

Women in rail

Ruth Busby



Each for equal

Ruth Busby, Committee Member of the Women in Rail South Regional Group and HR Director at Great Western Railway

Two years ago, I joined the Rail industry. I'd moved sectors before, so wasn't too concerned when people were telling me the railway is hugely complicated and that it is heavily male dominated. That was true of most of the sectors I had worked in.

I was nervous about taking up my first role as a Director and being the only woman on the GWR Exec team. I need not have worried: I was, and continue to be, greeted with kindness and support, with my non-rail perspective still welcomed. I also have another thing on my side: the community of Women in Rail!

I was incredibly blessed that, in my first month at GWR, Women in Rail South launched in Reading. As a passionate advocate for inclusion and diversity, I popped along and was welcomed by Anna and the team. It was inspiring to know there were many people in the industry determined to make a difference, to raise awareness amongst young women about the opportunities to work in rail, to address practical challenges including PPE, uniform and access to toilets and to champion women to be confident to thrive in our industry.

I was delighted when invited to join the Women in Rail South Committee in 2018. The team brings together people from a wide range of organisations and roles and has delivered fabulous events on networking skills, personal brand, superstar communications skills and wellbeing.

These events have an impact that lasts much longer than the day. They create relationships and connections that lead to further change. Much like a strawberry plant, once it has produced its own fruit, it goes on to seed new plants that thrive in their own right. Within GWR, and inspired by the Women in Rail South event, we've had two Personal Brand sessions for those who couldn't attend the Oxford session, and



Steve Carr, the inspirational speaker at the Women in Rail South wellbeing session will be educating all of our managers on mental health at our Leadership conferences this spring.

This is what excites me most about Women in Rail – the potential for great ideas to go viral. It has been fantastic seeing the all-female crewed, signalled, despatched trains for International Women's Day – from the LNER Flying Scotswoman to the GWR Odette Hallowes, and the Southeastern Victoria to Faversham.

Rail to refuge is another great example: a truly lifesaving scheme, in partnership with Women's Aid, that provides women who

are the victims of domestic abuse free train travel to refuges where they can find safety. This initiative was the brainchild of a station manager at Southeastern. It was launched in GWR and is now on the cusp of being introduced within many other TOCs.

When we stand shoulder to shoulder to champion the cause of women across our industry, and beyond, we are all the better for it. Women in Rail gives us that platform and I'm proud to help play just one small part in it.

To find out more about Women in Rail South Regional Group, please e-mail South@womeninrail.org.