

Biodiversity projects flourish across Scotland's Railway

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ScotRail has marked World Environment Day (Monday, 5 June), by celebrating its ongoing partnership with community volunteering charity, The Conservation Volunteers, which has seen a number of biodiversity projects flourish across Scotland.

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) provide volunteer parties to work with ScotRail staff to help carry out biodiversity improvements in the community.

Since the partnership began in 2017, TCV teams have visited four ScotRail depots at Yoker, Shields, Bathgate, and Haymarket, where they've helped to create wildflower spaces, orchards, bird boxes, bug hotels, hedgehog houses, and ponds. Change to land management at Yoker depot has even led to field voles inhabiting several embankments.

To date, ScotRail's biodiversity improvement programme has:

- Invested £40,000 annually supporting more than 50 biodiversity projects.
- Enhanced habitats for foraging insects and animals.
- Created nine wildflower meadows and three ponds.
- Delivered almost 2,000 dedicated volunteer hours on biodiversity projects.
- Upskilled more than 190 volunteers in local communities.
- Increased awareness of the importance of biodiversity among school children.
- Promoted the reuse of waste materials at ScotRail stations and depots.
- Carried out Citizen Science sessions to record species data.
- Improved access to wildlife spaces at depots for staff.

During the past year, this has seen volunteers:

- Install six 'homes for nature'.
- Maintain 640m² of wildflower meadows.
- Build 45m of new path.
- Plant 108 trees and 320 wildflower bulbs.
- Develop 60m² of food growing plots.

The benefits of the programme extend beyond the environmental impact, as volunteers improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing by being outdoors, active, and connected with others.

The train operator also has more than 250 stations and over 1,000 volunteers across the country enrolled in its Adopt-a-Station volunteering programme.

From Dyce to Dalry, volunteer groups work to improve the physical environment of their local station which includes activities such as installing planters, station gardens, information boards, and much more.

Volunteer groups who have adopted stations are as varied and unique as the stations they adopt, and include individual volunteers, local community groups, charities, schools, businesses, and local organisations such as the NHS.

Nicole Tyson, ScotRail sustainability manager, said: "It's great to see our biodiversity improvement programme continue to flourish.

"These projects help more than just the environment as by volunteering outdoors, it also enhances mental wellbeing through increased contact with nature. There are social benefits of group activity too, which helps people contribute something positive to their community.

"We recognise the part we have to play meeting Scotland's ambition to be a world leader on tackling climate change, and we're fully committed to creating a sustainable railway and which contributes to an environmentally aware Scotland."

Photo credit: ScotRail