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Weekly Monitoring

Friday 6th February

EVENTS INDUSTRY ALLIANCE

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EIA Update

This week the EIA is pleased to have confirmed a meeting with Dame Harriett Baldwin, Conservative MP for West Worcestershire and Shadow Minister for Business and Trade. This will follow the meeting Nigel Huddleston Shadow Secretary for Culture, Media, and Sport.

The meeting will provide an opportunity for us to explain the economic impact of the business events industry and what more can be done to support our industry.

Political Update

Much of this week's politics has centred on former US Ambassador Peter Mandelson's relationship with Jeffrey Epstein following the release of the Epstein files. The disclosures have intensified pressure on the Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, over why Mandelson was appointed ambassador to the US despite earlier warnings. Ministers now face calls to release extensive communications as police investigations continue. Amid the fallout, Benjamin Wegg-Prosser has resigned from Mandelson's firm, Global Counsel, and Mandelson's investments have been withdrawn from the company.

The Mandelson scandal has mounted further pressure on Starmer's leadership, with MPs weighing leadership moves amid anger over his judgement and reliance on Morgan McSweeney. Rivals are reportedly assessing their options and how they could mount a challenge although no formal or public challenge has been made.

Elsewhere, Reform UK has announced Dan Thomas as its leader in Wales ahead of the May Senedd elections. Born in Wales, he previously worked in financial services in London and served as Conservative Council Leader at Barnet before defecting to Reform UK in June 2025.

Labour has selected Angeliki Stogia as its candidate for the Gorton and Denton by-election.

News

Business Secretary Sets Out Vision for an Export-Led Britain

At the UK Trade and Export Finance Forum, Business Secretary Peter Kyle reaffirmed Britain’s commitment to open, international trade, emphasising exports as a driver of growth, productivity and resilience. He highlighted a new report by Oxford Economics, shows the UK Export Finance support has added £23 billion to the economy and backed 66,000 jobs annually. Citing examples from offshore wind to rail manufacturing, he pointed to the recently announced £11 billion lending package for small firms and pledged further supply-side reforms, expanded UKEF capacity and a renewed push to help British businesses scale and compete globally.

Fortnightly Talks Set to Accelerate Brexit Reset Negotiations

Britain and the EU have agreed to intensify negotiations on the Brexit reset, holding fortnightly talks to break deadlock on food standards, youth mobility and energy co-operation. Despite hopes of announcing a deal by May, discussions remain stalled over genetically modified foods, EU court oversight and limits on youth mobility. Ministers are also seeking opt-outs from new EU regulations on pesticides and gene-editing. UK and EU officials say deeper political engagement is now needed to resolve outstanding issues and deliver a workable agreement.

Labour Faces Fallout Over Business Rates U-turn

Labour’s retreat on business rates has sparked anger across the high street after Chancellor Rachel Reeves offered targeted relief only for pubs, leaving retailers, restaurants and hotels facing steep tax rises. Critics argue the move exposes deeper flaws in the system, where decades of sticking-plaster discounts and complex revaluations have failed to address how rateable values and multipliers disconnect taxes from economic reality. With Covid-era relief ending and bills surging, business groups warn that Labour must now deliver a coherent, long-term strategy rather than another short-lived fix.

Two Sport England Board Members Reappointed

The Government has reappointed Michelle Cracknell and Jason Fergus to the Sport England board for three-year terms. They will serve until 31st December 2028.

West Midlands Trains Moves into Public Ownership as Rail Reform Accelerates

West Midlands Trains has become the latest operator to transfer into public ownership on 1st February 2026. With services now run by WM Trains Limited, a subsidiary of DfT Operator Limited. This brings eight of the fourteen DfT-supervised operators into public hands as government rail reform gathers pace. Further transfers, including Govia Thameslink Railway in May, are planned ahead of establishing Great British Railways.

Interest Rates Held

The Bank of England kept interest rates at 3.75 per cent in a narrow five-four vote, signalling a possible cut as early as March. The Bank downgraded growth forecasts and raised its unemployment outlook, while expecting inflation to return to its 2 per cent target by April, paving the way for future easing.

Parliament

House of Commons

MPs Warn UK Risks Becoming "Weak Link" in Western Economic Security

The Business and Trade Committee says the Government's response to its economic security inquiry is inadequate as threats from hostile states intensify. Ministers accepted only four of twenty-five recommendations, refusing to define unacceptable foreign dependencies or essential sovereign capabilities, leaving industry without clarity. Allies have expressed concern over the UK's fragmented approach compared with stronger systems in the EU, US and Japan. Chair Liam Byrne warned Britain remains vulnerable without urgent action to strengthen defences.

Written Question on Business Rates

David Simmonds, Conservative MP for Ruislip, Northwood, and Pinner asked the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government:

"With reference to his Department's correspondence entitled 1/2026: Pubs and live music venues relief 2026 to 2027, published on 27 January 2026, whether the new scheme disapplies the transitional relief schemes for (a) 2027-28 and (b) 2028-29 financial years by capping any increases relative to the outturn bill for 2026-27 at CPI inflation."

Alison McGovern, Minister for Local Government and Homelessness responded:

"Properties eligible for the pub and live music venue relief scheme will benefit from a 15% relief in 2026/27. Thereafter they will see their rates bill frozen in real terms in 2027/28 and 2028/29 provided the pub remains occupied. Any improvements to the pub which increases its rateable value after 1 April may also increase the bill in the normal way.

"The Treasury have published examples of how the pub and live music venue relief scheme will work. Pubs and Live Music Venues Relief - GOV.UK."

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

Get in touch

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