

Frances shares opportunities for females at Hull STEM careers event

Taking place in Hull, the Women into Manufacturing and Engineering (WiME) Public Careers Fair highlighted the world of opportunities for women to join these fast-paced and exciting sectors.

During the day, approximately 200 girls from schools across the Humber area attended the event, with around 70 women going along in the evening. The event aimed to drive positive change in terms of gender balance in the workplace, challenge stereotypes and inspire girls and women to consider careers in these industries.

Among the inspirational females offering a glimpse into the industries was Frances Oliver. Frances is the National Highways Project Manager for the A63 Castle Street improvement scheme, which is transforming Hull city centre. She oversees this £355m upgrade which will improve access to the port, reduce congestion and enhance safety as well as connections between the city centre and tourist and recreational facilities.

Frances said:

I hope to promote equality so that women and girls don't feel that, if they do go for those roles, they will be the only female on their team. You can't be what you can't see.

After graduating from the University of York in 2006 with a BA Degree in Linguistics, Frances joined National Highways in 2007. Having initially joined the agency in the HR department, she went on to become involved in financial management for IT projects.

She later became involved in project management. She says:

This was a great way to be involved in an area that was fast-paced and public-facing.

She moved into Major Projects in 2012. Supported by the organisation, Frances worked her way up, going on to be assistant project manager for the A63 scheme before becoming project manager.

She says:

I've been involved in a variety of construction projects, but this is the biggest construction project I've seen – and I get to be manager of it!

Frances says she doesn't recall seeing a female engineer or project manager growing up:

I think, if you can't see something, you're not aware you can do it. I want to promote the fact that there are great roles out there for everyone and there are all kinds of women doing them. I work with fantastic women in our team.

The WiME event was led by Green Port Hull. This is a collaboration between Hull City Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council and North Lincolnshire Council to promote investment and development of the renewable energy sector in the Humber region. It also aims to support investors and their supply chains to secure long-term economic growth for the area.

Chair of WiME, Dr Kirsty Clode, said:

We're thrilled Frances and the team from National Highways could join us at our Hull careers event, which was supported by female employees from over 35 different organisations. What makes a huge difference is that we set up our events so that women who do these roles are available for girls and women to chat to. We're so thankful to everyone who gave up their time to make this possible.

National Highways and delivery partner Balfour Beatty have worked together to create a lasting "local first" legacy, helping charities, businesses, suppliers, schools and colleges throughout the life of the scheme.

The project is engaging with young people on employment and skills activities, promoting STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) as a career.

The project team has engaged with more than 12,000 students in the last 12 months and delivered STEM-based activities to schools, colleges, and the University of Hull, including a full day for 45 students from a local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities school.

Women into Manufacturing and Engineering (WiME)

WiME is an initiative to encourage women to choose a career in these industries.

With great pay, a high number of vacancies and attractive prospects, careers in manufacturing and engineering present a wide variety of interesting and exciting roles, which play an important part in our economy.

This is why Green Port Hull has launched WiME, to encourage, inspire and help women discover the opportunities available in manufacturing and engineering.

WiME has grown in strength with a network of 50 local companies, and has engaged with over 2,700 women and girls, encouraging them to consider STEM subjects and career opportunities.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.