

January 2015 Blog: Dawn Bonfield, President of Women's Engineering Society

January started for me, as it does for many science teachers I imagine, with the annual Association of Science Education conference, which this year took place at Reading University. This is a three day exhibition and conference where science teachers come along to find out what's new in the delivery of science education. WES had a stand at this event and I was there along with Rebecca Broadbent to let teachers know about [National Women in Engineering Day \(NWED\)](#), taking place again this year on 23 June. This is always a great occasion to really connect with science teachers and find out what the issues are, what they are trying, and what is working in terms of getting more girls engaged with science and ultimately engineering.

Immediately this event finished we welcomed our new WES intern, Amina Khalid, who has joined us as a new graduate from the University of Hertfordshire to work on the delivery of National Women in Engineering Day. She is with us for three months and has already relaunched the campaign and fully updated the resource packs ready to send out. If you would like to receive one of these packs which is full of useful information, activities, stickers and information, then please email Amina at nwed@wes.org.uk and ask her to send you one. Otherwise you can download one from the NWED website at www.nwed.org.uk.

One of our ambitions at WES for 2015 is to relaunch our MentorSET programme for women engineers, and we are working hard to bring this to fruition with DECC, the Department of Energy and Climate Change. We have a proposal now that aims to enrol 1000 female engineers in the first year, and this new scheme would include the much needed mentoring to board positions capability that would appeal to so many users. We are also hoping to trial the 'Reverse Mentoring' idea as a way of truly combating unconscious bias in the workplace. The key to ensure the success of this scheme into the future however, is financial sustainability so we are working towards this eventual goal, and would love to hear from anybody who would like to come in at the ground level and partner with us to enable us to relaunch MentorSET and offer it to your staff or members. Also included in this mentoring provision will be some new training courses, run by WES, and these will be delivered in London, Birmingham and Glasgow during 2015.

I had a 'political' day on 14th with a meeting with our tremendous patron Meg Munn MP who is helping us get to the bottom of what is to be done with the £9.7M underspend on the BIS Developing Women Engineers Employer Ownership Fund. This was followed by a Campaign for Science and Engineering cross party debate at the Royal Society between Liam Byrne, Greg Barker and Justin Huppert. Nothing new to report here though.



The ['Women in STEM: Are you IN or OUT'](#) survey results were published in January, and in conjunction with our other three partners (Prospect Union, TRS and Women in Manufacturing) we [wrote to Vince Cable](#) to ask him what is to be done with the Developing Women Engineers funding. Watch this space for his answer.

I am working with the Royal Academy of Engineering Diversity Subgroup on work experience placements and we are close to completing the guidelines which will enable employers, particularly SMEs who are not familiar with offering these placements, some helpful advice. Next step will be to find a way to match the placements that are out there with the students who are looking for them, as this is something that WES gets asked for help with a lot from girls and their parents.

I met up with our steering group for the Sparks project (which aims to address the STEM opt out rate for girls during the critical teenage years, through a targeted stream of communication) at Alton Convent School this month, where I am very proud to be a patron. Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell is also a patron and she gave an inspiring lecture to the students



on the same day. This is a super progressive school and is doing some brilliant work to encourage science and engineering.

Other highlights of the month include my attendance at the [Regional Heat of the F1 in Schools](#) competition at Chelsea Football Club where I met [Jessica Noble](#), the jewellery designer making use of new 3d printing technology; a productive planning session with Kate Bellingham who has some great new plans and ideas to get more involved in encouraging girls and women in engineering; the [100 Year of Women in Transport](#) planning meeting to progress this inspirational project; a catch up with Ann Watson [at SEMTA](#) to see how we can work together in promoting and encouraging girls into engineering apprenticeships; an [Engineering4Teachers](#) conference in London at which I found out some very useful information about Asian girls and the perception of engineering in the Coventry area; and I attended a super evening at Greenwich University at which [Professor Liz Bacon became President of the British Computer Society \(BCS\)](#). At this event she launched a network of senior women in STEM and this aims to address the lack of women at senior level in STEM subjects and become a collective voice for change.

Thanks for reading this blog and please do let me know if you have any comments or suggestions.
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Photo shows from left to right – (taken in the Painted Hall, The Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich):

Front row: Helen Wollaston, Director, WISE, Professor Isobel Pollock OBE, Chair, National Measurement Office Steering Board, past President Institution of Mechanical Engineers, Professor Liz Bacon, BCS President, Joanne Hannaford, co-head of Enterprise Platforms, Goldman Sachs Technology and partner, Professor Dame Celia Hoyles DBE, President, Institute of Mathematics and its Applications, Elizabeth Sparrow, past President, BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT

Back row: Sue Sumner, Director, Global Finance Technology and Solutions within Barclays, Sarah Fray, Director of Engineering at the Institution of Structural Engineers, Judith Hackitt CBE FREng, Chair of HSE and Past President Institution of Chemical Engineers, **Dawn Bonfield, President, Women's Engineering Society**, Professor Elizabeth Mansfield, Vice-President Learned Society, Institute of Mathematics and its Applications, Gillian Arnold, Director Tectre, Chair of BCSWomen, Professor Dame Wendy Hall DBE, past President, BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, Kate Russell, Technology report and author