

Industry Forum June Newsletter

The party's over?

Polls predict that, on July 5th, a new, likely Labour-dominated, administration will take over a country ready for change. It may be like the day after a long and exuberant party with a need to clean up and get back to work. Foremost amongst the challenges will be to get the economy moving and sort out problems in public services. New ministers will face the need to remotivate and reenergise the public sector and rebuild the confidence of businesses, including some major international companies. Without the scope to tax or borrow more, the big opportunities for growth are to encourage private sector investment and improve trading opportunities, especially with our European neighbours. Growth will gradually provide the tax revenues to improve public services, but demotivated staff will also require a new positive vision for how these services contribute to the society, and constructive reforms such as investment in better IT systems.

We have a House of Commons Business Reception for members and guests on the evening of 11 September. It will be sponsored by leading tech companies Workday and Vodafone, and Darren Jones MP, previously Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury has agreed to be the keynote speaker. We are also holding two fringe meetings at Labour's Liverpool conference on the subjects of AI and the contribution of Physics to the economy. These will be sponsored by SAP and the Institute of Physics respectively. Looking towards the end of the year, we are planning a Christmas reception for members and guests to meet some of the new government.

Over the period of the summer recess we have three research projects on big questions of significance for the economy, and for individual companies:

- Why do we need a more united Europe?
- How do we get UK climate plans back on track
- What is the reality of AI in business?

We cancelled all scheduled meetings with MPs following the announcement of the General Election. We will reschedule events and add to our autumn programme as soon

as possible after the election.

Industry Forum Business Reception



11 September 2024

Keynote speaker: Darren Jones MP, former Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury

UK prosperity and our standing in the world depend heavily on economic success which, in turn, depends a lot on our success in harnessing digital technology. We are therefore delighted that our House of Commons Business Reception this year will be sponsored by two leading international digital sector companies Workday and Vodafone. The keynote speaker will be Darren Jones MP, former Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury who was, until recently Chair of the Business and Trade Select Committee. Other speakers will be added.

The reality of AI in business



24 September 2024

Panel:

Dr Chris Francis, Government Affairs Director for UK & Ireland, SAP
Rod Dowler, Executive Chair, Industry Forum
James Johns, Head of Corporate Affairs, Workday

This year, the topic of artificial intelligence has seized the imagination of the media and stock markets. The transformative potential of the group of hardware and software technologies that are bringing AI services to market is clearly enormous. This fringe meeting is sponsored by leading enterprise software company SAP. It will have a panel of industry specialists who can put these developments into the perspective of the use of AI in the existing software and services and give their views on the future use of AI in business. We will also invite a minister with digital responsibilities from the new administration to comment on policy implications and priorities for AI.

Other meetings, currently in planning include:

- Strengthening the SME sector
- Policy priorities for building safely
- 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, as well as a, Christmas, House of Commons 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 immigration issues and managing parliamentary business.

Tackling our immigration issues



20 May 2024

Speaker: Stephen Kinnock MP, Shadow Minister for Immigration

'Tackling our immigration issues' was the topic of a recent Industry Forum expert roundtable led by Stephen Kinnock MP, Shadow Minister for Immigration. The meeting was sponsored by Lowick a leading reputation management and public affairs consultancy closely aligned with Labour. Kevin McKeever the founder and managing director of Lowick welcomed guests to their new offices close to Tate Modern. Stephen Kinnock identified the need for an immigration system that delivers for the economy and builds social cohesion. The approach of a Labour government would focus equally on compassion and control. The discussion, with people from business and academia, ranged across current bureaucratic failings in providing statistics and processing asylum seekers, the serious skills shortages arising from the end of free movement after Brexit, and the desirability to take the heat out of the current debate. It is clearly necessary to concentrate on improving home office efficiency and unifying border control resources to combat people smuggling. Reducing the backlog of asylum seekers and the cost of housing them would have the major benefit of restoring much of the foreign aid budget to help with reducing some of the problems that lead to asylum applications. In summary, systematically addressing the root problems looks like the most promising way to tackle UK immigration issues. It would be welcomed by UK business and academia.

Managing the business of the House of Commons



16 April 2024

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

The critical importance of managing the business of the House of Commons is not widely understood. Should Labour win the coming general election, this vital role would likely fall to the current Shadow Leader of the House, Lucy Powell. Clearly relishing the prospect, Lucy Powell led a wide-ranging Industry Forum roundtable on how she would approach this challenge. An incoming reformist government would clearly have a lot of work to do in rapidly turning policies into draft bills and then legislation. In addition, there are major challenges for big cross-departmental projects or missions which are currently not well managed by the Cabinet Office. It is important to restore standards in public life and restore controls on the executive exercised by, for example, the select committees. Large issues such as House of Lords reform will also need to be considered. Bearing in mind the current poor fiscal

situation all changes will need to be accomplished without the luxury of generous budgets. The business audience at the roundtable could fully appreciate these constraints; the potential bonus for Lucy Powell and Labour is that they also indicated that clear and consistent plans and policies would be valuable to business and could be the key to unlocking private investment in the UK. This meeting was hosted by Workday, a leading provider of cloud based financial and personnel management services.

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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