

Industry Forum February Newsletter

30 Turbulent Years

2023 marks the anniversary of the founding of the Industry Forum, 30 turbulent years ago. We will celebrate, appropriately, with a reception for members and friends, at a House of Commons on the evening of 19th September.

Meanwhile, there has never been a more urgent need for constructive dialogue between policy-makers and the private and public sector organisations that make up our economy. There is much to do to make this a reality, but the potential benefits are enormous: A comprehensive industrial strategy, backed by economic policy, would enable large and small businesses to plan with some confidence. A comprehensive energy transition plan would give confidence to users and the supply industries alike. Consensus on the health service would allow the NHS to move forward, with well-paid and well-motivated staff, to provide excellent services, and take advantage of the many recent advances in medical care and treatment. Peace with the unions would help the UK develop the sort of constructive labour relations that enable Germany to maintain enviable productivity. Finally, a positive relationship with the EU could lead to a better trade deal, and also unlock a new trade deal with the US. The maths is simple, but may not be on the PPE syllabus: Working together, $2+2=5$; Working at loggerheads, $2+2=3$. According to many commentators, that is where we are now.

The Industry Forum has always focused on business policy issues requiring discussion and understanding. We will continue to bring together progressive policy-makers, our members, and our friends, to explore practical ways to tackle these issues. This year, an influx of new members has helped us to expand our activities. In the next few months, three leading politicians will continue our programme. We look forward to building a strong programme for the whole of 2023.

Can higher education help solve the UK productivity problem?



23 February 2023

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.

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.

Building the NHS of the Future



15 March 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.

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 good 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.

Our most recent Industry Forum meeting focused on Labour policies:

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

With intense interest from business in the industrial and economic policies of the Labour party already apparent, the Industry Forum kicked off 2023 with a broad look at the 'Future direction of Labour Policies,' covering social, health, and industrial relations policies, the treatment of women and minorities, and our relationship with the EU. Anneliese Dodds MP, Chair of the Labour party, Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities, and previously an MEP, was the perfect person to lead the roundtable hosted by Paul Morris, Head of Corporate Affairs for Vodafone UK, at their south London HQ. It was attended by major national and international businesses and trade organisations based in the UK. Inevitably, there was a lively, broad discussion covering topics such as employment practices, science policy, the energy transition, gender issues, and pensions. It was clear that what businesses need for their own planning and investment purposes, is that government policy makers have consistent, focused objectives and deliver stability. What they value most, however, is good dialogue about how to work together to tackle changing economic and social challenges.

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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