



Industry Forum April Newsletter

Shaping the future

We must wait for the general election to find out the real economic plans of the next administration. The main parties will publish their manifestos, but these will be focussed on winning votes and largely concealing the hard truths about what lies ahead. Whatever their hopes, the weak economic position of the UK, and the cost-of-living crisis, will act as big constraints on their actions.

At the Industry Forum, we hope that the next administration will commit to clear plans for industrial strategy, trade strategy, international security and public services, after listening carefully to the sectors and regions concerned. We also hope for the return of respect for professionalism and accountability in government and management. Many people in business and the Civil Service had profound concerns about the economic and security consequences of Brexit but it went ahead based on assurances that proved worthless. Neither the country, nor individual companies, can afford too many such gambles.

Until the outcome of the general election and the priorities of the new administration are known, the Industry Forum will focus on some of the major issues currently facing UK businesses and the economy. We hope that by bringing together knowledgeable people of goodwill we will help shape broad policies into practical solutions that can be adopted and put into practice. We have two important meetings coming up and many more in planning. Our major House of Commons Business Reception for members and guests is now planned for the evening of 11 September. Darren Jones MP, Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury will be the keynote speaker.

Managing the business of the House of Commons



16 April 2024

Speaker: Lucy Powell MP, Shadow Leader of the House of Commons

The Leader of the House of Commons has the vital role of scheduling and managing the work of the House of Commons in order that as much as possible of the government's legislative agenda is delivered intact. Lucy Powell, MP and Shadow Leader of the House, will outline Labour's approach for the period before the coming election, she will discuss how she would manage a different and very full programme of House business, should Labour win the election, and take questions arising.

Tackling our immigration issues



20 May 2024

Speaker: Stephen Kinnock MP, Shadow Minister for Immigration

A big factor in the Brexit debate was the perceived need to exercise control over immigration from other EU countries. Since Brexit, the loss of access to EU workers has caused disruption in healthcare, social care, agriculture and construction, and the needs of such sectors have caused immigration from non-EU countries to surge.

There has also been no progress in dealing with the immigration backlog and the level of illegal immigration via small boat crossings. The high cost solution of sending some asylum seekers to Rwanda has so far not deterred asylum seekers or reduced the backlog. Stephen Kinnock MP, Shadow Minister for Immigration will lead a roundtable on 'Tackling our immigration issues.'

Other meetings, currently in planning include:

- Fallout from the HS2 decision

- Strengthening the SME sector
- Policy priorities for building safely
- Labour's Green Prosperity Plan will attract private investment
- Future UK environment and climate policy, and business engagement
- Delivering real benefits from science, innovation and technology
- Improving our digital infrastructure would be a win/win for businesses and the economy
- Reforming UK corporate governance is key to invigorating the UK economy
- Funding radical change
- Building a new positive relationship with Europe

These are all major topics which we hope to cover in some depth at meetings and policy workshops.

In addition, in the coming year, we are planning to host House of Commons dinners to discuss key sectoral issues with policymakers, and another House of Commons Reception for members and guests.

As well as members, we invite diplomats, academics, union representatives, and business guests to participate in our meetings.

Our most recent Industry Forum meetings have focused on road transport issues and reforming the Civil Service.

Key issues for UK road transport



7 February 2024

Speaker: Bill Esterson MP, Shadow Transport (Roads) Minister

As the Westminster war drums signal the coming general election, The Industry Forum was delighted that Bill Esterson MP, Shadow Roads Minister, could join us to lead a round table on 'Key issues for UK road transport'. There are, indeed, a lot of issues including managing a rapid switch to electric passenger vehicles, fixing the plague of potholes, moving freight from roads to rail, coping with the chaos caused by the cancellation of the Manchester leg of HS2, and transitioning to an integrated transport system. It was clear that Bill Esterson is brimming with practical policy ideas and would be keen to get on with them, after the small matter of the general election. The meeting was hosted by Uber and Tim Aldham, a public policy manager for Uber welcomed guests.

Reforming the Civil Service for the 21st Century



7 March 2024

Speaker: Rt Hon Lord Maude of Horsham

Joining us for an Industry Forum roundtable hosted by Workday, in March, the Rt Hon Lord Maude of Horsham, argued that addressing Civil Service governance and accountability shortcomings should be a top priority for the new, post general election, UK Government. From his government commissioned 'Independent Review of the Governance and Accountability of the Civil Service', he quoted some key findings:

- The arrangements for governance and accountability of the Civil Service are unclear, opaque and incomplete.
- There has been a failure over decades to implement or sustain uncontroversial reforms and improvements.
- There should be a comprehensive and transparent scheme of delegation of the Prime Minister's statutory power to manage the Civil Service and the appointment of a dedicated and full-time head of the Civil Service.

The significance of these points, coming from a consummate Westminster insider with experience at the top levels of government and business, was not lost on those attending. It became clear that for the UK to tackle its many challenges and become an agile, prosperous state with good public services, Lord Maude's findings need to be addressed as a bi-partisan priority.

New members welcome

The Industry Forum was established in 1993, and has held over 500 meetings with top policy-makers since then. It is one of the most experienced, and well-networked, business policy think tanks in the UK. If you're not already a member, and would like to help shape our agenda, host events, and receive invitations to all meetings, get in touch by email at info@industry-forum.org, or give us a call to find out more on 0207 434 0090.



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