

Dr Vince Cable and Lord Davies of Abersoch
Department for Business Innovation & Skills
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

Submitted by email: Womenonboards@bis.gsi.gov.uk

4 March 2014

Dear Lord Davies of Abersoch and Dr Cable,

Women on Boards – FTSE350

A number of our members have drawn to my attention your joint letter to the chairmen of FTSE350 companies.

As you will be aware, the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (ICSA) is the professional body that qualifies chartered secretaries and many of our members are closely involved in the nomination, appointment and induction of directors, and privileged observers of boards in action.

In your letter, you commented that “It is striking that some chairmen are keen to recruit more women board members, yet they tell us that they have been unable to shortlist female candidates with the combination of skills and experience that they were seeking.” You go on to ask that each chairman identify two females from their senior executive teams who might make suitable candidates as non-executive directors at other companies.

ICSA is, and has been for many years, completely committed to the cause of diversity in its widest sense. Some 35% of our members are female, including some 20% of Fellows of the Institute, our highest grade of membership. Many of these members are company secretaries of some of the largest companies in the country or work at a similar level in other organisations. By way of example, 30 FTSE100 companies have a female company secretary.

As I have mentioned, our members have a very privileged position from which to observe boards in action and, in many cases, more boardroom experience than many of the directors with whom they work. Whilst we believe that companies should seek to recruit directors who bring a diversity of skills and experiences to the board, making appointments entirely on merit, we believe that your proposal is an excellent means of demonstrating the availability of a suitably skilled and experienced board-ready female pipeline. We believe that company secretaries meet these criteria, and would be very keen to nominate some of our senior members to join your pool.

I look forward to hearing from you in this regard.

Yours sincerely



Peter Swabey
Policy & Research Director