

The Honorary Graduand: Wendy Stephenson

The Orator: Dr Jackie Rogers

Wendy Stephenson is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Engineering.

Wendy Stephenson was born in Middlesbrough in 1967, the eldest of four. Her childhood was full of adventure in the days when children only came home when they were hungry! Exploring the natural environment in search of adventure was a big part of growing up and unknowingly, became central to Wendy's life.

Wendy left school just before turning 16 and worked on the markets selling fruit before going to drama college with the desire to be a director. Always in search of adventure, and much to the disappointment of her parents, Wendy left this and Middlesbrough to take up work by the sea in Filey. This was the beginning of a colourful and rich five years working and travelling before finally returning to education at 21.

A few years later, Wendy emerged with an engineering degree from the University of Leeds, in the subject of Environmental Energy Engineering. Her interest in environmental protection and conservation was central to this choice and after graduating it was natural for Wendy to look for work in this area.

In 1996 Wendy joined AEA Technology, one of the largest environmental consultancies in Europe at that time. This provided an opportunity to work across a range of environmental projects including renewable energy, energy efficiency and research that led to stronger legislation on air quality across Europe and Wendy's first contribution to a publication 'ExternE'.

Eventually, Wendy's experience took her overseas and she worked on programmes in China as well as Thailand and Brunei where she lived for five years. Here she worked with Shell to help identify risk in its most hazardous operations and work with the teams to identify mitigation measures. Some say that they thought Wendy would have tied herself to the oil rig rather than work for them, but Wendy demonstrated that working from within these organisations is also critical to prevent and mitigate environmental pollution and disaster.

In 2004, Wendy returned to the UK where she took up a role as head of Environmental Affairs for EEF, representing UK manufacturers on UK and European policy and regulatory committees. She was made the Chair of the Manufacturers Climate Change Group and made representation to the parliamentary group on climate change.

In 2009, Wendy moved from the corporate sector to the charitable sector when she joined The Converging World as their chief executive, a charity that invests in renewable energy and uses the surplus funds generated for reforestation, access to affordable sustainable energy for the poorest and poverty alleviation. This work takes Wendy to India very often where they now have a 13MW wind farm owned and operated by a local team.

Wendy sits on several boards as a trustee and director, and environmental protection or restoration feature in all of these organisations she supports and represents. She is also currently working on a global reforestation strategy.

Wendy has received a Beacon Fellowship and the Social Innovation Pioneers Award for The Converging World.

The Honorary Degree is awarded in recognition of Wendy Stephenson's contribution to renewable energy engineering and security.