

News story: Greater diversity needed to secure future health of the rail industry

From designing to engineering to construction to driving, the rail sector needs to change.

Speech: Rail can no longer be a male preserve

In a speech to the Women in Rail Awards, Minister Nusrat Ghani highlights how Britain's railways will benefit from greater diversity.

News story: Call for views on new digital Functional Skills qualifications

Employers, post-16 providers, awarding organisations and students are being encouraged to have their say on the content for the new digital Functional Skills qualifications through an [eight-week consultation](#) launched today, Thursday 16 May.

The consultation is the latest step in the Government's drive to help more adults get the essential digital skills they need, such as using a tablet, buying online, working with cloud storage or managing privacy settings, that many people take for granted.

Views are being sought to make sure the subject content for the new qualifications best meets the needs of employers and will prepare students for everyday life and work.

The digital Functional Skills qualifications, available from 2021, will support progression into employment or further education and develop skills for everyday life – based on the new, rigorous national standards for essential digital skills.

Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Anne Milton said:

We want everyone to have the digital skills they need. This consultation builds on the new 'essential digital skills' qualifications which will give adults the chance to develop a whole host of new skills that they can use in their everyday lives and to get on in work.

I encourage everyone to have their say. We want to make sure the content of these important qualifications meets the needs of employers and gives people the knowledge and skills they need.

The proposed subject content for digital Functional Skills Qualifications is based on the new [national standards for essential digital skills](#) which, informed by the Essential Digital Skills framework, are defining the skills needed to participate in today's digital world, were developed in close consultation with a range of providers, awarding organisations, employers and digital inclusion organisations.

The Government recently announced new plans to boost digital skills for adults through free courses offered to thousands of people to help the [1 in 5 adults with no or low basic digital skills](#) thrive in an increasingly digital world.

In April, we announced the new offer will comprise of new Essential Digital Skills qualifications, available from 2020, and new digital Functional Skills qualifications, available from 2021.

The new national entitlement from 2020 will fully fund adults with no or low digital skills to undertake the new qualifications. They will be supported to use digital devices like tablets, smart phones and laptop computers and to perform everyday activities like how to navigate the internet, send an email and make online payments, while protecting their privacy online.

The announcement builds on steps already taken to drive up the government's digital offer including making computing a statutory national curriculum subject and introducing a new Computer Science GCSE and A Level.

Press release: First review of 25 Year Environment Plan published

The first progress report of the landmark 25 Year Environment Plan is published during the Year of Green Action.

Press release: First review of 25 Year Environment Plan published

The government has today published the first [progress report](#) of its landmark [25 Year Environment Plan](#) indicating that, in the first year alone, 90% of the plan's actions have been delivered or are being progressed.

Launched in January 2018, the 25 Year Environment Plan sets out how we will improve the environment over a generation by creating richer habitats for wildlife, improving air and water quality and curbing the scourge of plastic in the world's oceans.

Over the last 12 months, the government has:

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Through our landmark 25 Year Environment Plan and upcoming Environment Bill, we are committed to bold action on tackling plastic waste, reforming farming, protecting our landscapes and boosting wildlife. While progress is encouraging, we know there is still more to do.

As the future stewards of the environment, our children and young people have a crucial role to play in protecting our precious natural world. That is why, in this [Year of Green Action](#), we are involving young people in helping shape our shared future".

The first progress report comes during the Year of Green Action, a year-long drive to get more people from all backgrounds involved in projects to improve the natural world.

A key part of the 25 year Environment Plan, the government has appointed [15 environmental ambassadors to inspire action across the UK](#), and is working in partnership with the #iwill campaign to champion the role of young people during the year.

The government has today also published a [new indicator framework for the 25 Year Environment Plan](#), becoming one of the first countries to establish such a comprehensive indicator list from which to monitor environmental progress.

It comes as the government explores introducing a new citizen science project to build a broader understanding of the state of the environment.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove has written to the [Natural Capital Committee](#) to ask for advice on how the public could volunteer to be involved in a new environmental citizen science project. Members of the public would

go out and record their local environment, from logging individual plants and animals to noting changes across whole landscapes, so that the data can be used to help shape future policy.

In addition to involving citizens directly, plans are underway to examine how new technologies could be used to identify gaps in environmental protection. Techniques such as satellite monitoring could show what crops are being grown and where habitats need protecting. Social media data could also be used to understand how people are interacting with their environment.

As announced by the Prime Minister in 2018, the government is currently preparing the first Environment Bill for 20 years which will place the 25 Year Environment Plan on statutory footing and put environmental ambition and accountability at the heart of government.