

South Western Railway celebrates blooming beautiful stations

October 24, 2022



South Western Railway (SWR) has hosted the 'Stations In Bloom' awards, which recognised staff and volunteers for their work nurturing stations across the railway network into neighbourhood hubs and havens for nature.

The ceremony was held at Castle Gardens in Sherborne, kindly sponsored by The Gardens Group, and celebrated all the good that a train station does to add value to local communities and environments. It was attended by SWR managing director, Claire Mann, who participated in the presentations.

Paul Aldridge, community rail manager for South Western Railway said: "It is wonderful to see so many of our station adopters, colleagues and volunteers coming together to create a pleasant environment for our customers.

"The awards are a fantastic way to celebrate the work that they do all year round, and I am extremely proud of all their dedication."

Based on the guiding principles of community involvement, sustainability, and horticultural prowess, the

event was culmination of a summer of judging which considered floral displays, the range of activities by volunteers, positive environmental impact, community engagement with schools and other local groups, and coordination with onward transport links.



‘Stations In Bloom’ is shaped around the competition run by the [Royal Horticultural Society](#). It was organised by [Blackmore Vale Line Community Rail Partnership](#), which has been helping to spotlight the great work of station volunteers and railway staff since its inception in 2016. All the stations that were judged were commended in some way for their contributions to the betterment of the railway.

SWR now has a dozen community rail partnerships. These voluntary groups work alongside SWR staff to bring stations back into the heart of the community, and to encourage communities to use their stations not just as means for travel, but as local focal points and shared assets.

The awards ceremony this week followed the recent SWR ‘Big Bulb Plant Out’ during which staff and volunteers planted over 17,000 bulbs at 35 locations across the operator’s network as part of National Customer Service Week.

Locations for the mass planting included West Byfleet, Horsley and Effingham Junction, Alton, Brookwood, Wool, Winchester, and more.

The daffodils, tulips, crocuses, and other flowers will breathe new and colourful life into stations when they

begin to bloom in the springtime next year, helping to make the SWR network more welcoming and enjoyable for customers.

They will also enhance the biodiversity of the network in line with SWR's commitment to improve sustainability, providing new havens for bees, butterflies, and other insects and species to thrive and support the local natural environment.

The bulbs were distributed by SWR apprentices who joined in the planting, alongside SWR staff and management, and many of the network's station adopters. Some stations also benefited from an autumn clean.

Helping to foster community spirit on the railway is a key priority for SWR, which recognises how important it is for its stations to be well maintained and cared for, to reflect and strengthen the pride that local people have for their areas.