

Spectacular signal box bug house unveiled

By [Alan Quick](#) | Editorial Manager / Photojournalist | Sunday 7th December 2025 3:33 pm



North Devon MP Ian Roome and Barnstaple Mayor Janet Coates with the Barnstaple Junction Bug House. (Tim Steer)

RAIL users of Barnstaple Station may have recently spotted a newly installed signal box on platform two. Is this a return to the past when the station was called Barnstaple Junction and had two signal boxes, or something else?

Thanks to the successful application by the Friends Of Barnstaple Railway Station (FOBRs) to this year's GWR Customer and Community Improvement Fund, the group were able to commission Braunton Mens Shed to build a bespoke large scale bug house.

After half a year of negotiating the design, permission was granted by Network Rail to unveil the final installation in front of local dignitaries.

The mayor of Barnstaple and the North Devon MP were greeted by the FOBRs and Braunton Mens Shed volunteers who escorted the dignitaries onto platform two and showed them the fine award-winning work that the platform had achieved this year (Including South West in Bloom awarding Barnstaple station "Outstanding" for the "It's in your neighbourhood" category).

Barnstaple may be one of over 2,500 railway stations in the UK but it stands out as one that is remembered.



Some of those who attended the Signal box unveiling at Barnstaple. (Rob Dark)

Cllr Janet Coates, Mayor of Barnstaple, said: "It was an honour to officially unveil the Barnstaple Junction Bug House, created by the Branton Men's shed with the local community in mind. This addition complements the ongoing improvements at Barnstaple Railway Station thanks to the 'FOBRs' and reflects the Town Council's strategic priority on its commitment to a cleaner, greener Barnstaple".

Harriet Sargent, Network Rail Customer Support Manager (Community Rail), said: "Barnstaple Railway Station continues to be a shining example of community collaboration. This latest addition is a delightful enhancement to the Community Rail licence area, creating a welcoming environment for both regular passengers and visitors. It stands as a true testament to the dedication and hard work of the Friends of Barnstaple Railway Station, whose projects are consistently delivered with efficiency and a strong focus on community benefit."

David Whiteway, GWR Regional Development Manager for the West, said: "The Customer and Community Improvement Fund is a fantastic opportunity for us to invest in our communities through projects that make a real difference at a local level."

"We loved how this project by the FOBRs exemplifies how strong community partnerships can enhance the passenger experience and celebrate local heritage. Through the dedication of the group and the craftsmanship of Branton Men's Shed, this installation is not only visually striking but also a testament to collaboration and innovation. We are proud to support projects that make stations welcoming, memorable spaces for everyone."

Ian Roome, the North Devon MP said: "It was fantastic to celebrate Branton Community Men's Shed's latest project at Barnstaple Station recently. Commissioned by the brilliant (FOBRs), they've created a bug box in the shape of a signal box. It looks superb and is such a fun, clever addition to the station to go alongside the two carriage planters that went in earlier in the year."

"Little projects like this make a big difference in both sprucing up the station and supporting local wildlife - it shows the pride people have in our town. Huge thanks to the Friends of Barnstaple Railway Station, who have done so much for the station over many years, and to everyone at Branton Community Men's Shed for bringing this to life. It's a great example of community creativity in action!"

"Recent closures and constant disruption on the North Devon Line have shown that a fare freeze on its own isn't enough, which is why the campaign to improve it is so important.

More than 1,500 people have now signed our petition to future-proof the Tarka Line against the overcrowding and bad-weather chaos we've seen in recent weeks. I recently met the Managing Director of GWR and am calling on the Government to back a long-term plan for a reliable, affordable railway.

"My thanks to all the local authorities and councillors, regional and local rail organisations (including the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance) who've agreed to work together on a joint effort. Let's push for a service that actually works for North Devon!"



The bug house signal box unveiled on platform two at Barnstaple Railway Station. (Rob Dark)

Tim Steer, Friends Of Barnstaple Railway Station chair, said: "Fifty-five years ago, Barnstaple Junction was renamed Barnstaple when it lost its line to Ilfracombe. At the start of this year, our station group was successful in applying to GWR's Customer and Community Improvement Fund for a project to enhance the environment of Barnstaple railway station.

"We have been collaborating with Network Rail, GWR and the Braunton Mens Shed on the signal box design and we were delighted to unveil the finished result in front of the Mayor of Barnstaple and the North Devon MP.

"An interesting fact about the signal box is that the Marland bricks that make the base were donated from Chelfham station by the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway group - they are recycled from when the viaduct was restored in 2000.

"The Braunton Mens Shed workshop is a railway carriage, how brilliant was it to find out they built the signal box inside repurposed railway property!

"The North Devon line continues to rapidly grow in usage, with the 12 stations' total footfall up 63% since the year before the pandemic, and we know that this bug house will excite those users waiting for the next train and users arriving at Barnstaple. A special thanks to the North Devon MP who is campaigning to modernise the performance of the line for the existing and future rail users."