GENDER DIVERSITY IN BEIS MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENTS

Further to my letter of 8 March, I am writing to update you on progress in BEIS’s ongoing efforts to improve the diversity of ministerial appointments to our partner organisations. Over the last twelve months, 32 of 98 ministerial appointments made have been women – 33%.

Over this period, BEIS ministers, senior staff and ministerial appointments team have all been active in promoting diversity in appointments. This has included:

- Addressing diversity and inclusion, and ministerial appointments, at our regular network meetings for Partner Organisation CEOs and Chairs
- Producing a promotional booklet for BEIS Public Appointments to share with prospective applicants.
- Launching a programme of outreach events to draw in women who could be interested in applying for senior positions in our Partner Organisations. You will, I hope, be reassured to hear that we have deliberately sought to ensure a broad geographical reach with these events, and the most recent were held in Birmingham, Manchester and Cardiff.
- Making sure that our job and role specifications are drafted in an inclusive manner, and avoid language likely to exclude or dissuade particular applicants.
- Support to initiatives to improve diversity and encourage a diverse talent pipeline across the business and energy sectors more broadly, including the Hampton-Alexander review and POWERful Women, whose recent annual conference both the Secretary of State and I addressed. Minister Andrew Griffiths recently wrote to all FTSE 350 companies on the subject of board diversity.

We have also been working with our existing Chairs and Chief Executives to encourage progress in this area.
Our results so far suggest that this is having some effect. I would also highlight that we have double the number of women in CEO posts as compared to Chair roles. Whilst the total figure for female CEOs remains much lower than we would wish, it is notable that all of these recent appointees were put in place by their respective Partner Organisation Boards. This suggests that the commitment to diversity is shared across the BEIS group.

We recognise that, given the number of partner bodies BEIS is responsible for and our inherited gender mix, constant ongoing effort will be required in order to get us where we want to be. I am committed to pursuing this, as I know are my department’s ministers.

I welcome your interest in this matter, and your support for our continuing endeavours to improve female representation at the top of BEIS partner organisations, as well as in the industries and sectors we work with. I want BEIS and its partner bodies to be recognised as exciting and attractive places to work, and somewhere that leaders of all backgrounds can succeed and feel welcome. It would be excellent if, in your own continuing public activity on this matter, you might also recognise and support these efforts and help us to encourage women to put themselves forward for opportunities in BEIS, our partner bodies, and in our sectors.

Warm regards,

Alex Chisholm