

Events Industry Alliance End of Week Report

Friday 1st May

EIA update

Hi all,

As previously highlighted, we shared a survey on ministerial attendance at member events a couple of weeks ago. We've now started to receive some feedback, and we're grateful to those who have already responded. That said, it would be hugely helpful to get as many responses as possible to ensure we have a full and accurate picture. If you haven't yet had a chance to complete it, you can find the survey [here](#), or for AEV members, a survey [here](#). Please do take a few minutes to respond, as the insights will help us better understand current government involvement in the events sector.

The Culture, Media and Sport Committee held its final oral evidence session on major events on Tuesday, with **Stephanie Peacock (Minister for Sport, Tourism, Civil Society and Youth)** confirming the Government will publish a UK-wide major events strategy within 12 months. With the EIA having given oral evidence to this inquiry late last year - and having briefed Committee members ahead of this session drawing on SASIE data - Henham will be monitoring the report-writing process closely. Several core issues featured in the session, including visa barriers, ministerial attendance, and the government's overall attitude to business events. Notably, **Dame Caroline Dinenage** called for the Secretary of State for DCMS to bring forward an events calendar to Cabinet to prompt other Secretaries of State to commit attendance at strategically important events. The Committee's forthcoming recommendations to Government now represent the critical opportunity to ensure business events are treated as a distinct and strategically important part of any future major events framework, rather than being subsumed within a broader sport and culture narrative.

We are also finalising our submission from the EIA to the CMS Committee's tourism inquiry call for written evidence, focused on the role of business events in supporting the Government's 50 million-visitor target and the IS-8 growth sectors.

Finally, we have sent our draft correspondence to our 'MP champions' who have major venues in their constituency to relevant venue leaders. These will go out imminently and will set us up for meaningful engagement once Parliament is back from prorogation from 13th May.

Government this week

Wednesday 29th April

- Parliament was prorogued with Royal Assent given to a handful of the government's key bills including the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, Crime and Policing Bill, and the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. The latter Bill gives mayors of strategic combined authorities new powers over planning, including the ability to intervene in applications of strategic importance, to make mayoral development orders, and to charge a mayoral community infrastructure levy on developers.

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- The review process formally began for the [EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement \(TCA\)](#), requiring both sides to assess how the post-Brexit framework is functioning in practice. While this is a technical exercise with no obligation to renegotiate terms, it comes against the backdrop of a broader UK-EU “reset” that has already reshaped cooperation in areas like energy, emissions trading, and food standards. Progress has been uneven, with some concrete steps forward but criticism that momentum and strategic direction are lacking. Attention now shifts to the upcoming UK-EU summit, where any meaningful political decisions are more likely to emerge.

What happened in Parliament

Tuesday 28th April

- The Culture, Media and Sport Committee [held a session](#) on ‘Major events’ with some hugely relevant areas discussed around the UK event strategy, ministerial attendance, and issues around international touring.
 - **Strategy and coordination: Stephanie Peacock (Minister for Sport and Tourism)** confirmed the Government will publish a UK-wide major events strategy within the next 12 months, acknowledging that the lack of a "golden thread" tying together sport, culture and business events remains the one unmet recommendation from the predecessor Committee. She referenced a cross-government roundtable convened in January, attended by DBT minister **Blair McDougall**, with a second planned for June, and signalled she wants to move toward a "single front door" into Government for event organisers, with **Jonathan Martin (Director for Project Delivery and Major Events, DCMS)** acknowledging the Department is shifting from an "event-to-event" approach to more systemic industry engagement.
 - **Business events competitiveness and price: Liz Jarvis (LD, Eastleigh)** raised the UK being ranked 113th out of 119 countries for price competitiveness in travel and tourism (World Economic Forum), noting the cumulative burden of VAT, visa costs, ETA charges, Air Passenger Duty and a potential bed tax. This was underlined by the example of the ‘ICE’ gaming event from the UK to Barcelona, with **Jarvis** citing Brexit bureaucracy, cost and difficulty of operating here.
 - **Visas and equipment movement: Dame Caroline Dinenage (Con, Gosport)** pressed hard on visa obstacles, citing the F1's evidence that specialised but lower-tier staff face disproportionate difficulties, arguing this reflects a broader failure across Government to understand the economic firepower of the events industry. On cabotage and equipment movement, the Chair noted these issues are "biting" for touring and events; **Peacock** committed to raising them with the touring Minister and agreed to write to the Committee on the status of the MOU with Spain.
 - **Ministerial attendance and soft power: Damian Hinds (Con, East Hampshire)** pressed **Peacock** on the failure of Ministers to commit early to key business and trade events like Farnborough International Airshow, arguing early confirmation allows the UK to elevate its delegation and attract senior counterparts from overseas. **Dame Caroline Dinenage** called for the Secretary of State for DCMS to bring forward an events calendar to Cabinet to prompt other Secretaries of State to commit attendance at strategically important events. **Peacock** agreed to raise this directly with the Secretary of State later that day.
 - **Exporting the events sector: Bayo Alaba (Lab, Romford)** raised evidence that UK events exporters lack access to British officials in overseas markets, in contrast to other governments. **Peacock** committed to raising this with the FCDO, while **Jonathan Martin** noted DBT currently leads on export support through trade missions and a sport industry group, and **Michael Livingston (Director for Major Sporting Projects Delivery, DCMS)**

highlighted that many companies that grew out of London 2012 are now world-leading exporters working across Saudi Arabia, Morocco and beyond.

- **Regulation and compliance costs: Dr Rupa Huq (Lab, Ealing Central and Acton)** pressed **Peacock** on the cumulative impact of recent legislation on the sector, including the Employment Rights Act, Martyn's Law and rising policing costs. On Martyn's Law, **Jonathan Martin** confirmed DCMS is working with the Home Office on guidance with 12 months to implementation, focused on providing clarity for the wide range of venues and events covered. On policing costs, **Peacock** confirmed a targeted consultation has concluded with no final decision taken and agreed to ask the Policing Minister to write to the Committee with a timeline, indicating progress expected by the summer.
- During HMT OPQs, **Bradley Thomas (Con, Bromsgrove)** [asked why](#) the Government won't get on the side of business owners.
 - **Dan Tomlinson (Exchequer Secretary)** replied that the Government were supporting business owners through reformed business rates to help high-street businesses.

Written questions

Monday 27th April

- **Fleur Anderson (Labour, Putney)** [asked](#) the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Government plans to extend business rates relief to independent gyms and fitness centres.
 - **Dan Tomlinson (Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury)** said that new permanently lower multipliers have been introduced for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties and are worth nearly £1 billion per year, benefiting over 750,000 properties. He confirmed that this measure means over half of all ratepayers will see no bill increases this year, with most increases capped at 15% or below.

Tuesday 28th April

- **Euan Stainbank (Lab, Falkirk)** [asked](#) the Foreign Secretary what action the Government is taking to minimise prospective disruption for British citizens travelling to Europe this summer under the EU's Entry-Exit System (EES).
 - **Stephen Doughty (Minister of State for Europe, North America and Overseas Territories)** replied that while the UK is supportive of the aims of EES to improve border security, ministers want to see EES implemented in a way that minimises waiting times for UK travellers. He added that the government is actively engaging EU and Member State counterparts on EES and has worked with industry partners to encourage clear communications to travellers.
- **Gregory Campbell (DUP, East Londonderry)** [asked](#) the Home Secretary what steps were being taken to reduce waiting times for UK citizens travelling through airports in Schengen-area countries in summer 2026.
 - **Mike Tapp (Minister for Migration)** replied that the Government is working with the European Commission and Schengen countries to "promote flexible, pragmatic solutions" for UK travellers, while noting that waiting times remain a matter for the European Commission and member states.

Regional news

Wednesday 29th – Thursday 30th April

- *Solar & Storage Live London* at the ExCeL [brought together](#) over 10,000 attendees and around 200 exhibitors, highlighting strong momentum in the UK's clean energy sector. The event focused on scaling solar deployment, improving storage capacity, and unlocking investment across supply chains. It provided a major networking platform for industry, policymakers and investors with policy representatives from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero also speaking.

Week ahead

- Parliament has now been prorogued; both Houses will return on Wednesday 13th May for the State Opening and the King's Speech.
- The Local Elections take place next Thursday, across England, Scotland and Wales. Voters in England will choose around 5,000 councillors across 136 councils and six mayors, while Scotland votes for a new Parliament and Wales elects a significantly expanded Senedd. The results will directly shape local decision-making and devolved priorities, with knock-on effects for areas like transport, housing and public services across all three nations.

Media snapshot

Business rates system a major barrier to UK investment and competitiveness

In a CBI survey [of nearly 700 businesses](#) across the UK, nearly a third (32%) of all respondents said that the business rates system has played a major role in cancelled, reduced, or delayed planned investment in their property. Over 75% of respondents said that higher overall business rates will suppress investment. Louise Hellem, CBI's Chief Economist, reacted to the survey saying, "Business rates are no longer just a cost of doing business – they're a major tax on ambition and one that effectively penalises investment."

UK firms' worries about economy rise by most since 2020

UK business confidence fell sharply in April 2026, with [the headline index](#) dropping from +55 to +44 and concerns about the wider economy rising at the fastest pace since 2020 due to inflation, costs and global uncertainty. However, firms remained relatively resilient about their own performance, with the Lloyds survey of around 1,200 businesses showing trading expectations only slightly weaker and overall confidence still above the long-term average.

Birmingham events expert partners with annual unsung hero awards

Blackberry Events, a Birmingham-based events company, [has announced a partnership](#) with the Multicultural Business and Community Champion (MBCC) Awards, which celebrates UK "unsung heroes" in business and community leadership. The awards, now in their 11th year and expecting over 800 delegates, have previously attracted high-profile guests including Sir Trevor McDonald, Alison Hammond and Sir Lenny Henry. The 2026 ceremony will take place on Saturday 28 November at the Hilton Metropole in Birmingham, with organisers highlighting a shared focus on purpose, diversity and community impact.

MIA finds 73% of event professionals impacted by Middle East conflict

The Meetings Industry Association (MIA) [reports that](#) 73% of UK event professionals are being impacted by the ongoing Middle East conflict, with effects including postponements, cancellations, and some events being pushed into 2027. The sector is also seeing slower bookings and increased hesitation from international clients, who are delaying decisions and seeking more flexible contract terms due to uncertainty. In response, the MIA is working with CMS and InEvexco to develop legal and insurance guidance aimed at improving booking confidence and reducing cancellation risk.

If you have any questions regarding this update, please contact the Henham Strategy team

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