

# Network Rail inspires next generation of women in rail with careers event for International Women's Day

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Network Rail has hosted a 'morning myth-buster' event at a school in York ahead of International Women's Day. The event was designed to inspire students, and inform them about the wide range of opportunities for women in the rail industry.

It was held at the Mount School in York, and attended by 51 girls in year 10 and 12, all of whom are weighing up their career options after GCSEs or sixth form. Network Rail's myth-buster events aim to inspire young people to pursue their dream career, as well as helping to eliminate gender stereotypes.

Network Rail colleagues shared insight into the wide range of opportunities for women in the rail industry and asked whether students had considered a career working at Network Rail.

The event covered apprenticeship options and engaged students to spark an interest in careers relating to STEM subjects. There was also an interactive group activity where students built a bridge and were presented with the challenges that a real-life project would face, including budget limitations, supply chain issues, and environmental concerns.

Students could take on various roles including project manager, project sponsor, environmental manager and more based on their interests and competencies to get them thinking about how projects come together.

The day further focused on the importance of taking the right route for them, whether that was apprenticeships or choosing STEM-based subjects at university, through to graduate scheme opportunities.

The event, which was organised and facilitated by Lily Shimmin, Portfolio Manager in the Eastern region at Network Rail, included a presentation which informed the students about what Network Rail does, including personal stories about how Network Rail colleagues got into the industry.

It also encouraged the girls to write about their conceptions and what they associate with working in the railway.

Colleagues from Network Rail were on-hand to answer questions about their experiences of being a woman working in the rail industry and encourage students that working for the railway is for everyone.

The myth-buster events are aiming to expand out to schools across Yorkshire and to other regions to inspire the next generation of women as part of International Women's Day celebrations.

Lily Shimmin, Portfolio Manager in the Eastern region at Network Rail said: "These events are a great way to engage and inform girls on what it is like to be a woman working in rail at an age where they are choosing the next steps on their life path.

"Growing up, events like this were never hosted at my school and I wanted to organise something that reached out to students at key points in their education to show the various opportunities for women in the rail industry.

"It was created from a place of noticing a gap in the events that Network Rail run and wanting to make a real tangible difference to students careers.

"I hope we can expand these events out across regions and to reach out to a range of schools going forward. It is so important to make sure that women and girls feel able to pursue a career in any industry they wish."

James Waddington, Deputy Head of College at The Mount School, added: "The girls have had the opportunity to find out more about Network Rail as an employer and to talk about different routes into jobs such as apprenticeships and graduate schemes. They were also able to work on their own projects building bridges where they had to take on individual roles that they might have to do in the real-world of work.

“It is so important for the girls to know what is out there in terms of opportunities, they made great progress in the session, and they now have a much wider understanding of some of the roles that would be available to them in a company like Network Rail.

“Especially as an all-girls school, it is vital to challenge any gender stereotypes that exist in jobs in the rail industry and to show that women can thrive just as strongly.”