



## **Women in Rail Trustee Story Spotlight – Terri Cave**

### **Finance Director – Network Rail**



### **Beyond the numbers, bringing heart and purpose to Women in Rail**

As someone who has spent 13 years in the rail sector, I've seen first-hand both the challenges and the remarkable opportunities this industry holds. Today, in addition to my role as Finance Director at Network Rail, I'm incredibly proud to serve as a trustee at Women in Rail.

For me, this is about contributing to something that has the power to change lives. When I first joined the industry, it was clear that women were in the minority, not just in frontline operational roles, but at every level of leadership. While we've made real progress over the years, there is still so much more to do.

Joining Women in Rail two years ago, my first thought was about how I could help others and make a real difference. I've always felt strongly that if you have skills or experience that could support people, you should step forward and use them. Becoming a trustee has given me the perfect opportunity to do exactly that.

Taking on the role of Finance Director for Women in Rail felt like a natural fit. Everything I do instinctively in my professional life, keeping finances in order, ensuring transparency, and thinking strategically, is so valuable to Women in Rail. It's incredibly rewarding to see how skills I use every day can directly support a cause I'm passionate about. But what I didn't expect was just how much being a trustee would give back to me personally. It has opened up new networks I wouldn't have accessed otherwise, created opportunities for cross-industry collaboration, and really pushed me to grow. I've stepped outside my comfort zone, built confidence in speaking up, and connected with people across the sector who share a commitment to making rail more inclusive.

## **My role as a Trustee**

As the Finance Director on the Women in Rail Board, my role is very much focused on financial management and governance. This means implementing robust governance, clear delegated authorities and ensuring effective financial controls in place.

I work closely with the board to make sure our resources are managed responsibly, transparently and in line with our strategic objectives so we can continue supporting women across the rail industry for the long term.

Alongside the numbers, I also focus on building confidence within the team and our wider membership that we are spending wisely and delivering on our commitments. I want people to know that financial controls are in place, effective processes working correctly, and everything we do is managed professionally and properly.

My main goal as a trustee is to ensure the charity has a sustainable financial model. Ensuring sustainability is so important for Women in Rail, in that it will allow the organisation to be able to continue to thrive and make an impact for many years to come. It's about making sure we are not just here for today, but that we have the stability and structure to keep supporting women across the rail industry well into the future.

I see myself as the steady drumbeat, keeping us focused and on track so that we can clearly see and celebrate what we are achieving along the way. It's not just about monitoring for the sake of it, it's about making sure we recognise the progress we are making and sharing that with our members. That visibility matters, because the work we are doing really is life-changing, and it deserves to be seen, acknowledged and built upon.

Members can therefore expect to see clearer reporting on how and where we are investing our resources to create the most impact, alongside regular updates so everyone can see the tangible difference those decisions are making.

## **My finance plan for the year ahead**

This year, I'm really focused on making our finances clearer, more transparent and more empowering for everyone involved in Women in Rail.

First, I'll be sharing regular financial information with members through solid, accessible reporting, so everyone can see where our funding goes and the impact it's making. We will also be holding an AGM where we will walk through this together, so you can expect open conversations and a real chance to ask questions.

I've allocated specific budgets to our national events, so they can be bigger, bolder and deliver even more impact. And at the same time, I am committed to supporting our regional groups by giving them dedicated budgets to keep making a difference on the ground, right where our members live and work.

Crucially, the funding we receive from our corporate members underpins all of this, it makes the work of the charity possible. And yes, here's a sneaky but heartfelt call-out for even more corporate members to join us, because the more support we have, the greater our reach and impact can be.

Finally, we do have an objective this year to secure some full-time resource for the charity. If I can find a way to make that happen sustainably, it really would be the icing on the cake, giving us the capacity to do even more for our members and the wider industry.

### **Using my network**

I'm lucky to be supported by a fantastic team of volunteers who share an unwavering commitment to making our sector more inclusive. Together, we ensure that every pound we spend makes the greatest possible impact, from mentoring programmes and networking events to initiatives that reach women and allies across the country.

I'm so really pleased to have brought to life the idea of finance volunteers to support me in my work. Not only does this strengthen our finance function as an organisation, but it's also a fantastic development opportunity for those volunteers. They get to build new skills and gain practical experience in charity finance, while contributing to a cause that matters. It feels great to be able to give something back in that way too, helping others to grow while we work together to build a secure and sustainable future for Women in Rail.

### **Strategy and Deployment**

Beyond overseeing the numbers, I'm also leading the deployment of our strategic business plan, work that I see as absolutely essential for ensuring the charity's long-term sustainability and its continued growth.

The strategic business plan sets out our vision, goals and practical steps to grow Women in Rail's reach and impact. This plan is about supporting women in our industry for the long term. It helps us focus our resources where they matter most, expanding our key programmes, strengthening our regional groups, and launching new initiatives that champion diversity and inclusion across the rail sector. By thinking strategically today, we are building the foundations to keep making a difference well into the future. If you've not had a chance to read it yet, I really would highly recommend it, it's on our website and such a valuable piece of work.

For me, one of the biggest opportunities coming from having a clear business plan, is combining this with the checks and balances that let us monitor what we are doing, what we've achieved, and the impact it's having. I feel strongly that we should be held to account for what we've said we will deliver, and, as you can imagine, with my finance head on, this naturally makes perfect sense to me. But beyond the process itself, it's so important that our members and stakeholders can actually see that we are delivering. After all, this isn't just about numbers on a spreadsheet, it's about progress, work that makes a real difference for women across the rail industry.

### **The Future**

My hope for rail is a future where diversity and inclusion aren't separate agendas, but are woven into every decision we make, hiring, project delivery, innovation, customer experience. I want to see women, and all underrepresented groups, not just included, but thriving, leading, and shaping what comes next for our industry.

I'm genuinely optimistic about the future, especially with the changes coming through GBR and its real focus on people and passengers. I'm convinced this creates a huge opportunity for women to be right at the heart of shaping and delivering the railway of the future. Wouldn't it be great if, instead of always talking about what's holding women back, we shifted the conversation towards what's opening doors for women, That's the perspective I'd love us to take, focusing on possibility, progress and the positive change we can all help create.

Women in Rail can help make that vision real. We really do help empower women at every career stage to see a place for themselves in rail. And just as importantly, we invite the whole industry, men and women alike, to be part of the solution.

### **My advice**

If I could share any advice, it would be, find your network and really invest in it. Surround yourself with people who inspire you, challenge you and lift you up. Champion others, share your own stories openly, and never underestimate the power of a coffee and a chat. Those informal conversations often spark the best ideas, offer unexpected support, and remind us we are not alone.

Take the time to build each other up, because none of us succeed in isolation. And if there happens to be a jam and cream biscuit on the table while you do it, even better. Together, we can build a rail industry that isn't just fit for the future, but fairer, more inclusive and richer for everyone in it.

### **So here's my call to action**

If you work in rail, at any stage of your career, in any part of the industry, consider joining your local Women in Rail regional group. Whether you volunteer your time, share your story, become a mentor or simply attend an event, you'll be part of something bigger, helping to build a sector that truly reflects and serves the diverse communities around us.

On a personal level, I'm inspired every day by the dedication of my fellow trustees, the volunteers who give their time and energy so generously, and the members whose stories remind us why this work matters. It's a privilege to play my part in guiding Women in Rail's financial sustainability, so we can keep making an impact for years to come. Thanks for taking time to read my story, who said numbers were boring.....

*Terri*

For more information on Women in Rail, please visit: [www.womeninrail.org](http://www.womeninrail.org) or contact [wr@womeninrail.org](mailto:wr@womeninrail.org)