

Barnstaple railway station to receive environmental enhancements

Funding secured through GWR scheme will support new community-led improvements at North Devon's busiest station

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Barnstaple Train Station - Credit: Submitted

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Barnstaple railway station is set to benefit from a series of environmental improvements, following a successful funding bid by a local volunteer group.

The Friends of Barnstaple Railway Station (FOBRS) have secured support through Great Western Railway's Customer and Community Improvement Fund (CCIF).

The enhancements will include interpretation boards celebrating the station's history, new planters to brighten the platforms, and a specially designed bug house to support local biodiversity.

The fund, approved by the Department for Transport, invites applications from community groups across the GWR network to help improve local railway environments.

FOBRS chair Tim Steer said he submitted the application on behalf of the committee earlier this year and described the news as "amazing".

He said: "The FOBRS committee work with GWR and Network Rail at making sure that the volunteers are working safely, comply to training and guidelines. The news of this funding means we can now

improve aspects of the station environment. We have now instructed potential teams to construct our designs that will be unveiled later this year.

“We are going to make sure the history of Barnstaple railway station is remembered as well as joining this year’s national celebrations of two hundred years of the railway network. We hope to start more Community Rail Network projects to study the station history and how sustainable the railway is. This funding from GWR can help make sure these community projects will happen.”

GWR confirmed the success of the bid in an email to Mr Steer. In the message, Emma Morris, Senior Community Impact Manager at GWR, wrote: “Thank you for your bid to our Customer and Community Improvement Fund for your project ‘Joint railway Anniversary project’.

“We were heavily oversubscribed again this year and sadly we will not be able to fund every application, however, I am delighted to say that your project scored really highly, and we would like to take it forward.

“Congratulations on being one of our successful projects. We are so pleased that you put the bid in, and we really look forward to working with you.”

The station, which celebrated its 170th anniversary last year with a ceremony and festival at Barnstaple’s historic Pannier Market, has seen consistent passenger growth.

The North Devon line, commonly referred to as the Tarka Line, continues to attract high usage, prompting renewed interest in railway investment across the region.

In 2023, GWR approved a CCIF bid to jointly fund, alongside Railfuture and the Tarka Rail Association, an Initial Business Case to explore a possible extension of the Barnstaple to Exeter line through to Bideford.

The station has also earned national recognition for its upkeep, with FOBRS volunteers securing top-level environmental awards for four consecutive years.

The group meets weekly and is currently encouraging new members to join and support their ongoing work.

The latest funding comes as GWR prepares to introduce class 175 trains, recently cascaded from Wales, on the Barnstaple to Exeter route to improve service standards.