

# The four key strategic objectives for Rail Forum Midlands

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Karen Jackson was announced earlier this month as the new Programme Delivery Executive at Rail Forum Midlands.

She joined from Porterbrook, where she worked in the Communications team as Communications & Engagement Assistant.

Karen has written an article for [railbusinessdaily.com](https://railbusinessdaily.com) about the role and the priorities moving forward.

"It's now coming up to a month since I joined Rail Forum Midlands (RFM) and I'm really pleased to be here. As we begin to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis I am looking forward to delivering a range of services for and on behalf of members including an annual programme of face to face and online events, keeping up with industry news and developments and preparing regular newsletters to members.

RFM has four key strategic objectives through which we serve our members:

- **Sharing information about key issues and opportunities**

Keeping members up-to-date on key industry developments and government policy is really important in such a busy environment. We are also interested in sharing information about our members' successes, contract opportunities, the direction of the industry, client expectations and issues such as corporate social responsibility, safety and workforce diversity.

- **Providing a collective voice**

UK rail is highly political with a significant amount of central and regional government involvement; from setting policy and infrastructure priorities to managing the franchise process and developing the rail supply chain. We maintain close relationships with key government departments, on behalf of members, meeting regularly with officials and politicians to ensure they understand the environment in which our businesses are operating and competing.

- **Showcasing the capability of our members**

Many companies join RFM to access our rail community to network and meet potential clients and collaborative partners. We facilitate this through a variety of events from our high-profile conferences and receptions to smaller social or topical events.

During lockdown RFM has continued to support members through a significant number of on-line events which have been extremely well received.

- **Supporting the delivery of a Rail Sector Deal**

The Rail Sector Deal was launched last year with a number of workstreams being put in place to deliver the various aspects of this ground-breaking deal between the rail industry and government. One workstream, The Midlands Pilots, is being delivered by RFM.

The two specific pieces of work that we are leading on are:

- Driving SME resilience and growth through collaboration by providing opportunities for SMEs to respond to specific client requirements or challenges.
- Encouraging more apprenticeships via shared schemes and developing a regional approach to schools engagement.

The first SME project was recently launched, supported by Bombardier, Hitachi, Porterbrook and Siemens. The challenge focussed on opportunities for SMEs to come up with lightweighting options for both new and existing rolling stock. SMEs are

encouraged to collaborate to develop new ideas, products and services that will be pitched to clients.

We act as facilitator to bring companies together where needed and also act as a bridge to specific expertise, routes to potential funding if required and facilities for research and development.

This is a really great opportunity for SMEs to get involved.

RFM is also in the process of finalising the regional schools engagement strategy as part of the second pilot and this will be launched ready for the new academic year.”

*Karen Jackson, Programme Delivery Executive at Rail Forum Midlands.*

*Photo credit: Rail Forum Midlands*