

International Women's Day 2022 – employers urged to ditch the gender bias

A woman director of Thomas & Adamson (T&A), an international property and construction consultancy with offices in Edinburgh has called on employers to look beyond gender when considering the best person for a job.

The theme of this year's International Women's Day is #breakthebias moving towards a world free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination. The construction industry as a key part of the economy contributes 6% of GDP and employs more than two million people. But, according to statistics from [Rebuild](#), only 15% of the construction industry's workforce are women, only 15% are executives, 22% of board members are women and the gender pay gap in construction has been estimated at 20%.

Gill Kirkness was appointed to T&A earlier this year to lead the company's portfolio of public and private sector clients. This work includes providing cost management support for the regeneration and extension of the ten storey 152,000 square feet Grade A offices at 150 St Vincent Street Glasgow. During her 25 year career Ms Kirkness was previously Equity Director at Doig & Smith and also Project Director at Axiom Project Services Limited.

Gill said: "As a senior director in the construction industry, I really do feel it's time to change working practices in the sector so that people with the talent and skills can shine through. Throughout my 25-year career I have always been described as a 'woman', in the construction industry. Never is a man described as a man first and his position after, and I don't see why women should be singled out and treated differently in this way. It diminishes my level of experience.

"I strongly believe whatever the project, it should always be about recruiting the best person for the job. There are generations of talented women and girls who have missed out on the construction industry because they weren't considered suitable, and it is time for that attitude to change. As the UK Government plans a £600 billion stimulus package over the next five years to 'Build Back Better' out of the pandemic, the construction industry is actively recruiting new talent at all levels, with skilled workers from all trades critical to this effort. This is a crucial time to challenge gender bias and discrimination to recruit the best people for the jobs but more importantly, retain them long term in an industry reliant on cultivating and nurturing talent over time."

Gill's entry to the industry began some 25 years ago as a curious geography graduate wondering what to do next. She came across Tarmac Construction who were advertising for graduates who enjoyed working outdoors and indoors and wanted to continue their education while working on exciting live build projects. It was what she was looking for and she joined the Graduate Training Programme as a Trainee Quantity Surveyor. Gill stayed with Tarmac for seven years working on a range of complex high-profile projects from a HQ building, a new build prison, the M6 widening at Thelwall, a new build shopping centre in London, and the Channel Tunnel.

She joined T&A earlier this year following a six-month sabbatical pursuing a passion project in gelato making in

Bologna. Gil is a Director and Trustee of Ronald McDonald House in Glasgow, who give parents and care givers a free 'home from home' to stay while their seriously ill child is in hospital. She continues to take an active role in the day to day running and fundraising of the Scottish charity.



Gill Kirkness