

SYSTRA employee named one of Planner Magazine's Women of Influence 2024

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The Planner Magazine has selected Jenny Jefferies, Technical Expert – Consents at SYSTRA, as one of its Women of Influence for 2024.

Jenny, who is currently working on HS2 as part of SYSTRA's Signature Team for high speed rail and consenting, was nominated by her team.

Jenny said: "As someone who isn't a town planner by trade but has worked in planning and consenting for all of my career it's still a surprise to find myself on this list with such an inspirational group of women."

The Planner publishes its Women of Influence list to mark International Women's Day. Candidates were nominated by readers, before a panel of seven expert judges selected a final list of women that they felt 'illustrated the breadth and depth of women influencing planning across the UK and beyond.' With its non-ranked and non-competitive list, the Planner seeks to highlight and celebrate the 'impact of women on planning and planners.'

Jenny's unconventional career path certainly fits the bill. She graduated from Newcastle University with a Master's in Environmental Biogeochemistry in 2009. In the years that followed, she worked as a site supervisor on contaminated land sites, undertaking groundwater monitoring and testing and soil testing. Her roles saw her conduct flood risk assessments and Environmental Impact Assessment coordination, giving her a thorough understanding of the context in which important and high-stakes rail projects are built.

Jenny has been working on the HS2 project for SYSTRA for the last four years. In her main role as Consents Delivery Manager, Jenny has been managing and leading the delivery of the planning and environmental consents required for the permanent railway to be constructed.

Jenny's nomination citation mentions her 'remarkable grit and resilience.' It is this, combined with her technical knowledge and communication skills, that has helped her to successfully navigate the frequently complex world of stakeholder management and planning consents.

The fact Jenny was nominated by her team reflects the high regard with which they hold her. Jenny has fostered an environment in which her team feels supported and can thrive, encouraging colleagues to reach for new opportunities or to pursue professional registration.

Jenny added: "I'm often pushing my team to go for roles in SYSTRA that they may think out of reach for them but I support them to go for opportunities to help with their development knowing that they have my support should they need it."

Encouraging and lifting up others is a topic close to Jenny's heart. She continued: "One of the highlights of my professional life has been working with other women that have inspired me from the beginning of my career – Anna Butler, Lucie Anderton and Karen Sagar. They really helped me to believe that I can progress without barriers, and without having these role models I wouldn't have made the moves in my career that I did."

This theme was echoed in the speech Jenny gave at the UIC world congress on High Speed Rail in Morocco

in 2023, which happily coincided with International Women's Day. As well as speaking about improving the social and environmental impact of infrastructure planning for high-speed rail and the importance of sustainability in the sector, Jenny took the opportunity to champion female leadership at the highest levels of town and infrastructure planning.