

Speech: Matt Hancock speaking at the DCMS Diversity Forum

It's brilliant to be here at this incredible venue.

We look around at the great artists that are on the walls. I can just imagine the Fab Four right in front of me. It is electric to be here.

Of course, it's not just The Beatles. This place is associated with Elgar, Pink Floyd, Amy Winehouse, Elton John, Kanye West, Kate Bush, Stevie Wonder – anyone who's anyone in music, from Adele to Zucchero.

And the reason I mention all of these is because of the range. The range of genders, of ethnicities, of sexualities and people from all parts of Britain and all parts of the world.

I just want to introduce this morning's session and say why I care about this, and why I'm so glad that so many of you have given up your time to come here.

You can be forgiven for being sceptical as to why a straight, white man in a suit cares so much about diversity. But this is a moral imperative for everyone, from whatever background.

I have always thought that talent – in music, in sport, in tech, in the arts, in design – can be found anywhere.

And we need to look for the thing that everyone can do as an achievement. Look into every human heart for what they can bring to the party. And unless we look for that everywhere, and open up opportunities to everyone in this country, then we all risk losing out.

It's not just that we miss out on amazing ideas and amazing work and that people miss the chance to shine. As well as a moral imperative it's a business imperative too.

I have never been in a room making a decision where a less diverse group could make a better decision.

Diversity of thought improves the way things are done, and the way things are run, and creates the spark of creativity that makes for progress.

Anything, whether it's a TV script or a business plan for a sports team, can be improved by discussion with a diverse group.

And then there's the national debate – the mood music of our country – which is impoverished when we don't have a wide range of voices contributing, reflecting the rich diversity of our nation.

Some of our most exhilarating creative moments have been when diversity takes

centre stage.

Take the first lesbian kiss on Brookside or Channel 4's groundbreaking, brilliant coverage of the Paralympics.

One of my passions is grime and one the great strengths of it is that it's produced by people demanding to be heard.

I apologise for saying this in a Universal venue... But grime climbed its way up the outside of the music business, not through the traditional record labels. But demanded to be heard.

Now, having said that, not everyone is Skepta and not everybody can make that climb. Some people need help and encouragement to make the most of their gifts. We've seen some great progress in the last few years years, but there's much more to do. The Arts Council has announced millions of pounds to develop work by disabled and BAME talent and address the lack of diverse leadership in the arts. The Tech Talent Charter that Margot is championing has seen hundreds of tech firms sign a pledge to improve gender diversity. And there's millions of pounds been allocated through Sport England's investment funds, with a specific focus on under represented groups. I've just come from the Roundhouse, another legendary music space, and we launched a Creative Industries sector deal.

And as part of this, announced 2 million pounds of support to encourage a more diverse intake of talent and more routes into the creative industries.

But there is much, much more to do. Not just in the workplace, but in participation. It is a truth that participation in culture and sport is consistently below the national average for those with disabilities, those who are not white and those on lower incomes.

And that needs to change. And the Diversity Forum is a crucial step in putting these concerns right.

What we want to do today is bring together the leading organisations – like you in this room – to share best practice, to find new ways to make the industry more diverse.

We've all got the same objective, and we all gain when we work at it together.

So we are as much enthusiasts, as also in listening mode.

We are saying, with a resounding voice, from the bully pulpit of Government that a lack of diversity will not stand. And everybody has a role to solving the problems that we face. And we want to do this working together, and listening, and making sure that we come forward with solutions that work.

Our digital, our creative, our sporting industries are world leading and they showcase our country at its best.

But they will be so much stronger, and better represent who we are as a

nation, when they are open to all. When they are not just opening the door but inviting people in and actively recruiting from across our whole society.

One of our greatest authors wrote: "To thine own self be true. And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man."

And Shakespeare was right. Everyone has the right to be themselves and tell the world their story.

And we need to do our part in supporting everyone to do that. Thank you very much.