

Redundant railway room is turned into thriving community space

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A redundant room at Havant station has become the home of a thriving new community asset, after South Western Railway (SWR) agreed to hand the space over to local Community Interest Company (CIC), Solent Remade.

The Old Parcels Office at the station was last used as the station's taxi office but, as it was unlikely to be used for that purpose again, SWR sought to find a community use for it. After working closely with Solent Remade, SWR agreed to lease the space to the CIC on a peppercorn rent, so that they could use it as a hub for resource repair, reduce or reuse projects.

The refurbishment of the space was supported by Community Rail Network, Hampshire CC and UnLtd. A refit is currently underway by Bluehouse, with volunteers joining in to decorate the interior. This has been made possible by a Small Grants Fund grant from Community Rail Network.

The refit may not be finished yet, but Solent Remade was able to pilot its first monthly bike basics drop-in session on Monday 16 May and is already using the space to store equipment for Havant Repair Café and the Solent Cycle Project, as well as items for their emerging 'Library of Things' - a social enterprise that

helps people save money and reduce waste by affordably renting out useful items. It hopes to hold more such events as it attracts new supporters and volunteers.

Solent Remade is just one of the many community groups which are finding new and practical uses for redundant SWR spaces which might otherwise lie vacant for years.

Anne Sayer, a Director of Solent Remade, said:

“We can’t express our gratitude enough to all those organisations that have helped us make this project a reality – especially South Western Railway and Community Rail Network, without whom it really would not have been possible”

“Solent Remade is looking forward to using the space to make a real difference in the local community”.

Paula Aldridge, SWR’s Community Rail Manager, added:

“We are absolutely delighted to have been part of this project, and to help Solent Remade find a new home.

“This is another great example of how empty spaces at stations can be transformed for the benefit of the local community”.