

Agenda Item

REPORT OF Head of Communities and Place
To: Community and Resources Committee
Subject: Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance
Date: 22/07/24 **Reference:**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To consider whether Torridge District Council should formally join the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance

1. INTRODUCTION

At Full Council on the 8th April 2024 Cllr Hames proposed the following Written Notice of Motion:

Given this Council's support for a revival of the Bideford to Barnstaple railway link it is proposed that, in common with other local councils, we now help to further that aim by joining the North Devon Railway Development Alliance.

The minutes of the meeting record:

Given this Council's support for a revival of the Bideford to Barnstaple railway link it is proposed that, in common with other local councils, we now help to further that aim by joining the North Devon Railway Development Alliance.

Councillor P Hames presented his Notice of Motion stating that it should read Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance not North Devon Railway Development Alliance.

It was confirmed that a report would be presented to the Community & Resources Committee to establish any implications for TDC to join the alliance.

It was proposed by Councillor P Hames, seconded by Councillor D Brenton and –

Resolved:

That the Notice of Motion be approved.

(Vote: For – 19, Against – 4, Abstention – 5)

The Motion was carried.

2. REPORT

The stated aim of the Alliance is to secure a new rail link between Bideford and Barnstaple and upgrade of the North Devon (Tarka) Line between Exeter and Barnstaple, championing their



transformational benefit for communities and businesses and advocating to decision-makers the economic, social and environmental case for developing and investing in the project.

Torrige District Council has been invited to join the alliance and it has been proposed by Cllr Hames that it does.

The alliance are also supporting proposed improvements to the line and service between Barnstaple and Exeter and have stated that this is the initial priority for Northern Devon. In addition a concurrent work stream is to oversee the delivery of a feasibility study, assessing the viability, benefits and implications of reopening the railway line between Barnstaple and Bideford. Some progress has been made on the latter point although funding from the other partners within the alliance is still being sought.

To date, there has been one meeting of the Alliance at which the Leader, Chairman of the Council, Chief Executive and Head of Communities and Place were invited and attended.

The Torrige Logo is already used in communications issued by the Alliance and other partners already believe that Torrige is an active member. Torrige Officers have been invited to a workshop to develop the business case for proposals on that basis.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

None

Financial Implications

None beyond the initial funding identified for the feasibility study (£10,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund 24/25, funds to be spent by 31/03/25)

Human Resources Implications

No additional resource implications

Sustainability Implications

To be assessed in the production of any feasibility study on the reopening of the railway line in conjunction with the impact on other forms of public transport and active travel options.

Equality/Diversity

None

Risk Management

None

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

Aligns with the strategic plan objective to investigate, with the relevant partner organisations (North Devon Council, DCC, ACE Rail and Network Rail), the appetite to jointly commission and fund a study to evaluate the economic and environmental benefits and impacts of re-establishing the rail link.

Data Protection (GDPR) Implications

None

Climate Change



Joining the alliance would have no impact.

Ward Member and Leader Member Views

This is a cross cutting proposal that does not sit within one ward or one lead member area.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The aims of the Alliance are aligned with the Council's own strategic plan objective and joining does not commit the Council in decision making, policy making, estate management, financial or physical delivery terms.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

That members consider whether Torridge District Council should become a member of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations: Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Governance, Finance
Manager and S151 Officer
Contact Sean Kearney
Officer:
Background
Papers:

