

## Women in Rail

## Samyutha Bala &amp; Ruth Busby

# An equitable road to recovery



Samyutha Bala



Ruth Busby

**Samyutha Bala**, Head of Customer Experience at Great Western Railway and **Ruth Busby**, HR Director at Great Western Railway and co-Chairs of Women in Rail South describe how they think we can rebuild

**T**he pandemic has had a huge impact on our lives, one that will be felt long after the life returns to whatever new normal we settle in. Many of the changes have hit women particularly hard. Whilst there remain many challenges, opportunities have also arisen, including changes in the way we do things.

When we took over as co-chairs of WR South in late 2020 we reflected on what value we could add, during the seemingly interminable series of lockdowns and home schooling, where the burden has fallen disproportionately on women, but also on the road to recovery.

As we build back better, we must identify the opportunities to build back a more equitable world – generation defining events only come along every so often. With that in mind, we set about defining our strategy and areas of focus.

We aim to improve the gender diversity in rail with four key areas of focus. Firstly, to broaden the appeal of rail to young people from all backgrounds, especially young girls, and women. Rail can seem like an intimidating and impenetrable industry if

you don't know someone already working in it. School and university visits, virtual career fairs, work experience, and working with local authorities are all ways we can let young people know about our amazing industry and the incredible variety of roles we have to offer. To help make the industry more accessible and easier to discover we've launched an Instagram page – @womeninrailsouth – and plan to launch a podcast featuring a wide variety of women in rail.

Secondly, we need to support women already in the industry to help them to grow and develop and to retain their talents within rail. Our events on personal and professional development, providing opportunities to network and build skills aim to support this. Our monthly book club is one of the enjoyable networking opportunities we've introduced, and all are welcome to join us in our April when we are reading 'We Have Always Been Here' by Samra Habib.

Thirdly, there are many internal staff networks working within companies across rail that are doing a fantastic job in promoting gender diversity. We see our role

as bringing them together and sharing and learning from each other.

And finally, we want to provide support for health, wellbeing, and resilience. After the year we've had, there is nothing that is more important than our mental and physical health. From Pamper sessions to workshops on wellbeing and resilience as we come out of the pandemic, we have events to support this.

Rail has a huge part to play in levelling up, not only the economy, but in providing opportunities and careers for people and we need to show how inclusive and open we are to everyone from all walks of life. We've felt embraced and included in the big rail family in our own careers and hope to play our part in opening that up to more people.

Here's to a more equal, equitable and exciting industry!

To find out about Women in Rail and Women in Rail South Group, contact [wr@womeninrail.org](mailto:wr@womeninrail.org) and [South@womeninrail.org](mailto:South@womeninrail.org)