

North East engineer encourages more women to consider a career in the railway

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Johanna Priestley from Newcastle is using International Women in Engineering Day 2019 to encourage more women and girls to get into the discipline and the rail industry.

Johanna is a route asset manager for Network Rail, having begun her career on the railway nearly 30 years ago. Johanna was a track engineer in the North East for over ten years, before taking up a key role to improve train performance. Johanna was part of a wider team looking at how to make services more reliable for passengers and was responsible for the track element of this.

Now Johanna heads up a team of five who are responsible for looking after drainage, fencing and vegetation and making sure all of these assets are properly inspected and managed to prevent them from interfering with the running of trains.

Johanna hadn't always planned to be an engineer. Initially, she went to college to study land surveying and

mapping, however when she joined British Rail, she became more interested in engineering and went through further training to become a qualified civil engineer and incorporated engineer.

Speaking about her experience in engineering and the rail industry, she said: “My role is fantastic. Every day is different, and I get to work with a great team. I really feel as though I am making a difference and that’s what I love about engineering.

“You are tasked with problem solving and creating solutions which will make a real difference to the travelling public and our lineside neighbours, it is incredibly rewarding.

“I’m so glad that I ended up on this career path and in this industry. My message for any woman or girl considering engineering would be to suspend any myths you might have heard. Engineering is a fantastic career and something we can all excel at.”

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