

LONDON FASHION WEEK

14–18 FEBRUARY 2020

PRESS RELEASE

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Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and British Fashion Council host Downing Street reception to celebrate Britain Fashion and Sustainability

This evening Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Rt. Hon Oliver Dowden, MP, Stephanie Phair, Chair and Caroline Rush, CEO of British Fashion Council (BFC) hosted a Downing Street reception to celebrate British fashion and sustainability. Guests included designers, publishers, retailers and business leaders from the fashion industry, as well as international guests in London for fashion week.

Following five days of over 115 runway shows, presentations and events from global fashion designers with an international audience from over 40 countries, the event focused on the fashion industry's impact on the environment. The BFC shared its plans for the Institute of Positive Fashion and global initiatives map to support UK fashion designer businesses, while calling for an industry-led step-change to address climate change.

Stephanie Phair, Chair spoke first, followed by Caroline Rush, CEO with both speech notes found below.

Stephanie Phair, Chair, British Fashion Council

Good evening everyone.

I would like to thank the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP, for hosting the British Fashion Council at Downing Street tonight. It sends an important signal that this is your very first engagement in your new role and I would like to give you a warm welcome from one of the UK's leading industries.

At the beginning of this new decade the world is facing unprecedented challenges. Only this week we are navigating the impact of coronavirus, the ongoing negotiations around the shape of our industry post-Brexit, and Storm Dennis. But beyond these, the biggest challenge we face across industries and the world is the sustainability of our planet.

Set against that backdrop, as Chair of the British Fashion Council, I couldn't be more proud of the level of talent and creativity we have seen over the last few days, showcasing the best of British design. Just this afternoon, with HRH The Princess Royal, we awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Award for British Design to Rosh Mahtani from Alighieri. Her commitment to local manufacturing and ethical sourcing is a clear sign of the kind of business that will succeed in the future.

Since becoming Chair two years ago, I have seen the depth of commitment to supporting all aspects of this industry. From championing emerging talent to raising millions for education through The Fashion Awards to helping business prepare for investment and of course showcasing our talent on a global stage. As the first of the four global fashion weeks to open its doors to the public London Fashion Week has become an even more powerful platform for communication. Throughout my career, I've seen first-hand the power of fashion to tell stories and define our culture. This gives an incredible influence to bring the consumer into the conversation as we address sustainability and build a movement for change.

Some have called on us to cancel Fashion Week and I accept that our model, its frequency and its purpose need to evolve. But I do believe that it can be a positive platform to showcase change and we will work with consumers, the industry and our counterparts around the world because we all care deeply about our industry and its legacy. I'm particularly proud that as an organisation we recognise the power of activism but keep focused on practical actions.

As a significant global industry worth £32bn to the UK economy, employing 1million people, we are globally connected and forward thinking. In this year where the UK is hosting COP 26, we are poised to play our part and reimagine our industry as a force for good.

To my industry colleagues in the room - I ask you to collaborate. On this issue, more than any other - we can be greater than the sum of our parts.

And with that in mind, I am delighted to hand over to our brilliant CEO Caroline Rush who can tell you exactly what we are doing.

Thank you.

Caroline Rush, Chief Executive, British Fashion Council

Thank you, Stephanie and hello, everyone...

Climate change is the largest issue facing the planet today, we know that both collective and individual action is needed to meet the pace of change required.

As an industry there are some big questions we need to answer, and some new ways of working required.

- *How do we use the power of the collective as a catalyst? Incremental change is a start, but it won't be enough to significantly move the dial*
- *How do we share knowledge to avoid duplication? Reducing impact shouldn't be a race to who can monetise this first*
- *How can we as an industry use our voice, our platforms, our powerful global reach to communicate the need for change while authentically committing to change ourselves?*

We have marked 2020 as a year for positive change. In a very British way, we are looking at a practical, action led agenda that can help inform businesses, connect with global initiatives and bring industry together to tackle big issues:

We wanted to share three things we are doing to address this

- *Mapping Global Initiatives – the baseline to avoid duplication and provide clarity around where new resources can focus*
This map can be accessed by a QR code tonight above your phones in reception and on the British Fashion Council website
We invite you all to contribute, to help us make this map go further and to ensure that none of us duplicate, ensuring collaboration on positive change going forward
The initiatives currently on the IPF map are segmented by Pillar Environment, People, Community & Craftsmanship, and by territory market. By the time the IPF launches later this year, there will be deeper data to align the initiatives to business verticals.
- *The Institute of Positive Fashion will be launched this year, a platform where businesses can go to see what toolkits and information is available. Where toolkits exist, they will be sign-posted, where new are required we will work with experts to deliver them.*

It will also provide a framework that supports information flow to global initiatives such as G7, UNFCCC and is already working with the United Nations Office of Partnerships (UNOP).

In this way, we can engage with all relevant government departments and can bring together industry and government to address core challenges.

It will invite industry to collectively look more closely at innovation to address issues that are discussed at boardrooms and roundtables regularly.

With thanks to the IPF Steering Committee, who have dedicated their time and knowledge to helping us develop this greatly needed platform.

- *Finally, our Platforms London Fashion Week & The Fashion Awards*

We will use our platforms to address issues, to showcase new businesses models and create appetite for engagement as we have seen with Positive Fashion Exhibition here at London Fashion Week and our partnership with the UN Office for Partnerships at The Fashion Awards last year.

It is no accident we are here at Downing Street sharing this with you. We need government to work with us. These are challenging times and your support and leadership is required to shape the future together, to embrace innovation, address climate, people and cultural challenges so that the fashion industry can remain an economic, creative & cultural, positive contributor whilst ensuring that our natural resources are protected, re-instated and the industry evolves for the future.

Let's work together, share, collaborate not duplicate and use our voice

Fashion is a creative outlet for individual expression that touches everyone, and as we have seen at London Fashion Week our businesses can inspire, support communities with a huge capacity to be a social force for good.

Thank you.

- ENDS -

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ABOUT BRITISH FASHION COUNCIL

The British Fashion Council (BFC) was set up in 1983 to promote British fashion internationally and coordinate this promotion through fashion weeks, exhibitions and showcasing events. BFC now supports designers beginning at college level and extending to talent identification, business support and showcasing schemes. The BFC promotes British fashion and its influential role at home and abroad, helping British designer businesses develop their profiles and business globally. BFC Foundation (Registered Charity Number: 11852152) was created for charitable purposes and grant giving; attracting, developing and retaining talent through education and business mentoring. BFC Colleges Council offers support to students through BA and MA scholarships and links with industry through design competitions and Graduate Preview Day. Through grant-giving and business mentoring the BFC support designers through four talent identification and business support schemes: BFC/Vogue Designer Fashion Fund, BFC/GQ Designer Menswear Fund, NEWGEN which includes womenswear, menswear and accessories, and the BFC Fashion Trust, a charity supporting UK based designers. The BFC showcasing initiatives and events include London Fashion Week, London Fashion Week Men's, LONDON show ROOMs and the annual celebration of creativity and innovation in the fashion industry: The Fashion Awards.

ABOUT INSTITUTE OF POSITIVE FASHION

The Institute of Positive Fashion (IPF) is an initiative of the British Fashion Council whose aim is to create an industry blueprint by bringing together expertise from different areas to help brands in the industry navigate and understand sustainable business practices. The IPF will launch in the first half of this year and will engage with G7, UNFCCC and is already working with the United Nations Office of Partnerships (UNOP). The first iteration of the IPF is a global initiatives map showcasing initiatives already in place by Positive Fashion Pillar: Environment, People, Craftsmanship and Community.

Global Initiatives Map and QR Code

www.britishfashioncouncil.co.uk/positive-fashion

