

## Campaign boosts representative London leadership

PRESS RELEASE – 13 October 2016

Contact: Lisa Taylor | [lisa@futureoflondon.org.uk](mailto:lisa@futureoflondon.org.uk) | DD: 020 7251 6752



### The diversity dividend: Campaign boosts representative London leadership

*Does it matter if events featuring London's development and infrastructure leaders don't fully reflect the capital's diverse population? Policy network Future of London says it does matter – hugely – and is leading a pan-London campaign to bring under-represented voices to the table and freshen the debate.*

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The Mayor of London calls diversity the capital's greatest asset, and "wants every single Londoner to have the chance to thrive". The city's rich cultural and ethnic mix is already a draw for international talent and investment; on the local level, it's been shown that representative champions are the most effective way to engage residents.

Future of London's Speaker Diversity Pledge, supported by the Mayor of London, is aimed between the global and local, at built-environment leadership – specifically, the scores of conferences and events where best practice is shared, role models are created and careers advanced, and deals are done over coffee.

"This is a positive message on three fronts," says FoL chief executive Lisa Taylor. "First, it's simply the right thing to do, and nurturing people who may otherwise be overlooked feels good. Second, fresh voices and ideas are bound to help as we face new – or seemingly intractable – challenges. Third, this is a clear competitive advantage – companies embracing diversity attract top talent and have a procurement edge; event organisers look like they're in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; and speakers who stand up for diversity stand out as leaders."

James Murray, Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development, was the first signatory at the 24<sup>th</sup> August launch: "I'm proud to be one of the first to sign the Future of London speaker diversity pledge. London's greatest strength is Londoners themselves – we need to make sure we hear from a wide range of voices as we work together to tackle London's housing crisis. I am committed to using my role to promote more diversity in our sector and I would encourage others to sign the Future of London pledge."

Gerry Hughes, Chief Executive at Bilfinger GVA, is the initiative's private-sector champion: "Bilfinger GVA is proud to be a signatory on this London-wide Speaker Diversity Pledge. In an industry such as ours, there is still a long way to go where diversity is concerned, but through strong leadership and commitment, we are determined to make a profound difference, and in so doing, lead our industry forward."

There have been steps towards more equal opportunities and inclusion – and further strides since Mayor Sadiq Khan took office – but evidence suggests there's still some way to go.

A comprehensive review by the [Institute for Employment Studies](#) (IES) links board-level diversity with organisational performance, finding both internal and external business benefits. However, reviewing the role and effectiveness of non-executive directors (NEDs) in the UK, Higgs (2003) found that only 1% of NEDs interviewed were from ethnic minority groups and only 6% of NEDs in FTSE 350 companies were female.

Statistics such as these are worrying in uncertain times; not only in social justice terms, but also in development, economic, business and performance terms. [Evidence](#) shows diverse boards have the best mix of skills, experiences and perspectives for creativity and innovation. A diverse workforce has access and appeal to a greater range of markets, and is more relatable to society as a whole.

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An example of emerging thinking is the Institution of Civil Engineers (London & SE England), whose leadership and 20,000-strong membership are evolving, and whose pledge included this statement: “We greatly appreciate that there must be a step change in what we do, and in everything we do, to make our industry as open and inclusive as possible. Part of this requires making sure our leaders better reflect those they represent and creating new role models to encourage different communities to enter the industry. This is particularly apparent in the Capital where we have access to a diverse workforce.”

Geeta Nanda, Group Chief Executive at Thames Valley Housing has been hugely supportive of the campaign from the start. Nanda doesn’t pull any punches, saying: “If you have heard the same people say the same things time and time again and used conferences to have a little snooze then you need to support this campaign. Unless we take the time and put the effort in to get some diversity on stage, we won’t challenge our thinking. In 2016 having all-male or all-white-with-grey-hair panels is just not on. It is up to all of us to spot the talent, train them and open up the stage to more debate.”

The Mayor, wanting to lead by example, launched an action plan to ensure full pay equality across City Hall and the wider GLA group, and also appointed more women to his top team than any previous mayor.

“These types of initiatives are hugely helpful to women and to the workforce overall, but we can’t stop at gender,” says Taylor. “Our diversity speakers’ network was born of a 2015 conference where 50% of speakers were women, but only four of the 32 were minorities. When we tried to find more BAME representatives, we discovered there just wasn’t a known pool, especially of senior people.”

The Future of London team only needed to look at its own events – especially field trips and seminars – to see that just about every group is represented. They’re simply either not ready or not being put forward to speak.

A precursor to the pledge, FoL’s speaker diversity network was designed to bridge that gap, supporting forward-thinking event organisers with a growing pool of qualified speakers and chairs. Organised by expertise and offering assessment and coaching, it nurtures talent and ensures that the initiative isn’t just an equality tick-box.

A few weeks on from the **#DiversityPledgeLDN** launch at City Hall and with skeleton resource, the pledge has had great initial response. See below for a partial list. The pledge involves hosting more mixed events, putting forward speakers from under-represented groups, and speaking up when invited to single-demographic panels. Signatories track their progress and report back to Future of London. Twitter updates showcase new joiners and examples of outstanding commitment to diversity.

Jamie Ratcliff, Assistant Director at GLA Housing & Land, is a driving force behind the campaign, and invited FoL to lead the initiative. “The sector-leading work already undertaken by Future of London with their excellent diversity speakers network made them the natural choice to take this pledge forward”, says Ratcliff. “I’m delighted that we’ve already got so many signatories to the pledge, and I am determined to further champion it driving wider representation and diversity in the housing and regeneration industry.”

To sign the pan-London Speaker Diversity Pledge, support the campaign, join the speaker network or learn more, contact [diversity@futureoflondon.org.uk](mailto:diversity@futureoflondon.org.uk).

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Here are a few of the organisations and individuals who've officially pledged to date:

Amicus Horizon  
Bilfinger GVA  
Centre for London  
Future of London  
GLA Housing & Land  
GLA Regeneration  
Institution for Civil Engineers  
National Housing Federation  
New London Architecture  
Old Oak & Park Royal Development Corp.  
Peabody  
PlanningOut  
Pollard Thomas Edwards Architects  
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea  
Royal Town Planning Institute - London  
Thames Valley Housing  
The Edge  
Town & Country Planning Association  
Trowers & Hamlins  
Urbanistas

Victoria Hills, CEO, Old Oak & Park Royal  
Development Corporation  
Steve Howlett, CEO, Peabody  
Gerry Hughes, CEO, Bilfinger GVA  
Debbie Jackson, Assistant Director GLA  
Regeneration  
Félicie Krikler, Partner, Assael  
David Lunts, Executive Director, GLA Housing &  
Land  
James Murray, Deputy Mayor for Housing  
Peter Murray, Chairman, New London  
Architecture  
Geeta Nanda, CEO, Thames Valley Housing  
Clare Reddy, Partner & Head of Construction,  
Lewis Silkin LLP  
Ben Rogers, Director, Centre for London  
Graham Stallwood, Executive Director, Planning  
& Borough Development, RB Kensington &  
Chelsea  
Lisa Taylor, CEO, Future of London  
The [board directors](#) of Future of London