

HS2 and Network Rail highlight the female engineers transforming the railways and encourage others to follow in their tracks

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To mark International Women in Engineering Day, Network Rail and HS2 have highlighted the vital roles of women in engineering on the railways and urged others to consider playing their part in transforming the industry.

A Network Rail survey of more than 2,000 16-21 year olds in Great Britain, conducted by Savanta ComRes, showed that two-thirds felt there were not enough female role models within Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) sectors.

It also found that just 26% of females intended to pursue careers in STEM fields, although 27% did intend to study further in a STEM area.

When participants were asked if they recognised famous names and faces of STEM figures, more than 80% were familiar with male figures such as Steven Hawking and Sir Isaac Newton, but just 18% knew of Ada Lovelace, who is credited as the first computer programmer for her visionary work in computer science in

the 19th century.

Clocking up nearly 30 years on the railway, Network Rail's programme manager for change Jenny Webb, who is also a STEM ambassador, hopes she can inspire the next set of female railway engineers.

Jenny's career started when she took up a maintenance job in Shenfield with British Rail. Since then, she has achieved Chartered Engineer status and, in her own words, can now "put a few letters after my name". She's now building her team which is a challenge during a pandemic – but challenges and solving problems is what engineers like Jenny love to do.

She said: "Truthfully I fell into this role by accident. After leaving full-time education, the cost of university education put me off and competition for a job was massive. I applied for numerous roles in banking, insurance etc.

"Then I saw an ad for British Rail which included technical drawing which I had done. I got the job and didn't really know what I was in for but after a few weeks, with an amazing mentor and support, I was hooked."

"It was a bit of a novelty to have a woman on the front line back then and there were a few awkward moments, but never anything bad. There was a lot of banter. There are more women in these roles now so it's not really a 'thing' anymore."

And Jenny has some good advice for budding female engineers: "Go for it, the variety of work and sense of achievement you can get from it is brilliant. Find yourself a good mentor or work buddy, everyday is a school day, and other engineers love nothing more than to share anecdotes of their own past mistakes.

"Solving engineering problems, coming up with new ways of working, using innovation and new technology still ticks a lot of boxes for me; I guess the kid who loved her box of Lego just grew up and got to play with a bigger version of it."

HS2 calls on women to help build Europe's most ambitious infrastructure project

With construction just weeks away on the Birmingham to London section of the railway, HS2 Ltd is saying to women who may be considering a career in engineering that now is the time to get inspired and engage with the team transforming transport in the UK.

Among those already doing just that includes Rozie Harries, senior project engineer at Fusion JV, and Carine Marin, head of control, command and signalling HS2 Ltd.

Kate Myers, HS2 Ltd Head of Skills, Employment and Education, said: "At HS2 we've always been focused on addressing the issue of an ageing workforce in railway engineering and construction, a workforce traditionally dominated by men. We're determined to become a global leader in the sector and export our

skills in high speed rail and engineering excellence, and more women and young people is what will take us there.

“On Women in Engineering Day 2020 I want to encourage all those budding female engineers, project managers and designers to come and join me on Europe’s most ambitious infrastructure project, and together we can ensure that HS2 leaves a lasting skills legacy, with a culturally diverse and gender-balanced workforce capable of delivering the UK’s future pipeline of engineering projects.”

Inspire the next generation of engineers

Network Rail is inviting children to consider what our world would be like without the work of a female engineer and create a poster, poem or story to explain their findings.

Entries will be proudly displayed on screens at Network Rail's stations in a celebration of the impact female engineers have had on our world. Two winners of different genders will also be selected by an independent judging panel from each of the three age groups (5 to 8, 9 to 11 and 12 to 14) to win amazing and unique prizes.

All winners will have the chance to be inspired and ask questions to female role models in engineering. Winners from the youngest age category will also be turned into cartoon characters for a starring role in an Emily the Engineer activity book, whilst winners from the older age categories will be presented with a one-of-a-kind VIP Golden Ticket experience day* at Network Rail.

To find out more, click [here](#).

- National Women in Engineering Day was launched in the UK on 23 June 2014 by the [Women's Engineering Society \(WES\)](#) to celebrate its 95th anniversary. The day has since grown into a global celebration of women in engineering, achieving UNESCO patronage in 2016 and becoming International Women in Engineering Day in 2017 following interest and enthusiasm from across the world.

Photo and video credit: Network Rail