



**SPEECH NOTES**  
17<sup>TH</sup> February 2017

**LONDON FASHION WEEK OPENS**

Today at the opening of London Fashion Week at The Store Studios, Dame Natalie Massenet, Chairman and Caroline Rush CBE, Chief Executive of the British Fashion Council alongside Sarah Mower MBE, Trustee of the Education Foundation spoke to industry opinion-formers including media, retailers, BFC patrons, partners and government representatives.

**Dame Natalie Massenet, Chairman British Fashion Council**

*'Good morning.*

*Many of us have just landed from a very snowy New York, how nice it is to be back in London.*

*We are all here for the collections, to celebrate and showcase the creativity that turns the wheels of our fashion businesses. Over the course of the next few days our designers will make style proclamations that will fuel consumer desire. But in times of uncertainty, creativity is also channelled into fashion statements of a different kind.*

*We are seeing seismic political changes, not just here in the UK with Brexit, but in the US and throughout Europe. Our industry is also going through change; see now – buy now, men's and women's collections coming together and for some brands, the pull to the couture shows. Change can be challenging but in this time of extraordinary innovation we will thrive.*

*Designers have the gift of the internet, of social media and e-commerce. They are able to build new models of businesses that balance partnership between brilliant wholesale and a direct to consumer model. They can work with incredible media outlets as well as act as their own media owners, producing content and broadcasting their own information.*

*It is nothing new, over the decades there have been many booms and busts but fashion and creativity have prospered.*

*Putting a spotlight on creative businesses through events like London Fashion Week is essential. Supporting talent to develop sustainable businesses is a must. Encouraging creatives to be creative entrepreneurs and to innovate is a must for future success. I encourage designers to be bold in design and in business.*

*Creativity, innovation, business and inclusiveness are at the heart of British fashion. Our schedule comprises designers from many nations – Huishan Zhang from China, Eudon Choi from South Korea, Roksanda from Serbia, Bora Aksu from Turkey and Ashish from India to name only a few. Last night we launched the International Fashion Showcase at Somerset House, designers from 26 countries from Egypt to Chile, have come together under the title of Local/Global. Our businesses are filled with great diversity and our business leaders protect, nurture and promote that fiercely. Post referendum, business leaders' number one priority was to ensure the right of their EU team members to remain here and the British Fashion Council is working to support them.*

*This is the start of London Fashion Week when all eyes are on London and we welcome the fashion world, a brilliant example of a diverse global community to our city to see our incredible designers.*

*We applaud The Business of Fashion's campaign #tiedtogether which invites the fashion industry to stand together and make a clear statement of solidarity, unity and inclusiveness and encourages everyone to get involved through this simple and singular visual statement: wear a white bandana as a sign to the world that you believe in the common bonds of humankind — regardless of race, sexuality, gender, size, religion and ability.*

*We encourage the industry to have a voice, and to show the world that we stands for inclusivity, unity and humanity.*

*The British Fashion Council as an organisation not only promotes the British fashion industry but has the privilege of representing its diverse voices. Our doors are always open and with article 50 due to be triggered in the coming months, we encourage all those that would like to engage on the subject to email us at [brexit@britishfashioncouncil.com](mailto:brexit@britishfashioncouncil.com). There will be much talk of Brexit in the coming months, but over the next few days I hope that we are all able to take the time to let the creative excellence of our businesses shine.*

*Before I hand you over to Caroline, I would like to draw attention to the Nicoll Blue wall that you saw as you entered this wonderful new home here at the Store Studios. Nicoll Blue is a new Pantone colour created to commemorate Richard Nicoll. Richard was an incredible talent who was taken from us too soon last year. He was part of the fabric of our future*

*brands. He was the embodiment of British fashion, born in Australia, studied in London, built a business here, collaborated with artists and pioneered innovation leaving an incredible professional legacy. He had many friends here in London, and all of those who knew Richard miss him dearly. I would like to thank his friends for collaborating on Nicoll Blue and thank Pantone for making this possible.*

*Plans are underway for a multifaceted, retrospective exhibition of the designer's work to launch later in the year. The blue will be at the Central Saint Martins show this evening and will be shared by those who knew him around the world.*

*Thank you all for being here this morning, thank you for being part of this industry and for your support. Let's make some positive fashion statements!'*

**Caroline Rush CBE, Chief Executive British Fashion Council**

*'Thank you Natalie.*

*Welcome to the Store Studios at 180 Strand, our new home for London Fashion Week. Thank you to the Store Kitchen for hosting our BFC Lounge. Within this venue you'll also find a show venue, presentation space, an exhibition holding 120 designer businesses showing their collections and of course sponsor experiences. I would like to thank all our sponsors particularly Lavazza who keep us fuelled this morning with their coffee.*

*London Fashion Week is of course about presenting our designers. There are 51 catwalk shows on schedule; London is known for its creative talent and for its modern designers from Christopher Kane, Erdem, Rokanda, Simone Rocha and J.W. Anderson to the global brands such as Burberry, Mulberry and Anya Hindmarch. It is Roland Mouret's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and we welcome him back to London this year. We cannot wait to celebrate with him. We also have 32 presentations and many events populating the evenings.*

*I would like to thank Sunglass Hut who have been the principal London Fashion Week sponsor for several years, this is their last season. We have enjoyed working with you and taking British fashion content to your 3,000 stores around the globe, increasing traffic to your stores and increasing your and our social media engagement – we are delighted that you will be continuing as a part of London Fashion Week Festival which will start in this same venue from Thursday. London Fashion Week Festival is about shows, talks, styling, shopping and from next season we will grow to city wide celebration of our industry. It is about engaging the consumer as Natalie mentioned before using the buzz of London Fashion Week. We understand from our research that fashion has better engagement than football. It is not surprising as we have shows every 30 minutes over London Fashion Week, we have our street style obsession that outplays any other event plus opinions and content views from all over the world. With that in mind a consumer festival makes absolute sense.*

*Natalie touched on Brexit. I'd like to take this opportunity at the opening of London Fashion Week, a showcase of predominantly British talent and a brilliantly positioned event for the UK as global leader in creativity, innovation and business, to remind the Government that retaining our competitive position isn't straight forward and we hope that you'll listen and understand our concerns and our needs when we talk to you about visas, talent, tariffs, and IP. This is incredibly important to sustain this amazing industry. We are worth £28bn to the British economy each year, 880,000 jobs and are an industry that repeatedly exceeds the figures for national average growth.*

*Amongst the uncertainty this year we will be championing and shining a light on businesses that have great talent, that are sustainable, that have good news stories that represent our Positive Fashion vision for global best practice. This fashion week our very own Dame Vivienne Westwood will be championing Green Energy and shouting about how individual change can create positive impact. We are of course supporting the #tiedtogether campaign and next month we will be launching a database of best practice manufacturers that work with our designers and we are open to doing more. Championing skills and craftsmanship in the UK is essential to supporting the brilliant emerging talent we are known for, but more and more the established brands are also looking at what more they can do in the UK.*

*Finally we will also be championing education this year. Supporting new talent is important, it is the pipeline and lifeblood of our whole industry. We have both of our Education Pillar chairs here today, Sarah Mower and Meribeth Parker. Sarah is going to tell you more, so before I hand you over to her, let me thank you all for being here, for supporting London Fashion Week and British fashion. We are a truly global industry and I look forward to being tied together and working together in so many ways.'*

**Sarah Mower MBE, Trustee of the British Fashion Council Education Foundation**

*'Thank you Caroline.*

*British Fashion education is the top in the world, the absolute gold-standard. Last year The Business of Fashion's rigorous ranking of fashion schools throughout the world appointed for BA, Central Saint Martins first and Kingston second and for MA, Central Saint Martins first and the Royal College of Art second.*

*The fact is that it is excellence of fashion education which has put our country in pole position. Without it London Fashion Week would be robbed of 3 out of 4 of the talents and entrepreneurs it has today.*

*Yet, in these times, getting an education is tougher than ever. Until 20 years ago, Britain benefitted from free further education. Since then fees - not to mention rent and living expenses - have been sequentially ramped up, meaning that the creative gene pool we used to benefit from is being steadily drained.*

*The British Fashion Council Education Foundation aims to do our best to keep the doors to fashion education open. It aims to attract the best talent into the industry and ensure the future success of British fashion and the influence of its designers. The British Fashion Council Education Foundation is a charity which raises money to support students wanting to study BA and MA Fashion Design courses throughout the UK.*

*Since September 2016 we have given out over £100,000 to 12 students and we work with 32 colleges nationwide.*

*In December 2016 the BFC hosted The Fashion Awards at the Royal Albert Hall, an awards ceremony celebrating global talent. The aim of the event was to raise money for education, specifically for British talent.*

*We raised a total of £700,000 with thanks to Swarovski out of which £400,000 goes to supporting NEWGEN, business support and the BFC Colleges Council and £300,000 was donated to the BFC Education Foundation to support young British talent through scholarships - the single largest donation since the BFC Education Foundation was created.*

*Thank you to everyone who donated through The Fashion Awards and specifically Nadja Swarovski and Natalie for making it happen.*

*2017 will focus on education and supporting the pipeline of talent into this industry which can be seen at the helm of fashion businesses around the world. This is a call to arms and we will be shining a light on this all year, reaching out to colleges throughout the country, and asking many more people within this industry to join us in the pleasure of giving back.'*

**– ENDS –**

London Fashion Week  
The Store Studios, 180 Strand  
[londonfashionweek.com](http://londonfashionweek.com)

T: [@LondonFashionWk](https://twitter.com/LondonFashionWk) | [#LFW](https://twitter.com/LFW) | I: [@LondonFashionWeek](https://twitter.com/LondonFashionWeek)

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**The British Fashion Council (BFC)** was set up in 1983 to promote British fashion internationally and co-ordinate this promotion through fashion weeks, exhibitions and showcasing events. The BFC now supports designers beginning at college level and extending to talent identification, business support and showcasing schemes to help British designer businesses develop their profiles and business globally and promote British fashion and its influential role in Britain and London. The BFC Colleges Council offers support to students through its

Foundation, BA and MA scholarships, links with industry through design competitions and Graduate Preview Day. Talent identification and business support schemes include BFC Fashion Film sponsored by River Island; BFC Rock Vault; BFC Headonism; BFC/GQ Designer Menswear Fund; BFC/Vogue Designer Fashion Fund and NEWGEN. The BFC supports Boden's Future British initiative. The BFC also runs and owns charities including the BFC Fashion Arts Foundation, the BFC Fashion Trust and the BFC Education Foundation. Showcasing initiatives and events include London Fashion Week, London Fashion Week Men's, LONDON show ROOMS, International Fashion Showcase, London Fashion Week Festival and the annual celebration of excellence in the fashion industry: The Fashion Awards.