

# Government restores the Dartmoor Line as services resume for first time in half a century from 20 November

- The Dartmoor Line between Okehampton and Exeter will officially reopen for year-round services on 20 November, ahead of schedule
- It is the first former line to open under the Government's Restoring Your Railway manifesto commitment.
- Tickets will go on sale on 12 October for trains running every 2 hours, increasing to hourly from May 2022
- Passengers travelling between Crediton and Exeter will also benefit from an increase in service frequency

For the first time in nearly 50 years, regular passenger services will run on the Dartmoor Line, connecting Okehampton to Exeter. Services will launch on Saturday 20 November, marking the first reopening under the Government's Restoring Your Railway programme which is exploring ways to return old lines and stations to service across the country.

The route will connect Exeter St Davids, Crediton and Okehampton providing a launchpad for visitors to explore Dartmoor and regional links for local commuters. Around half of services, including at peak times, will also carry on to Exeter Central. The reopening of the route is expected to boost local businesses, the tourism sector, and provide greater access to education and work for thousands of people who live locally.

The Department and its partners have accelerated the reopening of the railway, delivering passenger services in only 9 months from the original funding being approved to entry into service, and saving money at the same time. As the Government continues its overhaul of the railways following the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, more lines and stations will be re-opened.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

"The project, funded by over £40million from the Department for Transport, is part of the wider campaign to reverse catastrophic cuts to the rail network primarily led by the Beeching axe.

"The work has been a successful collaboration between the DfT, Network Rail, GWR, Devon County Council, Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, and local campaigners and MPs."

Mark Hopwood, GWR Managing Director, said:

"Working with our partners at Network Rail and in the community we have long campaigned for the re-opening of this important local line, and we are really looking forward to being able to start running passenger trains again.

"With the start of services now just over a month away, this announcement is great news for communities surrounding Okehampton who will once again be connected to the national network.

"We've been working hard with Network Rail and local partners, including Devon County Council, to help prepare the line and the station at Okehampton for reopening on 20 November and this work will continue after 20 November as we develop the station facilities.

"The project to re-open the line is already helping to bring social and economic benefits to the local area reinforces the positive impact the railway can have on the communities we serve."

Mike Gallop, Network Rail's Western route and strategic operations director, said:

"We're delighted that we've reopened this much needed railway line for passenger services in just 9 months and ahead of schedule.

"Our team has worked incredibly hard alongside our project partners GWR, Devon County Council, Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership and the local community to ensure this railway is ready to open.

"We can't wait to welcome passengers back to the Dartmoor Line after an absence of nearly 50 years, linking passengers to Exeter and services to the rest of the country."

Regular passenger services will run on the route for the first time since 1972 following years of campaigning by local supporters. Since 1997, the line has only been open during the summer.

To make this possible, Network Rail's team of engineers has worked tirelessly to deliver a huge programme of work to physically reopen the line in just 9 months, including laying 11 miles of new track and installing 24,000 concrete sleepers and 29,000 tonnes of ballast in record time.

Repairs have also been made to 21 structures along the route including 4 bridges and a range of works including vegetation clearance, earth and drainage works and fencing are ongoing in preparation for the return of regular services.

More work will be carried out over the winter including further work on the station buildings to enable the restoration of the café and other facilities.

Tickets can be purchased from today (12 October) from GWR ([www.gwr.com](http://www.gwr.com)), and the timetables will also go live on this date.

## Dartmoor Line

The line between Exeter and Okehampton originally opened in October 1871. The last regular train service operated in 1972, when passenger services were withdrawn by British Rail.

After 1972 the line remained in use to serve Meldon Quarry, situated west of Okehampton, a supplier of railway ballast and related materials.

The line between Coleford Junction and Meldon Quarry was sold at the time of privatisation in the 1990s to the quarry owner, now known as Aggregate Industries. It was reacquired by Network Rail earlier this year.

## Train service details

Journey time between Exeter and Okehampton will be approximately 40 minutes.

Station Facilities will include new information screens, a Help Point, smartcard validation points, ticket vending machines, and a waiting room.

GWR operated services will run between Exeter and Okehampton, initially providing a service every two hours, which will rise to an hourly service from Spring 2022.

Exeter is a key hub for the wider region and the new rail service will provide access for education, work, shopping as well as other opportunities on offer in the city. Customers will also be able to connect at Exeter St Davids for trains to a host of destinations including London, Bristol, the North of England and Scotland.

Okehampton is a historic town situated on the northern flank of Dartmoor National Park. It also marks the start of The Granite Way, an 11-mile multi-use trail connecting Okehampton with Lydford.

The new train service will open up sustainable access to various leisure opportunities in the town and surrounding areas. The bus service to Tavistock is being amended to connect with trains at Okehampton.