

Driving the EDI agenda forward

Kate Jennings, of the Railway Industry Association, and Adeline Ginn MBE, of Women in Rail, discuss the progress of the EDI Charter

It has already been some journey for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Charter, which was launched jointly by the Railway Industry Association (RIA) and Women in Rail (WR) last November.

Four months ago, RailDirector spoke to Adeline Ginn MBE, Founder and Chair of WR and Legal and Marketing Director at CPMS-Egis, and Kate Jennings, Policy Director at RIA, about the Charter – marking the beginning of a new phase in the rail industry's EDI journey.

They've given an update on the progress made since the launch, with the excitement expressed then still going strongly. Much has also happened, both in terms of industry commitment and proactive actions taken by WR and RIA, to drive the Charter EDI agenda forward.

"We now have over 160 signatories to the Charter, representing a broad spectrum of companies from across the railway and demonstrating our industry's commitment to working together to drive the change needed to create a more diverse and inclusive sector," said Adeline.

"Having launched the Charter, and secured support from across the rail supply chain, rail clients and government, it was important to maintain momentum," added Kate.

"I felt strongly that it was important to encourage and inspire our industry with ideas to celebrate and drive positive change, and foster inclusion, so I proposed to Kate that we set up a cross-industry working group comprising diverse individuals who would represent both the breadth of the signatory companies and the diversity of the industry.



Adeline Ginn MBE (L) and Kate Jennings (R)

"Their role would be to educate the industry and drive the Charter agenda forward," said Adeline.

Kate echoed this and felt that it was important for such a group to be agile and representative to ensure all voices were going to be represented and heard. She said: "Working group members would themselves be role models of the diverse and inclusive rail industry that the Charter seeks to celebrate and grow."

"We considered holding a competition to identify group members but decided to identify individuals who were already active on the EDI agenda this time – this allows the group to move into action more quickly whilst still being able to consider competitions for future years."

WR and RIA set out to identify up to six individuals each from their respective networks, and to ensure the group was gender balanced.

"We sought assistance from the signatory

companies so that we benefit from the enthusiasm of some of the many men who are active supporters of the EDI agenda," said Kate. "We have now achieved a solid gender balance with a group of 11 – including five men – who are completely on board, ready to drive positive change throughout the industry. And we are already forming strong bonds as a team."

Wide range of members

The group's members are drawn from rail organisations representing the full spectrum of the industry, including infrastructure clients, arms-length bodies, supply chain organisations, train operating companies and other organisations.

They are also at different stages of their careers, from apprentices to senior managers, and so are well placed to represent the career opportunities and cultures of the different organisations within rail.

Adeline says: "Each member of the working group has been chosen based on their personal commitment to diversity and inclusion and their individual qualities and strengths. This is in addition to their representation of a wide range of backgrounds, ages, genders, ethnicity, abilities and identities within the UK rail industry at this particular point in time.

"They are the voice of their communities. Their role is to educate us on what we, as leaders, individuals, and as an industry, can do to attract, create and retain a workforce that is truly diverse and inclusive. They are all amazing and passionate about helping drive the changes our industry needs, and I am really looking forward to hearing what they have to say."

The group members put forward by WR were Charlie Woodhead (Accessibility & Inclusion Manager, LNER), Farah Sajwani (Assistant Project Manager, CPMS-Egis), Mohanad Ismail (Head of Regions, Young Rail Professionals and Senior System Consultant, WSP), Natalie Leister (Passenger Services Area Manager, Southeastern Railway), Rachel Fullard (Service Analyst, Rail Delivery Group) and Toyin Davies (Project Sponsor, Network Rail).

RIA nominated Nina Fairfowl (Corporate Communications Manager, Keltbray), Rob Doolan (Scheme Project Manager, Network Rail), Sep Semsarzadeh (Head of Operations, Colas Rail), Thevani Ravindran (Transport Engagement Lead, Atkins) and Tom Flannery (Team Leader, Rail Systems, SNC Lavalin).

Group vision

Both Adeline and Kate agreed on the importance of effective communication and the need to take time for the group to not only get to know each other but also to consider the group's purpose and the Charter's vision so that, as a group and individually, they can maximise the impact of the actions they are to take forward over the coming months.

"We also both agreed that neither RIA nor WR should act as Chairs of the group but instead take the role of facilitators to guide and support the group members in their role," said Kate.

"It was important for us that the group felt free to come up with innovative ideas, with WR and RIA in the background to facilitate and support them in their ongoing work," added Adeline.

Kate and Adeline also reached out to colleagues to help them provide that support framework.

Each member of the working group has been chosen based on their personal commitment to diversity and inclusion

Adeline asked Ruth Busby, HR Director Great Western Railway and Co-Chair of the WR South Regional Group, to join the team as group facilitator and Kate secured the support of Isabella Lawson, RIA colleague, Policy Executive and Young Rail Professionals Vice Chair for London.

The working group held their first meeting on 24 February and nominated Charlie Woodhead as their group Chair, and whilst the coronavirus pandemic has meant that the group has not been able to meet in person, they immediately got to work with virtual meetings instead.

Ruth introduced a series of strategic thinking tools, including Magic or Baggage and MINTO, so group members could start working together on refining their vision and sharing and developing their ideas. These have been their focus for the first three group meetings.

"We were keen to make sure we created a working group that was as representative as possible, and made up of passionate, self-starter individuals," Kate said, "and I feel confident that

now, after three meetings of the group, we have succeeded. I can't wait to see what they achieve over this year!"

"It is important that the group represents the Charter and support signatories in promoting EDI in rail – and how they do this is important. RIA and WR are not here to tell them what to do – we want to hear their positive ideas as the rising generation of trail blazers acting as role models for the wider rail community."

Over the coming weeks, WR and RIA will introduce the group on their social media channels, with each member talking briefly about why EDI and the group are important to them.

WR and RIA will work to empower the group, both as a collective and as individuals, by sharing networks and supporting their initiatives.

Kate says: "Both Adeline and I are keen that being a member of the group is beneficial to them as individuals, helping them to develop their skills and continue in their professional journeys. We will be amplifying their voices and giving them the platform, helping them to communicate with Charter signatories and the wider industry, promoting positive change and the move towards a more inclusive and diverse railway industry."

The group has met three times and the members have temporarily divided into three planning groups, looking at specific areas they would like to focus on and actions they would like to achieve.

At the next meeting on 20 April, they will come back together and discuss their ideas and start to produce a plan of action. The initiatives delivered by the group could take shape as events, content, and or industry interviews and both Adeline and Kate are excited to start to take the next steps in delivering the Charter goals alongside them.

To find out more about the EDI Charter, e-mail: info@edicharter.co.uk

High performance, low smoke, low toxicity, elastomer materials and components

An extensive range of unique elastomer materials for Surface, Sub-Surface, Tunnel and Rolling Stock applications - all of which are tested & approved to EN45545-2 and many other certifications, including LUL S1085 compliance.

Medium Density Silicone Sponge • Pure Neoprene Sponge • Vamac®
50°/60°/70° Shore EPDM • 40 to 60° Shore Silicone • 70° Shore Natural Rubber

Naturally, we can also provide other components and sheetings where conformance to EN 45545-2 is not required.

innovative rubber solutions | j-flex.com

WELFARE VANS4LESS

01782 848855
www.welfarevans4less.co.uk

Reduce running costs with the **Eco Solar van**. The conversion is run off solar panels (subject to weather). The **Eco van** includes ALL of the features of the Essentials Van plus all of the following

- Eco Friendly
- Solar Powered
- Energy Efficient
- Cost Effective

WE ARE COVID COMPLIANT