

Allan E Cook, CBE, FREng

Monday, 18 July 2022 am, awarded Honorary Doctor of Science (Hon DSc)  
with oration given by Rachel Sandby-Thomas, Registrar.

Vice-Chancellor

Our honorary graduand this morning is ALLAN COOK, a Chartered Engineer with a long career at the top of his profession, and an impressive record of national leadership in science and engineering. I am delighted to introduce Allan to this Congregation.

First time I met him was in the days before Warwick and I had recently become Director General in the Department for Business, known then as BIS, now BEIS. When the late, great Jeremy Heywood, Head of the Civil Service, shortly asked me shortly after I took up post what I was enjoying most, I replied it was meeting my external stakeholders, visiting them and learning what they do. He looked perplexed as that was obviously the WRONG answer... I should have said something wonkish about policy...but it was the truth. And no-one encapsulates it better than Allan.

I first met him on the 13<sup>th</sup> August 2012? How can I remember the day so well (before any of you get the wrong idea...): it was because it was the day after the closing ceremony of the Olympic games. I hadn't got to bed until 1am and was feeling a funny mixture of tired and euphoric...hardly the right frame of mind to meet a giant of engineering, skills and big business generally. I confess I was a tad nervous. No need. Within minutes we established he had been there too, was equally tired and euphoric and we chatted away for hours. I found then, during the rest of my time at BIS when he came to chair our departmental board and to this day, I could talk to him about anything at all and he would share his wisdom generously with openness and humour. And that continues to this day...doesn't it Allan..?!!

Allan began working in engineering as a 16 year old apprentice electrician with his father's electronics firm. He took an honours degree in Electronic Control Systems Engineering at Sunderland University, then went to work at Ferranti in Edinburgh. This was the start of a 40 year international career in the automotive, aerospace, infrastructure and defence industries, working in senior roles in prestigious companies such as GEC-Marconi, BAE Systems, and Cobham plc, and, later, as chairman of WS Atkins and of Helios Towers plc.

Allan's expertise has also led to a number of important roles at national level. He was Chair of the Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (SEMTA) from 2010 to 2017, overseeing its transition to an employer-led organisation recognised by both industry and government; until 2013, he chaired the UK Trade and Investment's Advanced Engineering Sector Advisory Board; as I mentioned, he was the lead Non-Executive Member of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills until 2016 and Chair of HS2 Ltd from 2018 to 2021. Allan is also the current Chair of the High Value Manufacturing Catapult (HVMC), established to bridge the gap between business and academia by providing access to world-class research and expertise: one of HVMC's seven centres, helping to drive economic growth, is based here at Warwick.

Allan's long experience has given him a unique insight into the needs of UK industry in terms of skills and training. He strongly supports the development of young people in the STEM subjects to enable them to acquire the skills necessary for the country's economic success. As a leader in the engineering sector, he has championed a commitment to closing the employment gender gap, stressing the need to tackle this at an early stage before gender

stereotyping takes root. And, partly based on his own experience, he is a strong supporter of apprenticeships: working with his father, he says, provided an invaluable foundation for his future career. He regards apprenticeships as crucial to the success of the engineering sector, providing a cost-effective, practical way to build a skilled workforce. In all this, Allan mirrors our thinking here at Warwick. We work to enhance employability and skills in STEM so as to close the skills gap; we have taken on board the importance of apprenticeships, developing a range of Degree Apprenticeships and setting up a new Degree Apprenticeship Centre with a focus on high value manufacturing, and we are looking to inspire and educate young people from an early age for careers in engineering through the two WMG Academies for Young Engineers now flourishing in our local region.

Allan is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering where he was Vice-President and a trustee, and chaired the Academy's industry-focused Diversity Leadership Group. He holds an honorary doctorate from Cranfield University and was awarded a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2008. He has provided inspiring leadership at a time when the engineering sector is transforming itself through investment in innovation, and the development of

new technologies in areas such as energy production and cyber security. It is a great pleasure to welcome him today.

**Vice-Chancellor: in the name of the Senate, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*, ALLAN COOK.**

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