

News story: Business Minister hosts diversity and the industrial strategy roundtable

Employers, community groups and small business owners from across the North East today met Business Minister Margot James to discuss how diversity and inclusion can strengthen the Government's Industrial Strategy.

As part of the ministerial country-wide engagement tour, Margot James hosted a roundtable event at Stockton Council to find out directly from business how the Industrial Strategy can support diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

In its green paper, 'Building our Industrial Strategy', the Government outlines 10 key pillars of focus to be discussed as part of a 12-week consultation, inviting contributions from industry, businesses, community groups and workers across the North East and the rest of the UK.

The Government's commitment to create an economy that works for everyone and today Margot James urged employers at the event to take seriously their responsibilities to create diverse and inclusive workplaces, giving everyone the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Business Minister Margot James said:

"Diversity and inclusion are key to the UK economy maximising its potential. Through our modern Industrial Strategy and investment in the Northern Powerhouse, we are building an economy that works for everyone and I enjoyed talking to employers in the North East about how we can work together to build on the regions strengths, raise living standards and create new, well-paid jobs in other industries and sectors."

The roundtable follows this week's publication of the Baroness McGregor-Smith review on black and minority ethnic (BME) labour market progression, which found the economy could receive a £24bn-a-year boost if people from ethnic minority backgrounds progressed in work at the same rate as their white counterparts.

As part of the Government's response to the findings, Margot James announced she will chair the new Business Diversity and Inclusion Group. It will bring together business leaders and organisations to coordinate action to remove barriers in the workplace and monitor employers' progress.

The group will meet every quarter at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and will also bring together the leaders of three industry-led diversity reviews:

- Baroness McGregor-Smith

- Sir Philip Hampton and Dame Helen Alexander, who are leading a review aimed at increasing female leadership in FTSE companies
- Sir John Parker, who today concludes a consultation on recommendations to increase BME representation in the boardroom, to participate in the group

The Government has issued an open invitation to all industries, businesses, workers and local groups in the North East to visit the GOV.UK website and help set the priorities for a modern Industrial Strategy.

The consultation is open until 17 April, after which the Government will consider responses before publishing a white paper later in the year.

Notes to editors:

. Among those in attendance at the roundtable were:

- ARC Stockton
- Association of Colleges
- Catalyst
- Cultures
- Daisy Chain
- EDF Energy
- Education Development Trust
- Groundwork NE & Cumbria
- Mencap
- Morrison Trust
- New Walk
- Nifco Ltd
- Recognition Marketing & PR LLP
- Shaw Trust
- Stockton Inclusion & Training Group, Cultures
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Teeside University