

# International Women's Day 2021



“ This is a great opportunity for the industry to reflect on the positive steps that have been made to encourage more women into engineering. We must keep having these important conversations about all aspects of diversity in the workplace and how to make our sector truly inclusive, and better for all.



## Vanda Jones

Executive Director for the British Compressed Air Society (BCAS)



### What is your current job title and responsibilities?



*I am Executive Director for the British Compressed Air Society (BCAS), a role I've held since 2015. Reporting to the BCAS board, I'm responsible for all aspects of the Society's operations – adding value for our members and helping to advise end users and the wider industry on the standards and legislation which affect their compressed air, vacuum and downstream applications.*

### What initially interested you, and lead you to this industry?



*I have always worked in the industrial sector, having held senior sales and general management roles for a number of leading brands, including Volvo, Land Rover, Lex, Caterpillar, Hyster and Ingersoll Rand. When BCAS approached me, the opportunity to help drive standards and educate both end users and industry-leading businesses was not to be missed!*

### Do you have any insights or advice for other women who may not know this industry as a potential sector for them?



*My advice would be simple – and I would say the same to anyone, regardless of their gender. Keep an open mind, focus on STEM subjects in your education and consider apprenticeships as an alternative route from the traditional degree path.*

*There was a view, maybe 10 to 15 years ago, that a career in engineering meant working in an old, dirty factory. I'm pleased to say that the stereotypical picture of the industry has changed considerably, and with a broad range of roles available, industry 4.0 is now bringing huge change to the factory of the future, with increasing emphasis on smart technologies as an enabler for positive change.*

### Do you have any insights into what could be done to encourage more women into this sector?



*There has been considerable progress in recent years to encourage more women into the industry, with the focus on STEM subjects at school and colleges leading more young people to consider a career in the sector, which is great to see.*

# International Women's Day 2021



“ This is a great opportunity for the industry to reflect on the positive steps that have been made to encourage more women into engineering. We must keep having these important conversations about all aspects of diversity in the workplace and how to make our sector truly inclusive, and better for all.



## Vanda Jones

Executive Director for the British Compressed Air Society (BCAS)



*However, there is a lot more to be done here to encourage diversity in the workplace. There is a shortage of students choosing engineering degrees and apprenticeships in general, so we must work hard to demonstrate that engineering is a modern career of the future. Add to this the fact that only one in ten engineering degree places are filled by a woman and it's clear we have long way to go to create a truly diverse workforce – starting at primary school level.*

*The challenge is not so much about whether the industry is ready for diversity in thinking, culture or education. It is about how we develop the understanding in children at a young age, so that we can develop the engineers of the future.*

*It is much more commonplace to see a woman working in industry than it was when I began my career, and having a more gender diverse workplace, with strong role models will certainly help.*

### What do you as a woman bring to the industry?



While managing all types of diversity is key, for me as both an employee and manager, it has always been relatively simple. I have been encouraged to bring openness and challenge to all the teams I have been fortunate to work with and recognition has been given for my contribution. I have never felt that this has been specifically because I am a woman.

### Where do you see yourself in five years? What is the big goal?



Perhaps I have been fortunate in my career compared to my female peers, but I have always been respected for the work I have done and, I trust, the value that I have helped deliver in the various businesses that I have worked in.

Of course, I've had to work hard, but so has my team around me. It has been through that mutual respect for each other and a willing acceptance of each other's diversity, not just gender, but ethnicity, age and cultural differences, that we have achieved what we have.

My hope for the future is that one day soon, we will not need an International Women's Day and that we won't need the debate about female representation in the workplace, and especially in senior roles. And young girls, wherever they live in the world, have access to education and can dream big.