

## Community groups work together on historical addition to station



### North Devon Journal

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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 visitor.

Passengers at Barnstaple railway station may have recently spotted the bespoke 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 bug house 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.

Councillor Janet Coates, mayor of Barnstaple, was greeted by volunteers before officially opening the new facility.

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."

Roger Byrom, chair of the Braunton Men's Shed, said the project felt right as their own workshop was a refurbished railway carriage.

"When they asked us if we would be interested in this project, we were delighted to say yes," he said.

FOBRS chair Tim Steer said the installation came 55 years after the station, previously Barnstaple Junction, was renamed.

"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," he said.

Harriet Sergent, Network Rail's local customer support manager for Community Rail, said the station continued 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," she said.

"It stands as a true testament to the dedication and hard work of the FOBRS, whose projects are consistently delivered with efficiency and a strong focus on community benefit."

The project was supported financially by GWR as part of an effort to invest in local communities.

David Whiteway, GWR regional development manager for the West, said the fund provided a "fantastic opportunity" to make a real difference: "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."

North Devon MP Ian Roome also attended the event and praised the "community creativity" on display.

"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 said, adding that such projects showed both the pride people had in the town and their desire to support wildlife.