

Thetford station volunteers get funding for swift and bat boxes

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Volunteers have won funding to install swift and bat boxes at Thetford station in a bid to protect them from habitat loss.

Greater Anglia's station adopter group – who have developed a wildlife garden along the platforms – received a grant and planning permission from Breckland Council to fund six specially-designed boxes, and worked with Network Rail to install them at the top of the Victorian station building.

Swift and bat populations have severely declined in numbers over the last 25 years, due to habitat loss and swifts are now considered highly vulnerable.

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The group has installed six 'day and night' boxes which are designed to house swifts during the summer months and bats all year round. Each box has a nesting chamber for a pair of swifts and a recess in the

rear panel where bats can roost.

Alongside the boxes they have also installed a solar-powered swift call emitting device to improve the chances of the boxes being found and used. As swifts are loyal to their nesting sites, the group's long-term goal is to establish a swift colony.

Lead volunteer, Fiona Rhind, said, "We recently became a Wildlife Friendly accredited station for the work we have done on the platforms, and we want to continually do more to show just what can be achieved in terms of greater biodiversity in an urban environment.

"At Thetford station we've planted native hedges, established a wildflower area and installed 15 bird boxes – which we were delighted to see become home to blackbird and robin chicks this year.

"It's wonderful that we can now provide a refuge for swifts and bats as well – as our native species need all the help they can get. We're really grateful to [Breckland Council](#), [Greater Anglia](#) and [Network Rail](#) for supporting us in our aims to do everything we can to support our local wildlife."

Thetford station recently received a 'Wildlife Friendly' accreditation from [Greater Anglia](#) and [Norfolk Wildlife Trust](#) to formally recognise the achievements of its team of volunteer 'station adopters' to create a wildlife haven at the station.

James Hogg, [Norfolk Wildlife Trust](#) Corporate and Membership Development Officer, said: "The alarming decline in the abundance of wildlife and the plight of species under threat means that just protecting the nature we have left is not enough; we need to put nature into recovery, and to do so at scale and with urgency. We are working to create a nature recovery network across Norfolk – and with fellow wildlife trusts across the UK – to create more space for wildlife.

"This project with [Greater Anglia](#) is a fantastic example of how people can transform nature-poor areas into new nature-rich places – and change the way we think about land, seizing opportunities to help nature outside traditional nature reserves."

[Greater Anglia's](#) Customer and Community Engagement Manager, Alan Neville, said, "I'd like to thank the volunteers at Thetford for the incredible work they are doing to support biodiversity locally. The railway is increasingly recognised as an important corridor for wildlife and thanks to initiatives like this, stations are becoming a vital part of that corridor which helps wildlife to move around the landscape and become more resilient to the effects of climate change and habitat loss."

Rail stations across East Anglia are increasingly becoming havens for local wildlife thanks to the efforts of volunteers who last year transformed over 6,800 square metres of railway land into thriving wildlife gardens.

In a recent survey, [Greater Anglia](#) station adopters reported a wide range of creatures visiting their stations including many different types of butterflies as well as bees, slow worms, bats, foxes, deer and many varieties of birds, recording more than 200 different species.

Greater Anglia has pledged this land to WildEast, a nature recovery movement which aims to restore 20% of East Anglia back to nature by 2050 and has joined the rest of the rail industry in pledging to make stations across Britain more sustainable.