkeRail; the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership (DCRP); the Dartmoor

Railway Association; Great Western Railway; Network Rail, and other partners involved in reopening the line.

Matt Barnes, GWR Head of Strategic Service Development, said: "It has been two years since we and our partners reopened the Dartmoor Line.

"This anniversary, with more than half a million journeys now made, is testament to the hard work of so many who campaigned for the line's reinstatement, and the benefits of investing in local transport.

"The continued demand shows just how important good rail connections are for the community, and the economies, they serve."

The Dartmoor Line was the first line to be reopened under the Government's Restoring Your Railway programme with more than £40 million being invested by the Government.

Rail Minister Huw Merriman said: "The re-opening of the Dartmoor Line was made possible through Government investment and two years on since services resumed, it's proved to be a huge success, providing vital links for passengers in the area.

"With over half a million journeys now made, it's clear how crucial the line is to the community, residents and businesses and by restoring our lost railways, we can help drive tourism and encourage investment across our regions."

The line has been a huge success to date, serving not just the town itself but a wider area extending as far as Tavistock, Launceston and Bude, with connecting bus services to/from Okehampton Station.

In May 2022, the previous two-hourly train service frequency was increased to hourly, seven days a week, and that October the Tavistock rail-link bus was joined by direct buses linking Bude, Holsworthy and Launceston with Okehampton station.

Devon County Council has long supported the Dartmoor Line, including being key partners in both the restoration of the station in the mid-1990s and funding the Summer Sunday service which ran from 1997 to 2019. The county council is leading the project to put Tavistock back on the rail network.

Councillor Andrea Davis, Devon County Council Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport, said: "Two years have flown by since the Dartmoor Line reopened and in that time the passenger numbers have been nothing short of incredible. All of the partners involved in reinstating the line between Okehampton and Exeter recognised how important these rail services would be, but their popularity is over and above what anyone predicted.

"The Devon County Council funded integrated bus service 118 to and from Okehampton Station is also ensuring that the benefits of the Dartmoor Line have a much wider impact as well, which is great news for our local economy."

An impact evaluation of the Dartmoor Line is currently being conducted. This research aims to assess the

extent to which the Line has delivered against the anticipated benefits for the local community since its re-opening. The evaluation will conclude next year with findings expected to be published in Spring 2024.

Okehampton Cllr Dr Michael Ireland, Chair of OkeRail and an Okehampton town councillor, was a leading campaigner for the reopening for many years and organised a number of surveys, events and passenger counts on the then Summer Sunday service to help make the case for the full reopening. He has worked hard since on making the most of the new service to the benefit of the town and wider area.

Dr Ireland said: "The huge success of the Dartmoor Line is a great delight to us all. I am very proud of the role I and other local people and organisations such as OkeRail and the Dartmoor Railway Association have played in both getting the line reopened and making it such an asset to the town and the wider area it serves."

The Dartmoor Line's success has seen the Government commit to provide £13.4m from the Levelling Up Fund for an additional station, Okehampton Parkway, at the east end of the town and two mins drive from the A30. At the other end of West Devon, the Government has also committed to fund the reopening of Tavistock to Plymouth to completion, subject to an updated business case.

Okehampton Station itself was recently awarded "Small Station of the Year" at the National Rail Awards and is shortlisted in the forthcoming National Railway Heritage Awards. The line itself and the reopening project have won several awards which are on display in a cabinet at the station.

*Photo credit: Great Western Railway*