

As leaders of business representative organisations across the UK, representing business communities in every region and nation, we recognise that to #BreakTheBias and achieve gender equality, individuals and companies across the economy and beyond must act.

Throughout the memberships of the British Chambers of Commerce and the 53 Accredited Chambers across the UK, the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors and Make UK, businesses recognise the importance of removing the barriers which may stop women from reaching the highest positions within business or which send a signal that they do not have a place at the table.

While it may seem trivial to some, language matters. Research from the World Bank suggests a link between the use of gendered language and employment rates between men and women, even after controlling for various geographic and economic factors that could be driving the difference.¹

The term 'Chairman' is still used by Companies House as its default term in its model articles, and subsequently used as the basis for the articles of many thousands of companies across the country.

Collectively, we are taking steps to amend our articles of association to utilise the gender-neutral term 'Chair'. We hope that businesses across the UK will take this step with us when next amending their articles. We also ask that Government will also take a small, but symbolic step to amend the Companies House model articles. There is an easy opportunity to do this in upcoming corporate governance legislation. In a recent survey of Directors, over 78% favoured making the change².

We recognise that this amendment is not a silver bullet, and other initiatives and activity are needed. Business is fully committed to gender pay gap reporting and activity such as the 30% club and following through on the Hampton-Alexander agenda. While the latest annual FTSE Women Leaders Review demonstrates that progress is being made, we know there is much more to do. This change would signal to future generations regardless of gender, that they have an equal role to play in running businesses across the country.

Together, we can help #BreakTheBias.

Yours,

Sarah Howard MBE Chair of the British Chambers of Commerce,
Lord Karan Bilimoria CBE, DL President, Confederation of British Industry
Dame Judith Hackitt, Chair, Make UK
Jonathan Geldart, Director General, Institute of Directors
Claire Mason, CEO, Man Bites Dog
Charlotte Valeur, Chief Executive, Global Governance Group
Sue Rimmer OBE, Chair, The Girls Network
Ian Smith, Chair of Bishop Fleming LLP, Chair of Trustees for The Rowlands Trust, The Kildare Trust and The Clothiers Company of Worcester Charitable Foundation
Adjoa Anim, Chartered Trade Mark Attorney
Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce
Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber of Commerce
Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce
Black Country Chamber of Commerce
Business West
Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce

Chambers Wales South East, South West and Mid
Cornwall Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce
Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Devon & Plymouth Chamber of Commerce
Doncaster Chamber of Commerce
Dorset Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce
East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce
East Midlands Chamber (Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire)
Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce
Essex Chambers of Commerce
Fife Chamber of Commerce
Glasgow Chamber of Commerce
Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce
Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce
Hampshire Chamber of Commerce
Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce
Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Hull & Humber Chamber of Commerce
Inverness Chamber of Commerce
Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce
Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce
Liverpool Chamber of Commerce CIC
London Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Mid Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce
Norfolk Chamber of Commerce
North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce
North East England Chamber of Commerce
Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce (inc. Milton Keynes Chamber)
Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce
Sheffield Chamber of Commerce
Shropshire Chamber of Commerce
Somerset Chamber of Commerce & Industry Ltd
South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry
St Helens Chamber
Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce
Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
Surrey Chambers of Commerce
Sussex Chamber of Commerce & Enterprise
Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group
West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce
West Cheshire & North Wales Chamber of Commerce
Wirral Chamber of Commerce