

CAVENDISH

Insight. Influence. Creativity.

Weekly Monitoring

Friday 20th

February



EIA Update

This week we submitted our responses to both the Visitor Levy consultation and the Business Rates consultation. In doing so, we highlighted the impacts on the business events industry. In our response to the Visitor Levy consultation, we reiterated our position that, should a levy be introduced, any revenue raised must be ringfenced for investment in local infrastructure and support business events functions.

Political Update

Parliament was in recess over the last week which provided the Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, with a brief reprieve of pressure on his leadership.

Dame Antonia Romeo has been appointed Cabinet Secretary, the most senior role in the civil service, by Starmer, becoming the first woman to hold the role in its 110-year history. This is despite bullying and expenses allegations from her time in New York that were investigated and found to have “no case to answer”. She replaces Sir Chris Wormald, the shortest-serving Cabinet Secretary, amid fresh scrutiny of Civil Service leadership.

The Government has abandoned its plan to delay 30 council elections in England after legal advice suggested the move could be unlawful, prompting accusations of a “humiliating U-turn” from opposition parties and celebrations from Reform UK, which had mounted the successful legal challenge. Ministers now say all affected elections will proceed in May 2026, though critics warn the reversal has wasted months of planning time and fuelled concerns about political interference in the democratic process.

Finally Reform UK used the recess to announce the first members of their 'shadow cabinet', marking a significant step in the party's efforts to professionalise and counter claims that it is a “one-man band”. The appointments of Robert Jenrick MP, Richard Tice MP, Suella Braverman MP and business leader Zia Yusuf signal Reform's intention to build a senior team capable of fighting the next general election and, potentially, governing. Further frontbench roles are expected shortly, with Farage emphasising his

aim to recruit the best people from both inside and outside Westminster. Cavendish have prepared a briefing on the announcement which can be found [here](#).

News

Government Unveils Major Finance Package for Creative Businesses

The Government has announced a major package to help creative firms access growth finance, with the British Business Bank expanding support as industry leaders meet at the Big Creative UK Investment Summit in London. Measures include a £45 million cornerstone commitment to Redrice Ventures, exploration of IP-backed lending guarantees, and closer coordination with Innovate UK to streamline funding routes. The package builds on last month's £500 million innovation investment and aims to unlock new capital across the UK's world-leading creative industries.

Create Growth Programme Delivers £43 Million Boost for Creative Businesses

DCMS provided an evaluation of the Create Growth Programme. The evaluation found that it has provided more than £43 million to help creative firms build investment readiness, offering mentoring, expert finance guidance and support to register IP. More than 900 businesses have completed regional cohorts, with Innovate UK awarding nearly £21 million in grants and leveraging over £5 million in private finance.

DCMS Sectors See Modest Dip but Remain Stronger Than Pre-Pandemic

DCMS economic estimates show that gross value added (GVA) across DCMS sectors excluding tourism fell by around 1% in the three months to December 2025, compared with slight UK-wide growth of 0.1%. Despite this short-term decline, the sectors remain well above pre-pandemic levels, with GVA up 14% since late 2019 versus 5.4% for the wider economy. Creative industries continued to perform strongly, though cultural sub-sector trends were more mixed.

Government Considers Delay to Youth Minimum Wage Equalisation

Ministers are weighing up delaying plans to equalise the minimum wage for all adults, despite Labour's manifesto pledge to scrap age bands and raise pay for 18- to 20-year-olds. Business groups warn higher rates could reduce youth hiring, while unions argue younger workers should not be paid less for identical jobs. The debate comes as youth unemployment reaches its highest level in more than a decade, increasing pressure on the Government's approach to wage reform.

Aviva Arena Named as Bristol's Long-Awaited Venue Takes Shape

Bristol's new 20,000-capacity Aviva Arena has been officially named, marking what developers YTL call a "defining moment" for the Filton project. Opening in 2028, it is expected to generate 2,000 construction jobs, 500 permanent roles and £1bn for the local economy in its first decade. Set to become the UK's third-largest indoor arena, it will anchor the wider Brabazon development of homes, transport links and leisure facilities.

PM Unveils Major Rail Investment with Seven New Stations for Wales

The UK and Welsh Governments have announced a generational plan to modernise Welsh rail, including seven new stations and funding projected to support 12,000 jobs. The commitment, will accelerate long-term upgrades such as Cardiff Parkway and improvements on the Wrexham–Liverpool line, backed by almost £500m from the

latest Spending Review. Ministers say the investment marks an end to years of underfunding and will boost connectivity, growth and employment across Wales.

Parliament

House of Commons

Written Question on Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Kevin Hollinrake, Conservative MP for Thirsk and Malton, asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer:

"What assessment he has made of the potential impact unresolved Covid Business Interruption claims expiring without payment on hospitality and leisure businesses."

Lucy Rigby, Economic Secretary responded:

"The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), as the independent regulator for financial services, sets the conduct standards required of insurance firms. This includes rules requiring insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly. The FCA meets with a wide variety of organisations in the course of delivering its statutory objectives. Queries about such engagements can be addressed directly to the FCA."

"The Supreme Court published its final judgment in the FCA's Business Interruption Insurance test case in 2021. At the time of the judgment, the FCA set out its expectation that insurers should communicate to all impacted policyholders what the judgment meant for their claim and should move quickly to resolve claims as determined by the judgment."

"The FCA court case did not cover all potential issues with business interruption policies. The FCA has been clear that, in the event of further court rulings, insurers will need to consider carefully how the rulings impact claims they have already decided."

"The FCA is continuing to supervise firms to ensure they are meeting their expectations and has robust powers to take action where necessary."

Written Question on Musician Touring Costs

Al Pinkerton, Liberal Democrat MP for Surrey Heath, asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer:

"Whether her Department has made an estimate with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport of the additional costs incurred by musicians seeking to perform in the European Union due to delays in the issuance of (a) A1 forms and (b) Musical Instrument Certificates since 2021."

Dan Tomlinson, Exchequer Secretary, responded:

"The Government recognises the importance of touring to the UK's world-leading music sector and continues to work closely with industry to support musicians performing in the European Union."

"A1 Forms

HMRC has not made an estimate, jointly or separately with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), of any additional costs incurred by musicians as a result of delays in the issuance of A1 forms since 2021.

"While musicians may use the CA3837 A1 application form, this form is also used by many other self-employed individuals. HMRC does not record applicants' occupations within the A1 process, and the systems used do not capture or store any information that would allow us to identify touring musicians as a distinct group. It is therefore not possible to provide data on processing times or outstanding applications specifically for musicians for any of the years requested.

"HMRC recognises how important it is for customers to receive their A1 certificates promptly and is strengthening the service to support this."

**For any queries regarding this round-up
please get in touch.**

Get in touch



cavendishconsulting.com