

Nest Construction - Whitburn

[Connecting Communities with the Environment] – a social performance case study

The project

Sand martins are a species of UK Conservation Concern, which nest in burrows excavated into sandy cliffs. At Whitburn, the annual collapse of natural nesting sites threatens the local population.

Starting in 2016, IP Signalling engineering, environment and construction teams designed new habitat, undertook surveys to aid planning and built the new nest site using their volunteer leave.



The key benefits delivered

Benefit to society: It was estimated that the survey, design and construction works for the nesting bank would have cost approximately £30,000. However £19,500 was saved when Network Rail stepped in as a partner organisation and provided survey and design services. For years to come, the local community will have an asset which will become a place for education, conservation and public enjoyment. This is particularly valuable within the area of North East England which has suffered economic hardship and a lack of investment.

Benefit to the business: The project has helped to build positive relationships with the local community and improve Network Rail's reputation with key stakeholders. The people of Whitburn see Network Rail has a key part of the community, and we have also seen an improvement in relationships with the National Trust. Linking this work to volunteer leave provided an opportunity for a team building day which helped to improve employee engagement and motivation.

Lessons learned

- Volunteering has proven to be highly effective in showcasing team members' skills that are unable to be represented in their usual role. Therefore, volunteer leave should be used to its full advantage to gain a greater understanding of colleagues' strengths and interests.
- Before works began, the project team went to view a similar build at Rutland Water and learned from this construction what to be cautious of to prevent a similar occurrence. The key lesson is to do research before starting a project and learn from past mistakes.

Who to contact for more information

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