

Events Industry Alliance End of Week Report

Friday 22nd May

EIA update

Hi all,

This week, 18th June was confirmed as the date for the Makerfield by election. This will be the most important by election in Starmer's tenure as PM, with Andy Burnham - seen as his biggest competitor - seeking to use this as his path back into Parliament, and from there, into Number 10. However, it is not guaranteed that Burnham will win the by-election: reporting on the ground indicates there will be a strong showing by Reform. The Reform candidate is Robert Kenyon, a local plumber and former NHS technician, who is positioning himself as a community-rooted alternative to "career politicians". In other parties, the Green candidate has had to withdraw over antisemitic comments, with a new one being chosen on Monday, while the Tories and Lib Dems have both announced theirs, although with little expectation of winning.

Closer to home, this week our work has centred on progressing stakeholder engagement with DBT and developing our "best practice" note on ministerial attendance at business events, which will underpin upcoming discussions with DBT colleagues.

To inform this, we have started to collate some initial findings from our ministerial attendance survey filled out by members, which have yielded some insightful results. The link to the survey is still live for any members yet to fill it out. For organisations who wish to list multiple events please use the [venue's version](#) of the survey and stipulate that you are an organiser instead. The standard survey for organisers can be found [here](#). Please do take a few minutes to respond, as the insights can continue to inform our approach.

Alongside our engagement with DBT, we have also been developing additional routes into government and local stakeholders. This includes exploring how supply chain members can support constituency-level engagement, and how this activity can feed into our wider narrative and case study work.

Finally, it has been encouraging to see that, off the back of the EIA's meeting with Mims Davies MP, she has tabled questions to various government departments around their ministerial attendance since 2023. We will update EIA members when these are answered. We have also begun receiving replies to our MP champion letters and are starting to arrange meetings with MPs representing constituencies with major venues.

Best,
Alexander

Government this week

Monday 18th - Friday 22nd May

- In partnership with leading financial, technology and cultural organisations, the UK Government's GREAT Britain and Northern Ireland Campaign [convened a major expo](#) in Los Angeles from 18–22 May. The delegation, led by **Peter Kyle (Secretary of State for Business and Trade)** alongside **Lisa Nandy (Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport)** and **Blair McDougall (Minister for Small**

Business), brought together more than 250 UK business, cultural and policy leaders. The programme focused on strengthening UK–US investment and commercial ties, with a particular emphasis on collaboration across technology, finance, the creative industries and science.

What happened in Parliament

Monday 18th May

- In a debate on ‘Backing Business to Create Economic Growth’, **Vikki Slade (LD, Mid Dorset and North Poole)** [welcomed the](#) government’s efforts to deepen their relationship with the EU but said the benefit to business is more than outweighed by “the jobs tax”.
 - **Peter Kyle (Secretary of State for Business and Trade)** replied that the government’s business rates support package was worth £4.3 billion and will protect ratepayers from large overnight increases in bills. He also noted the permanently lower multipliers for retail, hospitality and leisure properties - worth nearly £1 billion a year to 750,000 properties. He also earlier referenced the EU as “Britain’s most significant international marketplace” stating “we are going to deepen Britain’s trading relationship with the European Union.”

Wednesday 20th May

- During PMQs, **Esther McVay (Con, Tatton)** [asked](#) the Prime Minister if he agrees with Andy Burnham that the UK should rejoin the European Union.
 - **Keir Starmer** said he agreed with Labour’s manifesto, which he is implementing. He noted the UK was closer to the EU as a result of last year’s agreements and would be “closer again” as a result of the agreement they will reach this year.

Thursday 21st May

- During Business and Trade OPQs, **Ben Maguire (LD, North Cornwall)** [asked](#) about steps to help SMEs trade with European nations. His follow up question concerned a constituent who used to sell to EU customers, and is now struggling to export to the US due to their tariffs. He asked whether the Government would negotiate a bespoke customs union with the EU.
 - **Chris Bryant (Minister for Trade)** said the Government was reducing red tape and other obstacles via the EU-UK Summit last year, but said he wouldn’t be taking any ideas from the Liberal Democrats on a customs union.

Written Questions

Monday 18th May

- **Al Pinkerton (LD, Surrey Heath)** [asked](#) the Transport Secretary what assessment her Department has made of the impact of Schengen travel restrictions on (a) international coach and (b) international haulage firms since the ending of freedom of movement.
 - **Keir Mather (Minister for Aviation, Maritime and Decarbonisation)** said the Department is undertaking research to improve understanding of the effects of the 90-in-180-day Schengen immigration limit on the international operations of GB-based HGV and coach businesses that hold standard international operator licences. The data is currently being processed, and the study’s findings will be published in due course.

Regional news

Tuesday 19th May

- The Makerfield by-election was confirmed for 18th June, with Andy Burnham formally announced as the Labour candidate, [describing the contest today](#) (22nd May) as a “clarion call for change” in UK politics. Reform UK has put forward Robert Kenyon, a local plumber and former NHS technician, positioning him as a community-rooted alternative to “career politicians”. Henham will monitor for relevant comments during the campaigns.

Tuesday 19th – Thursday 22nd May

- The UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiif) [took place](#) in Leeds from 19-21 May with over 16,000 delegates attending, including more than 1,750 investors, 1,000 occupiers, and representatives from 275 councils. The forum received significant ministerial attendance with **the Chancellor, Steve Reed (Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government)** and **Matthew Pennycook (Minister for Housing)** using the event to discuss government policy.

Week ahead

Parliament has now entered recess; both Houses will return on Monday 1st June.

Media snapshot

Brussels ‘would charge Britain billions’ to rejoin EU

Former EU commissioner Sir Julian King [warned that](#) if Britain rejoined the EU, it would likely have to give up its budget rebate, pay billions more each year, and accept conditions like free movement, with no special opt-outs. While European Parliament president Roberta Metsola said the EU’s “door is open” and some UK politicians have revived talk of rejoining, others such as Sir David Lidington cautioned that the UK would not regain its previous favourable terms.

Martin Rhodes MP to officially open The Meetings Show

It has been confirmed that Martin Rhodes, Chair of The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Events and Labour MP for Glasgow, [will open](#) The Meetings Show 2026 at Excel London this June, marking the formal start of the UK’s leading MICE industry gathering. The event will bring together around 6,000 buyers and suppliers, with a strong international exhibitor base, and will focus on deal-making alongside discussion of sector pressures and growth opportunities.

IMEX Frankfurt opens at a record scale

IMEX Frankfurt 2026 [opened](#) at its largest scale yet, with nearly 3,000 exhibitors and more than 4,000 buyers from 80+ countries. Growth is being driven by increased participation from Africa, Latin America and Asia Pacific, alongside expanded presence from major hotel groups. The also hosted new industry research and over 200 education sessions, reinforcing its role as a key meeting point for global events professionals.

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

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