

SWiFT inaugural guest speaker event hailed a resounding success

November 21, 2022



SWiFT held a hugely successful and well-attended inaugural guest speaker event with journalist, author and strategist Alastair Campbell.

Guests enjoyed an entertaining and informative evening at AECOM London headquarters on November 17 with Mr Campbell, best known for his role as former Prime Minister Tony Blair's spokesman, press secretary and director of communications and strategy, sharing insights from his time in politics and as a political commentator and author.



Taking questions from the audience, Mr Campbell expressed his candid views on diverse topics ranging from the abuse of corporate power to social media and mental health.

The evening was hosted by Shomit Weinberger Gaiger, managing director for West Coast Partnership Development, who is the SWiFT lead and Women in Rail (WR) Trustee. She said: “SWiFT’s inaugural event, An Evening With...Alastair Campbell, was a huge success and we are extremely grateful to Alastair for being such an erudite, candid and thought-provoking speaker.”

“Someone who champions women in leadership roles, Alastair was shocked by the lack of women in senior positions within the rail industry and, while recognising ingrained sexism will take time to eradicate, he spoke of the power of allyship in breaking down barriers.

“And, as a frequent train passenger, Alastair recognised and commended the dedication of front-line rail staff.

“SWiFT would like to thank Newsom Consulting for sponsoring the evening. Managing director Jim Newsom shared the company’s most recent gender diversity in transport and infrastructure leadership teams report which, as SWiFT already attests, the success of companies and business impact is proven to be linked to having a gender diverse executive.”

An integral part of Women in Rail (WR), SWiFT provides space and support for its executive members through a peer-to-peer network and fosters the development of high potential women in the rail industry,

helping them progress their career and transition to more senior roles.

Open to male and female professionals, SWiFT's objective is to ultimately shift the dial of gender balance in executive roles in the UK rail sector and, in line with WR core values, further promote equality, diversity and inclusion, with a particular focus on executive grades and roles.

SWiFT has a number of 'An Evening With...' events planned for next year including HS2 chief commercial officer Ruth Todd, who has more than 30 years' experience in senior roles within supply chain, procurement, operations and consultancy in private and public sector businesses, and Yorkshire Water chief executive officer Nicola Shaw, who previously held roles as the executive officer at National Grid, chief executive of High Speed 1 and director of FirstGroup.