

Industry Forum December Newsletter

Reasons to be optimistic about 2023

As 2022 draws to a close, none of the big challenges facing the UK, has gone away; many are also world problems. The climate crisis has been made worse by the terrible Ukraine/Russia war which has spiked fossil fuel energy prices. International trade has become more difficult for the UK on account of Brexit, increased international tensions, and the pandemic aftermath. For the UK, in particular, a long period of Treasury-dominated economic management, lack of focus on building the economy, and high inflation is causing widespread industrial unrest.

Outside the UK, COP27 ended with a fudge and no sign that companies and countries with fossil fuel vested interests recognise the urgency and inevitability of the transition to carbon-free energy. Prospects for ending Russia's war on Ukraine and avoiding more trade separation from China, look equally bleak. In the UK the industrial relations situation is crying out for government involvement, recognition of the contribution of the public sector, and the need for public sector workers to be fairly paid. Without constructive dialogue such problems will remain an unresolved drag on the UK and world economies.

There are nevertheless reasons to be optimistic: The US Biden administration has led by changing the direction of US industrial strategy in favour of green energy, science, and reshoring jobs; the International Energy Agency has predicted a big, unexpected, increase in renewable energy generation by 2027; populist politicians are falling out of favour, and the centrist UK opposition Labour party has committed to a progressive industrial strategy with green energy as its central mission.

The Industry Forum has focused on such issues since 1993. In our 30th anniversary year, we will continue to bring together progressive policy-makers, our members, and our friends, to explore practical ways to tackle them. This year an influx of new members has helped us to expand our activities. We have already assembled four leading politicians to start the New Year programme, and we look forward to building a strong programme for the whole of 2023.

The future direction of Labour policies



25 January 2023

Speaker: Anneliese Dodds MP, Chair of Labour Policy Review and Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities

Given the current economic situation, there has been much focus recently on Labour's plans for financial, trade and industrial policies. Other factors, however, will also affect the success of a future Labour government and how it relates to the

business community. Such factors include industrial relations, management of public sector services, and the priorities allocated to women and equalities. Anneliese Dodds MP, Chair of Labour Policy Review and Shadow Secretary of State for Women & Equalities will lead a discussion of current Labour thinking about these issues.

Can higher education help solve the UK productivity problem?



Date - TBC

Speaker: Matt Western MP, Shadow Minister for Further Education and Universities

Compared with our major international competitors, the UK has a long-term and apparently intractable problem of relatively low productivity. This needs to be overcome to grow the economy and support the level of public services that we expect to enjoy. Matt Western MP, Shadow Minister for Further Education and Universities will lead a roundtable on ways to tackle the skills gap, the effectiveness of the apprenticeship levy and, overall, how we can harness higher education to solve the productivity puzzle.

Building the NHS of the Future



8 February 2023

Speaker: Dr Rosena Allin-Khan MP, Shadow Mental Health Minister

The NHS is probably the most loved institution in the UK. It has cared for the country through many health crises. But, like most 75 year olds, it has reached an age where it needs more care itself. Time and budget pressures mean that it usually, only gets short term fixes. This policy roundtable will be led by Dr Rosena Allin-Khan MP, Shadow Mental Health Minister, who is an NHS emergency care doctor with first-hand experience of operational problems, as well as policy ideas for the future. A small expert panel will respond, followed by a general discussion of ideas and technology solutions to help the NHS run more seamlessly, for the benefit of patients and NHS staff alike.

Delivering Green Power by 2030



1 March 2023

Speaker: Bill Esterson MP, Shadow Minister for Business and Industry

To address the climate emergency, the Labour party, in its industrial strategy 'Prosperity Through Partnership,' has announced an ambitious mission to deliver clean power by 2030. Achieving the decarbonisation of electricity will involve a range of renewable energy sources, deploying energy storage infrastructure, and improving the grid network for smart energy collection and supply. It will also need active consumer participation, and provide many thousands of new jobs throughout the country. Bill Esterson MP, Shadow BEIS minister will discuss how this can be achieved, and some of the issues to be overcome, besides winning the next election.

Other meetings currently in planning for 2023, include:

- Policy priorities for the water sector
- The renewable energy transition
- Implications of the changing nature of work for offices, transport, and pensions
- Fixing public procurement
- Key transport issues
- What does the Ukraine/Russia war mean for UK defence industries
- Improving the UK digital infrastructure
- Building more homes
- Public sector transformation
- Harnessing the power of artificial intelligence
- Building a new positive relationship with Europe

These are all major topics which we hope to cover in some depth. We are also keen to talk to members interested in working with us to produce policy action reports. Please let us know if you would like to sponsor and work with us on these or other topics.

In addition to members, we invite diplomats, academics, union representatives, and business guests to participate in our meetings.

In November this year, our Executive Chair, Rod Dowler was asked to speak at the Anthropy Conference at the Eden Centre in Cornwall. This was a major conference focussing on the issues of climate change, economics and governance. Here is his report on one of the key topics:

Anthropy - The Democratic Economy of the future

I was delighted to be invited by leading economist, Vicky Pryce, to speak at the ambitious Anthropy conference, held at the Eden project Cornwall in November. Our panel discussed 'The democratic economy of the future'. The panel included Bina Mehta, Chair of KPMG, Luke Hildyard, Executive Director of the High Pay Unit and Tamara Box, Managing Partner of Reed Smith. We discussed the ambitions and practices of leading professional services companies, the damaging effects of salary inequalities, and the overall risks to democratic government that have become evident in the political environment in recent years. Key questions for the future are: How do we preserve democracy in the face of the undermining effects of inequality and a widespread lack of trust in institutions? What will future prosperity look like? and, Where does economic governance lie between government and business? These are big challenges that we hope Anthropy will help solve.



Our most recent Industry Forum meeting focused on boosting international trade:

Boosting UK International Trade



14 November 2022

Speaker: Rt Hon Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, Shadow Secretary of State for International Trade

UK international trade is suffering badly from Brexit, the pandemic, the Ukraine/Russia war, supply chain problems and inflation. So, the Industry Forum invited Shadow International Trade Secretary, Nick Thomas-Symonds to lead a roundtable on 'Boosting UK international trade'. The meeting was in the City offices of Workday the fast-growing, US enterprise software company. James Johns, head of corporate affairs at Workday welcomed Nick Thomas-Symonds and representatives from a range of European and US companies to the meeting. Some of the key issues discussed concerned regulating data transfer and storage with the EU and the US, the need for improved trade arrangements with the EU, and the opportunities to work with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to support overseas trade. There was wide agreement that the UK, international trade strategy should focus on UK strengths including services and education, and link to an ambitious green programme for the economy. Nick Thomas-Symonds confirmed that his plans for international trade include working in lockstep with Labour's well-received industrial strategy 'Prosperity Through Partnership'.

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 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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