

Services on newly-opened Okehampton rail line have doubled amid huge demand

Services on a newly re-opened railway line in Devon have been doubled amid huge demand from passengers.

The Dartmoor Line between Exeter and Okehampton [reopened in November](#), restoring a regular, year-round service for the first time in almost 50 years.

From Sunday May 15, passengers now benefit from an hourly service.

The restored line has been hugely 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.

The line was the first to reopen under the Government's £500 million manifesto commitment to 'Restore Your Railways'.

It was fully restored in just nine months, and delivered £10 million under budget, transforming a mothballed former freight railway to regular passenger services.

Mark Hopwood, GWR Managing Director, said: "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. The demand for services shows just how important good rail connections are for the community they serve."

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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.

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

To make the restoration possible, Network Rail's team of engineers delivered a huge programme of work to physically

reopen the line in just 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.

Over the past 15 days, Network Rail's team [have upgraded 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.

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.

More work is currently being undertaken on the station buildings to enable the restoration of the cafe and other facilities.

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