

# Rail volunteer scheme continues to thrive despite pandemic

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An initiative to link communities with their local rail station continued to attract volunteers last year, despite the challenges of lockdowns and travel restrictions.

Greater Anglia's Station Adoption scheme attracted 23 new 'station adopters' in 2020 – 12 of them in December alone.

The 'Adopt a Station' scheme enables individuals or groups to adopt their local railway station and contribute to its use and welfare for the benefit of their community.

Greater Anglia provides funding to help station adopters cover the costs of small projects, such as the creation of station gardens and or to purchase materials to help improve the station environment.

Over the years, station adopters have played an active role in keeping stations looking good through inventive gardening projects, wildlife-friendly initiatives, creative community art projects, taking part in station 'health checks', being the eyes and ears of their station and encouraging links between the station and local communities.

The most recent stations to welcome new adopters are Diss, Elsenham, Manningtree, North Fambridge and Wymondham.

Alan Neville, Greater Anglia's Customer and Community Engagement Manager, who manages the scheme, said: "Station adoption is about empowering local people to ensure their local rail station plays its part in benefiting the community.

"Our station adoption volunteers have worked with us on some fantastic projects over the years such as opening a small museum in a redundant station building, growing fruits and herbs in tubs for the community to use and planting wildflowers to help local bee and butterfly populations.

"They make such a positive difference their local area through the Station Adoption scheme and I think this is why we are seeing it grow in popularity.

"It is very rewarding to work with community groups and see their plans comes to fruition and I look forward to welcoming even more new adopters in 2021."

Greater Anglia now has over 250 adopters at over 130 stations across Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

There are still 22 stations available for adoption on the Greater Anglia network. They are: Braintree Freeport, Brimsdown, Chelmsford, Cressing, Elmswell, Enfield Lock, Great Chesterford, Great Yarmouth, Harlow Mill, Harlow Town, Harwich International, Meridian Water, Newport, Ponders End, Rye House, Stansted Airport, Sawbridgeworth, Southend Victoria, Southminster, Stansted Mountfitchet, Tottenham Hale and White Notley.

Greater Anglia hopes that individuals or community organisations who have an interest in improving their local rail station and bringing it into the heart of the community will come forward with their ideas.

Anyone interested should contact [Alan.Neville@greateranglia.co.uk](mailto:Alan.Neville@greateranglia.co.uk).

*Photo credit: Greater Anglia*