

Speech: Building Inclusivity in Publishing

Good morning, and thank you for inviting me to speak at this important and timely conference.

The UK publishing industry is unequivocally world-beating. Of the 9 books to have ever sold more than 100 million copies, 6 are by British authors. To top it off, the Nobel Prize for Literature this year was won by British author Kazuo Ishiguro.

We are here to celebrate that success. And we are here to confront one of the biggest challenges facing publishing: diversity.

From Harry Potter to Never Let Me Go, publishing is our shop window as a nation. That's why, more than any other industry, it's essential that publishing reflects the rich diversity of the British people.

But diversity isn't just a social responsibility, it's an economic one: drawing on the largest possible talent pool makes business sense.

New ideas come when ideas collide. Ideas collide when people of different perspectives collide. Let us set ourselves the goal so eloquently put by Idris Elba: of diversity of thought.

There's still much progress to be made. The most recent DCMS statistics show that only 11% of those working in the Creative Industries are BAME; though this is up 15% on 2015, an improvement more than 2 and half times that of the wider UK workforce.

Meanwhile, recent events in the entertainment industry serve as a reminder of the importance of building a Creative Industries workplace where all are treated equally and with respect, and opportunities are genuinely equal.

Significant strides towards diversity and inclusivity in publishing have been made in recent years: HarperCollins's BAME Scheme, Penguin Pride, Little Brown's new "inclusive" imprint Dialogue Books, to name just a few. These bold initiatives mark progress on diversity in the publishing industry, and I look forward to seeing their outcomes.

But it will take more than individual initiatives to make profound and lasting change to the publishing industry.

I'm delighted PA are bringing industry together around this new Action Plan. The plan addresses a number of potential stumbling blocks to diversity, from unconscious bias to a lack of entry level opportunities and strong ambassadorship. Progress on diversity requires us all to do our part: I hope that the PA's members will do theirs and commit to fully embracing this plan.

Government is doing its part, too, whether that's role modelling diversity within the Civil Service through our new Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, or

by supporting the Creative Industries sector to diversify through the excellent work of the Creative Industries Council.

Diversity is a particular priority for me: next year I plan to host the inaugural DCMS Diversity and Social Mobility Forum, scheduled for earlier this year but postponed due to the Westminster terror attack. At the Forum, heads of industry from sport to tech, media to museums will come together to share best practice on diversity. I hope some of you will join me there.

British people are defined and united by our rich publishing history, of which you are the latest chapter. Yet only by understanding our differences can we truly celebrate what we have in common: our desire to make the UK publishing industry the best in the world.

Let us take away this thought: we must be confident in that which binds us together, to give confidence to celebrate that which is unique in each person's heart. Let us set that as our goal. And let us go forward, together.