

DATE	3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2014
USERS	7, 894

# Rail Professional

## The power of apprenticeships

**Jodi Savage** reports on the recent Routes into Rail launch, and looks at why apprenticeships are a win-win situation for youngsters, and rated more highly than other qualifications by employers

**R**outes into Rail has been created as a sub-group of the National Skills Academy for Railway Engineering (NSARE) Industry Promotion Steering Group (IPSG). The main aim for Routes into Rail is to support the rail industry by developing tools and initiatives to help increase the talent pool while promoting the rail industry as an attractive career choice. Women in Rail is a proud supporter of the group and we work closely with it on a number of initiatives, including the Joint University Presentation Programme which featured in last month's column.

## Women in Rail

in the next seven years and, perhaps unsurprisingly, 14 per cent of employees in the rail industry are under 30 years old compared with 24 per cent in the whole economy. However to me the most interesting figure highlighted was that during 2012/2013 27,155 students embarked on a degree in engineering while 66,410 opted to begin an engineering apprenticeship. Apprenticeships are currently a

employer. According to ICM Research's Apprenticeships Survey of Employers, 15 per cent of them believe that qualified apprentices are 15 per cent more employable than those with other qualifications.

### So what does the rail industry think about apprenticeships?

Network Rail runs a very successful three-year advanced apprenticeship scheme covering a range of disciplines while taking on, on average, 200 apprentices each year. Since the scheme began in 2005 NR has recruited a total of 2,103 apprentices with retention rates in the mid to high 90's. Currently five per cent of the intake of apprentices is female but NR has an aspiration to increase this to at least 12 per cent and, to this end, has a range of initiatives to inspire young women to select STEM subjects and choose a career in engineering. Network Rail itself has a number of noticeable appointments including former apprentices becoming maintenance engineers, project managers, designers, testers, and one is even a national aerial survey specialist in the Network Rail helicopter.

Bombardier also runs an apprenticeship scheme and has a fantastic success story with one of its young apprentices. Kirsten Gorton undertook a young apprenticeship scheme with Rolls Royce while still at school before joining Bombardier as an apprentice. Gorton has excelled by completing her four year apprenticeship in three years and has become the first female welder at Bombardier and the only female welder in Derby. Earlier this year Gorton met the Secretary of State for Education, Nicola Morgan, and made such a great impression that she was invited to speak



Last week I attended the Routes into Rail launch in London and heard from a number of speakers about why we should collectively be promoting the rail industry to the young generation and some of the ways in which we can do this. A number of facts, figures and statistics were offered throughout the presentations including that there will be £25 billion of investment in rail

hot topic perhaps fuelled by the Prime Minister who announced last month that a future Conservative government would use £1 billion in welfare spending cuts to fund three million new apprenticeships.

The Apprenticeships website ([www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)) states that after completing an apprenticeship 85 per cent will stay in employment with 64 per cent staying with the same

DATE	3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2014
USERS	7, 894

## Opinion

**'I strongly believe that apprenticeships are popular with both young people and businesses. The apprentices can earn a wage and gain valuable workplace skills while also achieving nationally recognised qualifications'**

on the main stage at the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham where she spoke about the importance of education and the great achievements you can accomplish with an apprenticeship. Gorton is passionate about encouraging more young women to join the industry and to consider undertaking an apprenticeship in engineering. As she said in her speech: 'I simply had to prove that a girl could do it too!'

Interestingly, Abellio also recently announced that as part of its new ScotRail franchise (which was announced

on 8th October and will commence operation in March 2015) it will have at least 100 apprenticeships on offer.

I work at Wabtec Rail which has run a very popular apprenticeship programme for many years. This year two of the eight apprentices we have employed are female – a first for us.

### **Popular with youngsters as well as business**

I strongly believe that apprenticeships are popular with both young people and businesses. The apprentices can earn a

wage and gain valuable workplace skills while also achieving nationally recognised qualifications. Businesses benefit by having a pool of people who have the correct skills and specific capabilities that their business needs. Furthermore apprenticeships are generally less expensive than recruiting and training experienced workers because of high recruitment costs plus induction and training expenditure.

We need to ensure that we are taking steps to make apprenticeship schemes not only available in the rail industry but appealing to both male and female applicants. We can do this through advertising and marketing material – ensuring that we show a diverse workforce in images that we use. We can also encourage our young stars to become ambassadors to promote the rail industry at local schools, colleges and university events to provide male and female role models who can inspire the next generation.

Jodi Savage is sales account manager at Wabtec Rail and a board member of Women in Rail

*LinkedIn: Women in Rail  
Twitter: @WomeninRail  
Visit: [www.womeninrail.org](http://www.womeninrail.org)*