

# CAVENDISH

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**Weekly Monitoring**  
**Friday 29th**  
**September**



## Political Update

Parliament is currently in recess for Party Conference season, with the Liberal Democrat Party Conference taking place earlier this week. The Liberal Democrat Leader, Sir Ed Davey launched the conference by promising to deliver a care package worth £5 billion and he also made the significant announcement to drop his party's pledge to put a penny on income tax. The Conservative Party Conference is next up, starting this Sunday in Manchester.

Elsewhere, the Bank of England voted to maintain the interest rate at 5.25% after previously voting to increase the rate 14 times in a row. This indicates their recognition that inflation has fallen in recent months and their belief that it will continue to do so.

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## News

### Shadow Chancellor sets out Labour Party plans for fiscal stability

Shadow Chancellor, Rachel Reeves published an article in the Financial Times in which she outlines how the Labour Party would restore economic stability to promote growth. She committed to protecting the Bank of England's independence and strengthening the Office for Budget Responsibility's (OBR) powers of independent forecast through a new charter of Budget responsibility. She also pledged to introduce a new set of fiscal rules that would mean no borrowing to fund day-to-day spending and the reduction of national debt as a share of the economy. Finally, Ms Reeves stated:

*“I will back the British industries that strengthen our energy security, cut household bills and create better paid jobs. I want to use the power of the Treasury to get business round the table so that we can unlock billions of pounds of investment into our towns, cities and regions. I will work with, not against, our financial institutions.”*

### **Transport Committee sets 9 tests for Government on new strike laws**

The Transport Committee has released a report setting out the key principles that the Government should utilise in relation to the ‘Minimum Service Levels’ regulations for railway worker strikes. The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act empowered Ministers to make additional regulations setting minimum service levels during strikes, which has not yet been announced by the Department for Transport. Thus, following an inquiry, the Transport Committee has published the following nine criteria that they feel should be met in any additional regulation:

- *“A minimum service level provided on strike days should be at least as good as typically provided on previous strike days.*
- *“Safety on the network for staff and the travelling public must be the primary consideration.*
- *“The minimum service level must be flexible enough to be applied to different patterns of industrial action affecting different employers.*
- *“Regulations should reflect the differential impacts on staff operating rail services on strike days. The greater responsibilities placed on those who must work on strike days to provide a minimum service must be reflected in pay and conditions. Resilience in staffing must be improved so that there are trained alternatives able to cover for specialised staff who may want to exercise their right to strike.*
- *“The minimum service level must be specified in a way which enables knowledge about travel patterns in particular regions and localities, including access to employment, education and essential services, to be taken into account.*
- *“Rail services—or credible alternatives—should be available to passengers in all areas of the country normally served by the network.*
- *“Passengers with access needs must receive the same support as they are entitled to on regular travel days.*
- *“A minimum service level for rail should protect industries, such as the night-time economy, that cannot adopt flexible and remote working patterns on strike days.*

- *“There must be clarity about the access that freight services can expect to have to the network, and Government and the freight industry must collaborate on determining what routes should be prioritised.”*

On the publication of the report, Chair of the Transport Committee, Iain Stewart MP (Conservative, Milton Keynes South) stated:

*“This Committee questioned an array of witnesses from the rail sector and we consistently heard that they were waiting for clarity from the Government on how minimum service levels might be set, how routes should be prioritised, how safety could be guaranteed and which types of staff might be needed. It became apparent that the Government needs to make the first move. Only then will stakeholders be able to feed back on the practicalities, so that regulations can be fine-tuned and plans drawn up.*

*“We therefore say to DfT, once it has determined which model of minimum service level it plans to implement, that it must consult properly with the industry and carefully build on the response it receives.”*

#### **Office for National Statistics releases export data for 2022**

Figures released by the Office for National Statistics show that the total value of the UK's exports were worth £834 billion in 2022, an increase from £815 billion in 2021.

On the statistical release, Minister for Exports, Lord Offord said:

*"This is fantastic news and shows our world-class exporting businesses are doing even better than first thought and selling more of the goods and services to the world. The UK is a services superpower, hitting over £400 billion in exports for the first time last year, but we want to see even more businesses exporting, so we can hit our ambitious target of £1 trillion of exports a year by 2030."*

#### **World's first fully digitalised goods shipment sent from Burnley arrives in Singapore**

Following the agreement of new trade legislation with Singapore and the passing of the Electronic Trade Document Act, Fort Vale, a valve manufacturer based in Burnley sent a shipment to Singapore with a fully digital customs document process for the first time. The Government expects this change to reduce processing times by up to 75%.

### Minister for Digital Infrastructure gives speech at Connected Britain 2023

John Whittingdale MP gave a speech at the Connected Britain 2023 Conference, held in the London Docklands. The Minister for Digital Infrastructure spoke on topics such as extending wireless coverage across the whole of the country, as well as building a connective infrastructure network for the future.

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## Parliament

### House of Lords

### Written question to His Majesty's Government on Migrant Workers: Visas

Lord Rosser (Labour) asked His Majesty's Government "what caps are in place for work-related visas, and how they are enforced?"

Lords Minister for Migration and Borders, Lord Murray of Blidworth responded:

*"The UK's Points Based system Skilled Worker and Temporary Worker routes are not capped, with the exception of the Seasonal Worker route which is specifically designed to support the UK horticulture sector. A sector in which growers typically require higher volumes of labour, for relatively short-term periods of time, in line with seasonal production peaks.*

*"The Seasonal Worker route currently has 45,000 visas available. A further 10,000 places will be released if there is sufficient evidence of need, and contingent with improvements in worker welfare. A separate quota of 2,000 places is also available to support the poultry sector in the run up to Christmas. These allocations are divided amongst the licenced Scheme Operators, in line with published policy, and are managed via the Home Office's Sponsor Management System."*

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