

DATE	1 st June 2015
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Rail Professional

Opinion

Women in Rail

#notjustforboys: changing perceptions of gender and diversity in a man's world

Adeline Ginn says the Not Just for Boys campaign is a step in the right direction for generating diversity, but there is more to do in redressing the imbalance

The government launched its Not Just for Boys campaign in February 2015 to dispel the myth that some industries are for men only. It aims to support and inspire women to consider the broad range of careers open to them by encouraging others to raise awareness of the options available and by sharing their own inspirational stories.

The initiative was spearheaded by Esther McVey MP who, speaking at its launch, said 'I want to see more women be able to make the most of the opportunities that are out there today and in the future. Despite a record number of women in work they are still unrepresented in many of the industries - for example engineering, science and construction - where they can be the role models in traditionally male-dominated

jobs for the next generation.'

The Not Just For Boys campaign is a step in the right direction for generating diversity in business and industry. It sheds light on the fact that many girls are reluctant to move into careers such as technology, engineering, science and mathematics. The launch also painted a clear picture of the disparity between men and women in certain industries: there are just 272,000 women working in construction, compared to almost two million men; seven per cent of engineers, 20 per cent in broadcast media and 25 per cent of scientists are female.

Scarlett Mummery, a 22 year-old offshore geotechnical engineer, uses her experience to tell girls all about the travelling, and cultural insights that come with her job. While only 3.7 per cent of the oil and gas industry are women, she is clear that this is not down to her sector



being discriminatory or archaic. On the contrary, women are encouraged to apply. However many don't consider it as being relevant for them as the opportunities to do so are just not presented to girls at a suitable age, at different stages in their lives.

This isn't just an equality issue; business and industry needs women. Government research showed that 23.5 per cent of FTSE 100 board members now include women, up from 12.5 per cent in 2011. Britain's top companies have made enormous progress on gender diversity because they understand the value this brings to the bottom line.

Still a lot to do

So with this in mind, while the Not Just For Boys campaign is an admirable

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initiative, there is still a lot to do. Society and business needs to do more to rectify the historic gender structure that currently prevents many girls seeing the full scope of employment opportunities available to them.

A recent OECD report made it clear that gender differences among high performing students remain stubbornly high in these STEM subjects. In 2012, only 12 per cent of women entering university chose to study in science-related fields, compared with 39 per cent of men. To tackle this unbalance we must work to a long-term goal rather than a short-term solution by investing in women and girls before they enter the workforce. In this way we can lead innovation in education, helping more women to move into roles in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

“More can and should be done to assist women in developing the skills and confidence that will help them take a bigger lead in these industries poised for sustained job growth”

The age of cultural prejudice against women is dying. Yet too many girls and women are unaware that these jobs are



just as much for them as they are for boys. As great as this campaign has been at bringing government and industry together to change cultural perceptions, it is just the start. More can and should be done to assist women in developing the skills and confidence that will help them take a bigger lead in these industries

poised for sustained job growth. Let's continue to expel the myth that there are occupations that women can't do, and instead ignite the passions that lie within them to achieve what they are capable of. Adeline Ginn is founder of Women in Rail and general counsel at Angel Trains Visit: www.womeninrail.org LinkedIn: Women in Rail