

A Pledge for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across the UK rail industry

Kate Jennings, of the Railway Industry Association, and Adeline Ginn MBE, of Women in Rail, discuss the new charter set to transform the sector



happened very quickly. As we were reaching out to clients we discovered Adeline was doing something similar so it made sense to collaborate. It's all been going really well and it is great to be working with Women in Rail."

Within weeks of being launched dozens of companies had already signed up to the Charter, a commitment which supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

"There has been an amazing response from the rail industry to the Charter which shows how much our sector cares for the EDI agenda," said Adeline, who juggles her role for Women in Rail with her full-time job as Group Strategy and Legal Director at CPMS.



There is more than a hint of excitement in the air as Adeline Ginn and Kate Jennings discuss the launch of a new charter set to transform the UK railway industry.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Charter has been officially launched this month, showing a collective passion and commitment for change.

"EDI is not only about fairness, it is also the right thing to do from a business perspective," said Adeline, MBE, Founder of Women in Rail. "If you have a more diverse workforce and diverse group of people making the decisions it is going to improve the business performance and allow for more innovation."

Joining forces

Coincidentally whilst Woman in Rail were drawing up their own plans earlier this year, the Railway Industry Association were also doing something similar, leading to both organisations joining forces.

"There are lots of great initiatives in the industry and lots of things companies are doing that are really good, but equally we all know that rail is seen as a sector that is quite male and maybe not as innovative and diverse as it can be," said Kate, Policy Director at the Railway Industry Association.

"There's a lot of evidence that diversity, innovation and inclusion drive financial performance, investors care about it and clients care about it. The Charter has all

so far shows the passion for change that was already there and just had to be harnessed. It demonstrates rail companies' commitment to working together and build on, if not accelerate, the progress we, as an industry, have made in the last few years, to create opportunities for everyone and build an inclusive culture in a more official way, learning from each other, sharing and exchanging ideas and best practice."

Signatory companies recognise that an inclusive workforce is good for business, and that it brings diversity of thought, innovation and a positive workforce culture as well as improved customer relationships.

"The scope very consciously covers all forms of diversity from diversity of thought through to innovation," said Kate.

"Sometimes people also find it quite hard to come into rail from other sectors. Even at a leadership level there is a sense that if you've been in rail forever you're going to get the top jobs, whereas if you come from another industry sometimes we might be losing those people and with that these ideas.

"I think clearly BAME, gender and other priority characteristics are important, but so is social mobility – and I think rail is probably quietly a lot better than some other sectors on social mobility – and we should celebrate this as we create opportunities for a new generation of rail colleagues across the country."



Commitment to EDI

"Our industry has worked hard in the last few years to improve EDI within the sector and many companies have done a lot of great work to create a more diverse workforce and foster an inclusive culture. In these difficult times with more people feeling vulnerable, we felt it was important to send a message openly and publicly to the rail workforce that we, as an industry, do care about EDI and are committed to strengthening our efforts during the crisis.

"I'm really pleased so many companies have signed up. The tremendous reaction

The Charter:

- // Commits signatory companies to lead by example and make a difference, publicly reporting on their progress.
- // Promotes positive change within the signatory companies and across the railway industry by empowering and educating leaders, making employees feel comfortable to challenge negative or discriminatory behaviours in the workplace, and collaborating to share best practice.
- // Commits signatory companies to support the progression of diverse individuals into senior roles, develop the talent pipeline and improve representation at senior and executive level of the railway industry.
- // Recognises that each signatory company will have different starting point and available resources and that progress will not look the same for every organisation.

A new phase

Those signing up to the Charter are urged to commit to publicly reporting on their progress, promoting positive change and supporting the progression of diverse individuals into senior roles.

“We see the Charter as the beginning of a new phase in the rail industry’s EDI journey, underpinned by a strong public commitment,” said Adeline.

“There are no EDI targets imposed by the Charter. It is a voluntary initiative based on goodwill, an industry-wide coordinated effort to promote positive changes for everyone’s benefits, people and businesses, with everyone working collectively together under the same umbrella. We will support and guide companies that sign up to the Charter, help them draw up their EDI plan if they so wish, share best practice and celebrate the success stories.

“In a year’s time, we will reach out to all the signatory companies and ask them if they are willing to share any lessons learned since signing the Charter, such as new innovative and efficient ways they may have identified to promote EDI within their workforce, any feedback from their staff on steps taken that help foster better inclusion and, if possible, evidence of the business case, the correlation between a diverse and inclusive workforce and their company’s financial results.

“One of the objectives of the rail sector is to attract the younger generation and more diverse people into rail. Attracting new diverse talent is one thing, but retaining it so as to foster the next generation of leaders

in our sector is more challenging. A public industry-wide commitment to EDI evidenced by proactive action, good results and success stories should go a long way towards enabling us to achieve this goal.”

The Charter involves several key commitments, including to:

- // Appoint a member of the senior leadership team as an ‘EDI Champion’
- // Agree an action plan
- // Provide opportunities for training and education of employees to help tackle unconscious bias and negative behaviours within workforces.
- // Create a culture that fosters inclusion, including at industry events and in meetings, thus providing a safe space for all employees to talk openly
- // Make recruitment and progression processes accessible and attractive to all to attract, retain and develop people of all backgrounds, ages, genders and identities

An action plan for success

The Charter is open to all companies in the UK railway sector who wish to play a role in promoting innovation, agility and positive change in the industry. Among the aspirations for companies includes appointing a member of the senior leadership team as an EDI champion, agreeing an action plan and providing training and education opportunities, although Kate and Adeline accept not all companies will be able to make the same commitments.

“The Charter is about people making a pledge that is right for them,” said Kate.

“It’s not about us dictating to companies how they do this, it is about them realising there’s an opportunity here. The Charter is open to companies of all sizes and disciplines, from major contractors to small businesses. So you might be a tiny micro company and you can’t just change your board to add people to it or simply hire a more diverse team, but you can do something and we can help you to do that. We also want to support and celebrate small businesses with diverse ownership.

“In a world where people are worried about jobs, the economy and there’s a lot of uncertainty, especially for young people, it has left people worried about how to find a career. We need to promote the diversity of opportunities in rail and recognition for rail as a secure career option.

“I think one of the great things about rail is that you might not stay in the same organisation the whole way through, but there is an amazing career if you want it in rail with an excellent diversity of roles and opportunities across the country. You can start as an apprentice and end up on the board of a major global company.

“There’s a risk that people think rail is all about wearing a hard hat and being on a building site and, of course it is and that is an important and exciting part of it, but it’s not only that. You can be in finance or law, or you can be in a passenger-facing role looking after accessibility. There is a whole plethora of jobs and we need to celebrate and promote that.” //

Sign up to the Charter

The Charter is open for all organisations in the rail industry to sign. Email info@edicharter.co.uk to find out more.