



Industry Forum April Newsletter

A fork in the road

The media are on fire with speculation about the consequences of Donald Trump's sweeping new tariffs which echo disastrous US policies of the 1930s. These tariffs have been imposed with little or no consultation and with threats of escalation in the event of countermeasures. The examples of Canada, Germany and Taiwan show no recognition of past cooperation, support and friendship; the example of Russia show no consequences for bad behaviour. Europe as a whole is characterised as a bunch of spongers exploiting US generosity. The EU in particular is singled out as an arch-exploiter. This approach breaks trust and commitments established over decades and even if compromises on reduced tariffs are agreed quickly, trust will take much longer to restore. Nevertheless, and despite big risks, this dramatic fork in the road offers important options for the rest of the world, and some major opportunities.

The option for the 42 democratic European nations is either to work closely together or face economic fragmentation driven by the US, and military fragmentation driven by Russia. The main European powers have already signalled that they plan to strengthen and unify their military capability. With a population and GDP exceeding that of the United States, democratic Europe is able to rival the US economically, and to continue previous international trade policies with the rest of the world. There is also no reason why democratic Europe should not organise its own technology renaissance, possibly with the help of a brain drain of scientists leaving the US.

The UK is heavily entwined with the US in military and economic terms. The Labour government has taken steps to revive a stagnant economy and establish its financial freedom of action, but still needs time get control of dire national and local government debt levels, and for the economy to start to grow. It would probably like to avoid choosing between the US and Europe right now but faces difficult choices in terms of NATO restructuring, and will have to think carefully about economic alignment and trade deals.

As we all worry about these big, evolving issues, the Industry Forum is continuing to plan our programme of meetings which we hope will contribute to the economic health of UK businesses. Our next scheduled event is our spring reception which will provide more opportunities for members to meet people in the still-new administration.

Industry Forum Spring Reception



Wednesday 21st May 2025

Keynote Speaker:

Gareth Thomas MP, Minister for Services, Small Business and Exports

Our Spring Reception this year will be an opportunity to meet Ministers and backbenchers, other members of the Industry Forum community and guests including the researchers, consultants and advisers who form part of the big influx of new faces contributing to the, still new and evolving, Labour administration. Our keynote speaker is Gareth Thomas MP, Minister for Services, Small Business and Exports. We are delighted that the reception will be sponsored by The Horticultural Trades Association and The British Coatings Federation.

Fixing the skills crisis



Tuesday 3rd June 2025

Speaker:

Lauren Edwards MP

Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Skills, Careers & Employment

The skills crisis is absolutely at the top of the agenda for Industry Forum members. Changes in immigration policies and inadequate education and skills training programmes are causing shortages in sectors including agriculture, healthcare, plumbing, programming and the leisure industries. This is currently hampering businesses and will be a restraint on growth. Lauren Edwards MP, Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Skills, Careers & Employment, will lead a discussion.

Delivering the homes that the UK desperately needs



Monday 6th October 2025

Speaker:

Florence Eshalomi MP

Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee

Adequate housing is essential for the social and economic functioning of a nation. Nevertheless, the UK suffers from a serious shortage of housing to buy or to rent at affordable prices, and this adversely affects living standards and labour mobility. After the destruction of WW2, the country had a continuous and successful house building programme. Much of the housing stock in this period, was owned and managed by councils who could adjust rents to allow for the circumstances of tenants. However, policy changes in the 1980s allowed council tenants to buy their houses and also drastically reduced council house building programmes. Since then, house purchase prices and rental prices have climbed greatly in relation to incomes, and the rate of building of new housing has declined. The current government has undertaken to address the housing shortage by overseeing the building of 300,000 houses per year for the five-year duration of this parliament. Florence Eshalomi MP, Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee, will lead this roundtable looking at the plans for this programme and the obstacles that must be addressed.

Our other meeting plans for 2025 include:

- Decarbonising homes - making it happen
- Could reform of consumer credit regulation support higher growth?
- Achieving Labour's energy mission
- International relations and defence diplomacy
- Working with the new US administration
- Improving our digital infrastructure would be a win/win for businesses and the economy
- Policy priorities for safe and sustainable, high-quality buildings.
- An integrated plan for the UK road and rail networks
- Key issues for UK pensions and savings
- Working closely with Europe

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



Big Change Research Programme

Work is proceeding on the following topics:

Why we need a more united Europe

The reality of what AI means

Combatting the growing threat of the lone terrorist

This programme will lead to short papers and roundtables over the next few months.

If you are interested to participate in these projects, in any way, please

contact jwyer@industry-forum.org

Our most recent Industry Forum meetings focused on:

Creating opportunity in the UK



24 March 2025

Speaker:

Sarah Smith MP, Opportunity Mission Champion

Recently, Sarah Smith MP, Keir Starmer's 'Opportunity Mission Champion', led a broad ranging Industry Forum roundtable on 'Creating Opportunity in the UK.' The meeting was hosted by the Chartered Insurance Institute and Industry Forum members and guests were welcomed to the CII City offices in the iconic Walkie Talkie building, by Katherine Kennett, Policy and Public Affairs Manager at CII. The discussion covered the broad ambitions of the Labour government to reverse the stifling of opportunity caused by economic stagnation and austerity policies dating back to the 2008 banking crash. To help achieve this, a primary government mission is to create a virtuous circle of more opportunity leading to increased prosperity and the ability to fund investment in education, training, infrastructure, healthcare, technology and more. The hurdles facing the complete economic turnaround needed are high, bearing in mind the poor financial condition of the economy and the challenging international security situation. Meanwhile, there are inevitable tensions between urgent short-term needs in such as helping young people not in education, employment or training, improving healthcare, social care, and housing, and longer-term investment in areas like early years education and the transition to renewable

energy. Nevertheless, sticking to fundamentals including clear objectives, a focus on improving training and skills, and long-term planning is the only approach which can succeed, and is also the approach taken by most successful companies.

Delivering the Growth Mission



4 March 2025

Speaker:

Dan Tomlinson MP, Labour's National Mission Champion for Growth

The Industry Forum was delighted to welcome Labour's National Growth Champion, Daniel Tomlinson, to lead a roundtable on 'Delivering the Growth Mission.' The meeting was hosted by the Railway Industry Association and introduced by their Policy Director, Robert Cook. Dan Tomlinson, an economist who has worked at the Resolution Foundation and in HM Treasury, outlined the severe structural economic problems that need to be tackled to restore growth in a stagnant UK economy. He also explained the important role of the backbench 'mission champions:' They will act as communications bridges on key issues to explain government plans and actions and relay back comments and suggestions. With plenty of comment and ideas from the wide range of UK and international businesses present, the discussion covered how the government and companies can work together to raise investment by the private and public sectors and address bottlenecks in the economy, particularly in transport and housing. There was also discussion of the need for the Civil Service to improve its commercial skills in areas such as procurement, project appraisal and ensuring value for money. As in all turnaround situations, a key question is where to make changes and allocate resources which will start to fuel the recovery. This will be made considerably more difficult by the urgent emerging defence needs!

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.



Copyright © 2025 Industry Forum, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

