



Making an impression: winner Yasmine Lunn (back right) with the nine runners-up and, right, receiving her award on the night and, top, alongside representatives from sponsors Linden Homes, Cushman & Wakefield and Bouygues UK



Leading ladies

■ **Mia Hunt** attends the WiP National Student Awards to celebrate the industry's rising female stars

It is rare to look around the room at a property event and see more women than men - unless you're at an event hosted by the Association of Women in Property (WiP), that is. At the 10th annual Women in Property National Student Awards 'Best of the Best' Dinner at Claridge's last month, some 240 industry professionals - most of them women - turned out in their finery to celebrate the achievements of the industry's future stars.

WiP has made great strides in encouraging more women to consider careers in property, working with schools, universities and businesses to nurture aspiring talent. Part of its remit is to recognise and reward the gifted young women hoping to pursue careers in the industry, which is why it launched the awards 10 years ago.

The lucky winner of its 10th anniversary awards, sponsored by Cushman & Wakefield, Bouygues UK and Linden Homes, was real estate undergraduate Yasmine Lunn. The Sheffield Hallam University

student fought off competition from nine other shortlisted students and a total of 86 who took part in the awards programme to scoop the prize of £700 and a year's membership to WiP.

Lunn, who was nominated by her lecturer, was described by the judges as "quite simply inspirational", a "brilliant ambassador for young women in the industry" and someone who will "always give 100%". She was also praised for her passion in driving diversity, which she hopes to champion during her career. "This whole process has been so positive and a real eye-opener," Lunn said on the night. "I've learned to perform outside my comfort zone and think on my feet and have developed relationships with some great people in the industry."

The entrants hailed from a wide range of built environment disciplines including architecture, civil engineering, surveying, planning, interior design and construction management.

During her speech, WiP's national chairman and architect Lisa-Jane Risk cited *Property Week's*

“It is our role to help schools help young women understand the possibility of a career in construction”
Lisa-Jane Risk

Open Plan campaign and Diversity Charter as having driven greater diversity and inclusion in the industry. But as she highlighted: "In a society where only one in five female students take business, finance, science or engineering degrees - even though these subjects count for 50% of all degrees taken - Houston, we have a problem."

Sadly in the property industry, the problem is even more acute: women account for just 15% of jobs in property and construction.

Risk drew parallels with the technology sector, which - although it affects every aspect of modern life - also has a striking gender imbalance, with less than 1% of females opting to study computer science at university. Lessons could be learned from the way Google had successfully encouraged girls to study coding, she said.

"How can we give kids the right kind of hands-on experience that will expose them to the possibilities of a career in property or construction before they start making career choices?" Risk asked.

"It is our role as an industry to help schools help young women understand the possibility and opportunity of a career in construction." ■