Case study: Building a team volunteering culture – Scottish Water

Context

Building a team volunteering culture requires coordination, commitment and enthusiasm. At **Scottish Water**, the North Hub team has developed a culture of giving back through a mix of project-related volunteering, community partnerships and employee-led initiatives.

Based in Inverness, the North Hub capital investment team includes Scottish Water employees and supply chain partners delivering infrastructure projects across the North of Scotland. Since March 2025, Project Manager Campbell Simpson has taken on the challenge of volunteer champion to increase participation and coordinate opportunities for the wider team.

Volunteering activity

The Scottish Water Employee Volunteering Programme gives all employees 2 volunteering days per year covering five broad strands - Local Community, Environment, Education, Skills Based and WaterAid (charity partner).

Volunteering opportunities are organised through a North Hub volunteer calendar and email list, which is shared with employees and delivery partners.

Activities include both project-related volunteering and partnership-based opportunities, such as:

- Visiting local primary schools near project sites to deliver educational sessions.
- Supporting community events in areas where Scottish Water projects are taking place.
- Volunteering with charity partners including Highland Hospice and Trees for Life.
- Assisting seasonal initiatives such as Mission Christmas Warehouse activities organised by Cash for Kids.

Project Managers are encouraged to identify volunteering opportunities linked to their work, while the volunteer champion coordinates with partner organisations to organise dates and promote activities through monthly internal communications. North Hub employees are also encouraged to suggest volunteering activities.

Impact

For employees

Volunteering has provided opportunities to improve wellbeing, network with colleagues and delivery partners and make a meaningful difference. Some participants said:

- Andy Hugget (Team Leader): "It was personally rewarding to be able to help such an important local charity that has no government funding and supports vulnerable people to live a more independent life and make them feel valued."
- Kyle McNae (Specialist Graduate): “It provided an opportunity to meet new people and learn new skills in a different environment.”
- Andrew Surgeoner (Project Manager): "My volunteering experience provided a fresh perspective in understanding the positive difference these charities make to local communities. The variety of donated outfits over the Christmas period also provided a few good laughs with colleagues."
- Stuart McCulloch (Project Manager): “Volunteering is a rewarding experience, as we helped kids to understand where their water comes from, how it reaches their homes, and the importance of how small actions can make a big difference in saving water."
- Campbell Simpson (Project Manager and North Hub volunteering coordinator/ champion): “I personally get a great ‘feel-good’ moment when I see pictures of volunteers taking part in the various events we have organised!”

For Scottish Water

Increasing visibility and leaving a positive legacy through volunteering within the communities in which they are working has direct benefits to Scottish Water.

Project Manager Campbell Simpson explained: “Through my own experience in managing customer / community facing projects, those where we undertake meaningful volunteering and contribute to the local community in some way are far easier to manage and we generally experience a far warmer welcome from residents. To me, this demonstrates the benefit of engaging directly with communities and showing our caring side.

Volunteering is a positive opportunity for employees to feel good, do good and get a break away from their desk / normal day-to-day duties. Companies should make the time for their employees to take part, if they can manage it. Wellbeing is a corporate buzzword at the moment; however, the reality is that the positive feeling from helping at one of these events carries through into both work and personal life and shouldn't be understated.”

Volunteering with local charity partners also has wider benefits in terms of strengthening bonds between colleagues and supply chain partners through shared volunteering experiences in addition to the wellbeing impacts of making a positive contribution to people, communities and places.

For volunteer-involving organisations

Volunteer support has helped charities manage workloads and improve operational capacity.

Karen Duff, Corporate Fundraiser at Highland Hospice said: “Our partnership with Scottish Water has been extremely positive and has made a meaningful difference to our charity’s retail operations. Over the past year or two, their employees have provided regular support in our warehouse, helping to sort, organise, and prepare donated clothing and other items for sale in our shops. This practical assistance has significantly improved our efficiency, enabling us to process stock more quickly, maintain quality standards, and keep our retail outlets well supplied. Their support during busy periods has eased pressure on our core team and contributed directly to maximising shop sales, which are vital to generating funds for our charitable work. Overall, Scottish Water’s employee support has strengthened our operational capacity and positively impacted our ability to raise essential funds. We are sincerely grateful for their continued commitment and would like to extend our thanks to everyone involved for their time, energy and ongoing support.”

Shirlee Lumsden, Warehouse Manager added: “Everyone from Scottish Water who has come to volunteer has rolled their sleeves up and got on with any task asked of them which in turn relieves some pressure on the warehouse team. For me personally, I really like how they become part of the team for that day. They join in conversations, have a laugh, and become passionate about what we do. It’s a lovely thing to see and we are extremely grateful for your teams wanting to give us their time.”

Key learning

Key insights from Scottish Water’s experience with managing ESV include:

- **Identify a volunteering champion:** Having a dedicated coordinator helps maintain momentum and organise opportunities.
- **Promote the benefits of volunteering:** Sharing positive stories and photographs from previous events helps encourage participation.
- **Offer a range of activities:** Coordinating project-related volunteering alongside distinct charity partnerships appeals to different interests.
- **Coordinate centrally:** A shared volunteering calendar and email list make it easier for employees and partners to stay informed.



Scottish Water employees volunteering at Highland Hospice. Credit: Scottish Water.

Knowledge Gateway

The Knowledge Gateway is created and led by **Volunteer Scotland**

Volunteer Scotland

This is a regularly reviewed resource. If you have any suggested updates, please email Volunteer Scotland at **hello@volunteerscotland.org.uk**