

NSAN AWARDS 2018

The nuclear industry's rising stars

Insight and advice from the Nuclear Institute's top performers

There was much to celebrate at the 11th UK Nuclear Skills Awards earlier this year when the Hilton Manchester welcomed the nuclear stars of the past, present and future.

The awards, organised by NSAN and Cogent Skills, brought the nuclear industry together to celebrate the success and high achievement of individuals nominated for awards in Apprentice, Graduate, STEM, Subject Matter Expert and Equality, Inclusion and Diversity disciplines. The main sponsor of the evening was the NDA.

As in previous years, in addition to their accolades, all of the shortlisted entrants were offered a year's free membership of the Nuclear Institute. With that in mind, we spoke to some of the winners and runners-up from the 2018 awards to see what the past 12 months have been like, as well as the impact of having being recognised at the prestigious ceremony.

LAURA JOHNSON
REMEDICATION
TECHNICAL ADVISOR
SELLAFIELD LTD



Q. What was the impact of being shortlisted for the NSAN awards?

A. The NSAN awards are hugely recognised by my employer, so to be shortlisted as Scientific Graduate of the Year was fantastic. They put my photograph along with some of our brilliant apprentices onto the internal televisions and digital boards and I received no end of congratulations from colleagues who had seen it. I attended the awards evening with my husband, who was so inspired by the apprentices he met there that he applied for (and is now successfully completing) a Health Physics Apprenticeship with Sellafield Ltd himself – at 34 years old.

Q. How has your job changed since then?

A. Since the awards, I have moved job role into the site remediation area of our business and went on a secondment into one of our supply chain companies, Nuclear Technologies. To go from experiencing a business

with 10,000 employees to a smaller business with ~9 employees in the office was something of a shock, but the work I've been completing in collaboration with the supply chain should allow us to plan facility characterisation work for the next 10 years, which will hopefully help us deliver safer, faster and cheaper decommissioning activities for the site. This is all work towards building a future capability for the remediation of nuclear facilities at Sellafield.

Q. What are the next steps you plan for your career?

A. I'm due to complete an NTEC module at Birmingham University this year focused on management of the decommissioning process. Continuous learning is necessary in any career and having only been in my current role since April 2018, I'm hoping to gain the skills I need to become proficient in managing decommissioning activities on our site.

"Continuous learning is necessary in any career..."

LAURA JOHNSON

Q. Any particular highlights since the NSAN awards?

A. Since the NSAN awards, I have joined the Cumbria Branch Women in Nuclear (WiN) Succession Committee to help promote visibility of diversity in our industry, as well as starting to help my manager set up a capability for laser scanning, something I knew absolutely nothing about before. I have been working on my change skills, completing APMG's Change Management course and building on my qualifications as a performance coach. I have just been asked to stand on the site steering group for coaching and to assist with our new leadership programme, for which I was so surprised that I emailed back to ask if they'd made a mistake. The group of coaches we have at our company are highly respected managers and leaders, so for them to even consider nominating me onto the committee was a real surprise. I have also just been asked to be somebody's mentor, which did bring a few tears to my eyes if I'm being honest.





Q. What value have you gained from your NI membership?

A. I've been NI Cumbria Branch communications officer for a couple of years now, so I have always known the benefits of not only being a member of NI when doing the comms for our events, but also in getting involved in the voluntary positions. Being awarded a year of free membership gave me the push I needed to finally gather together my Chartership portfolio for CSci, which I am hoping to submit within the next month or two. Due to working on a big site like Sellafield, it can sometimes be difficult to get a broader perspective from other industry professionals and NI has been a great way to meet other professionals from various companies.

Q. What would your advice be to other apprentices/graduates in the nuclear industry?

A. The only piece of advice I find I have been giving repeatedly lately has been around purpose in your job role. A lot of colleagues are looking to fulfil their life's purpose with their work and can sometimes be frustrated that they don't know exactly what job they want to do long term. I think there's a purpose in every job role you do and there's no reason that the purpose can't change with each job. When I worked in safety my purpose was to keep people safe. Now that I work in remediation, it's to keep the wider community safe by remediating our buildings as effectively as we can, providing maximum value for the country from our budget. When you're thinking with your job role purpose in mind, you'll find that you don't need to look for it any more – it comes to you.



“To win Manufacturing Apprentice of the Year was unimaginable...”

AIDAN BENNETT
ENGINEERING WORK PLANNER
SELLAFIELD LTD

Q. What was the impact of being shortlisted for the NSAN awards?

A. Being shortlisted for the Manufacturing Apprentice of the Year came totally unexpected to myself, and then to win was unimaginable. Since then I have been presented with opportunities to encourage other apprentices to push themselves further and inspire confidence to be more involved with projects and innovations around the Sellafield site. I have also recently been involved with a new pioneering work experience programme which Sellafield is offering. We hope that this programme will encourage more school-leavers to consider a career in the nuclear industry. So far, we have had great feedback.



AIDAN BENNETT

Q. How has your job changed since then?

A. Since the awards which I can possibly accredit to, I have been presented with the opportunity to progress into the Engineering Planning Department. I accepted this opportunity with great eagerness. Within this department we plan for the manufacture and installation of a wide range of projects across the Sellafield site. Each and every job is unique, as is each part of the Sellafield site. I feel like this has really helped my professional development as I gain new skills every day.

Q. What are the next steps you plan for your career?

A. I intend to continue my development in my current

department, expanding my skill set and experience through the complexity of the projects. Eventually, I would like to be leading these projects and provide innovative ideas going forward.

Q. Any particular highlights since the NSAN awards?

A. Since the NSAN awards I have enrolled onto an HNC in mechanical engineering with support from the head of my operating unit. I aspire to continue this path and eventually progress to degree level.

Q. What value have you gained from your NI membership?

A. The NI membership has been a great benefit to myself. The NI keeps you up to date with all the events and main topics of interest in my area and around the UK. I find a particular interest in projects which are being carried out in other areas of the nuclear profession, and the NI membership has kept me fully up to date with this.

Q. What would your advice be to other apprentices in the nuclear industry?

A. My key piece of advice for any apprentice is to be open minded. The nuclear industry is so large and there are so many different avenues to pursue. Take any opportunity which comes your way and enjoy the moment.

NAOMI PULFREY
PRODUCT SAFETY ANALYST
BAE SYSTEMS SUBMARINES

Q. What was the impact of being shortlisted for the NSAN awards?

A. Being shortlisted for and then going on to win the NSAN Science Graduate of the Year award was a fantastic thing for me. As somebody who had only been in the business a year and a half at the time, after being shortlisted I had the opportunity to meet the senior management in the nuclear function (whom I had only seen from afar at that point) to engage with and ask them questions about themselves and their careers. This has helped steer elements of my own career. As well as this it has given me the confidence to get myself out there and get my name known within the business to help myself build a good network of contacts – essential for anyone starting out in their career.



Q. How has your job changed since then?

A. Since receiving the Science Graduate of the Year Award I have found myself a full-time role off the graduate scheme which I love and is very much linked to my undergraduate degree in chemistry. I work on DSEAR, implementing these regulations across all of our submarine programmes. Using chemistry and maths to influence engineering design changes is so satisfying. I can look at the submarines that we produce and say: "I changed that design to keep the Navy safe".

Q. What are the next steps you plan for your career?

A. I'd like to continue to work across programmes in order to see as much of the business as possible, whilst applying what I have learnt by doing this within my specialism. I'd also very much like to be involved in developing the new intake of graduates and apprentices into my department in future years and go on to manage my own team. I

love the people aspect of the job as much as the technical side and feel that I would thrive in a technical leadership role.

"It has given me the confidence to get myself out there"



NAOMI PULFREY

Q. Any particular highlights since the NSAN awards?

A. Since the NSAN awards one of the most exciting things I've done is design, test and launch an after-school club for BAE Systems Submarines in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art & design and maths) subjects for Key Stages 1-4. Including art and design into STEM is a European initiative and I've been working hard with another engineer in the business to bring it here to the UK. When we give the students we are working with the opportunity to get creative, their solutions to the problems we present them with are so much better and it really adds to their enjoyment of the after-school programme.

Q. What value have you gained from your NI membership?

A. I have enjoyed using my membership with the NI. I like reading through the articles in the magazines which keep me in the loop with technology and projects working at the forefront of our industry, especially those





articles that showcase what young people in the sector have been doing. The webinars are a good source of information too; even those that are not directly correlated with my day-to-day work are good for broadening my understanding of the industry as a whole.

Q. What would your advice be to other apprentices/graduates in the nuclear industry?

A. Don't be afraid to cross boundaries, functions, departments and projects. Spending time working in the engineering function as a scientist was one of the best things I have done and it has brought so much more context to the work that I do as well as enjoyment from the new challenge it presented.



AMY MAYOR
PRINCIPAL PROJECT ENGINEER,
NUCLEAR
BAE SYSTEMS SUBMARINES

Q. What was the impact of being shortlisted for the NSAN awards?

A. I was so, so proud to get shortlisted for the awards, and to go on to win Business Service Apprentice of the Year was a huge honour and my greatest career achievement. It is an amazing feeling to get recognised for all the hard work and effort I put into my role. Attending the awards allowed me to network with a large range of people and sparked interesting conversations around current



"I've been promoted in-role which has given me a much wider scope of work"

AMY MAYOR

nuclear issues and my own future development.

Q. How has your job changed since then?

A. Not only have I been promoted in-role which has given me a much wider scope of work and increased responsibility and accountability, I have also started studying for my BSc Honours degree in project management and am on track for a first. I have undertaken further training to be qualified as Nuclear SQEP and am much more involved in the technical aspect of build delivery rather than just the project management side.

Q. What are the next steps you plan for your career?

A. I love my current job working on manufacture of the reactor compartment of submarines. It is such a unique area and I want to

keep my career here. I am really enjoying my current role where I manage other apprentices. I intend to progress to the next grade to have my own team working for me as well as apprentices.

Q. Any particular highlights since the NSAN awards?

A. Other than my promotion, I have won further business awards for my work on manufacturing readiness for the Trident replacement programme. In my personal life I have bought my first home and moved in with my partner and puppy. Overall it



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has been a great year.

Q. What value have you gained from your NI membership?

A. I have enjoyed keeping up to date with nuclear projects across the UK. It's really important to be interested in your field of work to keep you motivated and striving to do the best you can.

Q. What would your advice be to other apprentices in the nuclear industry?

A. Always, always push to do what you're interested in to get the most out of your apprenticeship. Go against the status quo. If I hadn't pushed to go into the different departments I wanted to, I wouldn't be writing this right now. Experience different parts of the business related to where you want your career to go and don't stop until you get what you want. Make sure you add value to every piece of work you're involved in and most importantly understand why you're doing that work and how it fits into the business's objectives.



MATTHEW HUTCHEON
ASSISTANT PLAN MANAGER
OF THE NATURAL URANIUM
RECOVERY PLANT
WESTINGHOUSE SPRINGFIELDS
FUELS LTD

Q. What was the impact of being shortlisted for the NSAN awards?

A. I was overjoyed to find out I was shortlisted for Graduate Engineer of the Year. I found it very satisfying to have my achievements recognised by an external organisation, and it really helped me to feel confident with my career. I was also asked to deliver my NSAN presentation to our senior leadership team, which provided an excellent networking opportunity.

Q. How has your job changed since then?

A. Since being shortlisted for the award, I have moved into a new role, providing chemical and process engineering support to one of our COMAH upper-tier chemical plants. I've also taken the lead in planning a major turn-around, and safety case revalidation. This transition from a graduate development role to an operational one has come with a significant increase in responsibility, as well as the chance to really



"Use your training scheme to get a broad range of experience"

MATTHEW HUTCHEON

use the skills I've learned in my career to date.

Q. What are the next steps you plan for your career?

A. I'm looking forward to staying with my current facility to help with the upcoming transition from operations to POCO and subsequent decommissioning. I'm also developing my expertise in the field of process safety, with a view to supporting process safety management at a site level. Finally, I'm working towards becoming chartered, and am looking forward to taking the role of mentor to the next intake of engineering graduates.

Q. Any particular highlights since the NSAN awards?

A. Since the NSAN awards, I've taken my most significant design project so far through a safe and successful commissioning process, and into operations. Seeing something you've designed in daily operation and contributing to the success of the business is extremely satisfying.

Q. What value have you gained from your NI membership?

A. Being a member of the NI has given me the opportunity to take part in and contribute to events such as the Nuclear Skills Conference. I have also found it much easier to keep up to date on developments in the nuclear sector, and felt more involved in YGN events.

Q. What would your advice be to other apprentices in the nuclear industry?

A. Use the time you spend on a training scheme to get a broad range of experience. I tried to see as many aspects of professional life as possible, from hands-on work as a fitter, to engineering, project management and sales. The experience you get early on in your career will really help you in the future, as you'll be able to work with a wide range of stakeholders, and have some very useful contacts. Make a point of getting involved in as much as possible, and never dismiss your input because you're "just the trainee" – you almost certainly bring useful skills and qualities to a team even if you don't realise it.

