

Minister celebrates International Women's Day and National Apprenticeship Week with female engineers of the future

Recently published statistics show that just 5.8% of apprentices who started an engineering course last year (2016-17) were female and even fewer – just 2.9% – began an apprenticeship in construction.

The Minister spoke as she visited Wylfa Newydd on Anglesey where she met second year apprentices Nia James and Sophie Wright who are currently on Horizon's Technical Apprenticeship Scheme. This week is also National Apprenticeship Week.

Originally from Dolgellau, Nia moved to Bangor at the age of 16 to undertake her apprenticeship.

She said:

"I have a passion for engineering and finally being able to put this passion into use has been amazing. I'm enjoying learning new skills and getting to know new people. Moving away from home at 16 wasn't easy but I was willing to do for this opportunity to work and train in such an interesting and fast moving environment.

"Doing an apprenticeship means I am earning while I learn and I'm gaining experience and skills in a field that will bring opportunities for years to come. For me, it is an exciting time. I'll get to see the power station through all the stages of development and will get to work there when it opens."

Sophie, who grew up on Anglesey, studied chemistry, physics and maths in sixth form before joining Wylfa's Apprenticeship programme.

She said:

"I have always had an interest in these subjects since I was a child and this led me to engineering as I could learn how things work. When I heard that Horizon Nuclear Power was aiming to build a Nuclear Power Station close to where I live I jumped at the chance to apply for an apprenticeship as I could carry on my dream of becoming an engineer while still be able to live on Anglesey.

"My dream once I finish my apprenticeship is to become a control room operator because that's the job that keeps the lights on. I'd

recommend it to any young women who enjoy a practical, hands-on career.”

The Minister said:

“Nia and Sophie are both excellent examples of young women forging rewarding and interesting careers for themselves through studying STEM subjects and undertaking apprenticeships. They are both embarking on careers in a highly skilled and technical environment with lots to offer in terms of progression, variety of work and job security.

“Unfortunately, however, they are a rare breed and this is something I am eager to address. There are no reasons why a woman should not actively pursue a career in the STEM field and apprenticeships are an excellent way of doing this. Encouraging girls and young women to study STEM subjects is vitally important if we are to ensure that employers can find employees with the skills they need for their businesses to thrive and that women have the same career options available to them as men. I hope Nia and Sophie’s experiences will inspire other young women to undertake apprenticeships or higher education in STEM subjects.”

The Apprenticeship Programme is funded by the Welsh Government with support from the European Social Fund.