

# CIBSE Scotland International Women in Engineering Day

Roundtable 2026



cibse.org

Scotland



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN  
In ENGINEERING DAY

23 June

To celebrate International Women in Engineering Day, CIBSE Scotland welcomed female engineers from across the building services industry to Scottish Futures Trust in Edinburgh for a roundtable discussion and networking lunch.

The event brought together professionals from a wide range of organisations and career stages to share experiences, discuss opportunities and challenges within the profession, and explore how we can collectively support and inspire the next generation of engineers.

The session opened with a presentation from **Lori McElroy**, the first female Chair of CIBSE Scotland, who spoke about her career journey and reflected on the progress made by women within CIBSE and the wider engineering sector.

Attendees then took part in a facilitated discussion around three key questions:

- What barriers still exist for women in building services engineering today?
- How can companies and CIBSE better support women progressing into leadership roles?
- How can we attract more girls and young women into engineering careers?

“In the words of Fiona Cousins: Be Curious,  
Generous and Brave”



Annual Dinner 2002 with CIBSE Scotland Chair, Dr Lori McElroy (centre)



## Raising the Profile of Building Services Engineering

A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the challenge of explaining what building services engineering actually is.

Many participants reflected that the term itself can be difficult for those outside the industry to understand, with students, parents and teachers often unaware of the breadth of opportunities available.

Participants highlighted that building services engineering is, by its very nature, often an "invisible" profession. Much of our work is hidden within the buildings we design and when these systems operate seamlessly, they often go unnoticed. While this reflects successful design, it also presents a challenge in raising the profile of the profession and helping people understand the essential role building services engineers play in shaping the built environment.

Attendees discussed how the industry could better showcase its impact on people, communities, health, wellbeing and sustainability.

There was strong support for increasing engagement through social media, podcasts, "day in the life" content and engineering career events, helping to demonstrate the variety of skills and career paths available within the profession.

Engineering was recognised as being far more than maths and physics, with communication, creativity, collaboration, problem solving and leadership all playing vital roles in successful engineering careers.



“Progress has been made, but there is still work to do..”



“We need to own our own identities..”

## Inspiring Future Generations

The importance of engaging young people early was a key focus of the discussion.

Participants highlighted the need for greater STEM outreach within schools, alongside stronger engagement with teachers and career advisors who play an influential role in shaping career choices.

Gender stereotypes and perceptions of engineering were recognised as barriers that can begin during school years, reinforcing the importance of visible role models and positive messaging from an early age.

Suggestions included increasing school engagement activities, supporting girls-only engineering events where appropriate, developing social media campaigns aimed at younger audiences and creating more opportunities for students to meet engineers and hear first-hand experiences from those working within the industry.

The group also discussed the importance of maintaining support beyond school and university, ensuring women are not only attracted into engineering careers but are also supported and retained throughout their professional journey.

To become a CIBSE STEM Ambassador, visit:  
[cibse.org/get-involved/cibse-stem-ambassadors](https://www.cibse.org/get-involved/cibse-stem-ambassadors)

## Supporting Women to Progress

The discussion highlighted significant progress within many organisations, particularly around flexible working practices and improved support for employees balancing career and family responsibilities.

Many participants recognised that supportive employers can make a substantial difference to career development, particularly during periods such as parental leave or other life transitions. However, it was also acknowledged that experiences can vary significantly between organisations, with some workplaces still operating within more traditional structures and expectations.

Mentoring emerged as one of the most important opportunities for supporting women throughout their careers. Participants highlighted the value of having access to mentors and peer networks, particularly where there may be limited female representation within an individual's workplace.

There was strong support for CIBSE Scotland exploring how mentoring and networking opportunities could be strengthened through future initiatives.

The discussion also highlighted the importance of transparent pay structures, flexible working arrangements and clear pathways for progression. Participants noted that visible female role models within organisations can play a crucial role in helping women envisage their own future career progression.

"We need to inspire girls into engineering careers, but we also need to ensure they stay and thrive within the profession."



"Creating inclusive teams benefits everyone not just women."

## Breaking Down Barriers

Attendees reflected on a range of barriers that continue to affect women within the profession.

Alongside external challenges, discussion explored the impact of self-imposed barriers, including imposter syndrome and self-doubt. Some participants noted that women can be less likely to put themselves forward for opportunities or leadership positions, particularly in environments where female representation remains limited.

The importance of authentic leadership and individuality was also discussed. Participants encouraged women to embrace their own identities and leadership styles rather than feeling pressure to conform to traditional expectations.

The group highlighted the need for organisations to continue addressing unconscious bias through training, competency-based progression frameworks and inclusive workplace cultures. There was also discussion around the importance of supporting wider wellbeing initiatives, including mental health awareness and menopause support, with examples shared of positive practices already being implemented across parts of the sector.

Industry culture was another area of focus, with attendees reflecting on how networking events and professional activities can sometimes unintentionally cater towards traditionally male interests. The discussion encouraged event organisers and sponsors to consider a broader range of activities and prizes that appeal to diverse audiences and create more inclusive environments for all members.

## Looking Forward

As the session drew to a close, attendees were invited to share reflections on their key takeaways and personal commitments following the discussion.

A strong theme emerging from these reflections was the value of connection, visibility and collective action. Participants left with renewed enthusiasm to support colleagues, champion the profession and encourage more women and girls to consider careers in engineering.

There was also significant interest in establishing a dedicated Women in Building Services Engineering (WIBSE) Scotland group to provide ongoing opportunities for mentoring, networking and professional support. The positive response demonstrated a clear appetite for continuing the conversations started during the event and creating a lasting platform for collaboration across the industry.

CIBSE Scotland would like to thank everyone who attended and contributed so openly and thoughtfully to the discussion. The insights shared will help shape future initiatives and strengthen our collective efforts to build a more inclusive, visible and supportive profession.

International Women in Engineering Day provides an important opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women across our industry. More importantly, it reminds us that creating meaningful change requires continued action, collaboration and commitment from individuals, employers, professional institutions and the wider engineering community.

Email: [Scotland@cibse.org](mailto:Scotland@cibse.org)

## WIBSE Scotland

Strong interest was expressed in establishing a Women in Building Services Engineering (WIBSE) Scotland network.

Potential priorities:

- Networking
- Mentoring
- Peer support
- Professional development
- Visibility of female role models



## CIBSE – Action Points

- More case studies on female role models
- Menopause Awareness Campaign
- Survey – Women's Industry Experience

## CIBSE Scotland – Action Points

- STEM – Teachers Event
- Careers Hive / Engineer a Career
- WIBSE Scotland Start Up Meeting
- Dinner – prizes more appropriate
- Review mentoring opportunities

