



Women in Rail Trustee Story Spotlight – Sharon Salmon, MBE Supplier Manager – Network Rail



A Journey of Connection, Resilience, and Purpose in Rail

When I first joined the rail industry, I'll admit, it wasn't something I had planned. Like many people, I found my way here almost by chance. What began as a job, quickly became a vocation. The more I learned about the industry, the more I realised how powerful it can be, not only in connecting people and places, but in shaping the society we live in. And now I'm 22 years in!

Working in rail has shown me the enormous impact that collaboration can have. Every step of progress depends on people, teams of professionals bringing their skills, ideas, and commitment together. But it has also shown me where we still have work to do, in representation, in accessibility, and in ensuring that our workplaces truly reflect the communities we serve.

Responsibility and Representation

Being a trustee for Women in Rail means so much to me. It's not an honorary title, it's a responsibility. It's a chance to help drive meaningful, long-term change in an industry that I care deeply about, to ensure that everyone, no matter their background, has the opportunity to thrive and be heard. It's about giving back, but also about showing up for others. It's not just a position, it's a platform, one that allows me to represent voices that are sometimes overlooked and to help shape a space where everyone feels seen, valued, and included.

I like to think that my work at Women in Rail means standing for something bigger than myself, using my experience to create opportunities, influence change, and ensure that our collective progress continues. Representation matters, not for its own sake, but because when people see someone who shares their journey in a position of influence, it reminds them that they belong too.

Championing Corporate Members and Collaboration

In my role I focus on our corporate members, the organisations that form the backbone of Women in Rail's collective strength. These partnerships are essential because real, lasting change in the rail industry happens when individuals and institutions move together.

Corporate members bring scale, influence, and the ability to embed inclusion into strategy, policy, and everyday operations. My role is to ensure these partnerships are not just symbolic, but genuinely impactful. I work to help organisations feel connected to the wider Women in Rail community, to see the value of shared learning, and to understand the power they hold to lead by example.

Much of my work involves listening, understanding what each company needs, where they are on their inclusion journey, and what barriers they still face. For some, it's about starting with the basics, improving gender balance or reviewing recruitment practices. For others, it's about deepening their approach, mentoring future leaders, using data to track diversity, or developing more inclusive cultures from the top down.

No two organisations are the same, but all share a common desire, to do better. And that's what Women in Rail offers, a platform for collaboration, where companies can come together to share challenges and celebrate progress. We are no longer talking about diversity as a box to tick, we are talking about it as a core business strength, one that fuels innovation, resilience, and long-term success.

This year, our goal is to grow our community of corporate members and strengthen the value we provide across all our services. Our corporate members are the lifeblood of what we do, and we are committed to ensuring that membership delivers meaningful benefits, creating more opportunities to connect, share learning, and collaborate. We also want to hear directly from you about how we can continue to improve and expand our offerings to better support your needs and goals.

Why Diversity, Inclusion, and Reform Matter

The rail industry is evolving. As we modernise infrastructure, embrace technology, and implement reform, we must also modernise our culture. Reform cannot just be about operational efficiency, it must be about people, about how we attract, develop, and retain the diverse talent that will carry this industry into the future.

Reform gives us an opportunity to rethink how we work, who we include, and what kind of environment we want to create. It's not enough to focus on gender equality alone, although that remains vital. We must embrace intersectionality and understand that people's experiences are shaped by many factors, race, disability, sexuality, neurodiversity, age, and socio-economic background.

True inclusion means seeing and valuing every individual. It's about making sure that the doors of our industry are open to all, and that once people step through them, they're supported to grow and succeed.

Supporting every marginalised group is not just the right thing to do ethically, it's essential for the sustainability of our sector. Rail thrives on innovation and collaboration, and those things can only flourish in diverse environments where different perspectives are welcomed.

Strength Through Learning and Collaboration

In my own journey, I have come to realise that the biggest barrier I have faced has often been the one I put there myself, the quiet voice that questioned whether I was "enough." What I've learned though is that strength doesn't come from certificates or titles, it comes from curiosity, perseverance, and the willingness to keep showing up and learning.

I've worked hard, and I've remained a constant student, always wanting to learn, to grow, and to share what I know with others. Collaboration is at the heart of how I operate, I truly believe that when people come together with openness and respect, incredible things happen. I've been involved with Women in Rail since its inception, and what continues to inspire me are the values it represents, being brave, building networks, collaborating, championing true inclusion, and supporting one another.

Becoming a trustee still makes me pinch myself, it's a role that means so much to me because it symbolises not just how far I've come, but how much further I still want to go. I've learned that the key to making real change is to stay focused on where you want to have an impact and to keep that vision alive, no matter how big the obstacles.

Heritage, Resilience, and Perspective

I'm proudly of Jamaican heritage, and that part of my identity means a great deal to me. The food, the culture, the music, and the humour, it all shapes who I am and how I approach life and leadership. Jamaica has an incredible history, one of both hardship and hope, and even now as the island faces its share of challenges, what shines through is its resilience.

That resilience, the ability to rise, rebuild, and keep moving forward, is something I carry with me into my work. It mirrors the spirit I see in the women and organisations we support through Women in Rail. Despite barriers, despite slow progress at times, there's a determination to keep pushing for better, fairer, more inclusive workplaces. Inclusion isn't just about policy, it's about attitude about how we respond to challenge and how we lift each other when things are hard.

Awareness, Support, and Impact

Wellbeing is something I take very seriously, it's not a luxury, it's essential. In a fast-moving industry like rail, it's easy to overlook ourselves in the process. I've learned that looking after your wellbeing isn't just about balance, it's about awareness, understanding limits, managing your energy, and recognising when we need to pause.

I do this by leaning on my support networks, friends, colleagues, and mentors who ground me, challenge me, and remind me of what really matters. I also make a conscious effort to keep challenging myself, to stay curious, to learn, and to think about the impact I'm having on others. Wellbeing, for me, is closely tied to purpose. When I'm centred, connected, and intentional, I can give my best to the people and projects that matter most.

My mum has always been my role model. She worked incredibly hard, often juggling family, work, and everything in between, yet she never complained and always pushed through with determination and grace. Watching her taught me the value of resilience and perseverance, qualities that have shaped the way I approach my own career. Having strong role models is so important, they show us what's possible and remind us that we belong here. I'm proud to now be in a position where I can inspire and support other women coming into the industry, just as my mum inspired me.

Authenticity and Values

I believe that authenticity and being genuine is essential. These are not just values we talk about, they are ways of working, connecting, and leading. What I love about Women in Rail is that it brings together people who show up as themselves, honest, open, and committed to making a difference. That sense of realness builds trust and creates an environment where everyone feels they can belong.

Being authentic means leading with honesty, showing vulnerability when it's needed, and staying true to your values even when it's difficult. It's about meaning what you say, doing what you promise, and supporting others without pretence.

Through Women in Rail, I've seen how authenticity builds stronger relationships, deeper collaboration, and lasting change, because when we are genuine, people don't just hear us, they believe us.

Recognition and Reflection

When I received the news that I was being awarded an MBE for my services to rail and inclusion, I was deeply humbled. For me, the honour wasn't about personal recognition, it was a reflection of the collective effort of so many individuals and organisations working to make our industry more inclusive and fair.

It reminded me that progress is possible, and that when we work together, we can make a real, measurable difference. And it renewed my determination to keep going, to continue asking difficult questions, supporting underrepresented colleagues, and ensuring that every person who wants to be part of rail knows that they belong here.

Vision, Courage, and Connection

Looking ahead, my hope is that we continue to deepen the partnerships between Women in Rail and our corporate members, because that's where the greatest impact happens. When companies commit to meaningful action, reviewing policies, measuring progress, empowering inclusive leaders, that's when culture shifts for good.

Making that happen requires courage, the courage to speak up, to challenge outdated assumptions, and to keep inclusion on the agenda even when it's uncomfortable. The railway has always been an industry built on resilience and innovation. Now, we need to pair that with empathy and equity.

Being a trustee gives me the privilege of helping to shape that journey. It allows me to connect organisations, support people, and advocate for a future where rail truly welcomes everyone.

Life, Rail, and Dance

At the heart of my journey both in Women in Rail, and in my personal life is a simple rhythm, commitment, resilience, and joy. I've learned that change doesn't happen all at once, it's a series of steps, sometimes small, sometimes bold, but always moving forward. I think of it like dance, each movement connected to the last, requiring focus, practice, and a willingness to take the floor even when you are unsure.

That's how I approach my work, my wellbeing, and my role as a trustee, with energy, authenticity, and a dedication to lifting others as we move together. For me, the story isn't finished, it's ongoing, like a dance that keeps evolving, but I'm proud of the steps I've taken and the people I continue to walk alongside.

So as I sign off my final message to you is this, I invite you to join Women in Rail and become part of a vibrant, supportive community that champions diversity, collaboration, and growth across the rail sector. Whether you are an individual looking to connect, learn, and be inspired, or a company seeking to demonstrate your commitment to inclusion and workforce development, Women in Rail offers valuable opportunities to engage, share knowledge, and make a real impact.

Rail connects people. Diversity strengthens connection. It's time for real change.

And together, we can build an industry that moves not only trains, but society forward.

Thank you for reading my story, it means a lot, with thanks, Sharon

For more information on Women in Rail, please visit: www.womeninrail.org or contact wr@womeninrail.org