



# 20 Most Inspirational Women in the UK Rail Industry 2016

A survey by Women in Rail



# Introduction

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In February this year, Women in Rail set out to find the most inspirational women working within the rail sector. We called for nominations from across the entire industry, and received profiles of nearly 200 women.

We knew this was an important job – to celebrate women in the UK railway sector who positively influence others and are an inspiration to peers, colleagues and those interested in joining the rail industry – but didn't realise just how difficult the task of shortlisting just 20 would be.

It was fantastic to read about the achievements, innovations and dedication of these women. Each nomination reminded members of the steering committee what a tremendous industry rail is to work in, and hopefully the stories of our top 20 will delight you, just as they did us.

To select our final 20, we looked at how many nominations they received, the impact they had on their colleagues and customers, as well as the influence they've had on the future of rail. From Costain's Community Relations Apprentice, Charley Whitelock's journey from GCSEs to co-ordinating sessions with local schools about engineering, to London Underground's Alero Abbey, who championed the introduction of new technology to the tube network, each woman has an inspirational story to tell.

It is time for rail to unite, to change perceptions of the industry, and open it up to a wider group of talent. Key to this is highlighting the fantastic female role models that the industry offers, and recognising the impact that they have on our day-to-day lives. So please enjoy this series of interviews, and share it far and wide with people young and old, to share a taste of the prodigious opportunities a career in rail can offer.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, sweeping initial 'A' followed by a long horizontal line.

**Adeline Ginn**

**Founder of Women in Rail**

# Alero Abbey – Area Manager, Green Park at London Underground

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*Alero Abbey has worked in the rail industry for 20 years. She joined as a Customer Service Assistant for Transport for London (TfL) straight after completing her degree in BSC Social Policy & Third World Studies.*

## **What does your job involve?**

I am an Area Manager for a busy and complex London Underground station and responsible for leading, motivating and developing teams of staff to deliver world class customer service. My role is to ensure that we efficiently achieve financial and commercial targets within the area, through cost optimisation and exploration of commercial opportunities.

I am also responsible for delivering real improvements in customer service and continuous improvement in safety, performance and staff development.

## **What is it about the rail industry that you love?**

I like the fact that I get the opportunity to engage with a diverse range of people as colleagues, team members and customers. The breadth of this experience has been enriching and transcends cultural differences, beliefs and life expectations. I have met CEOs, celebrities and most importantly for me, I have had the opportunity to cross paths with people who I have been able to inspire professionally as well as holistically and convince them that they have what it takes to fulfil their potential. In doing so, I have shaped my perception of life: that there may be barriers but the “glass ceiling” is my gift to shatter!

## **In your career what is the biggest challenge you have had to overcome?**

I think perception is something that many women in the rail industry have to deal with. People like to put limits on you and state “this is how far you can get”. It is important to blank out these messages and prove that women in this industry are extremely capable of pushing the limits. I have been in situations where people can’t believe when they meet me in person that I am a woman.

## **What do you think should be done to attract more women into rail?**

It is a mostly male dominated environment still, which can put many women off considering it for a career. Women with children and families don’t necessarily think of the rail industry as an ideal job. We need to redefine how we work and dismantle the age old tradition of 9-5, face to face and embrace more innovative platforms such as web conferencing and flexi-hours, especially for operational staff.

Alero was chosen because of her determination to improve customer service by empowering her staff through Change programmes such as Fit for Future and Every Journey Matters. Her dedication to supporting underprivileged children and encouraging them to aim higher in their careers choices has also inspired her colleagues, as she juggles a full time job and these other responsibilities seamlessly.

# Amelia Woodley – Thameslink Environment Manager at Network Rail

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*Amelia has worked in the rail industry for over 6 years. Before joining Network Rail in her current role, she worked in the construction industry on many projects, including the 2012 London Olympics.*

## **What does your role consist of?**

As an environment sustainability manager, my role is about helping create an industry that protects our environment, connects our communities and serves our customers whilst balancing our commercial priorities, to deliver value for money. My day is very varied, which makes it exciting, from being on a construction site to presenting to executive leaders. I work with designers, engineers, project managers and my job is to guide them on how to make major rail programmes more sustainable.

## **Has anyone inspired you during your career?**

I think the one person that springs to mind was a mentor I met a few years ago. He taught me to take the time to step back, self-reflect and challenge myself when making important decisions on my career. He encouraged me to ask myself: “Is this the right direction for me?”, “Do I want to try something else?” and “Is there an opportunity for me to stretch myself?”. Ultimately, by encouraging me to push myself out of my comfort zone, he helped me see challenges as a learning opportunity.

## **Do you think women handle leadership roles differently from men?**

I think everyone has a different leadership style. I look at leaders around me and learn from them the type of leader I would like, or would not like, to be. I look more at the person rather than the gender. Leadership is not really different across each gender. It's more personal, and you learn from what you see.

## **What advice would you give to other women in rail?**

You can do anything you want if you put your mind to it. Just because you and I are women doesn't mean that we can't climb up the career ladder to the top.

Amelia was chosen for her determination, as she works tirelessly to promote sustainable development. Her drive and energy was described as unrelenting, no matter what the challenge or barrier. A real team player, she was said to always find a solution to any problem, in a way that everyone around her feels valued. Amelia's extensive understanding of the business, matched with her skills and expertise in sustainability and leadership, is an inspiration to many within the industry. Her colleagues see her work as changing things for the better.

# Charley Whitelock – Community Relations Apprentice at Costain

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*Charley has worked in the rail industry for less than 2 years progressing in community relations following her role as a recruitment consultant for engineering professions.*

## **What does your role consist of and what is a typical day?**

My job role is to manage the relationship and minimise negative impacts between the implementation of our construction works and local stakeholders. This is achieved by keeping local stakeholders informed of our progress and any likely disruptions. It also involves supporting and organising community investment projects. Every day is different, whether it involves reporting, producing news articles, engaging with the project teams or preparing for community events.

## **How did you get in to rail?**

I left school after my GCSEs as I was not interested in going to university; my mind was set on starting work and earning money. I joined a recruitment company in a resourcer role and then moved into a full time position recruiting rail engineers overseas. I did this for almost two years and was keen to develop my career further. Following a referral from a friend, Costain offered me the opportunity to complete a higher level apprenticeship in public relations, taking my journey into the industry and to the next step.

## **What is it about the industry you love?**

I like the process of being a part of a project as it develops, there is real pride in working on a major infrastructure project and seeing it transform. I also love how my engineering knowledge has developed about the industry. A big part of my job is immersing myself in overcoming engineering challenges and communicating the information with our stakeholders.

## **What do you see as the challenges to attracting more women into rail, and what do you think has been done to make a difference?**

I feel there is a lack of knowledge about what the industry can offer to young people, especially women. I wasn't provided with information on the construction and engineering industry whilst I was in school (only being 21 now!), all I knew was that construction workers wore hard hats.

There are many roles and opportunities within the industry both office and site based which are not talked about enough at educational level.

Charley was chosen because she goes over and above by encouraging women to join the industry. Most recently, she coordinated a session with a local school to encourage young girls to consider engineering as a career. Not only this, she also led two events in London to promote the value of apprenticeships and networking. Charley only joined the industry in 2014 and is already described as a role model for other apprentices, having a positive impact on the projects she is involved in and the whole community.

# Claire Douglas – Driver at Direct Rail Services

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*Claire Douglas has been working in the rail industry for 15 years. She joined the railway as station staff, after seeing an advert in her local Fife Free Press, and qualified as a driver in 2008. She has also worked as a train conductor.*

## **What does your role consist of and what is a typical day?**

I work a ScotRail service around the Fife Circle. I drive freight and class one passenger trains. I usually start my shift at 12:50 and finish roughly at 22:00. This shift works better for me because I'm not an early riser. I definitely prefer the backshifts so I can get more done in the morning before I start work.

A typical day involves arriving at the depot, prepping the engine and testing the coaches' brake for departure. I leave the depot at about 15:00, emptying coaching stock on route to Edinburgh Waverley, where I bring the passenger carriages into service. At the end of the day, I drive the train back towards Edinburgh to bring the empty passenger coaches back to Mossend to be stabled for the early shift the next day.

## **What is it about the industry that you love?**

I love getting out and about and driving to different places: one day Edinburgh and Fife, and the next Inverness or down to Carlisle. There is a lot of variety, no one day is the same.

## **What would you say is the achievement you are most proud of?**

The progress I have made over the past 15 years. I moved on from being booking office staff, to being a train conductor, which was challenging. When I started going through the driver training program, I gave myself another hard challenge, but it was worth the effort.

## **What advice would you give to women and young girls considering a career in rail?**

If you think it's a job you'd like to do, do it. As with any career, it's not for everyone, so make sure you find out about the opportunities on offer and what they entail. If it's for you, you won't look back, I'm 15 years in and I couldn't imagine a better job.

Claire was chosen because of her professional diligence and her exceptional customer service in her role as a Driver at Direct Rail Services. Claire has successfully made the transition to a new form of duty a number of times in her career, most recently moving from driver to being in charge on the inaugural DRS operated commuter service for Fife. She is a strong beacon for other young female drivers in the industry.

# Clare Waller – Head of Timetable Development at Arriva UK Trains

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*Clare Waller joined the industry in 2001. She worked for Network Rail for 15 years in a number of roles across timetabling and strategic planning. She joined Arriva UK Trains in 2016 as Head of Timetable Development.*

## **What is it about the industry that you love?**

Without a doubt it's the variety of challenges. Since I joined the industry, 15 years ago, I don't think I've ever been bored. We've just got a really difficult challenge to solve as demand for rail travel continues to grow and our network is at, or is reaching, full capacity in many areas. That's why I like it, because I like being involved in trying to solve that problem.

## **In your career what's the biggest challenge you feel you've had to overcome?**

My confidence. When I joined the industry, I was daunted by how much everybody knew and how much experience they had. I spent a lot of time comparing myself to other people and doubting whether I had any value to add. I'm still a worrier, but I've learned that being inquisitive is a good thing. Ask a lot of questions, even if you think they are stupid ones. That's the only way you're going to form your own opinion and help improve things.

## **In your opinion what is the recipe for success, for team, career or otherwise?**

It's about enjoying it. If you find something you enjoy you're going to be far more likely to do it well. I'm really lucky, I've got a job that's challenging, about finding solutions and thinking about how to make things better, but I also get to lead a team and support and help people develop. I enjoy doing both. I've worked in some amazing teams and the best ones are formed where people know what they need to do and are trusted to deliver and work together to achieve a common goal.

## **Do you think women handle leadership roles differently from men?**

I think everyone leads in a different way, and it's not necessarily about gender. I believe having a diversity of approaches in leadership is massively important. Great leaders give people the freedom to be themselves. That's when you get the best out of them.

Clare was chosen for the vast influence she has had on her workforce throughout her career, what peers and colleagues refer to as the "Waller Way". She has worked tirelessly to deliver important projects such as Crossrail and Thameslink and built a strong and determined team around her, comprising people from both within the industry and other fields who, from the start of their careers, she trained, mentored and inspired to develop further, most of them still working in the rail industry today.

# Debbie Bewley – Sustainability and Assurance Manager at Carillion

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*Debbie Bewley has been in the rail industry for nearly 20 years. She graduated with a degree in Applied Environmental Science and has been working as a Sustainability Manager in the rail industry with a wide range of companies including Laing Construction, Schofield Lothian, Network Rail, Metronet, and now Carillion.*

## **What inspired you to join the rail sector?**

To be honest, after I graduated I didn't consider the rail sector as a career option as I knew very little about it. I was passionate about using my degree to make a difference in reducing environmental impacts in construction. I was introduced to rail after colleagues who were working on a project associated with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link asked me to support them to manage construction noise issues. I have been in the industry ever since. I wouldn't want to work anywhere else!

## **What is it about the industry that you love?**

Firstly, I love the wide range of people I work with who come from a vast variety of disciplines, such as designers, buyers, engineers, project managers and operations directors. I am always learning from their knowledge and experience of the rail industry. Secondly, I love the diverse nature of rail projects and the challenges of dealing with a wide range of issues. I can be working in both rural and urban locations which mean that at any one time I could be dealing with a broad range of environmental issues, from reducing noise impacts to local residents through to protecting wildlife and working with local communities to create social opportunities. I am also now part of the Senior Management Team for the Operations Director I work for and am involved in strategic health and safety culture change which is very exciting.

## **What advice would you give to young women and other women working in rail?**

My advice would be to always have the confidence to go for the opportunities that come your way. It might mean stepping out of your comfort zone – but it will be worth it. When I have done this it has helped me develop my skills and increased my confidence. Also, be yourself – don't feel you have to be 'one of the boys' to fit in. Your individual skills and qualities as a women bring another dimension to the team and this diversity helps consider issues in a more holistic way. It is possible for women to do great things in the rail industry, to enjoy a satisfying and challenging career in which there are great opportunities for continuous professional development and promotion, and where you can make a real difference.

Debbie was chosen because of the difference she consistently makes to the industry: her work has helped change attitudes, particularly in the area of safety, shifting the culture of working in rail and empowering the people most at risk on the front line to better protect themselves. Her achievements include developing a Health and Wellbeing programme and setting up a new Environmental Management Unit at Schofield Lothian. Her work has undoubtedly saved lives.

# Dyan Crowther – Chief Operating Officer at Govia Thameslink Railway

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*Dyan Crowther studied Geography at Middlesex University. She also has a Masters in Transport and Logistics from Salford University and is a member of the Chartered Institute for Marketing. Dyan began her career in rail as a Graduate in 1986, working for British Rail and Railtrack. Since then she has worked across a number of projects including HS1 and was Route Managing Director – London North West with Network Rail prior to joining GTR as Chief Operating Officer in September 2014.*

## **What does your role consist of and what is a typical day?**

I lead a team of over 5,000 people with the aim of providing a better railway for our customers every day. We are the largest train operator in the UK and carry 25% of UK passengers.

A typical day comprises overseeing operations, meeting stakeholders (MPs, Ministers), suppliers and doing strong governance. I also try to schedule thinking time, it is easy to become reactive in this role and it is important that senior leaders focus on the future as well as today.

## **What is it about the industry that you love?**

Change and people. I've been in the industry for 30 years and I love the fact that you have the opportunity to interact with people from all walks of life, be they a customer or colleagues.

## **Who inspired you during your career and why?**

Barbara Cassani. I heard her speak when she was part of the Olympic 2012 bid team. It was very inspiring – she explained why she had stepped down from leading the bid: because she was American and felt it would be detrimental to the UK's chances. It was a great example of someone putting the wider needs first, ahead of personal gratification – very humbling.

## **What advice would you give to young women and other women working in rail?**

Stay with it – work hard, network and challenge yourselves every day. Be prepared to work in all parts of the industry. TOC, infrastructure, ROSCO – they all make up the fantastic system of rail.

Dyan was chosen because of her ability to inspire women working across the whole rail industry. In the last decade Dyan has been a senior leader within large operational divisions, CEO of Northern Rail, Head of Operations at Network Rail, Route Managing Director of London North West route at Network Rail, which is the largest route in the country. Dyan has also shown real perseverance as she climbed up the ranks. From graduate trainee at British Rail, she has held a number of different roles within the industry, including station management.

# Helen Kellaway – Lead Systems Engineer at Siemens Rail Automation

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*Helen joined the rail industry in 1997, in a secretarial role for Siemens Rail Automation. In 2001 she moved into signalling design and undertook ONC and HNC in electrical and electronic engineering. After transferring into Research and Development in 2005, she undertook a 4 year full time Master's Degree in Systems Engineering at the University of Warwick. All of her further education was fully supported by Siemens Rail Automation.*

## **What does your role consist of and what is a typical day for you?**

I work in Research and Development, developing Control Centre products for metro and mainline railways. I write product requirements, which describe what it is that a product is required to do. Therefore I need to understand what the users need it to do. For instance, we may need to understand how a signaller interacts with the control centre. One way of doing this is by talking to signallers in order to understand what they need from the system and then we would document those requirements in a methodical way so that software and hardware developers can use them to build the control centre products. I also peer review others' work, talk to different product development teams and design teams about what they are working on and how that fits in with what I'm doing. Additionally I answer questions on product functionality of the control centre or operational scenarios if required.

## **What is it about the rail industry that you love?**

It's one of those places where you never stop learning. There are so many perspectives to understand and opportunities for you to improve yourself: you could be working in one department doing one thing, but there are always opportunities to do something else. There's always something new to learn about. I also like the network of friends you make - it's like a big family.

## **In your career what is the biggest challenge that you have had to overcome?**

The main thing was lack of self-belief. It's an odd thing because, I thought it would be the academic learning, given that I work in engineering, but it's not.

## **How do you balance home and work life and what advice would you give to other women?**

First, work out what you want. Turn off the TV and stop going on Facebook – read more books instead. Get organized, make a list of what you want, make them happen. Believe in yourself.

Helen was chosen because of the overwhelming support she has offered to young people in the industry. She runs lunchtime seminars and study groups for people taking their IRSE professional exams, supports members of Young Rail Professionals, and works with schools, talking about life in engineering and championing National Women in Engineering Day.

# Hollie Woodard – Project Manager at VolkerRail UK

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*Hollie Woodard joined the rail industry in 2005 as an Admin Supervisor for First Engineering. She moved into quantity surveying and joined VolkerRail in 2008, first as a Quantity Surveyor and as Project Manager in 2013.*

## **What does your role consist of and what is a typical day?**

My role consists of managing multi-disciplinary projects. I am currently working on an exciting scheme, looking to increase the train service frequency between Coventry Station and Nuneaton Station from hourly to half hourly and provide shuttle services between Coventry Station and Coventry Arena Station to support

major events.

A typical day will find me working from our Birmingham office, reviewing project deliverables against agreed timescales, reviewing design documentation and working with a wide variety of my peers to plan and safely deliver our projects. I will also attend progress meetings with our client and delivery partners and oversee the planning of early scheme activities such as site surveys.

## **In your career, what is the biggest challenge you had to overcome?**

Changing my role twice. When I decided I needed a change and more of a challenge I moved from a commercial role as a Quantity Surveyor into a role as an Assistant Project Manager. I was prepared to start from a junior role again to allow me to progress. Then more recently I have moved within the business to our major projects division which is a larger team with more reporting lines. Again this meant having a reduced amount of responsibility and being less involved in overall team decisions but ultimately, in the long term, it offered me overall betterment and increased progression opportunities.

## **In your opinion, what is the recipe for success – for a team, career, or otherwise?**

For me, a recipe for success individually and in teams, is about having integrity, delivering on any promises you commit to and generally doing what you say you are going to do. If everyone performs in their individual roles, then everyone succeeds and the team succeeds. Oh and a good gender balance helps!

## **What advice would you give to other women working in rail?**

Lead by example. Behaviours are mirrored so remember to behave in a way you want others to behave. Do your best, stay true to yourself and it will get noticed. Grab opportunities with both hands and remember, there are no jobs just for boys.

Hollie was chosen because she has dedicated the last 10 years of her career to gaining knowledge, moving from Admin Supervisor to Project Manager and in doing so, has inspired other younger people in her company with her hard work and dedication. Hollie does this whilst delivering fantastic performance, driving charitable causes within the business and speaking to girls about what rail and engineering could offer them as a career.

# Jane Simpson – Chief Engineer at Network Rail

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*Jane Simpson has worked in the rail industry for over 20 years, starting as an engineering graduate with British Rail. She has worked across a number of departments, including infrastructure and auto maintenance. Her current role is as Chief Engineer at Network Rail.*

## **What is it about the industry that you love?**

I really love the variety and the complexity. I love the idea that you can make complex simple. I also really love the fact that we leave a legacy, that's maybe the important thing about our industry. We leave something: we make people's lives better every day. We leave a legacy for the last and the next 150 years.

## **How do you balance your home and work life and what advice would you give to other women?**

I've got two children, a husband, and parents in their late 70s. I've got dogs, cats, chickens, and a pony, so I have quite a full life and a busy job. It is about a balance, it's not about work or home taking priority, it's a balance across the page. Certainly, don't feel guilty.

## **Has anyone inspired you during your career?**

Dyan Crowther, COO for GTR. One of the things she did was she forced me to think bigger. I like talking to my feet, and I hated giving presentations. But she forced me into doing that stuff, really building a profile for myself.

I'm not nervous, now, talking in front of 500 or 1000 people, but three or four years ago I absolutely would have been terrified.

## **What would you say is the achievement you are most proud of?**

In each role you take, you should try to push yourself into trying to achieve something new and something you're proud of. At Network Rail, I've made massive strides in increasing our pool of diversity in the organization.

## **Do you think women handle leadership roles differently to men?**

I think they do, women have different thought processes, different experiences that can impact outcomes. Which I think is important.

Jane was chosen for many reasons. The first is her route to rail: she left school at 16 to take up an electrician apprenticeship, and is a wonderful role model to inspire all young people to set their goals high. The second is her unrelenting dedication to grow the number of women in STEM, commissioning essential research into the issues called *Not for People Like Me* and giving generous amounts of time to share her story with pupils around the UK.

# Lucy Gardner – Senior Engineer at Arup

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*Lucy is a Chartered Engineer with 9 years experience across a wide variety of large-scale rail and civil engineering projects. Lucy joined Arup as a pre-university trainee before commencing her engineering degree at the University of Cambridge. Since graduating, Lucy has worked for Arup in a number of offices across the UK and in Australia.*

## **How did you get into rail?**

When I was a trainee, I asked to work on bridges. I worked in rail for the first six months, and bridges for the second six months. It was the luckiest coincidence of my career; I had never considered rail as a potential. That was the decision made because I rapidly realised that rail was far more interesting. All the different disciplines involved gave it more potential for a wider breadth of experience.

## **Did you know you wanted to be an engineer from a young age?**

Yes. A career advisor came in to school – I must have been about 15 - and looked at the things that I was good at and enjoyed. The choices were either a doctor or an engineer, which is funny because my dad's an engineer and my mum is a midwife. But I knew that I couldn't stand the sight of blood, so it was never going to be the health profession. That was the first time I'd seriously looked at engineering.

## **What's your role?**

I'm the last point of call between our design team and our clients. I review their deliverables before they go to clients, I check for technical correctness and multidisciplinary coordination. I make sure that all the different disciplines on the project are passing the right information between each other at the right times, so that when we get to the completed design, all of those different interfaces are covered. That might be within our design team in Arup, or it might be with subcontractors, or with completely different organisations that don't have a contractual link to us.

## **How do you balance your home and work life?**

I've got two young boys, aged 2 and 4, so I now work three day weeks, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. For me, that is absolutely the perfect balance. With all of my clients, I've made the days that I work very clear. I've always given them a contact that they can talk to if I'm not there. I work with great people who are really supportive of what I do. Arup is a great company and there is an acknowledgement that whilst lots of people don't work five days, when they're here, they do the job well. That's what makes it worth it.

Lucy was chosen because of her infectious enthusiasm and drive to both her professional and personal life. Lucy has achieved many accomplishments throughout her career including being Design Manager for the HS2 West Midlands Depot and Network Integrated Control Centre and winning RTSA (Railway Technical Society of Australasia) Young Railway Engineer of the Year in 2012.

# Maggie Simpson - Executive Director at Rail Freight Group

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*After graduating from Loughborough University with a degree in Mathematical Engineering in 1992, Maggie spent some time in management consulting before joining the rail industry in 1998, first at OPRAF and then at the Strategic Rail Authority. She joined Rail Freight Group in 2005 and worked in policy before being promoted to Executive Director in 2012.*

## **What does your role consist of and what is a typical day?**

There is no typical day, which is one of the things I love. Running a trade association means that I spend time with businesses, finding out about what they do and what the railway means to them. This could be one on one or at our many dinners, meetings or conferences. Another part of my job is promoting the rail freight sector to the government so this takes me to Network Rail, DfT, ORR and other railway forums, where I help make the case for measures to support more rail freight.

## **How do you balance home and work life and what advice would you give to other women?**

I have been lucky that Rail Freight Group is so flexible. It means that I can be there for my family after school some days in the week and I can work around other events too. Of course, this means I occasionally have to work on my days off but that is a fair balance for the flexibility. I don't think anyone should ever feel ashamed about flexible working, or balancing work and family, and the more open you can be, the more people will understand – and perhaps copy your example.

## **Has anyone inspired you during your career?**

I've been lucky to have some fantastically supportive bosses, male and female, who have given me space to operate, and to develop. Tony Berkeley, RFG Chairman, has supported me a great deal, and is always available for a bit of advice, or a nudge, on difficult issues. And there are some great people on the RFG Board, and in our membership too, who have advised and helped me in my current role.

## **What do you see as the challenges to attracting more women into rail and what do you think could be done to make a difference?**

We have to make the railways an attractive place to work for everyone. The classic image of the 'lifetime railway man' has probably had its day and we have to appeal to a generation who were born with the internet! And it's not just the railways facing this challenge – freight and logistics generally has exactly the same difficulty attracting young people and female employees.

Maggie has a reputation of excellence among her peers. Described as having “quiet persistence and dogged determination”, she has fought to raise the profile of the Rail Freight sector within the media, the government and the wider rail industry. By bringing together suppliers and customers, she has renewed stakeholder support for this vital industry.

# Margaret Kay – Managing Director at Supertram

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*Margaret Kay started her career in retail, working at Tesco for 10 years and then for The Covent Garden General Stores for 2 years, before joining London Underground, where she worked her way up to Head of HR for Engineering. She moved to Egypt in 1996, where she worked for 2 years before moving back into retail in the UK. In 2000 she returned to the rail industry, working first at South West Trains and then East Midlands Trains in HR roles. She has been Managing Director of Supertram since 2011.*

## **Why did you go back to rail?**

One of the things I very quickly realised when I joined London Underground, and then when I went back into Stagecoach Rail, is that the rail industry offers so many opportunities. The fact is, once you get into the industry, you can choose whichever career path you want to. I was always in human resources until I took on the MD role with Supertram. However, even within that one profession, the door was open to pursue whichever path I wanted to within HR. I don't think you can get such a breadth of experience, in my opinion, in any industry other than rail.

## **How do you balance home and work life, and do you have any advice?**

A work life balance is important for everyone. Over the years there's been a tendency to look at this from a female point of view. However, I've always been really keen to talk to people wherever they fit in the organisation, to see how their work life balance would work. When I recruit someone, male or female, I look at the job and what that entails. It's important that people can align themselves to that job and feel comfortable with the effect it will or won't have on their personal life. For example, if you have hobbies or interests which you are keen to pursue it is important that you feel that you are given the opportunity to have the right balance between your work role and those other interests.

## **In your opinion, what is the recipe for success?**

I believe that everybody has got potential. You will always find success if you can get the best out of people. It's about building organisations that really allow people to do their best. When I look at the successes I've had, it's always been down to the people I surrounded myself with.

## **What do you see as the challenges to attracting more women into rail?**

I know from people who have come into rail, and love it, that their original perception of it was that it's old-fashioned, slow, not dynamic. But it's the opposite. We also need to send the message that women are welcome, and that they do really well. At the moment, communications don't really show the range of opportunities available and where rail could ultimately take women in their career.

Margaret was nominated because of her dedication and her many achievements within Stagecoach Rail, particularly mentoring and coaching of dozens of individuals and making positive improvements within recruitment, inclusion and diversity, all whilst continuing to run Supertram successfully.

# Mary Roberts – Company Director at CAT 1 Safety Training

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*Mary Roberts has 27 years of experience working in the rail industry, mostly for London Underground. She studied at Greenwich University part time to obtain her PCET in Learning and Development. She is also a Lead Auditor and an IQA.*

*Her first role was Station Assistant, and she worked her way up to Training Manger. She left London Underground in 2006 to found CAT 1 Safety Training.*

## **What does your role consist of and what is a typical day?**

There is no such thing as a typical day, there is always a new challenge. I start at 7am and check the emails from the night before, make sure all the staff and students have what they need for the day, have a briefing with my managers to find out if there are any problems that need to be solved, attend meetings, organise track layouts. Sometimes I have engagements at schools and colleges to promote women in the rail industry. A real variety!

## **What would you say is the achievement you are most proud of?**

Starting my own rail company and getting people who had low aspirations and were unemployed back to work and watching their confidence grow. I have watched people's lives change because of getting back into employment which is terrific.

## **In your career, what is the biggest challenge you had to overcome?**

My first challenge was becoming the first women trainer to deliver protection training in an extremely male orientated work place. The second and biggest challenge I had to overcome was being taking seriously by a large corporation and showing them I could deliver on my promises.

## **What advice would you give to young women / other women working in rail?**

Support each other, listen to problems, never give up and "eat the elephant in small pieces". It is doable. The path has been laid for women in the rail industry. Our first London Underground woman driver was in the 60's and now it's the norm, but I would like to see more women in every aspect of the railway industry not just in certain pockets.

Mary was chosen because of the exceptional effort she has put into the future of the rail industry. Mary has built a training programme to get unemployed people and ex-offenders into full-time and sustainable employment within the rail industry, even earning recognition from the government. Her commitment to constantly driving employment in the rail industry is improving it for the better.

# Nita Rabadia – Head of Specification and Assurance at HS2

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*Nita Rabadia graduated from Brunel University with a degree in Engineering Science and Technology in 2002. She worked as a Systems Engineer at 3M UK Plc before joining the rail industry in 2003 as a Graduate Engineer for Network Rail. She worked there across a variety of major projects before being seconded to HS2 Ltd in 2012 as Lead Specification and Assurance Manager. Since 2013, she has been part of the senior leadership team within the organisation and is the Head of Specification and Assurance.*

## **How did you get into engineering?**

It was really down to my teachers during secondary school. They helped me to explore opportunities and subject areas around what I enjoyed, together with my strengths. I enjoyed design and technology (DT), maths and sciences, which ultimately opened the door to engineering. I was really lucky to get sponsored for my A-level DT by Racal Health and Safety (now Thales) when I was 16, designing a helmet for welding with an attached respiratory device from first principles, prototyping and testing it at their testing facility in Bognor Regis. Going through that project lifecycle experience from initial design development, to final product prototype testing really allowed me to see engineering in a new light. It provided a sense of fulfilment and achievement - it was incredible.

## **What does your role consist of?**

HS2 is the biggest infrastructure project in the UK, at about £55bn. I am the Head of Specification and Assurance, and lead a team of 22. It is our job to manage our sponsor's requirements, the Department for Transport (DfT), and derive those down into technical requirement specifications across the different phases of the project.

A typical day for me is championing and influencing parts of the business to take a 'systems thinking' approach. This ensures everyone is clear and aligned, so that we deliver the right optimised solution and output for an activity. Being able to see the bigger picture and understand how each part fits within that is key, to avoid any wasted efforts and minimise risk.

## **How do you balance your home and work life?**

There really isn't a glass ceiling for women that can't be pushed open, through hard work, focus and determination. Sure, there will be challenges along the way - as a mother of two I do know that - but it is life. I'd like to think that I have been successful at both driving my career forward and being a mum. My husband is very supportive which is great and we take turns to do the school runs and activities. Finding the right balance and also the courage to pick yourself up during those lows is essential. This is where I always advise those who I mentor or coach, to keep the end goal in sight.

Nita was chosen because of her dedication to diversity within the rail industry. She is a member of the Diversity Steering Group at HS2 which aims to diversify the industry throughout the supply chain. She also raises money for charities to support STEM engagement in her free time.

# Sally Clarke – Upgrade Delivery Manager at Transport for London

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*Sally Clarke graduated from Middlesex University with a degree in Management with Marketing in 1998. She joined the rail industry as a Management Graduate Trainee with Railtrack Plc, Great Western Zone. She has worked in many different areas of management in the rail industry, including signalling, area performance, reliability and strategy development. Sally joined TfL in 2002.*

## **What does your role consist of and what is a typical day for you?**

I am responsible for getting the business ready to operate and maintain assets as a result of the huge TfL investment programme. I'm currently working on getting London Underground ready for the Crossrail project which is extending five London Underground stations and will form part of the new Elizabeth Line. I am also leading readiness delivery for the Northern and Metropolitan line extensions. These programmes are all delivering a lot of significant assets, major change and billions of pounds worth of investment and I make sure that, as a result of all this investment, the business is ready to use the new assets. My team and I are the liaison point between project delivery and the end user and my job is to make sure that the project delivers what we need to be able to operate and maintain the railway from day one. On a typical day, I lead a team of about 20 managers, all who have different portfolios, different responsibilities and different accountabilities across these different programs.

## **What would you say is the achievement you're most proud of?**

A lot of what I'm proud of is not just my day-to-day delivery, but also giving something back to the industry. In 2014, I lobbied the TfL business to celebrate the 100 Years of Women in Transport. This programme now has funding and is leaving an industry legacy. But I feel really proud that in those early days, those conference calls, those meetings, I really pushed the senior level of our organisation to celebrate this amazing milestone. As Chair of TfL's Women's Staff Network Group, I have always pushed to move things on for gender equality. This year I have been working to secure better guidance around the menopause and support for those undergoing fertility treatment as well as securing accreditation for TfL as a member of Tommy's Pregnancy at Work Scheme. All of these small steps add up to a better industry for everyone.

## **What is the biggest challenge you've had to overcome in your career?**

I think it's the juggling and maintaining a work-life balance. I've spent half my career as a mum and half my career not as a mum and I know the difference. I certainly work hard to balance everything and it takes a great deal of planning, organising and flexibility. It is a challenge if you're serious about having a career, moving up the career ladder and looking after your family, but well worth the effort!

Sally was chosen because of her key involvement in a number of initiatives to support women within the industry, including driving the 100 Years of Women in Transport initiative. She also impressed with her efforts to lead a women's mentoring scheme and school visits to raise awareness of the opportunities a career in rail can offer, while excelling in her day-to-day role.

# Sara Clark – Commercial Guard at South West Trains

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*Sara Clark joined the rail sector in 2014 after completing five years of mixed age teaching. She completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and American Studies at Keele University in 2009 which included an exchange to Ball State University in Indiana, USA.*

## **What does your role consist of and what is a typical day?**

I am a commercial guard, so my main priority is always the safety of the train and the passengers travelling with me. A typical day would involve excellent customer service for our diverse range of passengers. But, there is no such thing as a typical day on the railway, which is all part of its charm. Every day is unique even when working the same shift for a few days in a row.

## **How do you balance home and work life and what advice would you give to other women?**

Balancing home and work can become difficult at times as I work shifts. I have a lot of hobbies and activities that I enjoy away from work and ensure that these take priority when I am off duty. Shift work has given me a thorough understanding of the importance of making time for me!

## **In your career, what is the biggest challenge you had to overcome?**

Learning to adapt in such a fast paced environment: the railway can change in a split second. The ability to adapt your behaviour, make effective decisions promptly and take control is essential. This was a little daunting to begin with, especially given the volume of people I deal with. However with some experience this has become second nature to me now.

## **In your opinion, what is the recipe for success?**

A large scoop of pride in what you do! Embrace each new challenge, enjoy your journey and aim as high as you desire.

## **What advice would you give to young women working in rail?**

My advice to other young women in the rail industry would be to aim high and never feel that you are unable to achieve or progress. The industry is highly diverse and the roles cater to all skill sets and abilities. There really is no end to the learning opportunities and progression available.

Sara was nominated for the hard work and dedication she has shown in her role as Waterloo Depot's iPhone champion, rolling out the new communication system. Despite the out of hour's calls, she remained constantly buoyant and upbeat, planning ahead and coming up with achievable solutions. Not only this, Sara has become a coach, factotum and all round exemplar to other members of the team. She inspires others to do better.

# Susan Cooklin – Route Services Director at Network Rail

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*Susan Cooklin has worked in the rail industry since 2007. Before joining Network Rail she spent seven years at Barclays Banking Group in a variety of executive roles in technology, change and operations.*

## **How long have you been in the rail industry and what inspired you to join the rail sector?**

I've been in the rail Industry for nine years. I previously had a career in retail and corporate banking. I joined the rail sector because of the opportunity to develop my career and move to a different industry – an industry that

continues to experience huge growth and change.

## **What is it about the industry that you love?**

The people that I meet within this industry are remarkable. Wherever you turn, there are individuals willing to answer your questions, tell you how something works and engage with you about your role. The passion within the rail industry to deliver the best for the passenger each day is admirable.

## **What do you see as the challenges to attracting more women into rail and what do you think could be done to make a difference?**

Part of the challenge is around perception. It is our responsibility to show the variety and diversity of not only the individuals working within the rail industry, but the activities that we undertake. This is important at all levels and initiatives such as this top 20 shortlist go some way to show the diversity of people and skills across our industry. The power of female role models in leadership positions should not be underestimated.

## **Has anyone inspired you during your career?**

A senior woman early on in my career showed me that it was possible to have both a successful career and children – up until that point I felt the two things were mutually exclusive!

Susan was chosen because of her drive to improve the reputation of rail. Susan established the 'Could IT be you' competition to encourage young girls in schools to consider STEM subjects, which it is now in its third year. Susan has been at the forefront revolutionising IT at Network Rail, putting it at the heart of the business. She is well respected for leading, influencing and ultimately empowering so many people across the industry.

# Suzanne Patterson – West Anglia HR Business Partner at London Overground Rail Operations Ltd

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*Suzanne Patterson has worked in the rail industry since 2008. She previously worked in the health and fitness sector, after graduating from Loughborough University with a degree in sports science.*

## **How long have you been in the rail industry and what inspired you to join the rail sector?**

I've been in the rail industry for eight years now. I was attracted to the company first and foremost. I'm a very proud Londoner and what London Overground Rail Operations Ltd (LOROL) was doing was hugely important for London. Rail just seems such a critical area to be involved in. When I look at our services and what LOROL has done I feel very proud.

My role initially was the recruitment of a huge number of train drivers and front line customer service staff which was exciting and interesting.

## **In your career, what is the biggest challenge you had to overcome?**

The biggest challenge was changing career. I moved from being a regional manager for a chain of health and fitness clubs, so dealing with sales, operations, customer service to HR. That was tough and I had to learn fast. I put myself through some training and worked some long hours to help myself. I took a big salary cut too, but it was worth it to move into the new career. HR is fascinating, people are interesting and the dynamics of work relationships are fascinating.

## **What do you see as the challenges to attracting more women into rail and what do you think could be done to make a difference?**

The challenge is that people don't immediately think of the rail industry as offering a great career, but it really can. It's about taking every opportunity to make people aware of this, through recruitment, external communications and getting the word out in schools and the local communities

## **What advice would you give to young women working in rail?**

It's an exciting area with great opportunities. With a positive, can do attitude there are so many different roles within the rail industry. Work hard, prove yourself and you will progress.

Suzanne was chosen because of her clear dedication to empowering women in the rail industry. One of her key contributions is the development of LOROL's Women in Leadership course which she designed and delivered to develop leaders from women across the business. The programme has had a great impact, boosting the confidence of staff and their ambitions.

# Wendy Spinks – Commercial Director at HS1 Limited

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*Wendy Spinks joined the rail industry in 2010 after working for Heathrow for 10 years, on its retail operations. She joined HS1 in 2010 and was promoted to Commercial Director in 2013, where she is in charge of developing revenue streams across the railway line.*

## **What does your role consist of and what is a typical day?**

I develop strategies for customer experience and commercial business, working with a wide range of customers, business partners, suppliers and stakeholders to make things happen.

A typical day could involve meeting a train operator at St Pancras, to developing a leasing strategy for the retail estate. I spend a lot of my day away from my desk. My role, and that of most of my team, is very external facing.

## **What is it about the industry that you love?**

There's no two days the same. I love the fact that virtually everything relies on people working together. The best customer experiences are achieved when everyone across many organisations plays their part and pulls in the same direction.

## **What would you say is the achievement you are most proud of?**

Big achievements aren't always from big actions. For example I'm particularly proud of introducing pianos to St Pancras. The idea is that they are open for anyone to play them. There are three of them there now and they make people smile every day. Social media channels are full of great clips of impromptu performances and feel good comments. They are a well renowned success and a part of what makes St Pancras a destination in its own right.

## **In your career, what is the biggest challenge you had to overcome?**

Learning to say no. I love a new idea but sometimes have to restrain myself to what is practical.

## **What do you see as the challenges to attracting more women into rail and what do you think could be done to make a difference?**

I see the rail industry more as a service industry that runs on a track. Within that you need a wide range of skills and experiences; so the industry could do more to promote the breath of opportunity. We should be opening up the industry to people transitioning into rail from other sectors, even if it's not a choice from school or university. I think that would help the rail sector seem more attractive to a wider group of people including women.

Wendy was chosen because of her perseverance in bringing new strategies into the industry while in her role at HS1, including her management of the development of five graduates in the HS1 and NRIL's Track and Train graduate programme. Since her appointment St Pancras station has flourished in both retail and customer service aspects, winning 27 awards in four years.

# And the nominees were...

Name	Job Title	Company
Abi Broadley	Business Development Director	Aquarius Railroad Technologies
Alison Bell	HR Director	MTR Crossrail
Alison Munro	Managing Director, Development	HS2
Allison Dunn	Senior Customer Experience Manager	South West Trains
Amanda Furlong	Finance and Commercial Director	Arriva UK Trains
Amber Edwards	Team Organiser Apprentice	Alstom TSO Costain
Ann Mills	Professional Head of Human Factors	RSSB
Anna Bereznova	Graduate Engineer	Siemens Rail Automation
Anthea Hague	Consents Manager	Network Rail
Ayesha Sheikh	Sales Officer	MTR Crossrail
Barbara Williams	Membership Administration Director	Railway Industry Association
Becky Munro	Apprentice Engineer	Mott MacDonald
Caitlin Richardson	Principal Engineer	Mott MacDonald
Carine Marin	Technical Director	SNC-Lavalin Rail & Transit
Carleen Oates	Route Safety Manager North West	Virgin Trains
Carol Poole	HR Director	LOROL
Carol Stitchman	Head of Design	Network Rail
Carole Ayres	Rail Operator	South West Trains
Caroline Harper	Head of Insight	TFL Rail & Underground
Caroline Munday	Head of OD	Northern
Cath Bellamy	Lead Negotiator, West Midlands DA	Department for Transport
Charlotte Page	Finance Manager	East Midlands Trains
Charlotte Murray	Emergency Planning Manager	Great Western Railway
Christine Thompson	Station Manager Finsbury Park	Govia Thameslink Railway
Clare Brint	Senior Asset Engineer (Geotechnics)	Network Rail
Cleo Bowen	Senior Submissions Manager	BAM Nuttall Ltd
Dawn Black	Prosecutor and Case Builder	Virgin Trains East Coast
Debbie Chesters	Commercial Scheme Sponsor	Network Rail
Deborah Lenihan	Scheme Project Manager	Network Rail
Elaine Holt	Vice President	Carnival
Emily Short	Project Manager	BAM Nuttall Ltd
Fiona McHugh	Managing Director	McCoda Limited
Gillian Peters	Business Development Manager	BAM Nuttall Ltd
Harriet Jones	Electrical Engineer	ATC
Hazel Martin	Rail Development	NEXUS
Heather Baldi	Head of Service Performance	Network Rail
Helena Blanc	Procurement Manager	TSO S.A.S.
Jackie Cleave	Production manager	DB Schenker Rail UK
Jackie Ronan	Rostering & Resource Programme Manager	Great Western Railway
Jane Collins	Associate Director	Ove Arup & Partners Ltd
Jane Austin	Head of Engineering	Network Rail

Name	Job Title	Company
Janine Foulger	Presentation Manager	Govia Thameslink Railway
Jasmina Jolevska	Project Manager	CSC
Jean Hale	Driver Team Manager	Northern
Jessica Kirby	Apprentice Administrator	Alstom TSO Costain
Jill Hampton	Head of Public Private Partnerships	Bombardier Transportation Americas
Joan Heery	Track Transformation Director	Network Rail
Joanne Warburton	Regional Head	Atkins
Julianna Moats	Principal Systems Engineer	WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff
Julie Ward	Submissions Assistant	BAM Nuttall Ltd
Julie Carrier	Rail Director	Transport for the North
Karen Venn	Business Manager	Network Rail
Karen Begg	Train Driver	Abellio Greater Anglia
Kate Marjoribanks	Engineering Director	First Great Eastern
Kate Hunt	Service Leader - Tunnel Ventilation	WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff
Kathryn O'Brien	Customer Service Director	First TransPennine Express
Katie Seymour	Senior Project Manager	Colas Rail
Katy Taylor	Director Marketing & Customer Experience	Go-Ahead Group
Kerry Cassidy	Train Driver	Great Western Railway
Kim Bucknell	Head of Revenue Protection	Abellio Greater Anglia
Kirstie Angell	Customer Service Training Manager	South West Trains
Kristin Thorslund	Head - Product & Engineering Performance	Bombardier Transportation
Laila Zidan	Engineering Integration Manager	WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff
Lara Louram	Project Engineer	Network Rail
Laura Kidd	Head of Architecture	HS2
Linda McCord	Passenger Manager	Transport Focus
Linda Wain	HST Fleet and Depot Manager	East Midlands Trains
Lindsey Wickens	Engineering Manager	Alstom
Louise Hamer	Customer Sales Supervisor	Great Western Railway
Louise Kavanagh	Finance Director	Network Rail
Luan Anderson	Integrated Programme Manager	Network Rail
Lucy Norton	Route Enhancements Manager	Network Rail
Lucy Palmer	Rail Specialist Project Manager	UK Power Networks
Luisa Moisio	Head of R&D	RSSB
Maria Hulburd	Depot Manager	Govia Thameslink Railway
Marianne Kilpatrick	UK Director - Transport Advisory	SNC-Lavalin Transport Advisory
Melissa Podmore	Information Controller	London Overground
Mercedes Rodriguez	OLE Design Team Leader	WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff
Michelle Nolan-McSweeney	Head of Training Strategy	Network Rail
Michelle Papayannakos	Sustainable Development Specialist	RSSB
Milla Mazilu	Programme Controller	Network Rail
Natalie Dickinson	OLE Engineer	ISS Labour
Natasha Wilding	Head of Trains and Stations	Northern
Nicola Brown	Industrial Relations Adviser	Alstom TSO Costain
Nicola Hosty	Head of HR Support Services	Northern
Nike Folayan	Technical Discipline Lead	WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff
Nishani Sakizlis	Chartered Fire Engineer	Mott MacDonald

Name	Job Title	Company
Pamela McInroy	H&S and D&I Specialist	Crossrail
Pat Beijer	Head of Strategic Development	Northern
Rachel Baldwin	HR Director UK	Arriva UK Trains and UK Bus
Rachel Vardy	Area Manager	South West Trains
Rachel Wottge	HR Business Partner	DB Cargo (UK) Limited
Rebecca Catterall	Development Officer	Devon & Cornwall Railway Partnership
Rebecca Price	Lead Business Change Manager	Network Rail
Rebecca Mason	Rail Manager	Spectrum Contracting Services
Renu Gupta	HR Business Partner	Alstom Transport UK
Rhiannon Price	Project Manager	Network Rail
Rhiannon Henshaw	Project Manager	Network Rail
Ruth Purim	Managing Partner	ProActive Rail
Sabrina Hollingum	Head of Rail Division	Stewart Signs Limited
Sabrina Ihaddaden	Signalling Systems Engineer	Bombardier Transportation
Sally Shellum	Head of Programme Development	Network Rail
Sally Sanders	Administration Assistant Apprentice	Alstom TSO Costain
Samantha Patterson	Sponsor	Network Rail
Sarah Barnes	Informations Systems Manager	WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff
Seyi Bello	Commercial Manager	Network Rail High Speed
Sheila Redondo	Survey Engineer	ATC
Sophie Jones	Senior HR Business Partner	Network Rail
Sue Coleman	Prosecutions Manager	South West Trains
Sue Gray	Area Production Manager	DB Cargo
Susan Evans	Customer Director	Alstom Transport UK Limited
Susan Anderson	Head of Clienting & Business Change	Network Rail
Suzanne Wise	Group GC and Company Secretary	Network Rail
Sylvia Follen	Gatling Supervisor	SWT
Tammy Samuel	Partner	Stephenson Harwood
Tanya Coff	Head of Finance Capital Programmes	Transport for London
Tara Parandeh	Project Engineer	London Underground
Teresa Pearson	Ticket Office Clerk	South West Trains
Tracey Chong	Business Development Production Manager	WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff
Tracy Santos	Finance Analyst	Network Rail
Verity Mills	Section Planner	Network rail
Veronica Dunn	Human Resources Manager	Dellner Ltd
Wendy McCristal	Service Development Manager	SNC-Lavalin Rail & Transit
Zoe Fithern	Duty Station Manager	Great Western Railway



## Contact us

Email: [womeninrail@angeltrains.co.uk](mailto:womeninrail@angeltrains.co.uk)

Website: [www.womeninrail.org](http://www.womeninrail.org)

Number: 020 7592 0796

Twitter: @womeninrail

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4403652>

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