

**4th BRITISH ISLES AND MEDITERRANEAN REGION
COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS CONFERENCE**

**6 -8 April 2017
Cardiff, Wales**

“Women in the Economy”



Contents

1. About BIMR CWP	1
2. Conference Overview	4
3. Attendees.....	5
4. Programme.....	6
5. Plenary Reports.....	7
5.01. Plenary Session One.....	7
Part one: <i>Women in the Economy</i>	7
Part two: <i>Education and Training</i>	8
5.02. Plenary Session Two.....	9
Part one: <i>The Role of Government in Promoting Women in the Economy</i>	9
Part two: <i>Inspirational Local Business Women</i>	10
5.03. <i>Plenary Session Three: The Diversity of Women in the Economy</i>	11
6. Workshop	
Reports.....	13
6.01. Workshop A: <i>“Supporting Business to Help Women Achieve and Prosper”</i>	13
6.02. Workshop B: <i>“Minding the Gap: Women in Construction”</i>	14
6.03. Interactive Workshop Session: <i>“Building Bridges”</i>	15
7. Acknowledgements.....	15
8. Funding.....	15

1. About BIMR CWP

1.01. The British Islands & Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) is a regional chapter of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians.

1.02. BIMR CWP held its first conference in 2014 in Edinburgh followed by Conferences held in Gibraltar in 2015 and Guernsey in 2016. Steering Committee meetings are held as required throughout the year.

1.03. BIMR CWP held its fourth Conference in Cardiff in April 2017. The conference is a key component of BIMR CWP's Strategic Plan in delivering its objectives, to:

- a) Build the capacity of women elected to parliament to be more effective in their roles;
- b) Improve awareness and ability of all parliamentarians, male and female, and encouraging them to include a gender perspective in all aspects of their role - legislation, oversight and representation;
- c) Help parliaments to become gender-sensitive institutions;
- d) Encourage more women into politics and connect with the work of the Commonwealth;
- e) Focus on themes of communication, advocacy and engagement;
- f) Link with other groups and associations such as UN Women, UNDP, CSW;
- g) Expand the work and understanding of CWP.

2. Conference Overview

2.01. The theme for the 2017 BIMR CWP Conference '*Women in the Economy*' was chosen by CPA Wales to build on issues of particular interest raised at the 2016 BIMR CWP Conference in Guernsey and to complement recent impetus to strengthen intra-Commonwealth economic relationships.

The conference provided an opportunity to explore how women can play a full and equal role in our respective and collective economies, now and in the future, and how policy-makers can support women to achieve and prosper.

The aim of the conference was to **collaborate, challenge and inspire change - to identify the barriers preventing women from fulfilling their potential, identify gaps in policy and strategy and share good practice.**

The conference brought together representatives from diverse sectors, international business, innovative start-ups, government, the third sector and education. Using their experiences delegates

explored how business, policy-makers and other stakeholders can together take steps towards greater gender equality, to create more prosperous societies for all.

2.02. The recurrent messages in plenary sessions and workshops highlighted the following needs:

- a) **Outreach activities specifically targeted at primary level children** (and their parents) with a particular focus on early years, before traditional gender identities are beginning to form;
- b) More **visible role models**, outreach activities need to include examples of successful women in diverse sectors
- c) **Flexible working and diversity** in the workplace, those with the platform to do so should be encouraged to promote how such practices benefits business;
- d) **Support mechanisms** for women entrepreneurs, including skills training and mentoring;
- e) Increased **attention of unconscious bias** in the workplace and the recruitment process, and the replication of behaviour and attitudes;
- f) All of the above should have **long-term sustainability** - one off interventions are not enough.

3. Attendees

BIMR CWP Steering Committee: Joyce Watson AM, Chair (Wales)
Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP (UK)
Norma Paris, States Member (Alderney)
Eleni Mavrou MP (Cyprus)
Samantha Sacramento MP (Gibraltar)
Ann Corlett MHK (Isle of Man)

Guernsey: Deputy Rhian Tooley

Gibraltar: Ms Sabina Guillem

Isle of Man: Ms Julie Edge MHK

Jersey: Deputy Anne Pryke

Deputy Judith Martin

Deputy Susie Pinel

Mrs Lisa Hart (Delegation Secretary)

Malta: Hon Deborah Schembri MP

Ms Maria Angela Bellizzi (Delegation Secretary)

Northern Ireland: Ms Nicola Crawford (Delegation Secretary)

Scotland Gillian Martin MSP

Rhoda Grant MSP

United Kingdom Baroness Anita Gale

Baroness Gloria Hooper CMG

Wales Ann Jones AM, Deputy Presiding Officer, Welsh Assembly

Jenny Rathbone AM

Caroline Jones AM

Rhianon Passmore AM

Suzy Davies AM

Mr Al Davies

BIMR Secretariat: Mr Andrew Tuggey DL (BIMR Secretary)

Helen Haywood

Anna Burt (Delegation Secretary)

Speakers: Cerys Furlong, Chief Executive, Chwarae Teg

Natasha Davies, Policy and Research Lead, Chwarae Teg

Christine Atkinson, Co-Director, Women's Entrepreneurship Hub, University of South Wales

Jane Hutt AM, Leader of the House and Chief Whip, Welsh Government

Sophie & Hannah Pycroft, Founders, Spectrum Collections

Jo Roberts, Founder, Fabulous Welshcakes

Helen Walbey, Diversity Chair, FSB UK

Maxine Barrett, Operations Director, HOS Hire Ltd
 Laura Toscano, HR Leader, GE UK
 Gemma Littlejohns, Employer Partner, Chwarae Teg
 Donna Griffiths, Partnership Manager Wales, CITB
 Sarah Jones, Salix Engineering Services

4. Programme

Thursday 6 April
Outreach visit to GE Aviation
Welcome Reception Hosted by the Presiding Officer & CPA Wales Branch Executive Committee Members
Gala Dinner Hosted by, Ann Jones AM, CPA Wales Branch Vice-President
Friday 7 April
Steering Committee Meeting - separate minutes available
Opening Address & Overview of Programme Joyce Watson AM (Wales), BIMR CWP Chair
Plenary Session 1 <i>Chair:</i> Joyce Watson AM (Wales) Part One: <i>Setting the Scene - Women in the Welsh Economy</i> <i>Presenters:</i> Cerys Furlong, Chief Executive, Chwarae Teg Natasha Davies, Policy and Research Lead, Chwarae Teg Part Two: <i>Education and Training - Developing Future Female Entrepreneurial Leaders</i> <i>Presenter:</i> Christine Atkinson, Head of Women's Entrepreneurship Hub, University of South Wales
Plenary Session 2 <i>Chair:</i> Ann Jones AM, Deputy Presiding Officer, Welsh Government Part One: <i>The Role of Government in Promoting Women in the Economy</i> <i>Presenter:</i> Jane Hutt AM, Leader of the House, Welsh Assembly Part Two: <i>Inspirational Local Business Women</i> <i>Presenters:</i> Sophie & Hannah Pycroft, Founders, Spectrum Collections Jo Roberts, Founder, Fabulous Welshcakes
Plenary Session 3 <i>Chair:</i> Rhianon Passmore AM (Wales) <i>The Diversity of Women in the Economy</i> <i>Presenters:</i> Helen Walbey, Diversity Chair, FSB UK Maxine Barrett, Operations Director, HOS Hire Ltd Laura Toscano, HR Leader, GE UK
Workshop A: <i>"Supporting Business to Help Women Achieve and Prosper"</i> <i>Facilitated by:</i> Gemma Littlejohns, Employer Partner, Chwarae Teg
Workshop B: <i>"Minding the Gap: Women in Construction"</i> <i>Led by:</i> Donna Griffiths, Partnership Manager Wales, CITB, and apprentices and other women working in the sector.

<i>Facilitated by:</i> Suzy Davies AM (Wales)
Interactive Workshop Session for All: “Building Bridges” <i>Facilitated by:</i> CITB and ICE
Report Back from Workshops & Closing Remarks <i>Chair:</i> Joyce Watson AM, BIMR CWP Chair
Official Dinner Hosted by Joyce Watson AM

5. Plenary Reports

5.01. Plenary Session One

Chair: Joyce Watson AM (Wales)

Part one: *Setting the Scene: Women in the Welsh Economy*

Speakers:

- Cerys Furlong, Chwarae Teg
- Natasha Davies, Chwarae Teg

BIMR Chair Joyce Watson AM welcomed delegates to the fourth BIMR CWP Conference. Noting the gender balance in the Welsh Assembly, the Chair acknowledged the work undertaken to achieve this, largely driven by Baroness Anita Gale during her time as General Secretary of the Welsh Labour Party. The Chair introduced the theme of the conference, Women in the Economy, stressing that women should be represented in all areas of the economy, not just those traditionally designated to women. The Chair introduced representatives from Chwarae Teg and thanked them for their support in organising the conference at short notice.

Natasha Davies began by giving an overview of women in the Welsh economy and the barriers they face.

Set up twenty five years ago Chwarae Teg means “Fair Play” and its vision is a Wales where women achieve and prosper. Chwarae Teg works toward this by working with women, work places, influencers, educators and decision makers. Natasha noted that 73.2% of women in Wales are economically active in contrast to 80.6% of men. Furthermore the average pay for women is £10.57p/h and £12.75p/h for men and women make up only 14% of those in Chief Executive Positions.

The impact of stereotypes was highlighted as an important barrier to women entering certain sectors. These stereotypes are often established at a young age, typically around 2-3 years when gender identity is beginning to form. This can rule out certain careers for women from an early age.

Natasha added that limited childcare and the lack of flexible working options is a key practical barrier to women playing a greater role in the economy. This also perpetuates the assumption that women are carers first and earners second.

Finally, traditional economic models are focussed on investing in high growth sectors where women are less represented. The result of this is that gender equality is often seen as more of a social rather than an economic issue.

Cerys Furlong briefed delegates on the role of Chwarae Teg in finding solutions to these barriers.

Gender inclusive education from an early age is an important step in breaking down stereotypes that persist in all, not just traditional industries. Cerys noted that there had been great progress in

Wales in recent years in regard to teacher training. Chwarae Teg work with training providers to achieve a greater gender balance and with careers advisers to bring more female role models in to Higher Education institutions. These role models are extremely important, allowing girls to see that all career paths are possible.



Investing in social infrastructure is vital in creating a modern workplace where women can prosper. This would include investing in flexible childcare and flexible working patterns. This should be part of a wider change in workplace culture, giving individuals more autonomy in delivering their work.

Cerys noted the fundamental need for decent work at a decent age. More employers should be paying the minimum wage and should be actively encouraged to invest in their workforce.

Coming back to Wales as an example, Cerys stressed the need to maximise the leverage of devolved powers, making best use possible of all opportunities to influence policy.

Part two: *Education and Training*

Speaker: Christine Atkinson, Head of Women's Entrepreneurship Hub, University of South Wales

Christine used the example of the Women's Entrepreneurship Hub at the University of South Wales as a case study of how the university has created links with partners in Wales, the UK and Europe to encourage women in entrepreneurship. Christine gave a brief background beginning with the introduction of Welsh Women Entrepreneurs on the Web (WWEW) in 1999 which established the differing needs, motivations and challenges among female entrepreneurs. In 2000 the university introduced the Pioneering MSc Entrepreneurship (Female Entrepreneurs) which established the need and demand for high level targeted courses/qualifications in part to overcome some of the challenges previously identified. In 2008 the university launched the Centre for Excellence in

Enterprise and the Women's Entrepreneurship Hub which provided a focal point for Research, Policy and Practice in Female Entrepreneurship and Gender and Entrepreneurship. Working with partners in the EU, in 2008 the university launched the Women's Entrepreneurship in the European Union (WEEU).

Since being established the Women's Entrepreneurs Hub has run several flagship projects. Women Adding Value to the Economy (WAVE), in partnership with Cardiff University and BAWSO focused on the motivation, definitions of success and the difficulty establishing credibility among female entrepreneurs.

Christine highlighted the importance of the Women's Entrepreneurship Hub, given the increasing participation of women in entrepreneurship and their vital contribution to the economy. In 2012 48 million female entrepreneurs and 64 million female established business owners had one or more employees. Despite this, women remain under-represented in entrepreneurship and the challenge of long term sustainability for women entrepreneurs remains. However, figures from 2015 show the ratio of women to men in entrepreneurship/gender gap narrowing.

The Q&A session highlighted the need for flexible working, and specifically the need for benefits of these arrangements to be articulated more. In response Christine noted that women entrepreneurs could play a key role in this by using their position as a platform to promote the benefits of having female employees. Participants and speakers also noted the vital importance of visible role models for aspiring entrepreneurs.

5.02. Plenary Session Two

Part one: The Role of Government in Promoting Women in the Economy

Speaker: Jane Hutt AM, Welsh Government Leader of the House

Jane Hutt AM opened the session by setting out how the Welsh Government was fulfilling its commitment to promote women in the economy. She told delegates that equality is built into the founding legislation of the Welsh Government and influences everything it does. As such the Welsh Government's strategy to deliver equality was cross-cutting and takes a whole of Government approach. She highlighted a number of areas of work:

Financial inclusion - working with partners to help improve access to affordable credit and financial services;

Business support - access to information, advice and support to start and grow businesses including help to find the right finance partner, loans and investors;

Childcare - provision of free childcare places;

Training - skills and building confidence;

Politics and decision-making - encouraging women into public life. Pledge to 50:50 by 2020 campaign;

Pay inequality - addressing the underlying causes (gender stereotyping, occupation segregation and lack of affordable childcare);

Women at all levels of management - leadership training, one-to-one support and encouragement.

The Minister emphasised the benefits of women in leadership in leading organisational change, flexible working practices, and the promotion of equality across the workforce as well as being role models in their communities. There is also a key responsibility for Government in tackling discrimination.

The minister concluded her remarks by emphasising the scale of the challenge, and the large amount of work still to do to ensure that women can fully participate in the economy; however that equality should be at the forefront of everything government does.

During the Q&A session the role of leadership in breaking down silos in government to help further the equality agenda was discussed. The Minister believes that whilst strong leadership is essential, it must be coupled with a collaborative and enabling approach, ensuring investment in the right relationships.

In addressing the question of how Brexit will affect UK business it was noted that 60% of Welsh exports go to the EU; however the Welsh Government has been sending trade missions all over the world to promote its business sector, and Commonwealth markets have been targeted.

Public sector procurement was highlighted as providing opportunities for women-led businesses and the Welsh Government has done some work on opening up access including addressing the length of procurement documentation, language used and providing digital skills training.

Part two: *Inspirational Local Business Women*

Speakers:

- Sophie and Hannah Pycroft, Spectrum Collections
- Jo Roberts, Fabulous Welshcakes

In the second part of the session delegates heard from three local business women on their experiences of starting and growing their businesses in Wales.

Sisters Sophie and Hannah Pycroft left successful careers in the media to launch Spectrum Collections, a business selling make-up brushes, bags and accessories. They have established a worldwide customer base and an annual turnover of £2.5m in the third year of trading. They stressed the importance of creating a strong brand which had been a key factor in the success of their business, and not being afraid to take risks. They had



brought skills to the business developed through their education and earlier careers, and had acquired business acumen as they have gone along. Sophie and Hannah have received significant support from Welsh Government initiatives to support small businesses and are applying to join the accelerated growth programme which will allow them to pay for intellectual property lawyers to help safeguard their brand and ensure the business's full potential.

Jo Roberts owns Fabulous Welshcakes, a business she created by turning an idea into a business opportunity. She has 15 employees, and has achieved excellent staff retention by building flexibility into working patterns concentrating production around school hours. The business currently has an annual turnover of £300,000 and is expanding to open a new shop in a different area of Cardiff.

The Chair thanked the speakers for their inspirational stories and congratulated them on their success. She noted the need for role models such as Hannah, Sophie and Jo to spur other women to start new and build existing businesses

5.03. Plenary Session Three: *The Diversity of Women in the Economy*

Speakers:

- Helen Walbey, Diversity Chair, FSB UK
- Maxine Barrett, Operations Director, HOS Hire Ltd
- Laura Toscano, HR Leader, GE UK

Delegates heard first from Helen Walbey, Diversity Chair of FSB UK. FSB is a non-profit making and non-party political organisation established over 40 years ago to help members succeed in business. It offered advice, financial products and support covering a wide range of benefits such as tax, legal and HR, local network groups, business banking and mentoring.

Helen was appointed as Diversity Chair in 2016, having run her own business, Recycle Scooters, in Aberdare since 2004. Having started trading bike parts online as a means of bringing in an income when her husband was recovering from a serious work accident, Helen's company now traded

internationally and employed local staff. Her interest in diversity issues was borne from her own experiences of being a female business owner in a male dominated sector.

Helen advised that there was a myriad of reasons why the number of businesses in the UK which were run by women was relatively low at only 22%, but it was estimated that £10.6 billion could be added to the economy if those women wanting to set up businesses pursued their dream. This could have major societal impacts, as women tended to spend the money they made from their business within their own communities - which changed the dynamic of an area and enhanced the community for the better. FSB had conducted a survey of its female members and received 1900 replies. Most conducted their businesses from home and operated predominantly in the service and caring sectors where there was less opportunity for growth and profit. Women tended to stop their businesses citing personal reasons rather than financial failure and those surveyed had indicated that financial management and an aversion to risk were their main concerns as businesswomen.

Helen highlighted that there was a real growth opportunity for women entrepreneurs within the public/private sector as the supply chains currently lacked diversity. The Welsh government had made inroads in addressing this, primarily by reducing its formerly impenetrable 164 page procurement application form to a shorter more user-friendly format, but more could be done. Access to advice and support was seen as crucial in encouraging women to set up in business and training was regarded as key; not just for a woman's personal growth but also as a valuable networking opportunity - "you can't be what you can't see". It was considered essential that women who were in diverse sectors were visible. Helen was the only woman in the UK who ran a scrapyard and, having succeeded in such a male dominated environment, was passionate about encouraging diversity in other areas too. She believed that women could succeed in whatever area of business they wanted and adopting a collaborative approach was key. She went into primary schools to talk about her business and inspire children, but especially young girls, to consider a wider range of careers.

The next speaker was Maxine Barrett, Operations Director at HOS Hire, an independent construction hire firm offering a range of formwork and non-mechanical plant for hire and sale. Maxine has worked at the Company since 2007, although she had no construction experience and had simply been looking for a new opportunity and was encouraged by a supportive mentor to push herself into an area generally populated by men, relying on her transferable skills and strong work ethic. Maxine managed all aspects of the business and leads a team comprised mainly of men. She has had first-hand experience of the difficulties and opportunities encountered by women in the construction industry. Her enthusiasm and willingness to learn earned her the respect of her colleagues. Maxine was keen to encourage other women to take on and develop roles in construction and considered that being under-estimated by some of the men she encountered on site provided her with an enormous incentive to succeed. Maxine champions and mentors young people and was hopeful that more women will join the construction trade to increase diversity and bring new ideas and a fresh perspective essential for the industry to thrive.

The final presenter was Laura Toscano, HR Leader at GE Aviation. Laura had joined General Electrics in 2015, having previously worked in HR for 18 years across various sectors. GE is an enormous organisation with over 330,000 employees across the world and 22,000 in the UK alone.

The Group CEO has promised publicly to bridge the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) gender gap, by seeking to employ 20,000 women in STEM roles and having 50/50 gender split entry on apprenticeship programmes by 2020. This pledge is being taken very seriously by the Company and a Technology Advisory Council had been established to address the current skills gaps in four main areas of acquisition, retention, leadership and shape. GE had been successful in attracting talent to work for the business globally, but had problems with retention and therefore needed to create a better culture in which women could thrive as employees. In terms of leadership, it was necessary to address some of the cultural practices which were inherent to the organisation and a training session ‘leading without bias’ is being rolled out to all staff to challenge behaviours. GE encouraged networking and has an active women’s network globally.

Laura had found the environment very different to her previous employment, but was keen to make positive changes. The factory employed 1,400 people and very few women were on the shop floor. Whilst the leadership was gender balanced, there was an ingrained culture amongst the factory workers where female leaders had simply replicated male attitudes to thrive and survive. Training was now underway to diversify leadership styles. The Company was also keen to attract early entry level staff and took on 30 apprentices every year. 100 STEM ambassadors were active in the community visiting schools as visible role models and GE was involved in this initiative. Laura’s factory was partnered, via Careers Wales, with a high school outside of the factory’s catchment area in order to encourage diversity. Staff also participated in a maths mentoring programme in schools, giving some 1,300 hours support to students to improve GCSE Maths results in the area.

A Q&A session then followed during which it was acknowledged that job adverts could often have a gender bias. It was recognised that any promotional information about a company or job had to be inclusive and that it was language as much as imagery which had to be addressed. Often the bias was unconscious and there was merit in using ‘gender cleansing’ programmes to ensure that all adverts were fully inclusive and gender non-specific. Furthermore, it was identified that encouraging an interest in a diverse range of career options was essential at primary school level. The Welsh Government’s ‘Big Ideas’ initiative, in which 300 business people had visited schools to discuss their businesses had played a valuable role in this work. Many delegates agreed this was something which could be emulated in their jurisdictions, as a means of showing young people that a career path did not have to be gender specific.

6. Workshop Reports

6.01. Workshop A: *“Supporting Business to Help Women Achieve and Prosper”*

Facilitated by: Gemma Littlejohns, Employer Partner, Chwarae Teg

Rapporteur: Hon Samantha Sacramento MP (Gibraltar)

This workshop introduced Agile Nation 2, a European Social Fund and Welsh Government funded programme being delivered by Chwarae Teg. The project includes two programmes - a career development programme for women and a business programme which works with small to medium sized enterprise. The programme for women has been designed to help participants gain the skills, confidence and knowledge needed to effectively progress their career. With businesses Chwarae Teg help employers review their working practices and how they can be adapted to enable women to prosper.



Participants discussed the wider barriers to women entering non-traditional sectors including construction. Much of this discussion focussed on early years' education and the role of parents, noting that perceptions are formed by four or five years of age. Gemma Littlejohns highlighted *Fair Foundations* - a key component of Agile Nation 1 which worked with local communities and primary schools. Gemma stressed however that such efforts are only effective if implemented over a prolonged period of time.

6.02. Workshop B: “*Minding the Gap: Women in Construction*”

Led by Donna Griffiths, Partnership Manager Wales from CITB, and apprentices and other Women working in the sector.

Facilitated by: Suzy Davies AM (Wales)

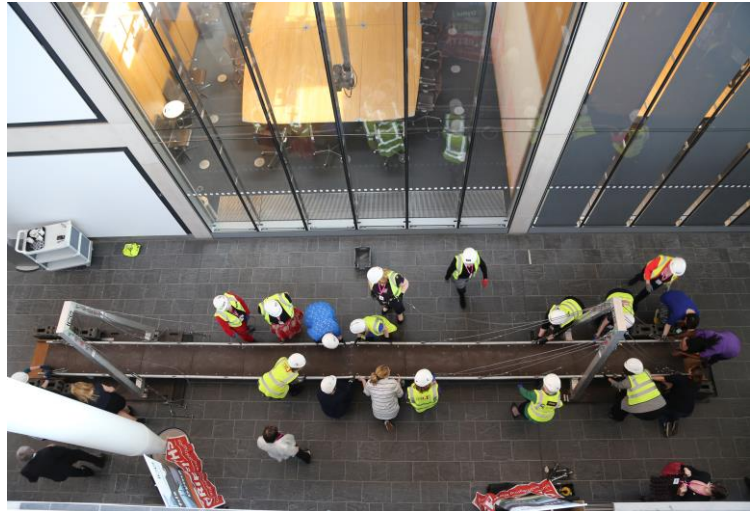
Rapporteur: Deputy Susie Pinel (Jersey)

This workshop demonstrated some of the innovations playing an increasingly important role in the world of construction and civil engineering - *challenging preconceptions that many women have of these industries*. The workshop included contributions from a range of women working in a variety of trades who explained their motivation for following that particular career path and their subsequent experiences. Each had a positive story to tell with no mention of discriminatory attitudes despite being in the minority. Delegates also heard about initiatives the construction industry is undertaking to try and address the under-representation of women in the industry, such as investing in school and community engagement programmes; and the importance of reaching primary-age girls where attitudes are more in their formative stages. A number of contributors mentioned the skills gap with jobs available in certain industries and insufficient skilled workers to fill them, and therefore the increasing importance of women’s participation in all sectors of the economy.

6.03. Interactive Workshop Session: “Building Bridges”

Facilitated by Female Construction Ambassadors from CITB Wales and ICE Wales.

Delegates took part in a hands-on, interactive session working with women in construction to build a mini version of the Second Severn Crossing. Divided into two groups participants were shown the engineering challenge of building a bridge. The groups worked together to build a 12m long cable stayed bridge. Having assembled the bridge they then walked across it before deconstructing it. The activity provided the opportunity for delegates to hear more of the varied roles and experiences of female engineers working in different roles in construction.



7. Acknowledgements

BIMR CWP is grateful to hosts, CPA Wales for their excellent planning, organisation and delivery of the 4th BIMR CWP Conference. Many thanks also to the speakers who gave up their time to attend the Conference, and whose varied and interesting presentations helped to increase the knowledge and understanding of all in attendance.

8. Funding

BIMR CWP Regional Strengthening Funds contributed £12,683.07 to the cost of the conference, including accommodation and travel. The remaining balance was paid for by CPA Wales.

