



## PICTFOR's Sixth Annual Diversity Rally

Professor Becky Strachan represented CPHC at the PICTFOR DEI rally in November 2024 at the Houses of Parliament. Dame Caroline Dinenege, PICTFOR Co- Chair opened the rally acknowledging the vital role of digital skills and the important of not leaving any individual or community behind. She then welcomed a series of speakers including MPs, tech founders, and Rachid Hourizi, Director of the Institute of Coding. Smantha Niblett, PICTOR Co-Chair concluded the talks emphasising the need for people to approach parliamentarians with solutions and data evidence rather than problems. Time was then given over to networking.

My main takeaways are:

1. It is a good time to push on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) agenda with the new government via PICTFOR and the various MPs/select committees that are around, particularly as the gender balance and STEM balance of MPs has changed post-election to be more favourable to both.
2. They want proposals for solutions accompanied with good evidence ie meaningful data to support any policies/strategies they are looking to take forward. So it may be good to pull together some of our data with those from others e.g. EPSRC, HESA, BCS, etc.
3. There's a feeling with the recent US election and world-wide events that DEI is in danger of becoming stale, so we need to continue to push to raise its profile as there is still much to do.
4. The various speakers were interesting to listen to – more information here: <https://pictfor.org.uk/pictfors-sixth-annual-diversity-rally/> and it was noticeable that many of the female speakers were involved with 'tech for good' rather than wider tech interests. There is something about using tech for positive societal changes that seems to particularly appeal to women. This could be useful to think about for our own programmes/curriculum.
5. Jobs and AI often combine digital skills with domain knowledge and this combination can further exclude some people from these opportunities particularly those from areas of social disadvantage. This could disproportionately affect our students too.

My overall conclusion is that we need to continue to work together with other people and organisations on this agenda and together we can make a difference!!

