

Greater diversity needed to secure future health of the rail industry

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Transport Minister Nusrat Ghani yesterday (15 May 2019) called on the rail industry to improve the diversity of the sector, and ensure women have access to the fulfilling jobs, pay and progression offered by the industry.

Speaking at the annual Women in Rail awards she made clear statistics which suggest women only make up 5% of train drivers show much more needs to be done if we want to make the best use of available talent and achieve our country's ambitions.

With the industry needing 50,000 extra employees by 2033, Minister Ghani called for culture-change to create more diverse teams in response to this gap. And with research showing diverse team drive success, she made clear improved diversity is fundamental to the future health of the industry.

In her speech, the minister set out the steps companies and the industry can take, including considering more developed flexible working practices and placing a greater emphasis of retaining talent from under-represented groups.

Transport Minister Nusrat Ghani said: “The rail industry isn’t yet doing enough: from designing to engineering to construction to driving, the rail sector needs to change.

“Just 5% of train drivers are female. Decades behind other industries. By not delivering enough opportunities for women, the industry is letting Britain down by not ensuring the broadest talent is working on our network.

“We need to nurture and embrace talent from everywhere, ensuring that the brilliant women working in rail now are joined by even more, for no industry or country can reach its full potential if it only recruits from a fraction of talent on offer.”

“Ensuring that the broadest talent is available to the industry will form part of the Williams Review commissioned by the Secretary of State but the industry needs to step up ahead of that. There are pockets of good practice and some great work but it’s time for a step-change and the whole industry to step out of the 1950s into the 21st century.”

The call to action follows government commitment to boost diversity in the sector by increasing the proportion of women taking up technical and engineering apprenticeships to at least 20% by 2020.

This is alongside industry efforts, with the employer led Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce committing to improving under-represented groups taking apprenticeships in the transport sector.