

Oration for Dame Fiona Kendrick, DBE being awarded Hon DSc

Delivered on Thursday, 17 January 2019, 3pm by Baroness Cathy

Ashton

Our honorary graduate this afternoon is the Chair of Nestlé UK and Ireland, DAME FIONA KENDRICK. I am delighted to introduce Dame Fiona to this congregation.

Fiona Kendrick began her professional life as a teacher of biology and chemistry, the subjects she had studied at university. She has had an important role in the wider UK food and drinks manufacturing industry, leading its skills and competitiveness agenda and co-chairing the UK Food and Drink Export Forum. Fiona became the first female CEO of in Nestlé UK in 2012 with a £2.4 billion turnover, employing 8,000 people across 20 sites.

From 2015 to 2016 she was President of the Food and Drink Federation. It was in an interview with a journalist on this appointment that Dame Fiona made a very telling comment: in the food and drink industry between 2010 and 2020, she explained, out of the 170,000 vacancies to be filled, 85,000 alone were engineers, but the UK could only produce 46,000 of those. 'I feel passionate about filling that gap,' she declared.

Fiona has devoted time and energy to filling this skills gap, and to addressing the educational needs of young people so that they can combine personal advancement with meeting the requirements of British industry. As a UK Commissioner for Employment and Skills, she played a leading role in supporting the development and delivery of strategies for skills and employment across the UK and was instrumental in establishing the UK's first MEng in Food Engineering – a response to the particular requirements of her own industry.

In 2017, she was appointed Deputy Chair of the Board of the Institute for Apprenticeships, supporting the government's drive to deliver 3 million quality apprenticeships by 2020. Dame Fiona has championed the growth of apprenticeships and emphasises the need to focus more on management apprenticeships to develop the leadership skills needed by British industry: we are responding to this at Warwick, where we are developing a range of Degree Apprenticeships from Engineering to Social Work and later this year will open a new Degree Apprenticeship Centre with a focus on high value manufacturing.

Dame Fiona is also Chair of the Board of Trustees at New Model in Technology and Engineering (NMiTE) – Britain's newest university inaugurated in the city of Hereford in October 2018, which will specialise in integrated engineering, providing enhanced pathways for women and non-traditional engineering students

Warwick is working closely with NMiTE as they develop a new, innovative approach to teaching engineering with a view attracting new students to engineering and creating a new wave of future employment-ready, industry-ready graduate engineers

In the 2015 New Year's Honours List, Fiona was created Dame Commander of the British Empire for services to the food industry and support for skills and opportunities for young people. In 2018, she was presented with the Chartered Management Institute Gold Medal for Leadership 2017. She already holds honorary degrees from two British universities: we at Warwick are proud to be able to add to these accolades today in recognition of her support for the skills and employment agenda and recognising the importance of engineering across our industries.

Chancellor: in the name of the Senate, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*, DAME FIONA KENDRICK.

524 words

