



CASE STUDY

Tracy Clarke - Bouygues UK



About Tracy:

I'm a Design Manager, having been with Bouygues UK for 2 ½ years.

Before that I have over 28 years of experience as an Architectural Technician, BREEAM Assessor and Sustainability Advisor, working within Architectural Consultancy.

I do not come from an affluent background, I was a benefits kid, one of five kids, on free school meals and with all that entails. I left 'home' at 15 and spent a brief period in foster care.

I worked whilst studying at college, and at 20, having achieved an OND in Technical Illustration and a HND in Building Studies, I joined a specialist Conservation Architecture firm as a Junior Technician and SAP Surveyor, whilst I continued studying part time for my Bachelors Degree.

Over the years I've worked for several Architectural companies on mainly Commercial, Education and Healthcare projects, finally achieving the level of Technical Manager, and Project Lead on developments up to £85million, whilst studying part time for various Post Graduate qualifications, and juggling being a single parent.

I'm a problem solver by nature, with a keen interest in all elements in what makes a modern building function. From areas of interest such as Fire, Building Physics, Acoustics, Disabled Accessibility, statutory regulatory compliance and Building Information Modelling.

I have a strong work ethic and insist on high standards, particularly in respect of attention to detail, which as a Design Manager is imperative. I love working in the fast paced, environment of a construction site, where the need for collaborative teamwork is tantamount.



Why Tracy wanted to get involved with this initiative:

As a girl, and then a young woman I encountered many obstacles and negative attitudes to pursuing a career in the construction industry. It was never seen as a 'job for a girl' with sites never even having basic facilities for women, however I always wanted to combine my interest in maths and science with my passion for design and aesthetics, and being involved in the creation of our built environment seemed to me as the perfect way for me to realise that combination of interests.

I'm a mother to a teenager myself, and can see that choosing a career path, can be daunting. By getting involved in this student engagement initiative I want to open eyes to the opportunities available, break down the pre-conceived ideas about the industry, and highlight how the industry has changed over the past 30 years. The available jobs and career paths within the construction industry is immense, with modern buildings being so complex, they require input from many types of engineers and specialists during their design and construction.

I can appreciate how a career in the built environment is not necessarily on young women's 'radar' but I also feel strongly that there are huge opportunities for talented young people of any gender and from any background in this industry that I love.

Tracy Clarke – Building Better Through Design, Leadership and Lifelong Passion



With over three decades of experience in design, conservation, and construction management, Tracy has built a career defined by resilience, innovation, and a deep commitment to improving the built environment. From being the first girl in her school to take GCSE Woodwork, to leading multi-disciplinary design teams on complex construction projects, Tracy's journey stands as an inspiring example of what's possible for women in the industry today

Early Inspiration and Entry into Construction

Tracy's interest in engineering, construction, and the aesthetics of spaces began early. As a teenager, she gravitated toward subjects like Maths, Science, History and the Arts, and challenged gender norms by pursuing woodwork. A pivotal moment came at age 14, when she attended a careers convention. After being dismissed by the Architecture stand, she approached the Building Engineering table next door—an experience that set the course for her career.

She went on to complete an OND in Technical Illustration, followed by a HND in Building Studies, before earning a part-time degree in Construction Management, Surveying and Building Technology—all while working full time as a technician for a conservation architectural firm.

From Conservation Practice to Construction Sites

Tracy began her career as a Junior Technician working on historic, listed buildings. Much of her time was spent on site, which quickly became her favourite environment. She thrived on the team spirit and the problem-solving energy that came from being close to live projects. She always knew she wanted to transition into contractor-side work, but as a single parent, the travel and unpredictable hours were initially a barrier. Once her son was old enough to travel independently to school, Tracy seized the opportunity and moved into design management—a decision that aligned perfectly with her technical background and passion for site-based delivery.

Changing Industry, Changing Culture

When Tracy started in the 1990s, the industry looked very different. She worked on drawing boards using ink pens and translucent paper. Women's toilets weren't available on construction sites, PPE was not designed for women, and biases were common—she once had a client complain to her employer for “sending a woman to site.”

Today, Tracy sees a transformed industry. Women, while still a minority, now make up a far larger proportion of the workforce, bringing diversity of thought and approach. She notes that the shift towards inclusion has strengthened team dynamics and improved project outcomes.

“What we deliver can be truly transformative to people’s lives,”

Impact Through Design Management

As a Design Manager, Tracy combines her technical expertise with her ability to translate two-dimensional concepts into practical, three-dimensional, buildable solutions. She enjoys guiding design teams, coordinating specialist inputs, and ensuring designs respond to real-world constraints and opportunities.

Her favourite moments come at project handover—seeing how a completed building positively impacts its users, whether by enhancing work environments, improving educational experiences, supporting healthcare delivery, or providing essential community facilities.

“What we deliver can be truly transformative to people’s lives,” she says.

A Diverse, Collaborative Industry

One of Tracy's biggest messages for young women is that construction is nothing like its stereotype. It's not a testosterone-fuelled environment—it's a highly skilled, collaborative ecosystem of specialists. She works with experts across archaeology, geology, hydrology, conservation, architecture, engineering, healthcare planning, acoustics, and interior design.

“There is a job for everyone within the industry,” Tracy emphasises. “No matter what your interests are.”

She also highlights the stability of the sector: in 30 years, she has only been out of work for six weeks.

Why Now is an Exciting Time to Join Construction

To Tracy, the industry has never been more dynamic. Rapid technological advancement—from digital design tools to modern construction methods—means teams must constantly adapt, learn and innovate.

The complexity of modern buildings and the pace of change demand a diverse range of skills. For anyone who loves creativity, problem-solving, and making a tangible difference, Tracy believes construction offers a thrilling and meaningful career path.

Quickfire Insights

- One word to describe construction today: **Exciting**
- Where's the real magic—studio or site? **Site**
- Best advice received: **If you believe in something, stick to your guns**

