

Rail Professional

Stepping up to the Big Rail Diversity Challenge

Adeline Ginn describes all the fun of the day...

In September, the inaugural Big Rail Diversity Challenge was held at Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground. The event set out to show that gender diverse teams work better together and to raise awareness of the business benefits attained when companies improve their male:female worker ratio.

The Big Rail Diversity Challenge is an important step in the rail industry agenda. It openly seeks to disprove one of the most destructive myths in professional life: that women and men cannot work effectively together. By engaging both men and women in equal measure we have started to tackle gender imbalance head on and create a more attractive, productive and successful industry in the process.

More than 300 attendees took part in a

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physically and mentally demanding set of challenges, from soapbox building to mind-boggling quizzes.

A favourite among many, the Haka Challenge saw teams face-off in a traditional New Zealand haka dance – made famous by the country’s All Blacks. The activity was symbolic as traditionally the haka is performed by men, with the female role, if any, limited to providing support by singing in the background. Donning their warpaint and scariest ‘pūkana’, the teams worked together to learn the intricate stances and moves to portray the instruction as closely as possible.

After a tiring day and competition the

time came for the awards presentations. Acknowledgement was paid to teams who stood out in individual challenges, taking into consideration the highest scores earned, team effort, cooperation and communication.

The **Best Team** name was judged ahead of the event by Bernadette Kelly, director general of the DfT Rail Executive, who was looking for originality and creativity. The award was given to The Nuts and Bolts, a team made up of people from Porterbrook Leasing Company. It was presented by Susan Evans, connected communities and devolved regions director, Alstom Transport.

Katie Mason, events manager for The

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Railway Children (chosen charity for 2016) awarded Fusion (Bam Nuttall joint venture) with a trophy for the **Best Shelter**. It was built using bamboo canes, bin bags and shoelaces – items that may be available to a child living on the streets. As well as needing to be able to withstand wind and rain, the teams were judged on communication and the way they worked together.

I presented the third award for **Collaborative Teamwork** to SNC Lavalin (team name: Tractive Effort). The men and

women forming Tractive Effort worked very well together and prepared for the afternoon challenges during their lunchtime hour. They were overall winners for two individual challenges and a close runner-up in a third challenge.

Leading the pack for **Team of the Year** 2016 was GoVia (team name: Aequalitas et Diversitas) who scored an impressive 93 points out of 100, closely followed by Angel Trains' Team One (team name: Derby's Angels) with 91points; Carmichael

UK and MTR Crossrail came in joint third place, with an equally impressive 88 points apiece. Members from the GoVia team were presented with their award along with bottles of champagne, by the event host, Vicky Binley from Nimble Media.

The event was a success with 30 gender balanced teams taking part and we managed to raise £886 for The Railway Children which is a good result. You can see pictures of the event on The Big Rail Diversity Challenge website: www.bigraildiversity.co.uk. It is very likely we will hold a Big Rail Diversity Challenge again in the summer of 2017 so watch this space if you wish to take part!

Adeline Ginn is founder of Women in Rail and general counsel at Angel Trains