

FROM THE COUNCIL TO THE COMMONS

Chamber

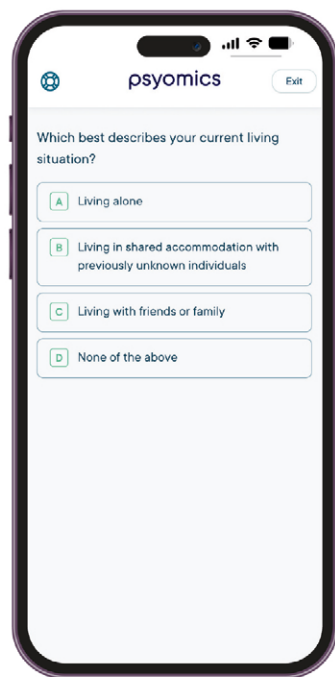
Chamber UK: Special Conference Edition

Pioneering a new era in precision mental health through the fusion of digital and biological data

psyomics

Psyomics is **pioneering how mental healthcare is accessed and delivered** across public and private sectors. Our digital platform captures rich, structured information directly from patients at the start of their journey - ensuring their voice is heard and supporting clinicians as they formulate which treatments are appropriate.

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Turning ambition for mental health into action together



Max Booth
Editor

“Computers have reached the point where they command facilities of memory and of judgement far beyond the capacity of any human being.”

- Harold Wilson, Labour Party Conference, 1963.

When Harold Wilson told attendees of 1963’s Labour Conference the above, he was warning that Britain had to harness the “white heat” of technological revolution, or be left behind. Since then, artificial intelligence (AI) has moved decidedly from imagination to reality, yet the way politicians speak about AI is no less sweeping and grandiose.

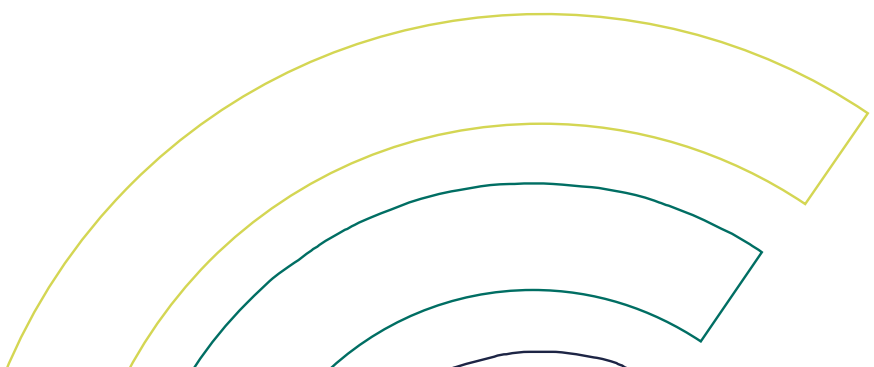
In his speech for the release of the Government’s AI Opportunities Action Plan, the Prime Minister said that AI is “the global race of our lives”, and that (mark his words) “Britain will be one of the great AI superpowers.”

UKAI, Britain’s AI trade body, has marked his words. And his actions. So you’ll find that UKAI’s scorecard of the Government’s progress on the AI Opportunities Action Plan is on page eight of this journal.

Also find in this special conference issue – contributions from Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Peter Kyle, AI Minister Feryal Clark, and Lord Clement Jones – all outlining their visions for what AI can do for Britain.

But before that, you’ll find useful tips for conference season: the best events, and how to make the most of your first conference, as well as what to look for in AI at this conference – we hope you find all that helpful.

That’s not all – hear from Sir Ed Davey on his experiences as a carer, Sir Mel Stride on where he’d take fiscal policy, and read about our interviews with Yvette Cooper, Bridget Phillipson and Jonathan Reynolds. ©





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How to Survive Your First Conference



Emily Hewertson

Senior Events and Marketing Officer,
Party Conference Expert

Chamber UK

Party conference season is just around the corner: the annual pilgrimage for politicians, would-be MPs, and policy-makers. For some seasoned pros, this year may mark two decades on the circuit; for others, like me six years ago, it's a first encounter with the spectacle. Here are five things I wish I had known to make that first conference count.

1. Outline Your Objectives

Start by asking yourself, "Why am I going to conference, and what do I want to achieve?" I'll come clean. At my first conference, as a budding Tory activist, I mostly wanted to have fun, get into the most exclusive parties and score as many selfies with MPs and famous faces as possible. Over time, that shifted. I came to see conference as a serious, valuable networking opportunity.

I actually met my now boss there a few years ago and, because I made a solid, professional first impression, he remembered

our encounter during the application process. Similarly, last year, following the Conservative MP exodus, many former staffers found new roles through connections they had built at events they had chosen strategically, having researched in advance who would be in the room.

Having a clear idea of what you want to achieve will ensure you spend time in the right rooms, ask the right questions and leave with concrete follow-ups.

2. Be Prepared

The first step before conference is to sort travel and accommodation well in advance and be clear on how you will be collecting your pass. When it comes to planning your agenda, the conference app will be your best friend. Scan the programme and fringe guides in advance and sketch a rough itinerary. Star priority sessions, add them to your calendar with room names and allow 10–15 minutes' walking time between venues. Also, check whether an RSVP is needed in advance, or if events are invite-only, as these are often strictly enforced and will stop you wasting time by being turned away at the door. Once you have selected your must-attends, draft one question per key panel and a 30-second intro tailored to who'll be in the room.



3. Dress Smart

The “what to wear” debate is surprisingly contentious. One piece of advice I was given, to “dress for a job interview”, tends to be more closely observed at Conservative Party Conference than at Labour, where smart casual is common. Conversely, an MP laughed off this advice and told me, “Please just wear what you want!”

The truth: there’s no single rule. Dress for your objective and your audience, and prioritise comfort. You will power-walk from fringe to fringe and smash your 10k-step goal

daily. Please learn from my beginner’s mistake of bringing only heels. Pack flats and plenty of blister plasters. A small bag for essentials, such as a power bank and business cards, is also a good idea.

4. Work the Fringe

The best conversations often happen off the main stage. Prioritise fringe events where ministers, spads, and sector leads are likely to drop. Do not be afraid to introduce yourself or ask questions. If you are desperate for that selfie with the Home Secretary (and there is no shame in this!), fringes are your best shot, although the most senior politicians do get swarmed, so be tactical about where you position yourself.

5. Pace Yourself

It’s easy to get sucked into late-night fringes, dancing in PopWorld with MPs until the early hours, and skipping meals because an event will “probably have nibbles”. If you’re doing the full Saturday–Wednesday stretch, you’ll need to sustain yourself.

I highly recommend planning rest windows to break up the long, intense days; drinking plenty of water; committing to at least one decent, nutritious meal a day (nibbles aren’t dinner); and aiming for at least eight hours of sleep a night. This will stand you in good stead to beat the dreaded conference flu and give you the final burst of energy to queue for the Prime Minister’s or Leader’s keynote on the final morning of conference. Your future self (and your feet) will thank you! ☺



AI on The Agenda



Max Booth
Editor
Chamber UK

As in the wider world, AI is no longer just at the fringes at this year's party conferences. Through set-piece frontbench speeches, panels, debates, and evening receptions, AI will be a constantly reappearing thread – especially from the Government, who will likely invoke AI heavily as they use their conference reset to regroup, take aim and shoot once more for growth.

If you only circle two events this conference, make them UKAI's evening receptions – at Labour conference (Liverpool, Mon 29th Sept, 19:30, Heathrow Lounge) and at Conservative conference (Manchester, Sun 5th Oct, 19:30, Heathrow Lounge). The

Labour event is billed as “Get Britain Growing: Diversity, Drinks & Dialogue”, with a keynote speech from AI Minister Feryal Clark. The Conservative reception will similarly highlight AI's potential for boosting productivity and regional economies: topping the bill there are Shadow Chancellor, Sir Mel Stride and Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, Dame Caroline Dinenage.

Also running AI events are SME4Labour, with OpenUK, who are hosting ‘Business Returns in the Age of AI’ on Monday 29th from 17:00 to 18:00, in the Arena Room. At both conferences, the Education Policy Institute and ASCL are running sessions on “Can technology solve the challenges facing education?”, and at both conferences, The London School of Economics will also be present, with academics from the Data Science Institute discussing AI for public services, growth, and skills.

Behind these events sits a fast-moving policy backdrop. In January, the Government agreed to all 50 recommendations set out in Matt Clifford's AI Opportunities Action Plan, and in the months since, we've seen some progress on delivering them. The headline target is to expand sovereign compute capacity twenty-fold by 2030, anchored by the UK Compute Roadmap and the AI Research Resource, with new national supercomputing capability in Edinburgh. The firing gun has also been started on AI Growth Zones, with the first site – Culham in Oxfordshire – being pencilled in.

Labour's positioning is clear, and their ambition is beyond doubt. Launching the plan, Sir Keir Starmer said that AI is "the global race of our lives" and that Britain would become an "AI superpower". But the question is whether ambition becomes reality. Conference is as good a time as any to take the temperature on progress towards those ambitions, as well as the rest of the Government's nebulous array of milestones, missions, and metrics.

AI is no longer a titillating technological curiosity – it's the main event. If you're plotting your route through Liverpool or Manchester, start with UKAI's receptions, add SME4Labour and OpenUK for business adoption, and finish with EPI for what AI means in classrooms. What follows after conference will be just as important – in the months ahead, keep your eyes peeled for further developments, and the next steps for the rollout of the AI Opportunities Action Plan. ©



**Scan here to to see UKAI's
AI Opportunities Action
Plan progress scorecard.**

Reviewing the AI Opportunities Action Plan – Six Months On



Tim Flagg
CEO
UKAI

The UK has set out an ambitious vision to be a global leader in artificial intelligence, not only in research and innovation but also in governance and responsible deployment. At the heart of this ambition lies the Government's AI Opportunities Action Plan (AIOAP), which set out fifty bold and ambitious recommendations in January.

Six months on, UKAI has published its six-month review of progress against the plan. As an independent membership body representing AI businesses of all sizes across the UK, UKAI plays a unique role: providing industry with a collective voice, scrutinising government delivery, and highlighting both achievements and priorities for action.

For AI to fulfil its economic and social potential, dialogue between government, business, and civil society is essential. Our report sets out to support the Government to successfully deliver the Action Plan: championing successes, amplifying good practice, and ensuring barriers to growth and innovation are identified and addressed.

Bringing Industry and Policymakers Together

To prepare this report, UKAI convened members and stakeholders from across the AI sector. We hosted a dedicated event, gathering business leaders and policy experts to analyse the delivery of the Action Plan and the wider context. This was complemented by a member survey, which provided insights into how announcements are being received by those on the ground.

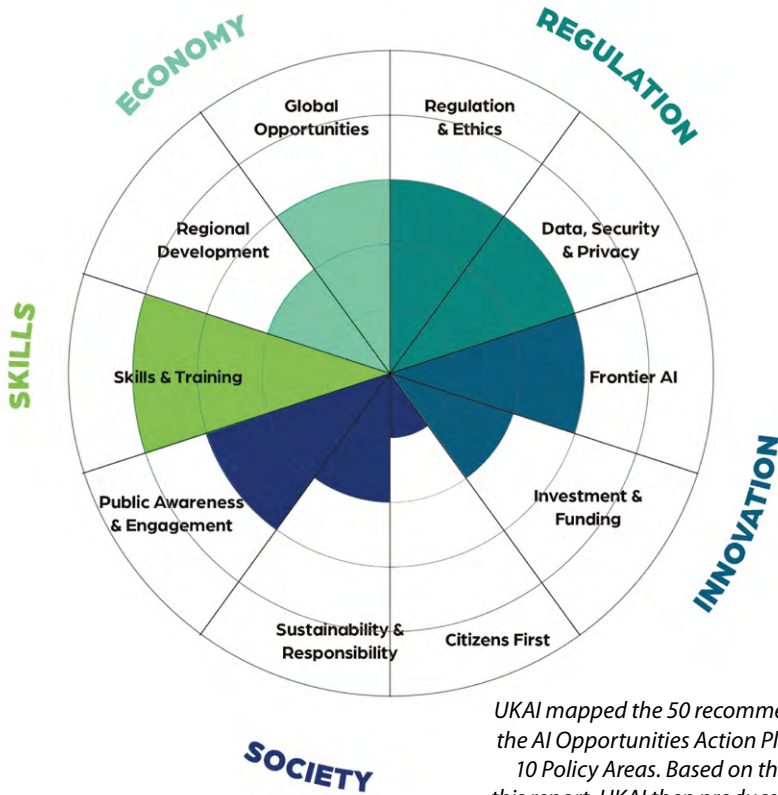
This combination of policy analysis, expert dialogue, and member feedback provides a unique snapshot of how the Action Plan is progressing, not just on paper but in the real economy. The review highlights where momentum is building, while also pointing to areas that require urgent attention if the UK is to stay on course.

Progress and Achievements

In several areas, there has been clear delivery that deserves recognition.

■ Skills and Education

The Government has announced significant investments in AI scholarships, postgraduate courses, and training initiatives. These measures are welcomed by industry, though our survey showed that



UKAI mapped the 50 recommendations in the AI Opportunities Action Plan to UKAI's 10 Policy Areas. Based on the analysis in this report, UKAI then produced a score for each of the 10 Policy Areas.

awareness remains low among businesses, meaning further communication is essential.

■ Innovation and Research

The establishment of the AI Research Resource and new funding calls through UKRI demonstrate commitment to sustaining the UK's world-class research ecosystem. There is optimism that these initiatives could help maintain the UK's competitive edge.

■ Public Sector Innovation

Government pilots such as Assist, Extract, and Minute AI are showing how AI can streamline service delivery and improve efficiency. These initiatives demonstrate

the potential of AI to modernise public services, and set an example of responsible adoption that can be scaled across departments.

Gaps and Challenges

However, there are notable areas where delivery has been slower.

■ AI Growth Zones

The concept of regionally designated zones to catalyse AI investment has not yet materialised. Industry voices emphasise the importance of devolved leadership and planning flexibility to make this vision a reality.

■ **Procurement and Adoption**

Opening up public sector procurement to AI innovation remains limited. SMEs in particular continue to find barriers to entry, limiting the opportunities for public sector organisations to act as a testbed to adopt and scale powerful new technologies.

■ **Public Awareness and Trust**

The general public across the UK remain reluctant to engage and adopt AI-powered services and tools – this is particularly noticeable with older demographics and outside the South-Eastern tech bubble. Without broader awareness, public trust risks lagging behind technological progress.

Recommendations

Drawing on the report's analysis, contributions from our members, and insights from experts, UKAI makes several recommendations for the next phase of delivery

1. Raise Awareness of Achievements

Communicate more clearly to industry and the public where investment and progress have been made, especially in skills.

2. Accelerate AI Growth Zones

Provide clarity on timelines, governance, and support, linked to broader planning and infrastructure reform.

3. Open Up Procurement

Remove barriers for innovative technology and service companies and create dedicated opportunities for AI solutions within government and public sector contracts. Accelerate the existing recommendations in the Action Plan.

4. Strengthen Public Trust

Partner with industry to invest in public engagement, transparency, and responsible AI initiatives to build confidence.

A Shared Mission

Overall, UKAI remains optimistic. The Government has set the right course, and the Action Plan offers a coherent framework for harnessing AI's opportunities. But success will depend on sustained delivery and continued dialogue and partnership with industry across the UK.

Our role is to help make that delivery visible, amplify achievements and provide constructive challenge where needed. By working together, the UK can ensure AI is developed and deployed in ways that drive economic growth, strengthen society and uphold the highest standards of responsibility.

The next six months will be decisive. To seize the AI opportunity, the Government must deliver at pace, scale successful initiatives and provide clear direction, timeframes, targets, and investment. With industry, policymakers, and regions pulling together, the UK can turn ambition into execution and establish itself as a global leader in AI-driven growth. ©



Scan here to download the executive summary and first ten pages or visit:
www.ukai.co/actionplan



The Only Trade Association for **AI Businesses** Across the UK

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AI IS OUR BUSINESS

Can Local Government Deliver the AI-Powered Growth Agenda?

Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Peter Kyle has been leading the UK Government's AI-driven economic growth strategy, emphasising its potential to enhance productivity and innovation, but how can these ambitions be locally implemented?

The UK Government has set out an ambitious vision for economic growth, with artificial intelligence and technology at its core. In his recent remarks to *Chamber UK*, Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Peter Kyle, outlined the Government's approach, stating:

Growth is the central mission of this government. And there's not an element of the growth we're creating – building new homes, bettering hospitals and schools, creating safer streets – that AI can't help power. There are no half-measures here. Matt Clifford put forward 50 recommendations in the Action Plan – we're going forward with everyone. All so the British people reap the rewards.

- Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Peter Kyle MP



*Former Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Peter Kyle.
Picture by Aleksandra Dragoi/DSIT*

This declaration underscores a shift in how the Government envisions national progress, positioning AI as an engine to drive growth across multiple sectors. However, the real test lies in the delivery. While Westminster sets the agenda, it is local and regional government that must implement these ambitions. From local councils to regional mayors, the challenge is not just one of adoption but also of capability, co-ordination, and public trust.

Unveiled in January 2025, the AI Opportunities Action Plan seeks to embed AI-driven efficiencies into the public sector.

The Government is making big promises, including significant investment in computing infrastructure, creating data-sharing frameworks, and attracting top global talent. But while the policy documents are optimistic, the capacity of local authorities to translate these pledges into tangible change remains an open question. AI's impact will be felt in areas such as local transport networks, public services, and urban planning, but councils and regional government must first have the resources and expertise to harness these tools effectively.

This push for an AI-powered economy is part of a broader strategy, exemplified by the recent industrial strategy. The Government aims to provide long-term economic certainty, fostering a business environment that rewards innovation and skills development. The question is whether these initiatives will truly be inclusive, benefiting regions outside of London and the South East. For many local leaders, this is not just about technological adoption, it is about ensuring regional investment and equitable growth.

Beyond policy blueprints, the regulatory landscape is also shifting. Later this year, the Government will introduce an AI Bill, which aims to set the parameters for responsible AI deployment. Alongside this, the Digital Information and Smart Data Bill is expected to outline critical safeguards around data governance. Together, these legislative efforts seek to balance the promotion of AI with public concerns about privacy, fairness, and security. Yet, this regulatory direction also brings added complexity for local authorities, who must navigate compliance while still driving forward digital transformation.

At the heart of these discussions is the readiness of local government. Most

councils are expected to deploy AI solutions in areas such as traffic management, urban development, and service delivery, but many are already grappling with budgetary pressures and staff shortages. The promise of AI growth zones - designated areas with accelerated planning approvals - could provide some relief, but without targeted support, these initiatives risk exacerbating regional disparities rather than alleviating them. Moreover, the role of community engagement cannot be overlooked. The success of these policies hinges on public trust, and local governments must lead the effort in ensuring AI integration aligns with societal values and expectations.

Ultimately, if the Government's AI-led growth strategy is effectively executed, it could place the UK at the forefront of global innovation, enhancing productivity and regional economic performance. However, without a clear plan to enable local authorities to fully integrate AI into service delivery and planning, opportunities for efficiency and growth could be missed.

The Government may be intent on pressing ahead with all 50 recommendations from the AI Opportunities Action Plan, but delivery will be determined not in Westminster, but in town halls across the country.

The success of this agenda will depend not only on cutting-edge technology but on how well AI is embedded into local economic strategies. With the right support, local government can leverage AI to drive efficiencies, attract investment, and create more dynamic regional economies. But without it, the AI revolution risks becoming an unevenly distributed opportunity rather than a true driver of nationwide growth. ©

Unlocking AI's Potential: Driving Growth and Opportunity Across the UK

AI and Digital Government Minister, Feryal Clark sets out the opportunities created by the Government's AI Opportunities Action Plan, emphasising regional inclusivity and addressing public concerns to unlock Artificial Intelligence's (AI) potential for economic growth and societal benefits across the UK.



Feryal Clark MP
Former AI Minister
**Department for Science,
Innovation and Technology**

For a long time, the idea that AI can make us better off has felt like just that – an idea.

A promise of growth that's out of reach for much of the country, driven by a technology that doesn't have meaning in people's everyday lives.

If anything, AI has been seen as something to fear, not welcome. In December, we ran research into how people really feel about AI. The three most common words that came up were "robot", "scary", and "worried". In my role in government, it's those last two I want to change.

I want to take AI from the lofty heights we see in films, or when we're doom-scrolling on social media, and bring it into the real world.

Working with devolved administrations and local governments, we'll show people and businesses, from Salcombe to Stirling, how AI will actually improve their lives and give their balance sheets a boost.

Because AI Should Be a Leveller

Something that gives people access to a more personalised education for their kids.

Faster care in our hospitals.

And for small businesses, innovations that might otherwise only exist for companies with deeper pockets.

The AI Opportunities Action Plan, launched by the Prime Minister in January, shows how we can use AI to make everyone better off.

Let's Look at How AI Improves Economic Growth

The IMF estimates that, if we embrace AI fully, it can boost productivity by up to 1.5 percentage points a year. How will it actually do that?

Businesses that adopt AI spend less time on admin, and more time doing work that improves their bottom line. AI leads to faster scientific advancement. And it can reduce the cost of our NHS, cutting paperwork and leaving missed appointments in the past. These improvements could be worth up to an average of £47 billion to the UK each year over a decade. That's more than enough to pay for every primary school for a year.

How Do We Ensure That Growth is Shared Across the Country?

The Golden Triangle of London, Oxford, and Cambridge is rightly a source of huge pride for us. It adds £94 billion to our economy, and that value will only grow as the Action Plan brings more investment and infrastructure. But we have so many other pockets of AI innovation across the country that I want to celebrate and strengthen.

Wales is the global leader in semiconductors. Bristol is home to the Isambard supercomputer – we're opening access to that for SMEs and researchers. And IT leader Kyndryl announced an AI hub, bringing 1,000 new jobs to Merseyside.

As a government, our job is to make sure the benefits of AI are evenly shared.

Through the Action Plan, we'll increase the UK's public computing power twentyfold by 2030. And we'll create AI Growth Zones across the UK. These hotspots will get faster planning permissions to build data centres, attracting more AI firms to the region. We'll work with devolved administrations and local governments to decide where the new Growth Zones should be. And together, we'll think about how we can support regional growth opportunities, so growth is felt locally, as well as nationally.

We Can't Talk About AI and Growth Without Talking About Jobs

I know the fear of AI affecting people's jobs is very real. But we can think of many jobs not as disappearing but as changing. Automation speeds up admin, so we get to spend longer on the parts of our jobs that need the qualities that make us human. Social skills. Judgement. Empathy.

And as we keep attracting AI expertise – by helping top talent move here from overseas – that means a host of new jobs. Like the 13,250 committed by leading tech firms as part of the Action Plan announcement.

Recent Visit to Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge

They're using AI to diagnose kidney cancer and Alzheimer's earlier. This means patients with a disease are being diagnosed before it progresses too far – meaning they gain more time to get treatment.

This is just one example of where AI is already touching our daily lives, without us even realising.

I get why "scary" and "worried" are words that came up when we asked people about AI. Safety and opportunity are two sides of the same coin, and rolling out AI safely will always be on my agenda.

But look further down that list, and you see other words – "good", "curious", "exciting". By growing our economy, creating jobs, and improving public services, AI gives us so much to be excited about – in our real lives, in real homes and offices across the UK. We'll make sure every part of the country gets to share that. 🌀

'The Time to Act is Now' – Shadow Chancellor Mel Stride

Writing exclusively for *Chamber UK* in June, Shadow Chancellor, Sir Mel Stride sets out why Britain needs a clear economic plan, and how he could deliver it.



Rt Hon Sir Mel Stride MP
Shadow Chancellor of
the Exchequer

The Chancellor's Spending Review was, quite frankly, not worth the paper it was written on. It was a "Spend Now, Tax Later" extravaganza, and the consequences will be felt by every working family and business across the country.

The Chancellor has completely lost control of the nation's finances. We were promised at the last election that Labour's plans were fully costed – and involved hardly any extra spending or borrowing. Instead, what we see is a staggering surge in government borrowing, with the cost borne by the taxpayer, now and in the future.

Let us be clear. The Government's own figures show borrowing is running 70 per cent higher than the plans Labour inherited. National debt is rising unchecked, with an additional £200 billion of borrowing now planned for this parliament compared to Conservative plans. Interest payments

alone are set to soar by £80 billion over the same period. Meanwhile, the Chancellor tries to reassure us that spending growth will slow to a mere 1.2 per cent a year – but her record tells a very different story. When the pressure mounts, the Chancellor blinks, overturning fiscal rules, abandoning promises, and indulging in costly U-turns. Her "Iron Chancellor" image has given way to the "Tin-Foil Chancellor" – flimsy and folding to any pressure.

This reckless borrowing leaves the country vulnerable. We have no room left to respond to shocks or economic crises. Bond markets watch with growing alarm, and the OBR say it will leave inflation and interest rates higher for longer. The Government is praying for growth to come to the rescue, but the latest monthly figure showed the economy is shrinking. Business confidence has plummeted, unemployment is up, inflation remains stubbornly high.

The Chancellor's answer? More taxes, and yet more uncertainty. The Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner, has even provided her with a catalogue of potential tax hikes.

If I were Chancellor, I would do things differently. I would not kill growth with punitive tax rises and bureaucratic red tape. I would focus on productivity, efficiency, and reform, rather than short-term giveaways with no strings attached. I would have pushed through welfare reforms to reduce long-term sickness benefit claims and ensure support goes to those who truly need it.

But it is not just the economy that bears the brunt of this Government's failure. Housing – something this edition of *The Chamber Journal* focuses on – is a vital, yet neglected, component of national renewal, and Labour's approach is deeply flawed.

We need homes – homes for first-time buyers, young families, key workers, and the next generation. But as my friend, the brilliant Shadow Housing Secretary, now Party Chairman, Kevin Hollinrake, has said, these must be the right homes, in the right places, shaped by thoughtful principles that respect communities, heritage, and the environment.

Instead, what we are seeing is a top-down planning model driven by arbitrary targets and central diktat. The Government's centralising zeal sidelines local voices. Local councillors and residents – those who live in, love and understand their communities best – are being cut out of the planning process. Their role is diminished, and their judgment overlooked. The individual becomes a mere cog in an impersonal machine.

The new planning reforms, combined with shifts in the National Planning Policy Framework, are misguided and unfair. Targets are being raised by up to 400 per cent in rural areas, while being cut significantly in major cities. This is not balanced, it is cynical and economically illiterate. What the Government presents as small adjustments to green belt policies is, in reality, a removal of vital

protections, risking the merging of villages and the erosion of cherished landscapes.

And the environmental consequences are grave. Once a habitat is destroyed, no compensation can restore the biodiversity lost.

Housing policy must never come at the cost of community and countryside. We cannot concrete over our natural heritage and expect it to be called progress. We cannot ignore the voices of those who live in these places. The planning system must rebuild trust, not erode it.

This Spending Review and housing policy encapsulate a government adrift – clutching at short-term fixes, ignoring long-term consequences, and leaving ordinary people to pay the price. Inflation and interest rates are staying higher for longer, while unemployment is rising, economic growth is downgraded, and business confidence has collapsed. The Chancellor's refusal to face facts or show fiscal discipline risks plunging Britain into deeper instability.

We must have a clear, credible plan to restore economic stability, to support business and job creation and to deliver affordable, high-quality homes where they are truly needed – built with local involvement and respect for our environment.

The choice is between a future of uncertain, unmanageable debt and soulless developments, or a future built on responsible spending, sound economic management, and housing policies that empower communities rather than alienate them.

Under Kemi Badenoch's leadership, the Conservatives stand for the latter. We will fight for taxpayers, for homebuyers, and for the communities that make this country great.

The time to act is now, before the damage becomes irreversible. ☺



How Labour is Stalling On Housebuilding



Sir James Cleverly MP
Shadow Secretary of State for
Housing and Local Government

You will be shocked by how many homes in Britain have planning permission but are still unbuilt.

In England alone, there is planning consent for over a million homes that are, as yet, unbuilt. In Labour-run London, Sadiq Khan has admitted that 300,000 homes have planning

permission but remain undelivered. Labour could get these homes built now – yet they remain only on paper.

Across England, housing starts are running at nearly 2 per 1,000 people, but in Labour-run London, the figure is barely 0.4 – the lowest in the country. By contrast, Conservative-led regions, such as the North East, West Midlands, and East Midlands, are delivering more than 2.5 homes per 1,000 people – among the strongest performances nationwide. Conservatives get homes built. Labour leaves families waiting.

Labour claims it will build 1.5 million homes. But here's the truth: they could meet that target simply by getting existing consents built. No new permissions needed. No excuses. Yet while Labour dithers, the housing crisis deepens, and prices rise.

Conservatives understand what's at stake. The dream of owning a home, or having a secure place to live, is about more than bricks and mortar; it is about stability and belonging. Margaret Thatcher's Right to Buy gave more than a million council tenants the keys to their own front door and an asset that appreciated in value for the first time in their lives. Michael Heseltine's regeneration of derelict docklands turned wasteland into thriving communities with jobs as well as homes. We built homes, transformed areas and created opportunity – and we will do it again.

And the numbers prove it. Under the last Labour Government (1997–2010), housing supply averaged fewer than 150,000 net additions a year. Under successive Conservative governments since 2010, that figure has risen substantially, peaking at over 240,000 in 2019–2020 – the highest level in more than 30 years. Conservatives have consistently delivered more homes than Labour ever managed.

Planning permission should mean progress, not a land bank gathering dust. That's why we believe in action: unlocking brownfield sites, converting empty commercial space, and increasing housing density where it fits. A modest rise in density in towns and cities can release thousands of extra homes without touching the green belt. It's common sense, backed by a record of delivery.

Over the past decade, Conservative governments have supported schemes

that speed up approvals, invested in local planning teams and ensured infrastructure is in place before people move in. We have shown that well-planned development can protect the countryside, improve transport links and provide the homes people need. We have turned plans into real places where families can thrive.

Labour talks about reform, but families still wait. Developers still sit on land. Projects stay in limbo. Under Labour, delay is the default. The longer they stall, the higher the costs climb. Young people are locked out of home ownership. Older people have fewer options to downsize. Communities stand still.

By contrast, Conservatives focus on delivery. We act when action is needed. We hold developers to account. We make sure planning permission is more than just a piece of paper. From the transformation of the Docklands to the boom in home ownership under Right to Buy, our record is clear: we turn ambition into results.

The housing crisis won't be solved by headlines. It will be solved by bricks in the ground. Home ownership is not just an economic goal; it's a social one. It gives people a stake in their community, roots to grow, and the stability to raise a family.

So, I return to my opening question: how many homes are sitting unbuilt in Britain today? The answer is still too many. And the tragedy is that Labour could change that now, but they choose not to. Under a Conservative government, that number comes down. We follow through. We build the homes. We strengthen communities. We get Britain moving. Labour may measure success in press releases. We measure it in front doors opening, keys in hands, and families finally home. 🏡

Why We Must Work Together

Psyomics' Take on the Mental Health System and the NHS 10 Year Plan

The NHS 10 Year Plan sets ambitious goals for mental health, but Psyomics argues that only through genuine collaboration, scalable and evidence-backed innovation, and a relentless focus on patient outcomes can ambition be turned into real, system-wide change.



Dr Melinda Rees
CEO
Psyomics

The NHS 10 Year Plan sets out ambitious goals for mental health services, but delivering on these promises is far from straightforward. The challenges aren't about ambition; they're about the system itself. Commissioning, procurement, and executing meaningful change is complex, slow, and often risk-averse. For startups like Psyomics, a digital front-door technology provider for mental health services, these barriers are very real.

Navigating Risky Hurdles

The NHS is designed to mitigate risk. Decisions pass through multiple layers of

approval, budgets are annual and inflexible, and movement of funds is tightly restricted. Promising innovations can face slow progress or get stuck in "pilot graveyards" with no clear path to scale. Change fatigue is real: staff are prioritising immediate pressures over potential innovations, capacity is limited, and the system isn't set up for rapid transformation.

Startups operate differently. Risk is part of our DNA. We iterate quickly, make fast decisions and are conscious of cash flow. Change isn't a threat, it's essential for survival and growth. This mismatch between ambition and action explains why collaboration often feels like an uphill struggle. Procurement frameworks prioritise risk mitigation, not innovation, and complex approval layers, vague contracts, and fragmented commissioning mechanisms can kill momentum.

Turning Ambition Into Reality

Delivering the NHS 10 Year Plan requires more than good ideas; it demands solutions designed for scale, accountability, and sustainability.

In this landscape, where the NHS is both commissioner and service provider, Psyomics acts as a trusted assessment platform across primary, secondary, and tertiary care. By reducing repeated patient storytelling, accelerating time to treatment, and standardising assessments, the platform exemplifies how digital innovation can align with the 10 Year Plan while overcoming systemic barriers. Our proven track record of supporting the NHS includes:

- **Scalability:** map existing care pathways to see where new solutions fit naturally. Innovations should follow outcome-based “test and scale” models, rather than pilots with no clear path forward, to ensure successful initiatives can grow across the system.
- **Accountability:** be transparent about a pilot’s scope, limitations, and ambitions. Embed practical milestones and draw on frameworks such as NICE’s Early Value Assessment to make progress measurable and aligned with system-wide priorities.
- **Sustainability:** speak the NHS language – cost-effectiveness, ROI, and cost-utility. Collaborate with analysts, academics, and evaluation experts. Every innovation must be backed by robust evidence,

demonstrating value to clinicians, patients, and the wider system.

Real-world Impact

Psyomics helped the NHS to see the benefits of this approach across multiple patient pathways

- **Adult Community Services:** the Psyomics platform captures robust symptom assessments alongside patient histories, helping clinicians select the right care pathway. This improves engagement, streamlines clinical flow, reduces administrative burden and allows faster, more comprehensive initial assessments.
- **Children and Young People:** early symptom assessments, including input from carers, support more refined pathway selection. Clinicians can engage patients and families more effectively, streamline assessments and track outcomes using Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs).
- **Neurodiversity Diagnosis:** long waits can be stressful, but the Psyomics platform identifies comorbidities early, helping clinicians signpost care and provide a positive waiting experience. A biopsychosocial formulation upfront enables priority pathway selection and holistic care.
- **Talking Therapies:** comprehensive patient profiling identifies complex cases quickly, freeing Tier 3 clinicians’ time and improving referral-to-recovery rates.



Although improvements are slowly being made, the system isn't built for innovation.



The Path Forward: Partnership, Capacity, and Outcomes

Although improvements are slowly being made, the system isn't built for innovation. Driving real change requires partnerships. Early collaboration builds credibility, aligns motivations and ensures relevance. Increasing capacity must be a priority, not an afterthought. Above all, patient outcomes must guide every decision.

Inaction is the greatest risk to patients. Progress starts with trust, shared purpose, and a mindset shift: change isn't a threat... it's progress, but only when driven by clarity and commitment from all sides.

The Psyomics Approach

Psyomics has developed a digital pathway to streamline mental health assessments for adults aged 18–65. Created with clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, and the University of Cambridge, the platform standardises how clinicians capture patient data, reducing inconsistencies, administrative burden, and delays.

Patients provide information on symptoms, social determinants, and personal factors such as suicidality, family dynamics, and

financial security. Clinicians use this data to determine the most appropriate care pathway, ensuring timely, personalised support. Key benefits include

- **User-friendly Process:** 25% of submissions occur outside office hours, increasing accessibility.
- **Comprehensive Data Collection:** clinicians make faster, better-informed decisions.
- **Streamlined Referrals:** patients no longer repeat their story multiple times, improving engagement.

By combining clinical expertise with cutting-edge technology, Psyomics is helping shape the future of mental health care, making it faster, more efficient, and more patient-centred.

Final Thought:

The NHS 10 Year Plan is ambitious, but its success will depend on more than intent. The current system often works against innovation, making collaboration essential to driving change. Early partnerships can build credibility and ensure new approaches remain relevant, while patient outcomes must always come first – underpinned by trust, shared purpose, and clear commitment. Delivering the plan requires systems that welcome innovation, partnerships that close gaps, and technologies that allow clinicians to focus on what they do best: caring for patients. ☺



Former Secretary of State for Business and Trade, Jonathan Reynolds, speaks to Politics UK

Industrial Strategy Review: Turning Words Into Results

The UK's economic future faces a defining moment. While Westminster celebrates another policy announcement, industry leaders are asking a harder question: Will this ambitious vision translate into the business investment and economic transformation Britain desperately needs, or will it join the graveyard of well-intentioned strategies that failed to deliver?

A recent Curia and UKAI webinar focused on the Government's Industrial Strategy provided a constructive assessment of the plans and outlined how ambition can be translated from words to actions.

The Strategy Works, but We Must Act Fast

Daniel Paterson, Director of Policy at Electrify Industry, was unequivocal in dismissing suggestions that the industrial strategy amounts to sophisticated political messaging, saying, "This is something that we've needed in the UK for a good long time now."

The UK is home to a breadth of world-class talent and a talent pipeline through world-leading education institutions; it now has an Industrial Strategy that could harness their potential, but the UK must act now.

Patterson highlighted that key measures like the British Industrial Competitiveness Scheme (BIC) must be brought forward from their intended 2027 start date to ensure Britain is not last to catch up.

This urgency reflects a broader concern among industry leaders that while the strategy's direction is sound, the pace of implementation may not match the speed of the markets.

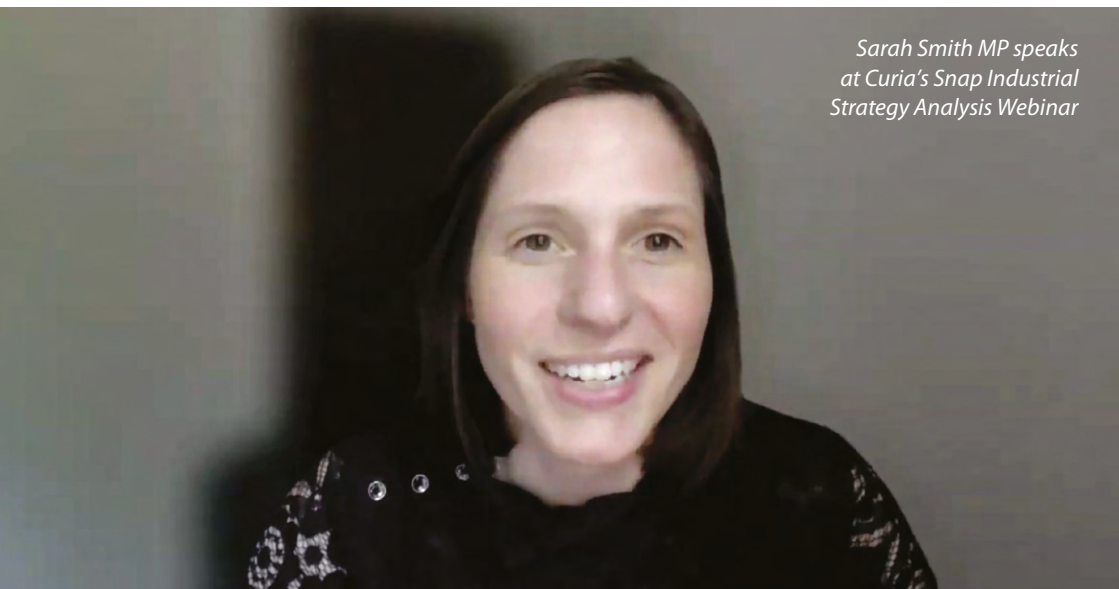
Infrastructure: the Make-or-break Factor

Marc Harris, co-chair of Labour YIMBY, cited a major limitation to the UK's current economic plans: it lags behind in its digital and energy infrastructure, with current systems unable to keep up with the demand of advanced manufacturing and a booming AI industry.

Harris identified several critical infrastructure priorities: automatic planning permission for energy projects aligned with national priorities, faster grid upgrades with statutory timelines, and infrastructure acceleration zones where planning and permitting are simplified.

"Other places around the world enable you to use the Internet on a train," Harris noted. "The fact that we can't do that reliably is a big problem." This observation captures a broader challenge: Britain's infrastructure deficits extend across multiple sectors, from digital connectivity to energy grid capacity.

Plans like the extension of 5G service to British train lines and stations will improve the UK's ability to embrace the modern digital age, but work must go further to support the growth of high-demand industries and facilitate greater connectivity for all parts of the country.

A portrait of Sarah Smith MP, a woman with dark hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark top with a patterned collar. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

*Sarah Smith MP speaks
at Curia's Snap Industrial
Strategy Analysis Webinar*

The Investment Imperative

In an interview with Politics UK, Business and Trade Secretary, Jonathan Reynolds, heralded “business investment” as the goal of the Strategy, with the ambition to “drive up business investment in every part of the UK and specifically to remove the barriers to our competitiveness, the things that are getting in the way” of growth and economic activity.

His framework focuses on concrete deliverables: action on energy prices for industry, skills development to create a “pipeline of people” and new jobs for the “industries of the future”, and finance reform to ensure “we don’t just innovate in the UK, we scale up and have bigger companies, more economic activity”.

Reynolds’ emphasis on ensuring “every part of the UK benefits from this” signals a deliberate attempt to avoid the regional inequalities that have characterised previous industrial strategies.

He was also quick to reaffirm the Government’s commitment to fiscal responsibility, saying, “This is not about new expenditure or additional expenditure having to be raised through taxation”, instead, claiming that funding comes from “the money that we raised in the last budget”. His message? No new taxes.

Four Factors for Implementation

1. **Acceleration Over Announcement:** global competition will not wait for Westminster’s preferred timeline, changes must be made to prepare the UK for the future, not to help us catch up.
2. **Cross-departmental Coherence:** success requires genuine co-ordination, not just policy alignment.
3. **Infrastructure Reality:** Britain’s competitive position depends on addressing decades of underinvestment across multiple sectors simultaneously.
4. **Political Sustainability:** the strategy must survive changing political circumstances, economic pressures, and the inevitable setbacks that accompany major reform programs.

Final Thought:

This is Britain’s moment to move beyond the cycle of grand announcements followed by implementation failure that has characterised industrial policy for decades. The expert voices in this discussion represent genuine alignment between parliamentarians, industry leaders, and civil society advocates around both the scale of opportunity and the urgency of action required.

The industrial strategy succeeds or fails not on the quality of its analysis or the ambition of its targets, but on whether we can sustain the collective will to see it through when implementation gets difficult. We have the expertise, the resources, and now, the framework. The question is whether we have the collective determination to make it work. ☺



Former Home Secretary Yvette Cooper speaks to Politics UK to mark the ratification of the new treaty

One Year In: Will Labour Gain Control of Migration?



Max Booth
Editor
Chamber UK

As many will recall, Labour came into power promising to smash the gangs. A year on, the only smashing has been the smashing the records for volume of small boat crossings, with the first half of 2025 being the busiest since records began.

A New Approach?

The Government has pointed to a new “one in, one out” deal with France as evidence that the tide can be turned. Ministers have lauded

new measures granting French authorities new powers to intervene against smugglers in particular.

But, as some have pointed out, this “one in, one out” deal isn’t really deserving of the moniker. Under the deal, there will be a ratio of 1:1 asylum seekers entering Britain having passed security and eligibility checks while in France, to ineligible asylum seekers returned to France. Ignored in the equation is the cross-channel flow of migrants that will inevitably continue (though the Government will be hoping this will be reduced as migrants choose the safe and legal route instead). It could, therefore, be argued that the official name of the treaty (UK/France: Agreement on the Prevention of Dangerous Journeys) is more honest about what exactly the treaty seeks to do.

Systems Under Strain

While the treaty deserves some praise for being one of the few credible (possible) solutions to making a dent in the Channel crisis that any party has presented – even a generous interpretation of the treaty must acknowledge that the Government’s approach does have flaws.

Take the Government’s latest idea – introducing a new offence for endangering others by embarking onto a crowded boat. The fact that our prison system is crowded itself notwithstanding, how would such an offence even work? Is a person who embarks on a dinghy while there is plenty of room, but remains on it as it becomes overcrowded to be prosecuted? Would they be expected to disembark? If enough such people disembark an overcrowded boat, and that boat becomes no longer overcrowded – then would the last individuals who shoved their way onto the boat, prompting those individuals to disembark, be completely safe from criminal repercussions? How would the CPS determine the exact order of embarkation and criminal culpability? It seems unlikely that anyone will face prosecution under this law – and the question is therefore left dangling: what is the point of the law?

Playing to The Audience

Whether consciously or not – the Government is attempting to play to an audience. Keir Starmer’s Island of Strangers speech was billed as a firm line in the sand – setting out why immigration was too high, how he understood public anger, and firmly stating he was the answer to fix it after a decade of disappointment. In a now multi-

party system in which a Labour leader is equally likely to lose votes to the left as to the right, he was pointing to those he might lose to Reform on the right and saying “I want you. I will deliver for you”.

Yet, before long, he rolled back his words – even going so far as to say he deeply regretted uttering them. In an exercise that will, going forward, forever be an example of trying to please everybody and pleasing no one, he marched up the hill and marched straight back down to finish where he began (hemorrhaging voters to the Greens and Jeremy Corbyn along the way).

Final Thought:

That is what makes Labour’s position so precarious. Its manifesto did not hedge. It promised that small-boat crossings would be stopped, and that net migration would be substantially reduced. These were clear, measurable pledges. One year in, neither has been delivered. Crossings are at record levels, and net migration, while dipping slightly from its peak, remains historically high. They cannot doubt that should they fail to deliver – they will be punished. Under the Corbyn years, Labour was never credible on migration – certainly not in the way that the public wanted. The Conservatives didn’t have an opponent breathing down their neck with a believable low immigration platform – but Labour does now in the shape of Reform. It’s up to the Prime Minister what happens from here. ☺

Bridget Phillipson on the Government's "Moral Mission" to Tackle Child Poverty

The Education Secretary spoke to Politics UK on the Government's announcement of the expansion of free school meals.

In an interview with Politics UK, Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson, spoke on the importance of eliminating child poverty and how the government's decisions like expanding free school meals to all children from households on Universal Credit, introducing primary school breakfast clubs, and capping the cost of school uniforms will further Labour's "moral mission" to reduce child poverty.

A primary motivator for the move to expand free school meals is to improve attainment and attendance in the classroom. Phillipson claims that increasing the amount of children eligible for free school meals will support half a million children, lifting 100,000 out of poverty thanks to estimated annual savings of £500 per child each year.

The Education Secretary also outlined that a range of measures are being undertaken

to reduce child poverty, such as capping the cost of school uniforms, introducing breakfast clubs, and increasing minimum wage all part of a range of social security and education reform.

She said that "nothing is off the table" in terms of reforms, indicating that scrapping the two-child benefit cap remains a possibility, saying that the upcoming Child Poverty Taskforce report, co-chaired by Bridget Phillipson and Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kendall, will review all options available to the Government to reduce child poverty and increase the life chances of children across the country.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies reported that the expansion of free school meals will actually be less cost effective in terms of lifting children out of poverty than scrapping the two-child benefit cap would be.



Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson, speaks to Politics UK for her announcement of the expansion of free school meals

When questioned on if the decision to expand free school meals was made instead of because it was an easier political decision, rather than the correct one, she said argued that this was not this case, instead saying: “We know we can lift children out of poverty” through meal provisions and support, which is why its

been “so well received by campaigners, by charities and by parents,” continuing to insist that further reforms to the social security system are under review through the taskforce, but that nothing is off the table and no single reform can be a “silver bullet”, the entire system requires adjustments and overhauls. ©



Regulation as an Enabler: the Case for Responsible AI



Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE

House of Lords Liberal Democrat
Spokesperson for Digital, and
Co-Chair of the APPG on AI

Well designed artificial intelligence (AI) regulation is not a barrier to innovation but a crucial enabler, fostering public trust, legal clarity, and ethical safeguards that drive widespread adoption, responsible development, and sustainable growth in an increasingly AI-driven world.

The conventional wisdom that regulation stifles innovation needs to be turned on its head in the AI sector. AI technology now impacts a vast array of sectors, including healthcare, finance, transport, and more, influencing decisions that can drastically affect individuals and communities

As AI systems become more powerful and pervasive, there is growing recognition that appropriate regulation isn't just about

restricting harmful practices – it's actually key to driving widespread adoption and sustainable growth.

There is a clear parallel with the early automotive industry. In the early 20th century, the introduction of safety standards, driver licensing, and traffic rules didn't kill the car industry – it enabled its explosive growth by building public confidence and creating predictable conditions for manufacturers. Similarly, thoughtful AI regulation can create the trust and stability needed for the technology to flourish.

In the current landscape, many potential AI adopters – from healthcare providers to financial institutions – are hesitating not because of technological limitations but due to uncertainties about liability, ethical boundaries, and public acceptance. Clear regulatory frameworks that address issues like algorithmic bias, data privacy, and decision transparency can actually accelerate adoption by providing clarity and confidence and generating public trust.

The inherent risks of AI, such as biases in decision-making, invasion of privacy, and potential job displacement, make it clear that unregulated AI can lead to significant ethical and societal repercussions. The call for regulation is about ensuring that AI systems operate within boundaries that protect human values and rights. Without this framework, the potential misuse or unintended consequences of AI could lead to public distrust and resistance against the technology.

Far from being a brake on progress, well-designed regulation can be a catalyst for AI adoption and innovation. Regulation can drive innovation in the right direction. Just as environmental regulations spurred the development of cleaner technologies, AI regulations focusing on explainability and fairness could push developers to create more sophisticated and responsible systems.

Regulation can stimulate innovation by defining the rules of the game, giving companies the confidence to invest in AI technologies without fear of future legal repercussions for unforeseen misuses. In markets where regulation is clear and aligned with global standards, companies can also find easier paths to expand internationally. This not only drives growth but also fosters international collaboration on global AI standards, leading to broader advancements in the field.

The question isn't whether to regulate AI but how to regulate it in a way that promotes both innovation and responsibility. Get this right, and regulation becomes a powerful enabler of AI's future growth.

The EU's AI Act and the UK's proposed pro-innovation approach to AI regulation

are contrasting and imperfect attempts to strike this balance.

Regulation should be principles-based rather than overly prescriptive, allowing for technological evolution while maintaining focus on outcomes. It should emphasise transparency and accountability without stifling creativity. And critically, it must be developed with input from both technical experts and broader stakeholders to ensure it's both practical and effective.

The journey towards responsible AI is not solely about technological achievement but also about how these technologies are integrated into society through thoughtful regulation. By establishing a robust regulatory framework, we can ensure that AI serves the public interest while also fostering an environment where trust and innovation lead to technological growth. The goal is to create a future where AI's potential is fully realised in a way that is beneficial and safe for all. This is not just a possibility but a necessity as we step into an increasingly AI-driven world.

There is some growing recognition of this in the AI Opportunities Plan in the UK. In particular, the language around regulation assisting innovation is refreshing,

Well-designed and implemented regulation, alongside effective assurance tools, can fuel fast, wide, and safe development and adoption of AI.

We must now make that a reality! ©



Why I Care



Sir Ed Davey MP
Leader of the Liberal
Democrats

Looking back on the pandemic's lockdowns can trigger painful memories. It was a time of uncertainty, hardship, isolation, and loneliness for so many people, especially for carers.

My family and I consider ourselves very lucky. We had enough space, a garden, a salary, and, most importantly, each other. Yet even with these comforts, the lockdowns were difficult for our family – in deep, personal ways. My wife Emily has MS, and her mobility definitely suffered. My son John, who has an undiagnosed neurological condition, also faced struggles. Without teachers and therapists, progress on his many challenges in mobility, independence, and communication all stalled.

Emily and I have always believed that wrapping John in cotton wool would do him a disservice. While he requires care seven days a week – and will for the rest of his life – people who live with disabilities are too often unfairly described by the things they cannot do.

John and our family team work hard to meet his various challenges – whether it's his inability to walk unaided, his general motor and muscle control, his communication issues, or his learning problems. We have fought hard for the degree of independence John has achieved – like his trunk and leg strength that now enables him to bear his own weight, so he is not forever wheelchair-bound and can even use the bathroom himself, to a degree. Much of our daily routine is focused on keeping his muscles strong and his mind active – with real efforts to motivate him, not least when his teenage boy reluctance kicks in.

During COVID-19, this all became so much harder. We all made do with the closure of so

many services significant to our health and wellbeing. For John, many of his vital activities that help keep him mobile – like swimming, rock climbing, and horse riding – were taken away. Our daily walks – with John on his tricycle – were wonderful but couldn't make it up. And then, teaching. It was challenging enough working with our daughter, but we found teaching John near impossible, despite Emily's astonishing tenacity. Our respect for his teachers reached stratospheric levels. So, the impact on John's mobility, mental health, and independence was visible and, for us as parents, deeply worrying.

This period helped me understand more deeply than ever the challenges of being a carer. I am sure every carer around the country will share my reflections on the experiences of lockdown, of the worries for the loved ones we cared for.

And it was also as COVID-19 ripped through our country that I began my leadership of the Liberal Democrats. And that was an incredible chance to be a voice for other carers.

Emily and I sat down to discuss how we could share our family's story. I'd hardly talked about my experiences as a carer before, but questions to a new party leader inevitably touch on your private past, and we knew we had to decide what was on and off limits. It felt like a big decision to make to cross that Rubicon and open up about our lives in such an intensely personal way.

One particular moment was my first party conference speech as leader – delivered virtually, speaking directly into a camera, in a room alone, with no audience. I decided to make a pledge there and then to be a voice for carers. It was difficult to tell if I was

connecting with anyone at that moment – with party members, let alone carers. But it felt like a moment.

And since that speech in 2020, I began to reach out and connect with so many carers across the country – more than ever before. Initially over Zoom, and then, as now, in my inbox and in person, I've had the privilege of getting to know thousands of carers around the country. Young carers. Family carers. Dementia carers. Sibling carers. Kinship carers. And many more.

Through these humbling conversations, I've grown in confidence to talk about my own care journey, from my dear Mum to my wonderful Nanna and, of course, John. And to talk about caring in a way that's directly linked to my learning from other carers – listening to their everyday problems and their hopes and fears for the future. It is incredible how different carers' lives can be, and yet we share so much in common.

Although I didn't realise it at the time, that discussion with Emily, and my first party conference speech pledge, were the genesis of so much – from our party election broadcast to my attempt with the Bath Philharmonia and the Young Carers' Choir at our Christmas single, "Love is Enough", to my new book, *Why I Care and Why Care Matters*, written this spring.

So when my editor approached me with the idea of a book, it felt entirely natural to start by sharing my own experiences: first as a young carer for my mother as she battled terminal cancer; then caring for my Nanna, who lost her only child and then needed help transitioning from independent living to sheltered accommodation and eventually

a care home; and finally, caring for John with Emily. Yet I also wished include the stories of other carers, whose caring experiences differed from mine in many ways, despite some fundamental similarities.

The scale of caring across the UK is so significant. I am just one in a sea of literally millions. Carers UK states that there are 5.8 million carers in the UK, with 1.7 million of those providing more than 50 hours of care per week – though other estimates suggest family caring may be significantly higher. That's why it's so important to hear from more carers, and while I obviously couldn't fit every carer story in my book, I felt very strongly that it needed to reflect the complexity and scale of the caring experience. So, I'm extremely grateful to the four incredible carers for sharing their stories to illustrate the variety of caring challenges there are.

Something that comes up time and time again in my conversations with carers is that they don't want pity. They don't want to be called "unsung heroes". They want real help. They want practical solutions that will make their lives possible as they continue to care for someone who needs them. A crucial truth for millions who receive care and most who provide it is this: care starts first and foremost with family and close loved ones. We shouldn't pretend the state can or should do everything. Instead, we should be asking what the state can do to empower families to be carers.

For Emily and me, that empowerment partly means having the right home with some particular features. When buying our home years ago, it was the big downstairs toilet that caught our eye. We installed railings to help John navigate our home as independently as possible, and this has been life changing for

all of us. We feel incredibly fortunate to have the space for these "luxuries", which are utterly necessary. If something as simple as step-free access showers and railings beside a toilet can be so impactful, it begs the question: what if the state did more to help other families make similar, vital adaptations?

Most families would prefer to keep their loved ones at home, and most individuals would rather be at home than in an institutional setting. That's why we need to value family carers more and support them better – and why we urgently need more care workers, so that social care services can enable more people to stay at home. And it can't be said enough: the shortage of care workers means people get stuck in hospitals, which then has a massive ripple effect across the entire NHS. If we don't fix care, we simply won't fix the NHS.

During the Election, Emily and I gave an interview in our garden with Sky's Beth Rigby. We were both a little nervous, having never been interviewed together. Emily, a local councillor who has stood for Parliament herself four times, isn't camera-shy, but she had never spoken publicly about John. In that interview, we touched on a painful subject for us both: what will happen to John when we are gone. In that interview, Emily said something that has stayed with me, and has become central to my thinking on care, "You can have all the money for social care in the world, but it will never be enough unless we build a more caring society, where the state helps carers look after their loved ones, where disabled people and the elderly are treated with dignity."

As long as I'm in politics, that is precisely what I will strive for. I am not going to let this go. ☾

Is the Government Losing Ground?



James Crouch
Head of Policy & Public
Affairs Research
Opinium

The Government is falling behind on its own benchmarks for success, according to the public opinion polling from Opinium and Curia. Political momentum today lies on the right, driven by a widespread sense that the Government is underperforming on the very goals it set for itself.

Labour entered office with five missions. Yet on nearly every yardstick, progress has been judged insufficient. The most glaring failures lie in the Government's economic and law and order missions. While there has been relative progress in health and other public services, it has not been enough to outweigh the perception that the Government has not met the problems of the day with the urgency required.

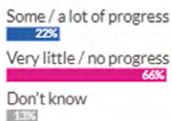
On the economy, Labour promised to "kickstart economic growth to secure the highest sustained growth in the G7". But public opinion suggests this mission has

How much progress has Labour made on its missions?

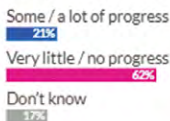
(UK adults vs Labour voters)



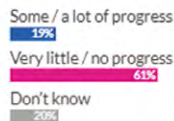
Build an NHS fit for the future



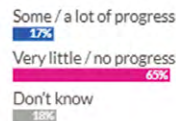
Make Britain a clean energy superpower



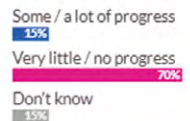
Break down barriers to opportunity



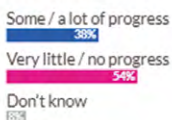
Kickstart economic growth



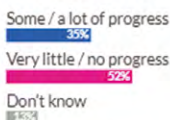
Take back our streets



2024 Labour voters



2024 Labour voters



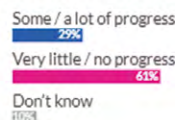
2024 Labour voters



2024 Labour voters



2024 Labour voters



Sample: 2,050 UK Adults. Fieldwork: 20th-22nd August 2025. Full question wording: "During the election, Labour put forward 5 missions to rebuild Britain. How much progress do you think the Labour government has made on these missions since being elected in July 2024?"

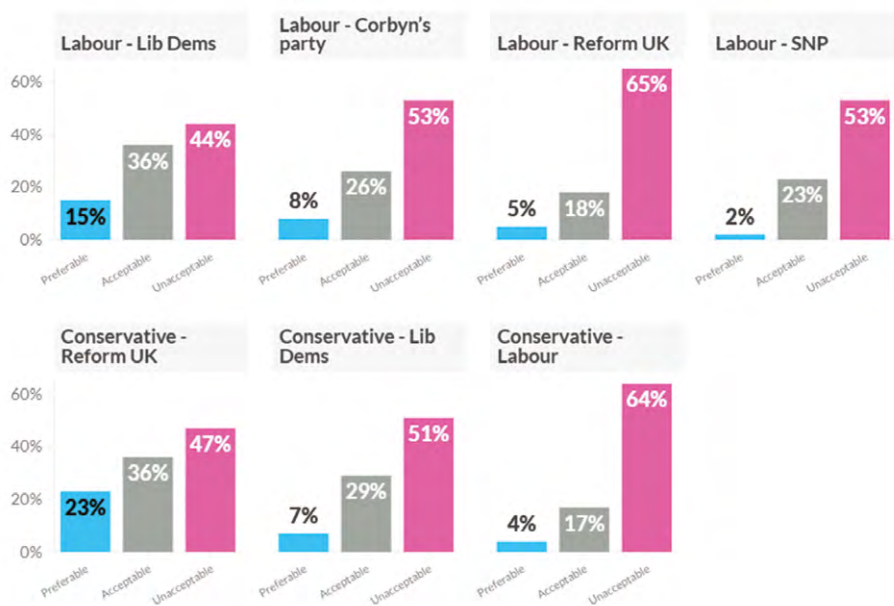
stalled. Only 17 per cent of voters think the Government has made some or a lot of progress, while nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) think there has been little or none. This places Chancellor Rachel Reeves under intense pressure, whose success is pivotal to unlocking the Government's broader agenda.

The position is no better on crime. The mission to "take back our streets" is widely seen as failing: just 15 per cent believe progress has been made, while seven in

ten (70 per cent) believe little or none has occurred. That leaves Home Secretary Yvette Cooper exposed at a time when economic insecurity is being matched by insecurity in communities, both in terms of crime and in terms of the immigration and asylum issue, which is also essential for the Home Office.

Perhaps most worrying for Labour is that even its own voters are unconvinced. Across nearly all Labour's missions, more than half of Labour voters believe very little or no progress has been made. The closest thing

What would be a preferable or unacceptable coalition in a future hung parliament? (UK adults)



Sample: 2,050 UK Adults. Latest fieldwork: 20th - 22nd August 2025.

Question wording: "If no single party wins an overall majority at the next general election, and a coalition government were formed, which of the following coalitions would be your preferred option for forming a new government? / Thinking about each of the following possible coalition governments that could form after the next general election, how acceptable or unacceptable would you personally find each one?"

to an exception is the NHS, where 38 per cent think the Government has made some progress in building a service “fit for the future”. Yet even here, a majority (54 per cent) believe little or no progress has been made. Health and Care Secretary Wes Streeting may take some comfort from this slight boost, but for the Government more generally, it is not enough to counter the wider narrative of disappointment.

Over a year into office, Labour is facing the consequences of high expectations paired with slow delivery.

Could Reform Lock Labour Out of Power?

As Labour struggles, Reform UK is reshaping the coalition dynamics of British politics. While the overall balance between a preference for Labour-involved coalition (35 per cent) and a Conservative-involved coalition (33 per cent) is relatively even, the rise of Reform has shifted the balance more decisively to the right.

The single most popular coalition in the public’s eyes is now a Conservative–Reform coalition, preferred by 23 per cent of the public. By comparison, just 15 per cent would

favour a Labour–Liberal Democrat alliance, while very few back a Labour–Reform deal (5 per cent).

This reflects the natural alignment between Conservative and Reform supporters: 57 per cent of Conservatives would prefer a coalition with Reform, while 60 per cent of Reform voters feel the same. Labour voters, by contrast, are far more divided. Only 31 per cent would prefer a Labour–Lib Dem pact, while to the left, 16 per cent would prefer a coalition with Jeremy Corbyn’s new party. And to the right, 10 per cent would even back a Labour–Reform tie-up. This fragmentation makes Labour’s path to stable government far less clear than on the right.

What is clear is that there is little appetite for grand cross-party unity. Two-thirds (65 per cent) of the public consider a Labour–Reform coalition unacceptable, while 64 per cent reject the idea of a Conservative–Labour deal. As Labour falters in delivering on its central promises, it has not only lost political momentum but also ceded the initiative in coalition politics to the right. For Labour, the danger is clear: unless it finds a way to restore confidence, it risks being squeezed between unmet expectations and a resurgent right. ©



Sir John Major speaks to Angela Rippon in Salisbury Cathedral for the annual Sir Edward Heath lecture.

“We Must Rebuild What We’ve Broken” Sir John Major

In a powerful speech that ranged from personal reflection to policy reckoning, former UK Prime Minister, Sir John Major set out a bold challenge to Britain’s political class: face up to the damage done – or prepare for decline.

In a wide-ranging and unsparing speech followed by a fireside chat with broadcaster Angela Rippon, former UK Prime Minister, Sir John Major delivered a damning indictment of Brexit, America’s retreat from the world stage, and the current state of British politics – while calling for renewed honesty, humility, and leadership.

There was a striking clarity – and candour – to Major’s address. Speaking not as a party man, nor a figure of nostalgia, but as a seasoned observer of international affairs and national politics, the former Prime Minister offered a searing critique of Britain’s current direction of travel.

The speech, delivered with quiet force and a measured tone, was as much a lament as it was a call to action. In it, Major painted a sobering picture of a country diminished – by choice, by complacency, and by a political culture allergic to truth.

Though delivered in memory of a public servant of similar conviction, Sir Edward Heath, the bulk of the address focused squarely on the present: a changing global order, a fractured Europe, an uncertain Britain, and a set of choices that will define not just this decade, but a generation.

The World Has Shifted – and So Has America

Much of Major's speech was devoted to the international landscape, which he described as being in disarray. He likened it to a jigsaw puzzle that is "falling apart, piece by piece, of its own volition." It was a sobering metaphor for the collapse of the post-war rules-based order.

Most notably, Major turned his gaze across the Atlantic, where he sees a profound shift in America's posture. "Modern America no longer sees Europe as its primary focus," he warned, calling it not a temporary phase, but "a settled judgement in Washington." In other words, Europe – and Britain within it – can no longer rely on the United States as a dependable ally.

"President Trump's unpredictability may win short-term compliance. But that is not leadership. If someone has their foot on your neck, you may comply – but you will never forget it."

It was under President Trump, Major asserted, that this shift became impossible

to ignore. The former US leader negotiated directly with Russia over Ukraine, sidelined key allies, and failed to deter invasion. "He cast doubt. He introduced confusion. He undermined the very values the West is meant to uphold," said Major. Perhaps most damningly, he added: "It was as though – for a time – America folded its arms and looked away."

The consequences, he suggested, are global: allies questioning their own security assumptions, adversaries emboldened, and a West increasingly unsure of its footing.

Brexit: Promises Made, Promises Broken

If his critique of American leadership was sharp, Major's assessment of Britain's post-Brexit condition was scathing. Without rancour, but with unmistakable clarity, he dismantled the central claims of the Leave campaign. Control of borders? Diminished. Economic growth? Weakened. Sovereignty? "Still heavily influenced by what [Europe] do," he said.

The economic cost, he noted, is not just theory – it is already being borne. Citing the Office for Budget Responsibility, Major reminded his audience that Brexit is expected to cost the UK over £100 billion in lost output. That amounts to roughly £40 billion in lost tax revenue – money that could have transformed schools, hospitals, and infrastructure.

"We walked away from the richest free trade area the world has ever known."

He added that the trade deals since struck "come nowhere near to compensating for what we've given up."

Yet perhaps the most piercing observation was cultural and political. “We have lost more than money,” he warned. “We have lost influence. We have lost goodwill. We have lost strategic alignment.”

Not a Rejoinder – but a Realist

To be clear, Major did not call for the UK to rejoin the European Union – not now, at least. He acknowledged that re-entry is not politically realistic today. But he urged that the door be left open for a future generation. In the meantime, he proposed re-entering the Customs Union, calling it a “practical and achievable” step that would ease trade frictions and rebuild confidence.

For Major, this is not about relitigating old arguments but about confronting the present with honesty. “We seek higher living standards,” he said, “but have enacted policies that undermine the very foundations of growth.” That contradiction, he argued, cannot be sustained.

The Home Front: Services, Standards, and Stagnation

Turning his attention to domestic issues, Major warned of deepening inequality, strained public services, and a younger generation facing worse prospects than

their parents. The scars of austerity and the pandemic are still raw, he said, and trust in institutions has frayed.

His solution is not ideological but rooted in partnership: public and private sectors working together. “We cannot sustain high-quality healthcare, education, and social care without wealth creation,” he argued. “And we cannot create wealth without rewarding risk and ambition.”

Here too, Major’s frustration was palpable. He decried a political culture that punishes enterprise and stifles initiative. “We need a culture that celebrates effort, rewards contribution, and supports aspiration,” he urged. It was a plea for pragmatism over populism, substance over spectacle.

A Damaged Image – and the Work Ahead

Throughout the speech, there was a quiet sorrow at what has been lost – an image of Britain as admired, trusted, and dependable. “That image has been damaged,” Major admitted. But he insisted that it can be repaired.

Britain, he said, must now rebuild – not in the image of the past, but for the demands of the future. And that work, he was clear, begins with honesty. Governments, he said, must “convey reality, not fantasy.” ☞

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