

New Head of Rail at Midlands Connect

April 30, 2021



Sub-national Transport Body Midlands Connect has welcomed Karen Heppenstall as its new Head of Rail. Joining after a six-years at engineering consultancy WSP, following roles at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Network Rail, Karen brings with her a wealth of experience in the development, appraisal and delivery of rail projects.

As well as developing a rail strategy for South-West STB Western Gateway, Karen has also spearheaded the production of business cases for reopening railway lines as part of Government's Restoring Your Railways (RYR) fund; led the development of a number of new and relocated stations (including Teesside Airport Station); and shaped station Masterplans such as that included in Stoke-on-Trent's Transforming Cities Fund bid.

In this new role, Karen will oversee the progression of Midlands Connect's rail programme; Midlands Engine Rail, work to secure funding for project development and integrate programmes within other key workstreams such as decarbonisation and future mobility. Midlands Connect will publish its updated connectivity strategy in the Autumn.

Maria Machancoses, Chief Executive of Midlands Connect, said: "It's fantastic to have Karen on board at what is a critically-important time for our railways. Midlands Engine Rail is the first programme of its kind

in our region, we must continue to gather evidence, work with partners and Government to turn our plans into a reality. With Karen's expertise and enthusiasm at hand, I'm confident we will continue to make great progress."

Karen Heppenstall, Head of Rail at Midlands Connect, said: "This is such an exciting time to be working in the rail industry, and I'm thrilled to be joining such an ambitious and forward-thinking organisation as Midlands Connect. The release of the Integrated Rail Plan this spring will be a critical moment; outlining Government's shortlist of regional rail investments for the next three decades. I am looking forward to working with my colleagues and our partners to deliver a more sustainable, connected and productive rail network for our region."

Photo credit: Midlands Connect