

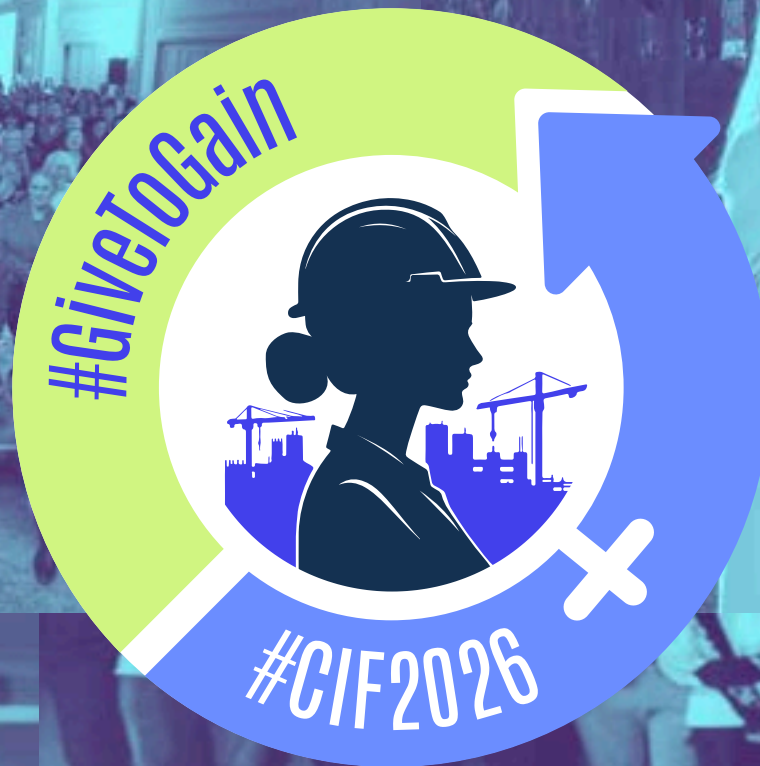


CONSTRUCTION
INDUSTRY
FEDERATION



GIVE TO GAIN:

CIF: A YEAR OF ACTION ON INCLUSION





GIVE TO GAIN: A YEAR OF ACTION ON INCLUSION

As part of the Construction Industry Federation's International Women's Day (IWD) event, we are reflecting on how the sector is evolving and on the role of inclusion in its future success. This year's theme, 'Give to Gain', recognises that when organisations invest in people, through opportunity, respect and understanding, the entire industry benefits.

Women currently make up approximately 11.2% of the construction workforce. While this figure continues to grow, it emphasises the importance of listening carefully to the experiences of those working across the sector.

To support this, in the past year, CIF has undertaken a structured research programme to hear directly from employees and employers, and to build a clear evidence base for meaningful action.

Alongside this, we have increased our support for important initiatives that showcase construction as a dynamic, rewarding career choice for women and girls, to strengthen our industry, while widening the talent pipeline.

We're delighted to share these initiatives with you as we celebrate IWD.

At a time when the construction sector is seeking to attract a broader and more diverse talent pipeline, partnership and early engagement with young people has never been more important. The Construction Industry Federation is therefore proud to support the STEM Passport for Inclusion (STEMP Inc.) - a national programme led by Dr Katriona O'Sullivan at Maynooth University that is transforming access to STEM education for students from underserved communities.

We were fortunate to welcome Dr. Katriona O'Sullivan as a past IWD keynote speaker. Her powerful words set us on the path to build our support for this groundbreaking inclusion initiative.





WHAT IS THE STEM PASSPORT FOR INCLUSION?

The STEM Passport for Inclusion is a renowned national programme that tackles unequal access to STEM careers. It provides secondary school students from disadvantaged backgrounds with a structured pathway to higher education through a combination of education, mentoring, and real-world industry experience.

participants complete a Level 6 NFQ university-accredited STEM qualification alongside mentoring from industry professionals and work experience placements, helping them build confidence, skills, and career awareness.

The programme's mission is clear and impactful: to enable students who may never have considered STEM careers to realistically access and succeed in them.

To date, the programme has already: • Reached over 6,500 students • Engaged 126 schools • Built a network of 1,000+ mentors • Achieved a 71% graduation rate.



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While the initiative was originally focused on supporting girls from disadvantaged DEIS schools into STEM pathways, the programme is now expanding further.

This year will also include a group of boys from disadvantaged DEIS school backgrounds, recognising that fostering participation requires supporting all young people who face barriers to opportunity.

For the construction sector, which relies on a broad spectrum of technical, digital, and engineering skills, this constitutes a vital future talent pipeline.

EXPANDING INCLUSION



ROLE OF CIF

CIF's involvement demonstrates our wider commitment to enhancing diversity in the built environment and ensuring the sector is recognised as a contemporary, innovative, and inclusive career option. Our members are supporting the programme in three key ways:

Industry mentoring: Construction professionals act as role models, helping students understand careers ranging from engineering and surveying to digital construction and sustainability. **Workplace exposure:** Companies host workplace visits and work-experience placements, giving students a real understanding of how projects are delivered. **Career awareness:** By connecting education to real projects, the sector demonstrates how STEM translates into tangible societal impact: homes, schools, hospitals, and infrastructure.

Importantly, mentoring is not limited to engineers or technical specialists. The programme emphasises that mentors simply need to share their experience, encouragement, and perspective, helping young people understand the working world and their place in it.





A CALL TO THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY: WE NEED MORE MENTORS

Over the past year, we set ourselves an ambitious goal to significantly grow the number of mentors participating in the STEM Passport for Inclusion Programme. With thanks to the incredible support of our members, we achieved a remarkable outcome.

Construction sector mentors increased from 12 to 120. A phenomenal jump.

A special thanks goes to Bennett Construction - Helena Kiernan, Denise Bartley and Paul Bruton, and to John Paul Construction - Claire Cox and Kelly O'Shea - who shared their positive mentoring experiences in our social media video campaign, encouraging others to step forward.



Designer Group provided a strong example of how members can actively support the initiative, hosting students at their training academy and offering hands-on activities and workshops, alongside mentoring.

[Learn more about Bennett Construction here](#)

[Learn more about Designer Group here](#)

[Learn more about John Paul Construction here](#)



Employees from across multiple sectors are getting involved, and there is space for everyone: all levels, all backgrounds, all experiences.

Your guidance matters. And the students, girls and boys, benefit enormously.

With around 190,000 people employed in Ireland's construction sector, there is significant potential to create a positive impact.

Crucially, we are seeking mentors from across the sector - both women and men - to reflect the full diversity of our industry and to ensure young people see a broad range of role models.

Young people gain from exposure to diverse career paths.

CIFF encourages any member interested in mentoring to come forward and help open the door to STEM careers for the next generation.

Find out more

[about the STEM Passport for Inclusion](#)



BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

CIF INCLUSION SURVEYS

Over the past year, the Construction Industry Federation has collaborated with members and CIF encourages any member interested in mentoring to come forward and help open the door to STEM careers for the next generation.

The programme has included two complementary surveys - one capturing organisational practices within member companies and a second gathering the experiences of people working across the industry - providing a broad evidence base to guide practical action and improvement.

We would like to sincerely thank all companies and individuals who gave their time to participate and share their perspectives. The findings already highlight many positive foundations across the sector as well as areas where consistency can be strengthened.

A more detailed analysis of the combined results is underway and will be shared with member firms and associations in the coming months, along with practical support and guidance to drive continuous improvement across the industry.

I WISH 2026 SHOWCASE OVERVIEW

The I Wish Showcase took place on 5 February 2026 at the RDS Dublin, welcoming almost 4,000 secondary school girls from across Ireland to explore future careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The event is specifically designed to influence subject and career choices at Transition Year stage - a critical point at which students begin forming realistic expectations of potential career pathways.

In 2026, the Construction Industry Federation led a dedicated Construction Zone for the first time, positioning construction clearly within the national STEM landscape and strengthening the sector's visibility among future entrants to the workforce.





STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Founded in 2015, I Wish has reached over 60,000 students and consistently demonstrates that increased attendance increases interest in STEM subjects and related careers. The need for such engagement is particularly acute for construction.

Women currently account for approximately 11% of the construction workforce in Ireland, with representation in on-site roles significantly lower. At the same time, the industry faces long-term capacity pressures related to national infrastructure and housing delivery, which require broader participation in the labour pool.

The event is therefore closely aligned with CIF's strategic objectives for workforce development, social value, and the industry's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda. National media coverage further highlighted the showcase's role in addressing gender imbalance in applied STEM careers.

THE CONSTRUCTION ZONE

This year marked an important milestone with a dedicated Construction Zone powered by the Construction Industry Federation and our members. The Construction Zone was developed under the theme 'Build the Future: Be the Future of Construction' and was designed to present construction as a modern, innovative and purpose-driven profession.

The space combined interactive engagement with direct industry participation, allowing students to experience how buildings and infrastructure are conceived, designed and delivered. There were a number of stands representing construction in the construction zone, including CIF members, BAM Ireland, Dornan Engineering Ltd, Jones Engineering, and Walls Construction.

Demonstrations illustrated the breadth of roles across the sector, including engineering, digital construction, sustainability, project management and technical careers. Female professionals from member companies delivered short talks outlining their personal pathways into the industry and explaining how school subjects are relevant to real-world careers. The emphasis on lived experience proved particularly important in challenging pre-existing assumptions and providing relatable role models.



Beyond student engagement, the zone also provided visibility to teachers, parents and guidance counsellors, supporting a broader understanding of construction as a professional STEM discipline.

This repositioning, spanning from manual occupations to technology-enabled skills delivering climate, housing and infrastructure solutions, was a central objective of the initiative.

THROUGHOUT THE IWISH CAMPAIGN, WE WERE PROUD TO SHOWCASE THE INCREDIBLE FEMALE TALENT ACROSS OUR INDUSTRY ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS, FROM LINKEDIN TO INSTAGRAM TO TIKTOK.

By featuring women working in a wide range of roles across our social media channels, in association with iWish, we highlighted both the depth of expertise within the sector and the powerful example these role models offer to students and the next generation considering a career in construction.

Thank you to the video participants from Kirby Group Engineering, Glanua, Dornan, CPAC Modular, Bennett Construction and Jones Engineering for answering our call and highlighting our sectoral opportunities.

We were also delighted to share a special message from Katie Mullan, Head of Sustainability at Park Developments. Her insights reinforced the importance of visibility and opportunity in fostering a more inclusive and future-focused industry.

Katelyn Cummins, Rose of Tralee, and an outstanding ambassador for women in construction, was one of the many supporters and advocates on the day.

Throughout the iWish event, we kept the message of diversity and the strength of a career in construction front and centre across all our social media channels, extending its impact far beyond the RDS.

Videos captured on the day were produced and shared to amplify the voices, experiences and inspiration of the women shaping our industry and make our growing catalogue of resources for career pathway promotions.





WHAT WE LEARNED: OPENING DOORS TO CONSTRUCTION

#CIF2025

Engagement throughout the iWish day remained consistently high, with students responding strongly when construction was framed around societal impact, climate action and real-world problem-solving. Many were surprised by the breadth of roles available and by how central digital skills, environmental understanding and collaboration are to modern project delivery.

The presence of female role models proved especially powerful, quickly shifting conversations from general curiosity to practical questions about subject choices, apprenticeships and university routes. For industry, the event strengthened construction's place within the wider STEM ecosystem, showcasing leadership, inclusion and early talent engagement.

Crucially, the experience revealed that lack of participation is driven less by capability and more by awareness: many students had simply never considered construction as a career.

By embedding construction within Ireland's national STEM outreach and presenting clear, relatable pathways, the 2026 iWish Construction Zone addressed one of the sector's most persistent challenges, visibility, and demonstrated that improving gender balance depends not on changing the work, but on changing how the work is understood.

This engagement not only supports diversity objectives but also strengthens the long-term resilience and delivery capacity of the Irish construction industry.

[Learn more about iWish](#)



BALANCE FOR BETTER BUSINESS (B4BB): ACCELERATING LEADERSHIP CHANGE IN IRISH CONSTRUCTION

At our flagship International Women's Day event, CIF is proud to highlight our support for Balance for Better Business (B4BB) - the Government-established initiative driving gender balance at board and executive leadership level across Irish business.

Since its launch in 2018, B4BB has set a clear ambition: achieve at least 40% female representation on boards and leadership teams. The 2025 Annual Report shows real progress. Women now hold 42% of board seats across the ISEQ20 and 39% across all listed companies, placing Ireland 5th in the EU for board representation.

However, the report also highlights that progress in executive leadership is slower, and sectors such as construction remain among those with the lowest levels of female representation. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

Through active engagement with B4BB, CIF is helping to drive change within our sector. Our contribution to the 2025 Annual Report reflects the Federation's commitment to promoting data transparency, measurable targets, leadership development, and inclusive succession planning across construction firms.

Gender-balanced leadership is not simply about fairness - it is about performance. As Ireland delivers housing, infrastructure and climate action at scale, the construction industry must access the full breadth of available talent.

This International Women's Day, CIF reaffirms its commitment to working alongside Balance for Better Business, Government, and our members to accelerate progress, ensuring that women are not only represented in our sector but also leading and shaping its future.

[Find out more](#)

[Read the B4BB Annual Report](#)



CONTINUING THE MOMENTUM OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The construction sector is changing - in how it builds, how it works, and who it attracts. The insights gathered through the Building an Inclusive Future initiative provide a clear foundation for the next phase: moving from understanding to implementation.

Over the coming year, CIF will work with members and associations to translate these findings into practical guidance, shared learning and measurable actions that improve everyday working experiences across the industry.

This year's International Women's Day theme, 'Give to Gain', captures the spirit required for this progress. When we invest in people - through mentoring, inclusive workplaces, meaningful development opportunities and increased participation - the entire sector benefits. Inclusion is not only a social commitment; it is a strategic one. By opening doors and creating space for all voices, the industry gains the talent, resilience and innovation needed for long-term sustainability.

As we mark International Women's Day 2026, we reaffirm our belief that building an inclusive industry strengthens construction today and shapes a better industry for tomorrow.

On a final note, we would like to sincerely thank all of our members, partners and volunteers who continue to support these initiatives and contribute their time, insight and leadership. Real and lasting progress depends on sustained collective effort.

We encourage every member firm to remain engaged as we move from commitment to action over the coming year.

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET INVOLVED IN ANY OF THE PROGRAMMES OUTLINED ABOVE,
OR DISCUSS HOW YOUR ORGANISATION CAN PARTICIPATE, PLEASE CONTACT OUR
MEMBERSHIP TEAM VIA CATHERINE JORDAN CJORDAN@CIF.IE**

