

Stations set to go green as rail companies make sustainability pledge

April 21, 2021



More solar panels, wildflower zones and electric vehicle charge points may be appearing at railway stations across the country as all rail companies responsible for managing railway stations today pledged their commitment to making stations more sustainable.

The pledge was made as the rail industry published a new Sustainable Stations: Best Practice Guide, which details ways in which train operators can meet this commitment in support of global goals of decarbonisation, reducing waste and supporting local plant and animal life. The document will also be used by train companies when agreeing future contracts.

Network Rail, which is responsible for managing 20 railway stations, including some of the nation's biggest and busiest, have also committed to make their stations more sustainable by meeting targets set out in the Network Rail Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

The pledge, printed on the new Sustainable Stations Guide reads:

'In support of global efforts to decarbonise, reduce waste and increase biodiversity, we the undersigned,

as the operators of Britain's railway stations, are committed to making our stations more sustainable. In doing so we will be informed by best practice set out in this guide and Network Rail's Environmental Sustainability Strategy.'

Robert Nisbet, Director of Nations and Regions for the Rail Delivery, said: "Stations are at the heart of countless communities across Britain and many have already undertaken incredible work to reduce waste, cut carbon and support wildlife. Rail is already a green way to travel but we know there is more we can do and through this pledge, rail companies have made clear they are up to the challenge."

There are currently 2,563 railway stations across Britain coming in many shapes and sizes, from big modern redevelopments to stunning examples of Victorian architecture and even single platforms serving more rural villages. The guide offers advice on the different ways stations can be made more sustainable with operators, transport bodies and government agreeing which will be most effective on a case-by-case basis as new management contracts are agreed.

The guide highlights best practice already employed at other stations including rainwater collection to cut water wastage at Birmingham New Street, solar panels at Accrington in Lancashire and dedicated wildflower zones at Perth to help local bee populations recover.

Railway stations are estimated to cover more than 20 square kilometres of land across Britain, an area around the size of Central London, and 85% of people in the UK live within 5km of a railway station. Therefore, work to make them more sustainable will be a big step forward in support of climate action and local wildlife.

Ensuring people return to rail travel will also be vital to secure a green economic recovery from COVID and avoid a spike in car use that would deal a hammer blow to Britain's net-zero carbon emissions. It is estimated that attracting people out of cars and onto trains by making fares simpler could add 300million rail journeys over the next ten years, preventing 1.2m tonnes of CO2 emissions from cars, while investment in HS2 is expected to cut 1million lorry journeys over a similar period by increasing space for rail freight on existing lines.

Photo credit: Rail Delivery Group