

Engineering a bright future for women

As a Chartered Mechanical Engineer, Hannah Kozich could comfortably be a role model for women contemplating a career in engineering.

In the early 1980s, LLW Repository Ltd's current Head of Strategy was a rarity when she opted to go down the same engineering route as her late father, with the full support of her mother.

Late into a darkened lecture theatre on a university engineering faculty open day, Hannah found that, when the lights went up, she was the only woman in a room of 40 males.

"We had six women out of 65 on my course at Durham, and that was a lot compared to many other universities," she recalled.

Hannah, speaking on International Women in Engineering Day, believes that her degree, and a decade spent in engineering roles, equipped her well for her subsequent career outside the profession.

"An engineering degree is hard work, but it's great to have," she said. "I haven't worked as an engineer for some time, but the way I work now in many ways is a result of having trained and worked as an engineer. It's a great all round way of growing your brain, of structuring how you think."

Managing a team of up to 50 men and 100 subcontractors on a project to complete a submarine lifting facility at the Royal Navy base at Faslane was just one of many highlights for Hannah, who, armed with a First Class Honours degree, found little trouble breaking into engineering.

But it's only in the last decade that she has started to see many more women in industrial roles.

"When I went to work at Sellafield I saw women in shop floor, technical and managerial roles and thought, this is really good," she said.

"It was the first place I had worked where I was not in a significant minority as a woman. There were still few women in senior management roles, but that is starting to change.

"All the work being done by LLWR and the NDA on ED&I (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) makes you more conscious of the positive changes that are happening. But there's still a long way to go."