

Doncaster Station Triangle
Doncaster
Network Rail

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Pollinator

Project overview

A 12 acre site of derelict scrub land to the south of Doncaster Station has been transformed into a wild flower habitat capable of sustaining bees, butterflies and all manner of small wildlife. Doncaster Station is located within a highly urbanised and industrial area of the town where green space is at a premium. A team of 12 were involved in the Project initially including the local off track maintenance team in Network Rail and our contractor Cleartrack. Funding for this local initiative was provided by the Visual Impact De-vegetation Project being run from Network Rail's Route Office in York

What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

The conditions on site prior to this initiative were very poor for any kind of wild flower/wildlife sustainability.

Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?

During 2014 Network Rail embarked upon a large scale de-vegetation programme along the rail corridor removing trees and vegetation that affected safety. This was not welcomed by all lineside neighbours. So we wanted to give something back and believed this particular site to be perfect given it could be seen by the travelling public coming in from and out to Sheffield as well as the East Coast Mainline in and out of the town. Also local residents that overlook the Station would have something other than derelict land to look at



The Triangle prior to any works

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

To improve the area, the poor quality scrub was cleared to create a wildflower patch instead. Wildflowers are important for a whole range of insects, particularly pollinators. Ongoing management of the site in this way means the scrub will not re-develop, improving visibility for train drivers and safety for the ground maintenance teams and importantly providing permanent habitat for pollinator insects, especially bees that are currently under threat.

This is the first full year of flower for the site and signs are very encouraging that it will be successful. Before any work started a sample was taken to determine soil type, this returned a result of ph neutral which meant we were able to plant a 100% British wildflower mix made up of 1 x annual field poppy and 9 different perennials. This mix is perfect as it means the flowers should re-seed themselves and ongoing maintenance will be minimal with a regime that involves the strimming and mowing of the site and then raking the debris off the top to enable the flowers to come back stronger, this we have been advised by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust should be done bi-annually to get the best results.

Within the site we have utilised old sleepers and rubble from a demolished building as habitat for ground nesting birds and small reptiles. Already we have witnessed bees among the flowers. Running in parallel to this initiative the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust have a Green Corridor Project which includes the rail network and highways. As the location of this particular site is locked between two major arterial routes into and out of Doncaster the use of outside volunteers is not advised, but this does not exclude us from enlisting their help at other locations and we actively support the work of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. There is a second triangle at the same location where this initiative can be replicated to further enhance the area and we are actively looking at other sites along the infrastructure corridor where we can adopt the same policy.



The site in April 2016

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement

Further information

Once the site had been confirmed as suitable for planting an extensive programme of works began in the Autumn of 2014 to clear the site of small trees and scrub. It was then weed-sprayed and left until April 2015 to ensure the weed killer would have maximum effect without affecting the seeds. The seeds were sown at the end of April into May which was a little late to have any impact. The area was left to its own devices and in the spring of this year it really started to come into its own. Already the amount of bee activity had increased and during a site visit in late April we could hear bird song which was unheard of previously. We see no reason why this site cannot sustain both flora and wildlife for years to come with the right maintenance regime in place. It will continue to contribute to the local community as surrounding flats and houses will be able to see it as well as the travelling public. As part of our maintenance this year we need to "walk" in some yellow rattle this plant will stop too much grass from growing and taking over the site.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

I have always been passionate about biodiversity and trying to improve the environment around me. The railway infrastructure is not the easiest of environments to do this, however I saw an opportunity with this site to give something back to the local Community as well as improving the safety of workers and passengers.



Bees already taking advantage of the flowers