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Weekly Monitoring
Friday 9th January



EIA Update

EIA has started off the new year with a string of MPs who are interested in meeting with us to discuss our Economic Impact Study launched last year. These include; Harriet Baldwin, Shadow Minister for Business and Trade, Mims Davies, Shadow Secretary for Wales, Bob Blackman, Conservative MP for Harrow East, and Gareth Bacon, Shadow Minister for London and Housing and Planning.

We are continuing to arrange a meeting with Nigel Huddleston, Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and look forward to outlining our key asks during the discussion.

In addition, we are leveraging a recently published Times article highlighting the UK's lack of presence at the CES Trade Show to reinforce our arguments with stakeholders we have previously engaged with. Further details on the article can be found below.

Political Update

Parliament returned on 5 January. Ahead of its return, Starmer outlined his priorities for the year, including pledges on economic recovery, closer alignment with the EU single market, and supporting peace in Ukraine.

Despite these commitments, the first week back has largely focused on international affairs, including the UK's assistance to the US in seizing a ship in the North Atlantic. Conversely, critics have urged Starmer to adopt a firmer stance against Trump over Venezuela and Greenland.

The Labour leadership debate continues, with Starmer telling Laura Kuenssberg, "*I'll be Prime Minister this time next year*," while stressing that the May local elections should not be viewed as a referendum on the Government.

In Scotland, the Visitor Levy Amendment Bill has been published. While local authorities currently apply percentage-based charges, the proposed changes would introduce fixed-

rate options, seasonal flexibility, and clearer reporting, giving councils greater scope to fund tourism effectively.

Meanwhile, Reform has announced its candidate for the 2028 London Mayoral election: Laila Cunningham, currently a Westminster City Councillor.

News

MPs Demand Clarity on Business Rate Reforms Threatening Hospitality and Cultural Venues

MPs have urged the Chancellor to clarify the impact of business rate reforms on hospitality and entertainment venues. In a strongly worded letter, CMS Committee Chair Dame Caroline Dinenage warned that changes announced in November's Budget risk devastating grassroots music venues and cinemas already struggling for survival. The Committee called for the Treasury to publish the analysis behind the reforms and confirm details of alternative support promised by the Prime Minister, stressing that urgent action is needed to safeguard cultural infrastructure and protect local economies nationwide.

Tech Show Chief Criticises UK's Weak Presence at CES

Gary Shapiro, Head of the US Consumer Technology Association, has condemned Britain's "spotty" participation at CES in Las Vegas, contrasting it with strong representation from France and the Netherlands. Despite CES attracting 100,000 visitors annually, the UK government has faced criticism for failing to provide senior political presence or reinstate trade show grants scrapped in 2021. Industry voices warn the lack of support undermines Britain's tech ambitions, leaving private firms to shoulder costs.

Government Plans to Ease Business Rate Hike for Pubs

The Treasury is set to announce changes to how business rates for pubs in England are calculated, reducing steep rises following higher rateable values. The move comes after pressure from landlords and industry groups, amid warnings of closures. Relief may include lowering the multiplier or boosting transitional support. Licensing rules could also be relaxed to allow longer opening hours and pavement drinking.

Government Slashes Cost of Electric Lorries to Boost Green Freight

Hauliers can now save up to £120,000 on new electric lorries under an expanded Plug-in Truck Grant, backed by £18 million of funding until March 2026. The move forms part of a £318 million green freight investment aimed at cutting emissions, reducing costs and supporting jobs. Savings vary by vehicle size, with the largest trucks eligible for the full discount. Alongside this, a consultation will outline plans to phase out sales of non-zero emission HGVs by 2040, giving industry certainty.

Parliament

House of Commons

Written Question on Business Events

Cameron Thomas, Liberal Democrat MP for Tewkesbury, asked the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport:

"Whether her Department plans to develop a UK major events strategy."

Stephanie Peacock, Minister for Sport, Tourism, Civil Society and Youth responded:

"The UK is a world-class host for major events, and the government is investing in a decade-long pipeline to drive economic growth and community impact.

Support for sporting events is already established through the Gold Framework.

Additionally, DCMS will launch a new Visitor Economy Growth Strategy next year to strengthen the business events industry and enhance the UK's global competitiveness.

"The Department welcomes the CMS Select Committee Inquiry into major events and continues to engage with industry to address challenges and identify further opportunities for collaboration and growth."

Written Question on the Impact of Business Events on Economic Growth

Cameron Thomas, Liberal Democrat MP for Tewkesbury, asked the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport:

"What assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of business events on economic growth."

Stephanie Peacock, Minister for Sport, Tourism, Civil Society and Youth responded:

"Business events can generate economic growth, create jobs, and boost the visitor economy across the country. In 2024, business events contributed a reported £33.6 billion to the UK economy as a whole according to data from UK Events.

"The average business traveller spends more than double that of a leisure tourist (£209 v £101) and, with 38% taking place outside of London, business events are an example of how events can support economic growth across the UK.

"The British Tourist Authority also supports organisations in attracting international business events across UK cities via the Business Events Growth Programme. In the 2024-25 financial year, the programme financially supported 36 international events across Britain and generated an additional £27.5 million in expenditure. These events were aligned with key Government priority sectors including healthcare and life sciences, engineering and manufacturing, technology, renewable energy and creative industries."

Debate on UK Town of Culture

MPs used the UK Town of Culture debate to showcase venues driving regeneration and to raise concerns about financial pressures. Liz Jarvis emphasised Eastleigh's cultural assets, including The Point Theatre and the Ageas Bowl, which has evolved from a cricket ground into a major concert venue hosting global acts such as Rod Stewart and the Arctic Monkeys. She warned that Hampshire County Council's £600,000 cut to the Cultural Trust threatens arts projects, stressing that investment in venues creates jobs and supports freelancers. Vikki Slade echoed this, citing Poole's Lighthouse cultural centre and the need for councils to maintain funding as high streets shift towards experience-led economies. Patrick Hurley highlighted Southport's plans

for new event spaces, including Lyceum Square and a cultural quarter, while Dr Allison Gardner showcased Longton's transformation of heritage sites into creative hubs. Several MPs linked cultural growth to economic resilience, noting that rising business rates and reduced relief risk undermining local venues.

Responding, Minister Ian Murray confirmed £60,000 development funding for shortlisted bids and praised culture as a catalyst for regeneration, citing Bradford's success in attracting investment and boosting wellbeing. He promised the competition would launch "very shortly" and urged towns to apply, stressing its role in shaping future opportunities.

**For any queries regarding this round-up
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