Industry Forum November Newsletter

A ray of hope from Washington?

The midterm power shift in Washington brings hope that greater oversight of the administration will gradually lead to more stability in US trade policies which have given some UK sectors serious difficulties. It would be reassuring to also see realistic US foreign policy initiatives to end the wars in Ukraine and Iran which are raising energy costs. That isn't imminent and therefore energy prices are likely to remain high. Meanwhile, in contrast, the low key approach of the Labour government may be paying off, with GDP growth of 0.7% in Q3, driven largely by strong tech sector growth.

It is also good news that having broken the taboo on discussing the economic damage caused by Brexit, Andy Burnham's government will be in Brussels on 20 November to discuss the next steps to a closer relationship with the EU. There is a wide range of options for more formal trade agreements with the EU, and some businesses are not waiting for these. As an example, at the major Dutch trade mission to Liverpool, earlier this month, it was clear that the maritime and aerospace sector companies present could see real benefits and synergies from working together. For these sectors, growth in European defence spending, and a switch of European defence procurement from the US to Europe offer real prizes.

We are currently revamping our plans for 2027 to increase our focus on Europe, technology and the UK financial sector, as well as key domestic issues in manufacturing, retail, home building, youth employment and more.

Our next meeting is:

European Agenda: Outcome of the second EU-UK summit



Wednesday 9 December

Business Breakfast

The second EU-UK reset summit will be held on 20th November. The UK Prime Minister, Andy Burnham, will meet António Costa, President of the European Council, and Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, in Brussels. Although the stated objectives of the summit are modest, it is clear that this is part of a more ambitious process backed by the UK and a number of key EU states for a much closer reunion that would partly or fully repair the serious economic damage done by Brexit. At this joint Industry Forum/Business with Europe meeting, we are keen to hear views on what we then know of the outcome from members. A panel of speakers including some politicians, will kick off the meeting followed by a Q&A. If, before the meeting, you would like to send a short summary of the views of you organisation please do so. It will be a relatively small meeting so please register interest as soon as possible; but if there is sufficient interest, we will hold a follow-up meeting in the New Year once more will be known of the progress made at the summit. Panel members to follow.

Other meetings in planning include:

- What do the US midterm results mean for the UK economy
- Revitalising trade with Germany
- The business opportunities of European rearmament
- Managing UK energy supplies and prices
- How should London compete with New York, Singapore and Hong Kong
- Is digital sovereignty necessary and possible
- Addressing the bottlenecks in building homes and infrastructure
- Rewiring Whitehall
- Improving our digital infrastructure would be a win/win for businesses and the economy
- Policy priorities for safe and sustainable, high-quality buildings

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

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.

Our most recent Industry Forum events were:

Labour's message to Business



5 November 2026

Speaker: Claire Reynolds, Executive Director of Stakeholder Relations, The Labour Party

In early November, Claire Reynolds, Labour's Executive Director of Stakeholder Relations enthusiastically led an Industry Forum roundtable on 'Labour's Message to Business'. Claire, who has worked in No. 10 Downing Street for three prime ministers, has a wide range of responsibilities covering relationships with business, local and regional government, the third sector, think-tanks and campaign groups, as well as women, equalities, faith communities, youth and students. The meeting was hosted by the Chartered Insurance Institute and Matt Connell, their Director of Policy and Public Affairs, welcomed members, and a number of insurance sector guests, to their new offices in Old Broad Street, London. It was clear that the leadership change to Andy Burnham, and changes in much of the ministerial team, have led to a big gear change, and real keenness to work closely with business to tackle the many economic challenges facing the government. The role of the government is to provide the financial stability and predictability that business has asked for, but only public/private cooperation will work to understand and provide the sectoral solutions needed.

Industrial Strategy Implementation



27 October 2026

Speaker: Blair McDougall MP, Minister for Reindustrialisation

Who said Industrial Strategy isn't fun? Certainly no-one at the Industry Forum roundtable on 'Industrial Strategy Implementation,' last month. The meeting was led by Blair McDougall MP, the Minister for Reindustrialisation and was hosted by BASF, the world-leading chemical company. Lisa Kelly, UK BASF Managing Director, welcomed members and guests on behalf of BASF. The minister outlined the government's approach to its eight-point industrial strategy covering financial and regulatory measures in the context of the drive for devolution. It is clear that the effect of Brexit and current financial constraints, as well as climate change, are problems to be addressed. Nevertheless, the meeting was a further indication that the new Burnham-led administration is keen to face these problems and engage with business in doing so. We were pleased to welcome to the meeting yesterday, as guests, a number of major European manufacturing companies, and we announced that we are working with Business with Europe to launch a new monthly breakfast meeting, the European Agenda, to discuss progress on key European issues affecting business. The topics for the first two meetings will be the UK-EU Summit, and European defence industry issues.



At short notice, the Industry Forum was asked to moderate the opening morning of a major Dutch trade mission to Liverpool at the beginning of November. Rod Dowler, our Executive Chair, was delighted to participate in this event which brought to Liverpool some 70 Dutch companies from the maritime and aviation sectors and was also attended by UK Trade Minister, Anas Sarwar on day one, and the King of the

Netherlands on day two. The first session on Monday morning began with an introduction from the Dutch Ambassador to the UK, Paul Huijts and concluded with words from the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Sjoerd Sjoerdsma. In between, there were great keynotes and presentations from the UK Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade, Make UK and panels of Dutch and UK business people covering topics such as the advanced manufacturing supply chains, and tips on doing business, in the Liverpool region. The Netherlands is the UK's third largest trading partner and although Brexit initially reduced trade, much of that loss has been restored. A theme that emerged was the opportunities for growth as Europe takes back defence production from the US. It was clear that the British Prime Minister, Andy Burnham's aim to get closer to Europe will be good for business and has also inspired UK Civil Servants to promote the UK energetically.

Big Change Research Programme

2026 projects

Our 2026 research programme is now, largely completed. The topics this year are:

1. **Will the government meet its housing and new homes targets?** The government has not achieved its target rate of progress in the first two years. Now the key questions are whether it is possible to ramp-up house building, and are we building the right houses in the right locations.
2. **How can Europe compete with US innovation?** It is apparent that the US leads Europe in many areas of technological innovation. This may have been acceptable when the US was a close and benign ally, but now this is not the case the continent needs to assess where technology lags are most dangerous and how to address them.
3. **What are the main problems with the NHS and how could they be fixed?** The post WW2 establishment of the NHS and the delivery of universal health care in the UK has been widely and deeply appreciated in the UK. Financial pressures since the 2008 banking crisis have, however, impacted its performance.

We plan to publish researched opinion pieces on these topics in Q1 2027.