

Chair's column

by Rachel Bell, National Chair #StandTall

There is lots of change happening around us. We stepped into summer and out the other side. Students are back to school, college and university. I expect a number of us are starting to look at how our future hybrid working will take shape...and events are now happening in-person.

Speaking of which, I was so pleased to take part in the National Student Awards at Claridge's in London recently and see so many people come out in support. How amazing it was to talk to 200 people in a room again!

The evening was a humbling and joyous experience. I felt privileged, after so many years of being involved in the regional awards, to sit on the judging panel and hear directly from our finalists. To meet such talented, confident young women from across the country was inspiring. I must say well done again to our winner, Charity Zawadi Mwambeyu.

Meeting students at the start of their promising careers made me think about the future of our industry and the very real and serious challenges we all face. With COP26 in the near distance, I am

drawn to the question of how we will tackle our climate emergency. The answers are complex and nuanced but I do feel that we, as individuals and communities, have the skills and the talent to inspire meaningful action.

If I can inspire one small action to take today it would be to bring up your calendars and look for the white space – the empty slot. When you find it, protect it. We can all feel the pressure to say yes to everything and embrace every invite and opportunity, especially in these hectic times, but sometimes the most positive thing we can do for ourselves and those around us is to take a moment. Step back from the grind and, instead, do something that sparks joy. That small investment in yourself will pay you back.

Stand Tall.



Rachel Bell
National Chair of Women in Property

Congratulations Charity!



Rachel Bell, Charity Zawadi Mwambeyu, Richard Rees of Savills, Carole Bell of Bouygues UK, both national Awards sponsors.

A Civil Engineering student from the University of Bristol has won the 2021 National Student Awards. Charity Zawadi Mwambeyu claimed the top prize, competing against 12 other students in the national final, on the Awards programme which saw 119 students participate from across the UK.

National Chair Rachel Bell, a director at Stride Treglown

Architects, sat on the judging panel alongside Carole Ditty of Bouygues UK and Iain Maxwell of Savills, both national sponsors of the Awards, and Caterina Polidoro of Architects, tp bennett.

They described Charity as "having great maturity and professionalism, confidence and humour, and a real serenity and depth about her. In our view, she embodied the potential for an alternative way of leadership."

"We were wowed by her comments, for example, 'great things never come from staying in your comfort zone' and adopting Verna Myers' quote – 'Diversity is being invited to the party but inclusion is being asked to dance'. Well done Charity!"

A day in the life of... the National Student Awards 2021

The Student Awards programme is a formidable feat of organisation and planning, involving a team of amazing member volunteers from each of our branches who invite the Universities to nominate their best female students and then support them as they progress through the Awards process.

The regional judging days are coordinated by the National Executive, culminating in the national judging morning, followed by a Mentoring training session for the students and, finally, the fabulous 'Best of the Best' Awards dinner. And of course, none of this would be possible without our national sponsors Bougyues UK and Savills, and our regional sponsors Amazon, Curtins, Ecus, HBD, Hydrock, ISG, JMW, Pinsent Masons and Willmott Dixon.

This year we were delighted to be back 'in person' to enjoy networking in the Deco glitter and glamour of the newly refurbished Claridge's ballroom suite.

In her welcoming address, National Chair Rachel Bell recommended the concept of 'White Space', as discussed by Adrienne Herbert on her Power Hour podcast

"...the slot in your diary which enables you to better manage your own time, set boundaries, avoid burnout and remind yourself that free time is not a licence to say yes to more things!".

Our keynote speaker was the inspiring Virginia Gardiner, founder of Loo watt who explained that 70% of people in the world don't have access to toilets. She invented a waterless flush system, based on anaerobic digestion, which is ultimately used to power communities, particularly in remote and disadvantaged areas. This, Virginia said, was an idea that became a sustaining passion, asking us "What sustains you?"

Congratulations to all 13 national finalists but, in particular, to the 2021 winner, Charity Zawadi Mwambeyu. As the judges said, "the future of the industry is in safe hands".





Awards & Outreach - want to get involved?

Involvement in our two education initiatives – the National Student Awards and the Outreach programme – is not only of great value to the young people involved but we know is highly rewarding to the volunteers taking part too.

The opportunity to encourage a school student towards a career in a built environment discipline, with all the variety it offers, or to give your expertise and guidance to an undergraduate, is extremely motivating, sometimes humbling and almost always inspiring! If you would like to find out more, please contact executivedirector@womeninproperty.org.uk



Why does Equity Matter?

Dr Yemisi Bolade-Ogunfodun was one of four panellists for our Black History Month discussion. Here she explains why we all need to understand what equity means.

Equity makes such a huge productivity difference, that it is astounding why many business leaders have not caught on for so long. But first, let's clear up some grey areas around what it really means. Equity is much more than giving everyone similar measures of performance (targets) and equal rewards for meeting those targets – that is the principle of Equality. "You can be anything you want to be in this organisation" is the thinking underpinning such organisational rules. The emphasis here is on the rules being clear and applying to all equally. That is a good starting point. However, this thinking, though well-intentioned, assumes that everyone in the organisation is starting the race to the top from the same starting line. The reality is that this is far from true. Before the race even begins, some employees are already at a disadvantage.

Many factors account for differences in individuals which predispose some to struggle through the same challenges while others make accelerated progress. Recent research by Henley Business School, UK suggests that racial inequity adversely impacts on an employee's experience of work. But, beyond race, there are also differences along gender, social class

(along with the associated social capital/ lack of it), educational background and (dis)ability lines. These can affect how well an employee performs and the chances of moving up the career ladder. As business leaders, why is this important to understand? What these differences imply is that some employees may have more stumbling blocks in their way which need to be moved away for them to perform at optimal levels. It is your responsibility as a responsive leader to ensure that these hurdles are cleared, if you want to see productivity unleashed in your employees.

So, how does Equity come in? Equity means that the limiting factors are considered when setting expectations, targets and rewards. If targets are pre-set, then supporting adjustments need to be made for employees, depending on what their limiting factors are. In this way, everyone truly has a clear racetrack ahead of them, with no weights slowing them down performance-wise. Sometimes weights could be physical, emotional, psychological or structural, which can cause alienation and disengagement.



Dr Yemisi Bolade-Ogunfodun
Programme Director & Lecturer in Organisational Behaviour, Henley Business School, University of Reading.

Responsive leadership considers these barriers to performance and works at removing them by providing the needed support. With open and safe communication in the manager-employee relationship, an excellent foundation for ensuring equity and sustained productivity can be laid.

Update: Inclusion Champions



The Women in Property EDI group is working on a national strategy, under the guidance of the North West committee's Chithra Marsh, to help ensure our activity – whether through Outreach, CPD and social events, or influencer work – is as inclusive as possible. As the strategy states, the aim is to "strengthen the work of the women who have gone before us, and to develop new initiatives that would bring us closer to creating a more balanced and inclusive industry." The emphasis will be to listen and learn from each other, in areas including gender,

race, ethnicity, religion, belief, parents, LGBTQ+ / sexual orientation, disability, mental health, neuro-diversity, age and social mobility. In the last month, we have collaborated through our South Wales branch on a hybrid event with BAM Construction UK addressing the Changing World of Work, with a focus on flexible working and Shared Parental Leave. Then, in recognition of Black History Month we ran a panel discussion on Understanding Racial Equity.

“The chicken and the egg”



In the Changing World of Work webinar, hosted by BAM Construct UK, with Women in Property and Brook Graham, to celebrate National Inclusion Week, Matt Farquharson, founder with his wife Anna Whitehouse, of Mother Pukka came up with a very visual analogy to explain the benefits of flexible working. Picture the free-range, organic chicken that enjoys fresh air and daylight and lays eggs when it wants. Compare this to the pitiful caged chicken, stressed, anxious,

laying on demand and likely to peck at its companions. The free-range chicken produces beautiful, nutritious, high-quality eggs. As for the caged bird...

There are some similarities here with our own productivity. Those who have flexible working arrangements are happier, more committed and are more productive. And this isn't just for parents – it doesn't matter why someone might want flex, they will be refreshed, re-engaged, will do better work, more efficiently.

It is hard not to agree with Matt, but a question put to the panel related to stigma and whether it is still attached to flex working in the construction industry? Phil Powell from BAM Nuttall agreed that some contractors do have an issue with presenteeism and Dave Ellis added that, for BAM Construct the aim is that flexibility should be the default position, for everybody, but arranged in teams and based on trust and empowerment rather

than rules. Panel Chair Shuabe Shabudin, from Brook Graham emphasised that a more flexible company will attract and retain the best people, with clear group gain.

“How do we encourage bigger take up of Shared Parental Leave?” was another question, answered by Charlotte Byrne of BAM, saying it is important that employers and colleagues see the benefits, employees taking SPL come back with a different perspective on life. Shannon Conway of Glenbrook Property and Women in Property North West agreed, stressing how vital it is that the employer actively encourages SPL. Like flex working, the result will be happy people giving loyalty, commitment and greater productivity to the business.

If you would like to read a report on flexible working undertaken by Mother and Papa Pukka with Sir Robert McAlpine, visit **Flex Appeal**

Developing a City Food Plan

Abi Mordin sits on the Glasgow Food Policy Partnership (GFPP) and recently took part in a webinar organised by Women in Property Central Scotland, exploring the potential of the Glasgow City Food Plan to positively impact the built environment. As Abi explains, the GFPP's work offers learnings for all of us, which are transferable to our own towns and cities.

“The GFPP is a cross-sector, multi stakeholder collective, of businesses, public and private sector organisations, education and third sector, all of which have a key interest in food, in different ways. Since 2014 we have worked collaboratively to look at how Glasgow can be a more equitable, fairer, healthier and resilient food city, resulting earlier this year in the City Food Plan,

The facts are quite stark: one in three children in the city live in poverty, over

60% of adults are overweight or obese and 78% report eating fewer than '5 a day'. However, despite its poor health record, Glasgow has market and community gardens, allotment sites and 1,300 hectares of vacant and derelict land, providing significant opportunity for food growth. Bearing in mind that, globally, 30% of greenhouse gas emissions arise from the food system, implementing an effective City Food Plan is an important driver to help Glasgow achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

In 2018 we convened a core project team with representatives from the Council, NHS, Chamber of Commerce and myself, to form cross-sector themed working groups. These addressed procurement, poverty, economy, children and young people, community and the environment. We held a public consultation October-



December 2020 and, although we have 76 actions across these six themes, we have nine key outcomes. These include reduced food insecurity, a thriving local food economy, more food produced in ways that are good for the environment and reduced food waste.

In particular, for your audience, we want to highlight the viability for community food spaces alongside other development, in planning policy. The Glasgow City Food Plan has the potential to make a real difference on many levels. If you'd like to know more, click **here**.”

Branch News

Across the branches, we have collectively run over 270 events over the past 18 months, with many returning to 'in person' in September. Well done to everyone involved! It has been wonderful to connect with people properly, having seen them virtually over the course of the pandemic.

Midlands The Cornerblock Roof Terrace was the venue for the branch's 'Welcome Back' drinks. Kindly provided and sponsored by Bruntwood Works, members and guests re-connected with colleagues from the property and construction sector, while enjoying stunning views of Birmingham at sunset.



South Wales held a fascinating virtual tour of Sparc|Spark, the world's first social science research park, located at Maindy Park in the heart of the Cardiff University



campus. Designed by Hawkins Brown and built by Bouygues UK, attendees were shown round the scheme, including the Oculus staircase, the first of its kind in the UK.

Northern Ireland was delighted to host the Minister for Infrastructure, Nichola Mallon, who gave a thorough overview of her department's extensive remit. Her talk included transport policy, including zero emission buses, rail connectivity, quieter roads and cleaner air. She stressed the need to create better transport systems so more people can change their behaviours, particularly post-Covid and with the very real implications of climate change. "It's crucial we plan for the longer term – our focus must be bigger than any single election cycle" she said.



Yorkshire & North East welcomed members and guests to a late summer drinks party at The Furnace in Sheffield. Kindly sponsored by nineteen47, the event was held on the outdoor terrace with private bar. Meanwhile, for members in the Leeds area, members mingled on the terrace at Issho, for a summer drinks party sponsored by Schofield Sweeney. Both events provided an opportunity to meet friends and entertain clients, finally in person!

Don't forget to keep an eye on the events page for details and remember booking is easy using the new app.



If you've not yet heard it, listen out for Rachel Bell's latest #StandTall podcasts, with Katie McManus of HBD and, coming soon, Annie Marston of Hydrock. Find out more [here](#)

Success stories

Women in Property members are being honoured and promoted across the UK. Congratulations to all of them!

Ivet Dimitrova, a Project Manager at University College London, has won the Staff Award for Outstanding Commitment to Sustainability



Hannah Floyd, director PiSq, has been awarded Young Entrepreneur of the Year at the City of Birmingham Business Awards



Steph Hector, South Wales branch membership secretary has celebrated ten years since launching her business X-Press Legal Services



Hannah Lloyd, former Chair of the Highlands & Islands branch is celebrating being awarded the One to Watch Award by the Association of Scottish Business Women



Alison Nicholson has been promoted to Associate at Buro Happold, where she is a Geoenvironmental Consultant



North West branch Chair, **Eleanor Ogilvie**, was a finalist in the Women in Housing Young Achiever Awards 2021



Sandi Rhys Jones OBE, Women in Property's Mentoring Lead, has been appointed Vice President of the Chartered Institute of Builders, becoming President in 2023.



Emma Richman has been appointed to the Board of First Choice Homes Oldham and also Chair of its Investment & Development Committee.



Sophie Smith was awarded Emerging Property Person of the Year at the 2021 Insider Midlands Residential Property Awards



Mandy St John Davey has been honoured as Property Personality of the Year at the 2021 Insider Wales Awards



Karyn Watt of Anderson Strathern has been appointed Vice Chair of the Women in Property Scotland Board and to Construction Scotland Innovation Centre's Board.



Charlotte Whitehead has been appointed as Legal Director to Blake Morgan's fast-growing Real Estate team in Cardiff



Sarah Wills has moved to Town Planners and Urban Designers, nineteen47 as Associate Director