

LEADERSHIP STORIES

BY CAROLINE WILSON



East Yorkshire's transport Top Gun

Caroline Wilson, MD and founder at The Recruitment Story, meets Hull and East Yorkshire's transport chief, **Chris Blucke**

► Briefly explain your role

I'm the Director of Transport & Connectivity for the newly established Hull and East Yorkshire Combined Authority, responsible for shaping and delivering the region's transport strategy. My remit spans buses, rail, active travel, highways and anything innovative that helps people, businesses and communities connect safely, efficiently and affordably.

I always say customers don't care about arbitrary lines on a map or who operates the service. They care about getting from A to B. That's the lens I use for everything we do.

What's one leadership behaviour you believe makes the biggest difference in transport?

Accountability. Accountability to customers means explaining what's happening, why it's happening and what we're doing about it. People can forgive disruption if they understand it. They can't forgive silence.

Accountability to colleagues is just as important, being clear about what's possible, what isn't, and why. Transport is complex. People need honesty, clarity and confidence from their leaders. That's what I try to bring.

What's one fear you've carried in leadership?

People often see me as sociable, energetic and outward facing and that's true. But the fear I carry is social overload.

I set a high bar for being available, upbeat and supportive. I listen, I help, I try to take stress off people. But when I'm emotionally or socially drained, after a day of supporting a team, then going home to two-year-old twins and no sleep, I worry about the impact on others. My fear is that if I'm not my usual self, people might hesitate to approach me or feel unsupported. I've learned to recognise when I need to step back, reset or signal that I'm having a quieter day.

Describe a time when your team surprised you, in the best possible way.

I don't get surprised often because I know my teams well. But one moment stands out: my paternity leave.



Life was chaotic with newborn twins, and despite my best intentions, I didn't leave much of a handover. My team had to absorb everything, my structured ways of working, my expectations, my pace, with almost no warning and no clarity on how long they'd be covering.

What surprised me wasn't their capability; I already knew they were strong. It was how seamlessly they adapted to my style, maintained external confidence and kept everything running as if I'd never been away. They even shielded me from work when I tried to step back in. They didn't just know the job... they knew me.

If leadership came with a soundtrack, what would your 'Monday morning theme tune' be?

If leadership came with a soundtrack, mine would be *Danger Zone* by Kenny Loggins, the Top Gun theme song. Not because of the name, but because of the energy. Every time I hear it, I get the same surge of excitement. If I can bring that level of energy into the office on a Monday morning, I know it sets the tone for everyone else.

And yes, at 17, I was offered a place to train as a fast-jet pilot for the RAF. A medical result changed that path, but the love of aviation (and Top Gun) never left.

Why I love public transport and why others should too

Transport affects everyone. Whether you're popping out for milk, going to school, commuting or travelling for leisure, you're using transport. It doesn't matter your age, background or circumstance, transport connects you to your life. That's what makes working in this industry so exciting. Few sectors allow you to make decisions that tangibly improve people's daily lives.

Moving back to East Yorkshire after years in London has deepened that sense of purpose. Making a difference in the place you live is uniquely rewarding.

And then there's the joy. My twin boys are transport obsessed, fire engines, tractors, buses, trains and their enthusiasm has reignited my own love for the industry. Once you're in transport, you never really leave.

And yes, I still think a big red bus is one of the best symbols of British culture! ■