



SPOTLIGHTING GOOD PRACTICE

From graduate to industry leader

Sophie Banham, Offtake Director - Dogger Bank D Wind Farm at Equinor

When I joined the renewables industry in 2008, offshore wind was still an emerging sector. Today it's a cornerstone of the UK's clean energy transition, and I've had the privilege of growing my career alongside it.

I often reflect that the relatively young nature of the industry has helped to support a more modern, diverse and forward-thinking workforce. Certainly, when it comes to DEI and career progress, my own experience has been positive compared to some of my peers from university who went into other industries.

Over the years, I've been part of some of the most ambitious projects in UK offshore wind. This included being part of the team that consented the world's largest offshore wind farm. I've worked across a broad range of disciplines, including environment and consenting, digitalisation, stakeholder engagement, and leadership. I've been privileged to hold roles as Industry Sponsor for the Offshore Wind Growth Partnership, and Developer Vice Chair of the Offshore Wind Industry Council.

My career has benefitted from working in companies with pretty flat structures, where you are judged on your experience, regardless of career path, age, or gender. Two of my roles called for candidates with an engineering background, which I don't have, but I have other valuable skills that outweighed this 'template' requirement. Having said that, we do need more people with engineering skills, which is why Equinor does a lot to promote STEM skills in schools and beyond.

Having taken a full year's maternity leave with both my children, I've never felt my career progression was compromised. I've always been supported to return, take on new responsibilities and continue to grow – which says a lot about the culture here at Equinor.

There's now so much evidence showing how diversity strengthens performance and innovation. We've made real progress, but we can't take it for granted. We need to keep promoting the benefits, pushing back on the counterarguments, and proactively ensuring that inclusion remains central to how the energy industry evolves.



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