



Industry Forum February Newsletter

Preparing for change

The coming general election will deliver a new administration with a new mandate. Both the main parties agree on the need for urgent changes to spur economic growth. We have not yet seen the party manifestos but assume they will not agree on how growth should be achieved, nor on how its benefits should be shared.

Already politicians are clearing the decks to fight for their own seats and win targets seats. And some, of course, are polishing their CVs or practicing their golf swings. Key policies to win votes are already baked into electoral planning. But, within a year, promises will need to be replaced by action plans. It won't be adequate to declare that an objective is a plan - timetables, resources, responsibilities and budgets will need to be allocated, assuming the promises were sincere.

For such reasons, the Industry Forum, as a forward-looking business organisation, is focussing on post-election planning by encouraging discussion of how government and business can work together to make the UK prosperous again. We have already had three important meetings this year and many more are in planning. Thank you to all the organisations that have joined us recently. We are optimistic that 2024 will be one of our most active and successful years since 1997.

Finally, Rod Dowler, our Executive Chair, thanks everyone who sent good wishes following his road accident in January. He received wonderful care from the NHS, the ambulance service and the University College Hospital. He is recovering fast, and hopes to be fully mobile again by April.

Reforming the Civil Service for the 21st Century



7 March 2024

Speaker: Rt Hon Lord Maude of Horsham

Numerous problems in recent decades show that the management of the Civil Service does not reliably match the needs of the country in a fast-changing world. The Covid Inquiry provided examples of governance and accountability failures during a crisis. Such a disconnect is serious for the effective management of the country and led, in 2022, to the appointment of Lord Maude to conduct an independent review of Civil Service governance and accountability. Lord Maude has first-hand experience of management in government, is a long-term advocate of government reform, and was the architect of the truly world-leading Government Digital Service. He will present the broad findings of his review and lead a discussion about what needs to be done.

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.

Other meetings, currently in planning include:

- Labour's Green Prosperity Plan will attract private investment
- Getting serious about saving energy in housing
- 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
- Fallout from the HS2 decision
- Implications of the changing nature of work for offices
- Building a new positive relationship with Europe
- Would better industrial relations improve UK productivity?

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 Terrace Reception for members and guests.

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

Our most recent Industry Forum meetings have focused on government procurement, water policies and road transport issues.

Improving government performance in procurement and value for money



25 January 2024

Speaker: Dame Meg Hillier MP, Chair of Public Accounts Committee

Dame Meg Hillier MP, Chair of the Public Accounts Select Committee, spoke recently at an Industry Forum roundtable on the critical subject of 'Improving government performance in procurement and value for money.' The meeting was hosted by the Railway Industry Association and introduced by Robert Cook, Policy Director at the RIA. With her trademark precision, Dame Meg Hillier described current and historical problems. Key issues discussed included the need to widen competition for large

projects and enable more medium-sized firms to bid for contracts. The Civil Service also needs more staff with the skills and experience to manage large projects and provide continuity of oversight until they are successfully delivered. With an election certain within twelve months, and both major parties promising cross-department changes on a tight budget, it is essential that the next administration can make good procurement choices and control costs and quality on large projects.

Policy priorities for the water sector



29 January 2024

Speaker: Emma Hardy MP, Shadow Minister for Flooding, Oceans and Coastal Communities

Recently, Emma Hardy MP, Shadow Minister for Flooding, Oceans and Coastal Communities, led a highly topical Industry Forum roundtable on 'Policy priorities for the water sector'. Lila Thompson, CEO of hosts, British Water, chaired the meeting in the absence of Rod Dowler. The wide ranging discussion covered a number of issues and, in particular, flooding. With the impact of climate change growing, the management of water issues will increase in importance and a new post-election administration will need to hit the ground running with suitable policies and action plans.

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.

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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