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Weekly Monitoring
Friday 22nd
September



Political Update

Parliament may have only returned from recess for a brief period but that was enough time for a few impactful announcements. At the start of this week, Leader of the Opposition Sir Keir Starmer's promise to renegotiate the UK's Brexit deal caused quite a stir amongst the Conservatives. Sir Keir Starmer also visited both Canada and France, putting himself more on the global stage as the Labour Party's position as a "Government in Waiting" solidifies.

The biggest stir, however, was caused by Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak's announcement of his substantial U-turn on Net Zero policies. Framing his decision to U-turn on previous net zero targets as one of courage and honesty, Sunak wants to prioritise long-term decisions before short-term choices, even if those come at a political cost. Stating that the UK requires "sensible green leadership", he wants to move away from two extremes – those who want to abandon Net Zero and those who want to accelerate it – as both fail to "reckon with the reality of the situation". He is confident that there is a way to adopt a more "pragmatic and realistic" approach which will ease the burdens of a cost of living crisis on the British people.

Parliament is currently in recess for Party Conference season, the Liberal Democrat Party Conference will be the first one to take place in Bournemouth from 23rd – 26th September.

News

[Labour Releases their National Policy Forum Document](#)

The Labour Party's National Policy Forum's (NPF) Policy Programme was distributed to members of the National Executive Committee (NEC) and other stakeholders late last week. The NPF is the policy making body of the Labour Party, containing delegates of all the major constituent organisations that form the broader party (including regional parties, trade unions and related socialist societies).

This programme document has been constructed via consultations with the parties' stakeholders and outlines the proposals that delegates will vote on at the Party's annual conference in Liverpool, this October.

Once voted on at Conference, those accepted policies will undergo the scrutiny of the 'Clause V' meeting (comprised of the NEC, relevant shadow cabinet members and senior trade union representatives), meaning they could form the basis of the party's General Election manifesto.

For a summary of the NPF Policy programme, please click the button below.

[Click here to download a summary of Labour's NPF Programme.](#)

New visa fees set to come into effect next month

The Home Office has announced that increases to immigration and nationality fees to pay for vital services are set to come into effect on 4th October. The changes mean that the cost for a visit visa for less than six months is rising by £15 to £115, while the fee for applying for a student visa from outside the UK will rise by £127 to £490, to equal the amount charged for in-country applications.

Millions get more power over working hours thanks to new law

The Workers (Predictable Terms and Conditions) Bill has achieved Royal Assent. This Government-backed Predictable Working Act introduces a right for workers to request a more predictable working pattern, intending to redress the imbalance of power between some employers and workers in atypical work, encouraging workers to begin conversations with their employers about their working patterns. The Act and any secondary legislation are expected to come into force in approximately a year to give employers the time to prepare for the necessary changes.

UK appoints new HM Trade Commissioner for Asia Pacific to strengthen trade and investment links

The Department for Business and Trade has appointed Martin Kent as His Majesty's Trade Commissioner (HMTc) for Asia Pacific. As the new Trade Commissioner for Asia Pacific, he will generate business opportunities for the UK while contributing to the growth of sustainable, resilient, and productive economies across the region.

Alongside trade and investment, Kent will pursue regional security priorities in his new position, protecting free trade and supply chains and continuing the progression already made by the AUKUS security pact.

UK minister's visit to Canada and US will boost long-standing ties with key allies

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Americas and Caribbean, David Rutley went on a four-day visit to Ottawa, Louisiana and Texas. With more than \$1 trillion invested in each other's economies, the visit will build on UK-US relationships that create thousands of jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

Government unveils new Board of Trade with high-profile CEOs

Business and Trade Secretary and President of the Board of Trade Kemi Badenoch has today announced a refreshed membership of the Board of Trade, one of the most high-profile Governmental advisory boards, existing since the 17th Century. The focus of the new Board will be on working with leaders from the UK's top growth sectors to identify and address export barriers so businesses can achieve their full potential to reach the 'Race to a Trillion'. The creative industries, for example, are heavily represented with fashion, film and music CEOs all on the revamped Board., as well as senior leaders from top global companies and innovative UK businesses, such as Tufan Erginbilgiç Chief Executive Officer of Rolls-Royce, and Sir Lucian Grainge, Managing Director of Universal Music Group.

Parliament

House of Commons

Written question to the Department for Culture, Media and Sports on Cultural Heritage: Customs

Barbara Keeley (Labour, Worsley & Eccles South) asked the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, “whether she has had recent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on reducing the cost of the ATA Carnet for cultural goods?”

Minister for Data and Digital Infrastructure, Sir John Whittingdale responded:

“Ministers and officials regularly engage with industry and ministerial colleagues from other departments on issues facing creative and cultural sectors.

"The government is committed to supporting touring artists and the wider music industry to adapt to new arrangements following our departure from the EU. We have worked with the sector and directly with Member States to clarify what creative workers need to do, noting that the vast majority of EU Member States, including the biggest touring markets such as Spain, France, Germany and the Netherlands, have confirmed they offer visa and work permit free routes for some short-term touring activities. The Government also launched an Export Support Service where UK businesses, including touring professionals, can access advice and guidance.

"We will continue to engage with industry to understand challenges facing the live music sector and options to address these issues."

Written question to the Northern Ireland Office on Investment

Ruth Jones MP asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, "what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the agenda for the Northern Ireland investment conference in September 2023?"

Minister of State, Steve Baker responded:

"My officials worked closely with the Department of Business and Trade, the department leading on delivery of the event alongside Invest Northern Ireland. There was Ministerial direction and oversight throughout. A number of UK Government ministers from different departments played an active role in the Summit, which successfully showcased Northern Ireland's innovation and technological strengths across its internationally renowned sectors to more than 100 global investors."

For any queries regarding this round-up
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