

News story: Minister discusses barriers to voter registration for people with disabilities in Scotland

The Minister for the Constitution heard first hand some of the experiences that members have faced when voting or registering to vote. They discussed ways of encouraging other people with disabilities to engage in their local community and increase voter registration in the lead up to the local authority elections in Scotland in May.

The Glasgow Disability Alliance has over 3,500 members across the greater Glasgow area. Their aim is to bring people together to build confidence, create connections and enable people with disabilities to overcome barriers so they feel they can take part in their communities.

Chris Skidmore, Minister for the Constitution, said:

The Glasgow Disability Alliance is a fantastic organisation that ensures people with disabilities feel confident, empowered and remain an active part of their society.

A big part of this is being able to register to vote and remain a part of our democracy. Today's visit has helped me understand how we can support people with disabilities to ensure that ours is a democracy that truly works for everyone.

Everyone I have met today has been so passionate about engaging their local community. This is particularly meaningful in the lead up to the local elections in May. Regardless of who you are, or how you vote, every voice matters and we encourage you to register to vote in what will be a significant moment for your area.

Marianne Scobie, Deputy CEO of the Glasgow Disability Alliance said:

As a disabled people's organisation we know that disabled people want to have their say and have their voices heard. We firmly believe that given the right support, access to information and opportunity to build confidence and make their contributions, disabled people can participate in all aspects of participative democracy.

Further information

The Minister is visiting Glasgow as part of his Every Voice Matters Tour. The tour will see him visit every part of the country to understand how to tackle barriers to voter registration.

Speech: Does British television and film reflect the diversity of our modern nation?

Thank you for inviting me to speak at this event to celebrate the second anniversary of Channel Four's 360 Diversity initiative.

It's been fascinating to hear Charles talk about Channel 4's great work in this area.

I look forward to hearing more about your Year of Disability, where I know you have met and in many cases exceeded your commitments.

For example, the doubling in the number of disabled people in top shows on screen. And off screen, the increase in apprenticeships offered to disabled people.

I know the real reason most of you are here is to listen to the brilliant Riz Ahmed – so I won't keep you for too long.

I am here to talk about diversity.

There's no better place to start than to pay tribute to this year's eventual and deserved Oscar winner Moonlight.

Moonlight told the story of a gay black man, but it didn't speak just to a gay black audience. It spoke to anyone who's tried to find a place in the world, and a person to stand beside them in it, to anyone who's struggled.

And it hasn't only been a critical success – it has done brilliant business at the box office too.

Black stories, gay stories, the whole gamut of stories should be told not because it's the right thing to do but because they appeal to us all.

Tell a good story and people will pay to watch and maybe even hand you a shiny statuette if you tell it really well – once they've opened the right envelope.

That's what Moonlight's win teaches us.

On becoming Minister of State for Digital and Culture I made expanding access and diversity one of my top priorities.

It is a central tenet of this Government that everyone, from every background, of every colour and identity, from every part of the country should have equal chance to succeed. That means an equal chance to access arts and culture.

TV brings culture – high-brow, middle-brow, resolutely low-brow – into homes across the land.

And just as TV audiences are wide and diverse, the industry should be too.

While there is already a push for greater diversity on-screen, and we will continue to support that, it must be matched by a similar drive behind the scenes.

Among writers, directors, commissioners and executives.

Television, this proudly demotic medium, should reflect our richly diverse society not only on screen but behind the scenes. In the production offices and commissioning meetings. It shouldn't be an echo chamber for one type of person.

I was delighted to launch Diamond in August, and I am sure it will go from strength to strength.

So ask yourself this:

New technology and distribution is making it easier to break through. But does commissioning reflect the diversity of our modern nation?

Strides are being made on gender, disability, sexual identity, and ethnicity.

But what of social diversity too?

I'm delighted by progress. I'm glad there's a growing consensus that diversity is here to stay. But I'm determined there's more to be done.

Soon I will be holding a 'diversity and social mobility' forum at the world-famous Abbey Road studios. For the first time as a Department, we will be bringing together stakeholders from right across culture, media and sport.

We will celebrate success, and set out what more we can do.

As your Minister, I am determined that by working with many of you in this room, we can make real progress in this area. And ultimately by working together we will reach our goal: of a country that works for everyone, where each and every person has the chance to reach their potential.

Press release: The UK's Best Apprenticeship

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), an acknowledged world leader in science, technology and innovation, is excited to be coming to this year's What Career Live event at the NEC. This year Dstl has increased the number of apprentices that it wants to recruit to 31. These vacancies cover cyber security, software development, aerospace engineering, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, data analysis and business Administration Support.

Dstl is not just any employer. Our apprentices get to work on some of the UK's most exciting and interesting science and technology programmes. Many of them have international and well as national implications. In recent years, for example, current and former apprentices have worked on space satellites, drones, stealth aircraft and tackling the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, to name a few.

Some of our recent trainees have produced a YouTube video about an innovative project that they have delivered to help tackle cyber attacks on the UK. This is the type of innovative project that our 2017 apprenticeship entrants will be working on.

[YouTube video](#)

Jade Ward, Dstl's Apprenticeship Resourcing Adviser said:

Dstl is justifiably proud of its nationally recognised apprenticeship scheme. Our scheme is different to most others because our apprentices make a contribution to the security, defence and prosperity of the UK. The fact that many of our former apprentices now hold senior positions in Dstl, the MOD and in the private sector is a reflection of the quality of our scheme.

She added:

If you'd like to find out more about our apprenticeship scheme please come and see us on stand A200, next to the visitor's café and parents and advisors lounge.

Ollie, a first year mechanical engineering apprentice from Bromsgrove said:

I didn't want to go to University so when I was coming to the end of my course at the South Bromsgrove Sixth Form, I started to look for a local apprenticeship. At the time I wanted to live at home so

wasn't looking much further afield than Birmingham. However, that all changed when I looked at the Dstl apprenticeship programme. The opportunities and training that Dstl offers are second to none, so I knew that I wanted to work for them.

He added:

When it came to moving away from home it wasn't the easiest but once I had started the apprenticeship at Dstl I knew it was the right decision. The course has already covered many different aspects of mechanical engineering not just on the theory side, but also on the practical side developing hand skills and machining skills.

The quality of Dstl's programme for School and College leavers has recently been recognised by [All About School Leavers](#). Dstl's programme is ranked second in the public sector and 32nd overall.

All Dstl's apprentices have the opportunity to gain internationally recognised qualifications as well as sponsorship towards a degree and post-graduate qualifications. Apprentices can also apply for overseas postings and secondments when they have finished their training.

Dstl's apprentices are based at our Porton Down site, near Salisbury and Portsdown West site, near Fareham. Relocation packages may be available to outstanding applicants.

Dstl has a diverse, inclusive workforce and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified applicants. Apprentices at Dstl enjoy a range of benefits including a competitive salary and 25 days paid leave a year.

The last day to apply for one of Dstl's exciting apprenticeships is 31 March 2017.

Further details of Dstl's apprenticeship programme can be found online on the [Civil Service Jobs site](#) and Dstl Early Careers [Facebook page](#).

What Career Live is running at the NEC from 3 to 4 March 2017. Come and meet us!

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2 Mar 2017



The SNP has been accused of placing education “on the slow train”, despite the party claiming it’s a number one priority.

At First Minister’s Questions today, Ruth Davidson asked Nicola Sturgeon why a key education strategy had been delayed amid claims of ministers wanting to “chew over” additional submissions.

This is despite Ms Sturgeon making repeated threats about holding another divisive independence referendum, the latest coming this week at the David Hume Institute.

Ruth pointed to the example of education charity Hometown, which has asked the Scottish Government for two years about the possibility of piloting community-run schools.

They said this could be done without interfering with wider reform plans, but have received nothing back from ministers.

In a letter to education secretary John Swinney, the organisation said: “We have lost patience. This whole process has been a series of false dawns.

“This is really not a great demonstration of meaningful engagement with stakeholders or a good start in trying to empower teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education.”

Ruth accused the SNP of paying lip service to education reforms, while privately having no intention to take them forward.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“When it comes to education reform, the SNP government is kicking the can down the road.

“At the same time that she is ramping up the rhetoric on a second independence referendum, Nicola Sturgeon is putting education on the back burner.

“People fear that the Scottish Government has already made up its mind on much-needed education reforms, and that decision is they’re not going to happen.

“A year-and-a-half ago the First Minister staked her reputation on reforming Scotland’s schools.

“But since then literacy standards have slipped, numeracy has decreased, the Curriculum for Excellence continues to fail and now her education secretary

is stalling.

“The continued delays over education reform show the SNP’s claim that it is a priority is quite simply false.”

To see the letter from Hometown to the Scottish Government, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/doc00122920161122150512.pdf>

[Additional £150,000 to support publishing in Wales](#)

The Economy Secretary, who also has responsibility for Culture and publishing in Wales, has confirmed that an additional £151k of capital funding will be allocated to the Welsh Books Council in 2016/17 to enable the Council to make improvements to its headquarters, further develop its IT systems and keep pace with digital developments.

The investment is in addition to the additional capital funding of £184k provided by the Welsh Government to the Welsh Books Council during 2015-16 and the additional revenue funding of £123k that the Council will receive during the 2017/18 .

It reflects the Economy Secretary’s ongoing commitment to supporting Wales’ publishing industry.

Ken Skates said:

“The Welsh Books Council plays a crucial role in promoting and supporting Wales’ publishing industry and ensuring the creation of a wide range of Welsh language and English language publications.

“In recent years, we have been encouraging publishers in Wales to embrace digital developments such as e-books. This is something they have embraced and there are now approximately 1600 e-books available.

“As we celebrate World Books Day I am pleased to confirm this additional funding which will help the Welsh Books Council to update its IT infrastructure and ensure it has the business-friendly and accessible platforms in place to support the industry . It will provide a significant boost to both the Welsh Books Council and help to strengthen Wales’ publishing industry more

widely.”

Helgard Krause, Chief Executive of the Welsh Books Council said:

“We are delighted to receive this additional funding, especially as it allows us to invest further in our distribution centre to the benefit of not only publishers but also booksellers and libraries. Government support such as this is central to sustaining an efficient service to the publishing industry in Wales offered during times of rapid technological change.”