

# Sustainable solutions to support a cleaner rail industry

September 14, 2022



*Huntingdon-based TRB Lightweight Structures has built a reputation for quality and reliability in the rail sector for nearly fifty years. In this article, the firm's Director of Sales for UK and Europe, Toni Shepherd, explains how it has grown its offering and is developing new lightweight materials to support a greener transport industry.*

As a design, manufacturer, and refurbishment specialist in rail Interior fittings and doors, TRB Lightweight Structures offers a tailored approach to each client.

Offering a turnkey solution with a firm eye on sustainable transport solutions, the future looks bright for TRB Lightweight Structures. We talk to Toni Shepherd Director of Sales for UK and Europe about working in rail, her pivotal role, and what the future holds for TRB Lightweight Structures.

### **Humble beginnings**

Toni Shepherd didn't follow a traditional route to sales management. She began with a customer service role, and her early success allowed her to move into a more senior sales management role in 2019.

"I was given the opportunity to expand this to a Sales Manager position back in 2019, which was a more client-facing role; it helped me expand and develop my knowledge of the rail sector even further. In turn, this allowed me to progress to Director of Sales in 2020," Toni explains.

Toni joined the company with a great understanding of customer services and found that the rail sector welcomed her with open arms. She said: "The rail sector is like a family, once you get established it becomes a very warm and welcoming industry to work in. It's more about building relationships with your customer base and people within the industry."

The company itself was like a diminutive version of the wider sector and Toni found herself amongst a group of individuals who worked like her and believed in the value of good customer service. Providing a high-level service to clients and the public became a way of life for Toni. Even as Director of Sales, Toni describes herself as part of the team visiting customers to listen and offer advice and expertise.

As Toni summarises: "Being a part of a team like this makes me feel very proud. I think we all motivate one another to do more and strive for better."

### **Women in Rail**

Toni believes that the rail sector is trying hard to create an ecosystem that supports both diversity, inclusion, and a healthy work-life balance. As this becomes part of the natural order, Toni believes this approach is already making a critical difference. These changes are opening doors across the UK and Europe. As Toni concludes: "the sector, which has been traditionally led by males, has been very active in attracting more women to the industry, driving equal pay, treatment and careers. I believe the rail sector offers great opportunities for women."

### **Turnkey services and a unique approach**

TRB Lightweight Structures offers everything from advice and expertise to communication with the engineers to ensure the product is right for each client. The essential mix of a client-facing, customer-focused team with in-depth technical knowledge allows projects to run smoothly and efficiently.

As Toni explains: "we believe we have created the right balance in the team. This helps us to keep

communication clear and manage our client's expectations effectively. Our capability to design, build and refurbish creates a unique combination which our clients tell us makes a huge difference to our approach and the final results."

TRB Lightweight Structures has over 25 years of experience in the examination, reverse engineering, and rebuilding of both External and Internal Door Leaves as well as other interior components.

The company can provide the following services across all fleets:

- On-site Surveys
- Elimination investigations
- Reverse engineering – including 3D models
- Revalidation including fire and GM/RT2100 testing
- Tool manufacture
- Refreshing old doors using existing frames
- Partial repairs
- Full strip repairs
- Painting and glazing
- Vinyl Application
- Installation assistance
- Provision of method statements

### **Looking to the future with Net Zero aspirations**

Creating a more sustainable transport network is a key objective for TRB Lightweight Structures and as such, refurbishment is a key part of this important strategy.

TRB Lightweight Structures' comprehensive service offers a range of processes to ensure that refurbished products stand up to the most demanding rail environments. A variety of activities are involved, including stripping down components, replacing worn materials, repairing water ingress issues, filling, and dressing impact damage, replacing doors and component furniture, and repainting.

Aluminum has traditionally been used to make lightweight structures for transportation because it is strong, lightweight, and recyclable. Repurposing original components and sourcing local components will be considered when refurbishing to help the business reduce its carbon footprint during operations.

The use of composites has significant potential in the transportation industry, making it possible to create lighter and more durable components for use on the railways.

TRB recently announced a partnership with Turkish manufacturer Kordsa, working on the manufacturing of ground-breaking composite materials. This new collaboration aims to continue the development of sustainable lightweight composites for the automotive industry and make environmental considerations more accessible in transportation.

The new partnership will enhance TRB's offering, with Kordsa's vast materials science knowledge and global operation capabilities helping the firm to source and supply greener materials. The partnership forms part of an ongoing drive to develop lighter components to support clean transportation. "We are committed to creating a more sustainable future at TRB, adds Toni.

"As a result of advancements in material science, improved manufacturing processes, and cost reductions, we aim to accelerate the adoption of sustainable transportation solutions."