

London Assembly Transport Chair calls for rail industry to better represent the people it serves at diversity event

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Florence Eshalomi AM, Chair of the London Assembly Transport Committee, has called for the rail industry to better represent the people it serves. She made the call at the Railway Industry Association and Young Rail Professionals TrailBlazers Reception at the KIA Oval Cricket Ground.

The Reception brought together existing rail industry leaders with leaders of the future from a wide range of backgrounds to network, learn from each other and discuss diversity and skills in the sector. The day included a pre-reception workshop, speeches from Ms Eshalomi, RIA Chief Executive Darren Caplan and National Chair of Young Rail Professionals David Westcough, and networking at one of the UK's landmark sporting venues.

Florence Eshalomi, London Assembly Transport Committee Chair, said at the event: "Rail plays an important part in the daily commute and travel for thousands of Londoners. As London's population is set to increase to 10.8m by 2041 we need to respond to the challenges across the transport network. There are existing skills shortages and gaps in the rail and wider transport sector. Having the right people with

the skills in place to deliver the transport infrastructure is critical.

“We have to invest in the next generation of staff and challenge the perceptions that the rail and transport sector is only for men by encouraging more females and other underrepresented groups to study STEM subjects, supporting apprentices, training and graduate schemes.”

Darren Caplan, Chief Executive of the Railway Industry Association (RIA), said: “We all know that the rail industry is a great industry to work in. It provides fantastic jobs and great career options, yet the sector still suffers from a lack of diversity: 70% of the rail workforce is male and only 5% of train drivers are female, a third is over 50 and only 27% are from a Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) background.

“So, I wholeheartedly back London Assembly Transport Committee Chair Florence Eshalomi’s inspired call for the rail industry to improve diversity at our TrailBlazers Reception.”

David Westcough, National Chair of Young Rail Professionals (YRP), said: “In order to ensure the vital success of rail, it is vital that we continue to attract high quality young people from diverse backgrounds into the industry, as well as develop the young people already working in rail to their full potential. We’d like to thank the Railway Industry association for raising the awareness of this need at the Trailblazers networking reception, as well as Florence for her call to improve diversity within rail.”

Photo credit: RIA