



Meet Helen Kilbride

Process Director

Fluor Corporation

BCECA members provide engineering, design, procurement, project management and construction services to the process and energy industries worldwide. Fluor's Process Director, Helen Kilbride, talks about her journey so far.

Fluor Corporation was founded in the US in 1912. The company, which now has a presence around the world, opened a London office in 1957. Fluor provides professional and technical solutions for the delivery of world-class engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) projects for global clients from its office in Farnborough, Hampshire. Recent work in the UK has spanned energy and process optimisation projects with companies including INEOS and Valero, decommissioning the original fleet of Magnox nuclear reactors, and Greater Gabbard, a 500MW offshore wind farm located in the North Sea.

In the beginning

"After growing up and attending school in Belgium, I completed my A-Levels in London. Prior to returning to the UK, I had decided to study chemical engineering - totally unaware that it wasn't considered 'a job for girls' back in the 80s. My parents, both chemists by degree, were very supportive. I studied chemical engineering at University College London and quickly realised that I was one of very few women, but equally capable of working with physics and mathematical complexity. My degree provided an excellent foundation for my career. Extracurricular activity was important too. I took on leadership roles with several engineering societies – great for networking and developing essential communication skills."

London to South Africa and back

"I secured a place as a graduate process engineer with Davy McKee (now JM) in London. Six months into the role, I was offered an assignment in South Africa to work on a huge construction project. It was a pivotal time for the country and a challenging environment but a defining experience that expanded my global outlook. I later returned to South Africa with Foster Wheeler Babcock (now Wood) where I took on a project engineering role; and then with Fluor, as a process engineer. Today I'm a company executive and Process Director with functional responsibility for process technology globally. My role embraces business strategy, training and the adoption of new tools and working practices in a rapidly changing landscape. I'm excited by project execution and new data-centric approaches. I have also led projects at all phases of development in the upstream and chemical industries, including carbon capture."

Thirty years on

"The role of the process engineer is changing. Big data, machine learning, AI, automation, and visualisation are transforming process design and process engineering in ways that never occurred to me 30 years ago. I'm a Chartered Engineer and a Fellow of IChemE, and I'm working with the Institution to widen the understanding, application, and education of digitalisation tools. This extra-curricular stuff is important to me and I'm also involved in Fluor's charitable arm. Making sure that women understand what engineering is has also been a focus and I look for opportunities to make a difference. I feel that choosing chemical engineering was pure luck, so my career is in a way 'an accident'. I don't want others to miss out."

For more information about career prospects in the engineering contracting, sector contact BCECA at 10th Floor, Camelford House, 89 Albert Embankment, London SE17TP

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