



Women in Rail Trustee Story Spotlight - Kelly Warburton

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My Journey, My Passion, and why Women in Rail Matters

When I first stepped into the rail industry back in 2001, something struck me very powerfully. I was one of very few women both in my business and indeed in the industry itself. The landscape was very different back then. Female role models at senior levels were rare and mainly only to be found in the HR department. For younger women starting their career the path ahead wasn't always clear. But I was determined to build a career where I could grow, learn and, importantly, make a real difference.

Over the last 25 years, I've been fortunate to do just that, moving through a range of commercial and leadership roles, from Alstom to Unipart Rail, and now as Chief Commercial Officer at the Global Centre of Rail Excellence (GCRE). Along the way, I've laughed, cried, had a baby, gained multiple different experiences, faced challenges and learned that the railway isn't just about tracks and trains. It's about people, purpose and possibility.

Today, as a Trustee of Women in Rail, I'm excited to help open doors wider for other women and underrepresented groups so they can see themselves in this sector and thrive. Things have changed for the better since I started, but we still have more to do to make rail an industry that looks like the community it serves.

Why Being a Trustee for Women in Rail Means So Much to Me

Becoming a Trustee for Women in Rail is deeply personal for me. The industry has given me so much - a fantastic career, lifelong friendships and the confidence to continue to want to do more. It's therefore natural that I want to help others experience the same.

There's something incredibly powerful about seeing women succeed in rail. When you see someone who looks like you breaking through barriers, it expands what you believe is possible. That's why I'm passionate about raising the profile of Women in Rail, about helping shape its message and about supporting its campaigns and events.

Through Women in Rail, we can amplify women's voices, create stronger networks and build a pipeline of talent that reflects the communities we serve. Importantly, helping to attract and retain women in the sector.

Responsibilities at Women in Rail

I lead on marketing, communications and social media. In today's fast-moving digital world, it's vital that our message penetrates far and wide, not just within the echo chamber of rail, but beyond it too. My role is to shape and amplify the voice of our organisation, ensuring that our values, mission, and impact are seen, heard, and felt across the industry.

My primary goal is to build deeper, more engaging connections with our members, partners, and wider stakeholders through clear, inclusive, and inspiring communication. I want to ensure that our messaging reflects the diversity and strength of our membership and reaches people in ways that make them feel seen, involved, and empowered.

My aim within my trustee role is to:

- Tell more stories, highlighting the real experiences and journeys of our members,
- Increase visibility, making Women in Rail's work and impact more prominent through consistent branding, strategic PR, and compelling digital content,
- Strengthen engagement, making it easier and more appealing for our members to get involved, share feedback, and be part of the Women in Rail journey,
- Promote inclusivity, ensuring our communications reflect the breadth and diversity of women and allies in the rail industry.

I'll be working alongside the Women in Rail Board, regional leads, and our members to deliver a communications strategy that brings Women in Rail to life across multiple platforms. Including:

- Content-led campaigns, launching regular storytelling features, podcasts, and videos that showcase member experiences, regional activities, and our wider impact,
- Enhanced digital presence, we will be refreshing our website to be more dynamic, informative, and reflective of our vibrant community,
- Strategic PR outreach, building partnerships with key media to elevate the visibility of Women in Rail in industry press and beyond,
- Member involvement, creating opportunities for members to contribute their stories, ideas, and feedback through surveys, calls for content, and interactive events.

Some of the key initiatives I'll be driving include:

- Launching the **'Trustee Stories'** series, giving our team a voice to connect more personally with our members,
- Rolling out the **Women in Rail Podcast**, sharing inspiring interviews and insights,
- **Increasing the frequency** of member features and spotlight stories to reflect the diversity and innovation across our network,
- Running targeted campaigns around key dates like International Women's Day, National Inclusion Week, key industry and Women in Rail events and more.

This role directly supports the delivery of the Women in Rail's **Strategic Business Plan**, particularly in the areas of visibility, engagement, and member growth. By focusing on communications and marketing, I'll ensure that our initiatives don't just happen, they're celebrated, shared, and leveraged to inspire further progress. As we outlined in **Pillar 4** of the plan, visibility is key in our drive for gender equity and is a key factor across all our programmes, therefore promoting what we do, why we do it, how we can help and the impact we are having is key, I will be supporting all the Trustees and Regional leads in promoting all our activities, which is hugely exciting.

We will showcase the incredible achievements of women across the sector, celebrate diversity and inspire the next generation to see rail as an exciting and inclusive career path. Social media gives us a powerful platform to amplify voices that might otherwise go unheard, to build strong communities and to engage with younger audiences who are just beginning to explore their career options.

Through targeted campaigns, engaging content, and vibrant storytelling I want to help Women in Rail become an even stronger, more visible advocate for equality and opportunity in the industry. The more we can raise awareness and open up the conversation about equity, the greater the impact we'll have, not just on individual careers, but on the future shape of the railway itself.

So as a Women in Rail member, here's what you can expect:

- More inspiring content, from podcast episodes and video interviews to blog features and behind-the-scenes looks at Women in Rail events,
- Regular updates to keep you informed about opportunities, activities, and initiatives in your region and nationally,
- Opportunities to contribute, share your story, appear in a feature, or get involved in our media campaigns,
- Clearer pathways to membership, for individuals and corporate partners looking to join or support our mission.

Above all, I want our members to feel that Women in Rail reflects who they are, listens to their needs, and gives them platforms to shine. So I ask of the following:

- **Become a Women in Rail member**, or encourage your colleagues and friends to join,
- As an organisation, join as a **corporate member** and help us expand our reach and impact,
- **Share** your story, we want to hear from you,
- **Tell us** what you want to hear, podcast topics, feature ideas, or communications you'd love to see.

We want to continue building a Women in Rail community that is truly member-led, and your voice is key to shaping our next chapter.

Looking Ahead

The next decade is pivotal. We know that structural reform in our industry is coming and the railway must embrace diversity. I'm optimistic because I see huge potential for rail but only if we keep investing in people as much as infrastructure.

My hope is that the rail sector does become a place where anyone, regardless of background, gender, or experience, can build a fulfilling career and contribute to something bigger than themselves. Unfortunately, women still only make up 17.4% of the industry. That's not good enough and we must simply do better.

Rail can be that sector full of opportunity and transformation. There's room for engineers, planners, commercial leaders, drivers, and many more. If you're passionate, curious and ready to challenge the status quo, there's a place for you here. So know this, by supporting each other and by lifting others as we climb, we can create a rail industry that truly reflects the diverse, dynamic communities we serve. Your voice matters, so use it. Confidently, and here at Women in Rail we will help you do that.

Being part of Women in Rail is my way to give back and help build a stronger, fairer industry. I absolutely love how we are unapologetic in our pursuit of gender equity. If I can inspire even just one woman to see herself in rail, to believe that she belongs here, then everything I've done so far will have been worth it.

Thanks for taking the time to read my story, and I look forward to sharing more with you. And remember, seek out mentors, build your network and never stop learning, want to know how – well just check out the Women in Rail website and follow these stories.

Kelly

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