

Scottish rail supply sector commits to apprentice target at RIA Scotland Conference

November 25, 2022



Scottish rail suppliers have said that 5% of their workforce could be made up of apprentices, providing the right Government support is in place.

The offer came at RIA (Railway Industry Association) Scotland's annual conference, which was held in Edinburgh on Thursday 24 November.

The conference is a flagship event in the railway calendar and attracts some 100 industry leaders and senior players, to discuss the strategic direction of the industry in Scotland.

This year's conference included a keynote speech from Transport Minister Jenny Gilruth MSP, in which she spoke about the importance of the railway when it comes to decarbonisation, innovation and social value. Bill Reeve, Director of Rail at Transport Scotland and Alex Hynes, Managing Director of Scotland's Railway also took part in panel discussions.

Meirion Thomas, Chair of RIA Scotland, said: "This was a hugely successful event and RIA Scotland members stand ready to use their expertise to make the Scottish rail investment programme greener and

more efficient.

“We look forward to work with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, Network Rail and many others to deliver a successful, sustainable and vibrant railway industry in Scotland.”

The agenda was based around RIA Scotland’s four priorities for the country’s railway: decarbonisation, skills, innovation and efficient delivery. At the conference, the industry made a series of ‘offers’ and ‘asks’ to Government for each of the four themes.

On skills, rail suppliers said they wanted to achieve the target of employing 500 apprentices or have apprentices make up five percent of their workforce but needed decision makers to provide a clear pipeline of work and launch a programme to promote the diversity of jobs within the rail industry.

The industry also said it could offer better value for money to the taxpayer, make electrification cheaper and become more innovative with the right approach from Government.

Jenny Gilruth MSP, Minister for Transport, said: “It was a pleasure to attend the RIA Scotland conference today and hear first-hand the collaborative way in which the rail supply sector works. The Scottish Government is committed to delivering an affordable railway for the people it serves.

“RIA Scotland is right to maintain a clear focus on four key priorities: decarbonisation, skills, innovation and efficient delivery. Delivering on these will be essential to providing a reliable, cost-effective and sustainable railway that’s fit for the future”.

Regional RIA conferences continue at pace, with the next, the RIA North conference, taking place on **1 December in Manchester**.