

# NATWEST BOSS FOCUSES ON DIVERSITY AT THE TOP

Key figures from the BAME community hear about the bank's initiatives to make its leadership team more diverse

**N**ATWEST hosted a roundtable event earlier this month which discussed its ongoing efforts to achieve greater diversity at the bank.

The event, held at Westminster Central Hall, was part of a range of initiatives aimed at achieving a goal of recruiting at least 14 per cent of its leadership from black and minority ethnic backgrounds by 2025; in other words, leaders with visible heritage from African, Asian, Middle Eastern and South American regions.

Among those who attended the event were entrepreneurs, an education expert and the head of a social enterprise aimed at helping more of the young African-Caribbean community into career options and choices that are right for them.

NatWest CEO Ross McEwan made a special trip to Westminster for the session, which was facilitated by the bank's Sharniya Ferdinand. Paulette Simpson, Director of The Voice Media Group, also joined the conversation.

The discussion centred around the diverse organisations and entrepreneurs the

bank has supported and ideas about what more can be done to further develop the entrepreneurial talent within London's African-Caribbean community.

McEwan addressed the participants on the progress being made on the bank's efforts to create a more diverse workforce.

He told *The Voice*: "At least 15 per cent of our staff at NatWest are from a BAME background. Yet when I look through the senior ranks it's around five per cent. That's what I want to start a conversation about."

## STRATEGY

McEwan continued: "The first part of our strategy is about an awareness of the fact that we do not have in our senior leadership the diverse range of people that others can look up to and say 'I could be doing those jobs'."

"Then we need to start having the conversation about the issues, about the importance of diversity. And then we need to reflect that not just into our products but to our customers because if we're not reflecting how our customers feel and what they look like and make

CONVERSATION: NatWest CEO Ross McEwan, left, discusses the issues surrounding diversity with some of the roundtable attendees



them feel comfortable they'll do business with somebody else."

Speaking about the event, Young Mums Support Network founder Fiona Small said: "This wasn't a tick-box exercise; I felt Ross genuinely wanted to hear voices in the community. I'm excited to hear about the next steps."

Today (October 4) the bank will host another event called 'Let's Have the Conversation' aimed at encouraging NatWest colleagues to talk about ethnicity.

## Exhibition celebrates black graduates

**PORTRAITS** of the first black graduates of Cambridge University will feature in a new exhibition which opens this month.

The exhibition was put together by Cambridge student group Black Cantabs Research Society, which was set up in 2015 to explore the stories of past black students.

Famous alumni highlighted in the exhibit include actress Naomie Harris, author Zadie Smith, *Westworld* star Thandie Newton and shadow home secretary Diane Abbott.

The exhibition also includes the university's first black scholar, Francis Williams, who graduated with a bachelor's degree in mathematics, Latin and literature in the 1720s.

Black Cantabs Research Society president Surer Mohamed, 24, a PhD student, said of the exhibition: "It's not to say 'look who made it', it's to say this is part of the Cambridge story."

The exhibition also features an image of rapper Stormzy, who last month launched scholarships to help black Cambridge University students pay their tuition fees.

The university came under fire in June after a freedom of information request by



FAMOUS ALUMNI: Head of exhibitions Chris Burgess adjusts a portrait of actress Naomie Harris (Photo credit: Joe Giddens / PA)

the *Financial Times* showed some Cambridge colleges admitted no black British students between 2012 and 2016.

*Black Cantabs: History Makers*, runs until December 31, and is free and open to the public in the university library.