

"We need to go into schools; we need to go into colleges. We need to tell them how great our industry is and what fantastic opportunities there are"

Welcome from SOE patron Beverley Bell

By 2022, and that's not that far away, we're going to need an extra 1.2 million workers in transport and logistics. And transport and logistics includes engineering and making sure that the wheels keep on turning. We have about 2.2 million people working in transport, logistics and engineering-related jobs – 8% of the workforce. There are jobs that haven't even been invented yet that are going to have to be filled.

How do we encourage young people to come into our sector? It's not easy. The first problem is that the parents don't want them to do the work we do. They want them to be lawyers – God forbid – or accountants or doctors, or do something 'worthy'. Well, actually, what we do is worthy, because we deliver for Great Britain every day. We deliver people and we deliver goods, and without our industry, we would quite literally grind to a halt. So we have to somehow influence the parents.

And then there are the schools, bless them. How do we influence the teachers? Because they don't say: "You're a bright kid, go and work in transport, logistics and engineering."

And then there are the 'girls'. Most 'girls' quite like working with the 'boys', but they don't always want to do it in engineering. I wonder why? I look around the audience. We're all

gorgeous. We're all of a certain age. But maybe we're not so attractive to the younger generation?

In short, how do we tackle the skills gap? There are three ways we can do it.

We must engage with government, and ask government to put its money where its mouth is. In my other capacity I chair an industry working group that reports to the minister for transport, about how we can attract young people into transport and logistics and engineering. I've just written to a number of government ministers asking them to provide some industry match-funding to enable the project to move forward. When you look at the cost to the public purse of young people not in education or training and claiming jobseekers' allowance, the amount we have requested is small fry, because it's costing us millions of pounds a year to keep those people on – quite frankly – the dole. So let's get them off the dole and working in your organisations.

Second, we must engage with the education



sector. We need to go into schools; we need to go into colleges. We need to tell them how great our industry is and what fantastic opportunities there are. It's no good us

doing it; students aren't going to listen to us, given our certain age profile. We need the youngsters who did the course last year to go and tell them how great it is.

Thirdly – and this is my call to you – we need to work with industry. If you don't sell the industry, if you don't believe in the industry, you can't possibly expect other people to believe in it. We have to convey that. Maybe we should have, maybe SOE should have, a bring-a-young-person-to-work day. Show them just what the opportunities are, and show them just what a difference they can make to ensuring that we keep delivering people and goods every day.

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