

Quirky new arrival at Devon train station platform

'It looks superb and is such a fun, clever addition to the station'

DevonLive

NEWS By [Lewis Clarke](#)

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A group photo during the official unveiling of the new signal box bug house at Barnstaple station.
(Credit: Rob Dark / Friends Of Barnstaple Railway Station)

Commuters and travellers are used to seeing trains at the platform, but a new miniature arrival is designed to attract a very different type of passenger.

The tiny addition is intended to support local biodiversity while celebrating the unique history of the railway.

Rail users at Barnstaple station may have recently spotted the bespoke large-scale bug house, designed in the shape of a signal box, on platform two. The installation was commissioned by the Friends of Barnstaple Railway Station (FOBRs) following a successful application to the GWR Customer and Community Improvement Fund.

The group worked with the Braunton Men's Shed to build the structure, which was unveiled in front of local dignitaries after six months of design negotiations with Network Rail.

The unveiling comes as the station celebrates being awarded "Outstanding" in the "It's in your neighbourhood" category by South West in Bloom. Cllr Janet Coates, mayor of Barnstaple, was greeted by volunteers before officially opening the site.

Cllr Coates said: "It was an honour to officially unveil the Barnstaple Junction Bug House, created by the Braunton 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 Sergent, Network Rail customer support manager (community rail), said the station continues to be a "shining example of community collaboration.

Harriet added: "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.

The project was supported by GWR as part of an effort to invest in local communities. David Whiteway, GWR regional development manager for the West, said the fund is a "fantastic opportunity" to make a real difference.

David said: "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 Braunton Men's Shed, this installation is not only visually striking but also a testament to collaboration and innovation".

Mr Roome, North Devon MP, also attended the event and praised the "community creativity" on display. Mr Roome said: "It was fantastic to celebrate Braunton 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.

He noted that such projects show the pride people have in the town while supporting wildlife, but used the occasion to highlight broader issues on the Tarka Line. Mr Roome added, "Recent closures and constant disruption on the North Devon Line have shown that a fare freeze on its own is not 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 have seen in recent weeks.

The bug house itself features historical details, including a base made of Marland bricks donated from Chelfham station by the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway group. These were recycled from the 2000 viaduct restoration.

Roger Byrom, Braunton Men's Shed chair, said the project felt right as their own workshop is located in a refurbished railway carriage. Roger said: "Another great day for the Men's Shed, when we finished off the last of our projects at Barnstaple Railway Station. When they asked us if we would be interested in this project, we were delighted to say yes.

Tim Steer, Friends of Barnstaple Railway Station chair, noted that the installation comes fifty-five years after the station was renamed from Barnstaple Junction.

Tim said: "The North Devon line continues to rapidly grow in usage, with the twelve 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.



The bug house features a base made of recycled Marland bricks donated from Chelfham station.
(Credit: Rob Dark / Friends Of Barnstaple Railway Station)



The installation was designed to mirror the historic signal boxes of Barnstaple Junction.
(Credit: Rob Dark / Friends Of Barnstaple Railway Station)



The bespoke signal box bug house has been installed on platform two to support local biodiversity.
(Credit: Rob Dark / Friends Of Barnstaple Railway Station)



Mr Roome and Cllr Coates officially unveil the new bug house.
(Credit: Tim Steer / Friends Of Barnstaple Railway Station)



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