

# LONDON FASHION WEEK

20-24 FEBRUARY 2015

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### LONDON FASHION WEEK AW15 CELEBRATES THE BRITISH FASHION COUNCIL'S BUSINESS PILLAR

Over the past two years the British Fashion Council (BFC) has been working with James McArthur, CEO of Anya Hindmarch and President of the BFC Business Pillar to review the BFC's business support strategy to help build designer brands of the future. This reboot aims to reinforce London's reputation as *the* city to start, develop and grow a designer fashion business. The BFC calculated that each year 10,000 hours is spent on mentoring London Fashion Week (LFW) designers through BFC initiatives which include BFC Rock Vault, BFC Headonism, NEWGEN sponsored by TOPSHOP, NEWGEN MEN sponsored by TOPMAN, BFC Contemporary sponsored by eBay, BFC / Vogue Designer Fashion Fund and BFC / GQ Designer Menswear Fund supported by Vertu. The list of graduates from these initiatives spans the hundreds with some of the first designers including Alexander McQueen, Antonio Berardi, Clements Ribeiro, Julien Macdonald and Matthew Williamson.

Today, over 50% of the London Fashion Week schedule is populated by designers who have graduated or are in BFC initiatives including Christopher Kane, Christopher Raeburn, David Koma, Erdem, Gareth Pugh, Giles, House of Holland, Jonathan Saunders, J.W. Anderson, Mary Katrantzou, Osman, Peter Pilotto and Roksanda.

The Mayor of London Boris Johnson said: *"British designers are internationally renowned for their innovative ideas and craftsmanship. There is justifiably always a huge buzz around London Fashion Week, with journalists and buyers jetting in from around the world. Over the past few years British Fashion Council business support and mentoring programmes have had an important role in ensuring our designers are able to develop and thrive in a highly competitive sector. Strengthening this activity will help ensure that even more of them will be able to maximise the business potential of their amazing talent, which can only be a good thing for our city's reputation for creativity and for our economy."*

Nicholas Kirkwood, previous NEWGEN recipient and winner of the 2013 BFC / Vogue Designer Fashion Fund added: *"The sense of support for designers in both the industry and the press as well as between designers themselves makes London a very special place. Initiatives from the BFC such as NEWGEN and the Vogue Fashion Fund were key supporting moments for me."*

To build on this success, the BFC aims to increase its Business Pillar activity with the following three key stages:

#### 1.1

The BFC aims to **demystify the fashion industry** for new talent entering the sector by creating **Fashion Explorer** workshops to help open up opportunities for graduates and to give the foundations for those wishing to start a business. Aimed at students who are about to graduate and those considering starting

their own business, the BFC and industry mentors will give an overview of business planning, the basics of starting a business and an introduction to the support available. These will be free of charge with the first workshop scheduled to take place in spring 2015.

## 1.2

The BFC aims to **build a stronger pipeline of management talent** by nurturing **closer links to business schools**. It will deliver the second partnership project with the London Business School in spring this year, with the goal set to head towards a full accreditation of an MBA programme in Luxury Management.

## 1.3

The BFC aims to **provide free information online** by re-launching the **Designer Fact File**, with content created through its support programmes. The Designer Fact File will provide downloadable guides, further links and become a hub for digital content supporting fashion business development. The Start-Up Guides will launch in spring 2015 to support the first Fashion Explorer workshop.

## 2

The BFC aims to **reboot and restructure the business support element of its current talent schemes** including BFC Rock Vault, BFC Headonism, NEWGEN sponsored by TOPSHOP, NEWGEN MEN sponsored by TOPMAN, BFC Contemporary sponsored eBay, BFC / Vogue Designer Fashion Fund and BFC / GQ Designer Menswear Fund supported by Vertu by introducing the **BFC Fashion Entrepreneur Programme** which will wrap a suite of workshops around these programmes, covering all the key business elements from financial management and merchandising to manufacturing.

## 3

The BFC aims to give **in depth and targeted support** to New Establishment designers so they can become future brands. The new **Brand Builders Programme** opens up the chance for 5-6 British fashion businesses to tap into the incredible experience of senior mentors, one-on-one. The mentors who will be matched up with designers include: Alison Loehnis, Frederick Luckoff, James Seuss, Jonathan Akeroyd, Mark Sebba, Pierre Denis and Stacey Cartwright.

Emilia Wickstead who has partnered up with mentor and BFC Business Pillar President James McArthur, commented: *“The business mentoring and support that we receive from experts such as James is vital for the long term economic growth of my business.”*

This season, in line with the celebration of its Business Pillar, the BFC announces that global professional services giant **KPMG** has committed to become a **Patron of the British Fashion Council** and with it bring its advisory teams to support Business Pillar activity.

James McArthur CEO Anya Hindmarch and President of BFC Business Pillar commented: *“With the Business Pillar programmes now set to launch, our next step is to develop better access to growth finance for designer businesses. Now that we have launched the pillar, this is the next challenge to tackle.”*

James McArthur spoke this morning at the official London Fashion Week opening breakfast following a speech by Natalie Massenet MBE, BFC Chairman:

*“Good Morning ladies and gentlemen and thank you for being here. For those of you who were in New York – well done for getting up and being here – and for those of you who weren’t – apart from the snow and -20 degree weather you missed a great British Victoria Beckham show, the great British Peter Copping’s first show for Oscar De La Renta, the great British Stuart Vevers at Coach, the great British Michael Herz at Diane Von Furstenberg and more - in fact New York Fashion week is getting more London by the season. We must be catching.*

*This morning I want you to join me in celebrating the exceptional talent that is the British fashion industry. Not just the all-important designers who come out and take a bow at the end of the catwalk – wherever they are in the world - but also the people who help get them there. This season we celebrate our Business Pillar – so a big thank you goes to all of those business teams out there in the industry without whom our*

*designers' visions would be impossible to fulfill. From the CEOs, finance directors and accountants to the communications and marketing teams; from the lawyers and merchandisers to the sample manufacturers and retail experts. What we all do for a living is a celebration of incredible creativity backed by extraordinary expertise in commerce. We are one of the few cities in the world where we champion both to a global audience.*

*I know you have heard it before but don't forget we are worth more to the economy in the UK than the car industry. As an entrepreneur and business leader based in the UK I can tell you from first-hand experience fashion is a serious business. It is time for a broader range of establishment figures, politicians and global industry leaders to recognize that fashion has a crucial impact on an economy and creates inspiring job opportunities as well as garnering front page news across the world.*

*Whilst we are celebrating British fashion success this season, we also remember that without the very best fashion educators there would be no talent to build businesses around. Later this morning at St Paul's Cathedral we will celebrate the life of one of the greatest of those fashion educators – Professor Louise Wilson OBE. I am sure the idea of Louise being acknowledged at the opening breakfast of London Fashion Week would have been met with suitable derision on her part but without her ability to cultivate and nurture talent, London Fashion Week and indeed the wider global fashion industry would be a much poorer place. Her legacy of brutal honesty, incomparable integrity and sheer love of talent is something we should all carry with us.*

*Louise was adamant that the industry should support talent from Foundation Year to MA to protect and cultivate a sustainable pipeline of talented designers. To date the BFC Education Foundation has raised funds for 36 MA scholarships. 2014 was the pilot year for Foundation and BA scholarships and already we have secured support for a Foundation Year scholarship and for six students studying for a BA. Today, our ambition to raise more funds for this very worthy cause is more pertinent than ever before. Just a few weeks ago, our industry sadly lost another of its pioneers and ambassadors, Anne Tyrrell, Chair of the Colleges Council and Trustee of the Education Foundation. As many of you know, Anne was a passionate driving force behind building links between education and industry and will be sorely missed.*

*This year sees the culmination of my work as Chair of The British Fashion Council, and I am more committed than ever, with the support of Caroline Rush CBE and her amazing team at the BFC, to make the next twelve months the best we have ever seen as an industry globally.*

*It seems entirely appropriate that in September we will celebrate the last of our five pillars – that of Reputation – a fitting summation of everything we have done in Education, Investment, Digital and Innovation and of course this season – Business.*

*I will shortly hand over to our Business Pillar president – James McArthur, CEO of Anya Hindmarch. The Anya Hindmarch business is a perfect example of how to combine extraordinary creative vision with exceptional business know-how to build a great British luxury accessories brand with a phenomenal global reputation. James will share how we will shape our business support to develop robust and sustainable designer businesses for a very exciting future.*

*I am also delighted to report that the second of our Fashion Forum, launched under the Investment Pillar, it will take place in June – further strengthening our relationships as a community and proactively building business opportunities for our best talent. Our Digital and Innovation Pillar also continues to go from strength to strength with our technology experts and brands sharing their expertise and driving our industry into the future. Via extraordinary work from Burberry, Topshop, Hunter, River Island and others we are more visible, more engaged and more inclusive across the country than ever before. Technology has helped open windows into our world and as a consequence we are attracting even more talent to our industry - the future talent pool is expanding and looking brighter than ever.*

*The British Fashion Awards – on 23<sup>rd</sup> November – will be a chance to truly reflect on the extraordinary place London has become for Fashion over the last few years. We are the centre of creativity and commerce and as the Oscars celebrates the best film talent in the world both in front of and behind the lens - so the Fashion Awards will celebrate both British and global fashion. The generosity and commitment of our sponsors is vital to this event and we pride ourselves on working together with our partners to ensure that each season is bigger, better and more effective both for our designers and for our stakeholders.*

*A special thanks is in order to BFC Patron Marks & Spencer, not only an integral part of Positive Fashion and of Vodafone London Fashion Weekend, but has also joined the roster of London Fashion Week*

*sponsors. The support of big business is vital to the vitality of the big business of fashion. Thank you all. I feel that we have achieved a great deal already, but we also have the ambition to do more and James will share that with you now. I would like to thank all of our Business Pillar Presidents, Meribeth Parker and Sarah Mower for Education, Johnnie Goodwin for Investment, Peter Fitzgerald for Innovation and Digital, Sophie Neophitou for Reputation and of course James McArthur for Business.”*

The BFC would like to thank the generosity of its sponsors including the funders for the BFC/Vogue Designer Fashion Fund: Burberry, Debenhams, Harrods, Paul Smith, Topshop and Vogue. LFW Principle Sponsor: Vodafone. Official Sponsors: American Express, DHL, eBay, FIJI Water, Lavazza Coffee, London Evening Standard, Marks & Spencer, Maybelline New York, The May Fair Hotel, Mercedes-Benz, Swatch, Scavi & Ray, TONI&GUY and TOPSHOP. Official Suppliers: ExterionMedia, Fashion Monitor, LG, Mainetti, Penhaligon's, Propercorn, Rightster and Triumph. Official Funders: ERDF, Mayor of London and UKTI

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