

Historic signal box successfully dismantled for new life at heritage railway

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Eight days of engineering works to get ready for railway platform extensions for new longer trains – including dismantling a historic signal box – are now complete.

Platforms at Greater Anglia's stations on the Hertford East line need to be made longer so that the train company's new commuter trains can fit when they are ten carriages long.

An old disused signal box at Hertford East station had to be removed to make way for a longer platform.

In a project partly funded by the Railway Heritage Trust, the signal box was dismantled piece by piece so it can be rebuilt at Leyburn, North Yorkshire, as part of the heritage Wensleydale Railway.

Each piece was carefully catalogued, removed and packed on flat bed lorries ready to be transported to North Yorkshire.

Even some of the original foundations were removed as part of the meticulous removal project.

While the line was closed, engineers carried out survey works in preparation for the platform extensions at Rye House, St Margarets, Ware and Hertford East, which will take place next year.

Jamie Burles, Greater Anglia managing director, said: "Thank you very much to all customers for their patience during these works.

"We are very pleased that a little piece of East Anglian heritage will find a new life in North Yorkshire as the railway continues to change and evolve.

"New five-carriage trains are already running on the line for some services. After we have made the platforms longer they will be able to run as ten carriages at busier times of day, giving customers even more seats."

Andy Savage, executive director of the Railway Heritage Trust, said: "We have been concerned about the listed signal box at Hertford East for many years and that it has not been possible to find a local use for it.

"With the need to relocate it for a new platform this provided the perfect opportunity to not only relocate it, but also give it back to its original purpose of controlling the movement of trains. We have been very happy to support this project financially."

Nigel Park, Wensleydale Railway Association chairman said: "The Wensleydale Railway is grateful to Greater Anglia and the Railway Heritage Trust for their grant of £80,000 towards the restoration costs of the Hertford East signal box.

"The Victorian signal box will be carefully restored, largely by volunteers, to its original condition at Leyburn on the Wensleydale Railway. The signal box is a key part of the site development where it will be made fully operational again, controlling train movements through the station.'

Ellie Burrows, Network Rail's route director for Anglia said: "Relocating the old Hertford East signal box will help keep the railway safe and reliable for passengers for years to come and enable Greater Anglia to bring in its longer modern trains. As the custodian of many historical signal boxes, we try and work with industry partners to give them a new lease of life and be enjoyed for years to come."

Greater Anglia's new commuter trains are longer with more seats, plug and power points, improved accessibility features including an accessible toilet on every train, better passenger information screens and dedicated cycle spaces.

The trains are the first in the UK to have underfloor heating which works with an overhead heating and ventilation system to improve passenger comfort and increase foot room for passengers sitting in window seats.

They feature regenerative braking which delivers energy back into the electrical supply network, rather than wasting the energy through heat, as is the case with conventional systems.

Photo and video credit: Keltbray/Greater Anglia