EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

LOGISTICS UK

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2026

POLITICAL FIRSTS

Interview with

★

RACHEL WOLF

PUBLIC FIRST CEO

★ **ANNUAL INSIGHTS**
A full report on Logistics UK's second Annual Conference

★ **INVESTING IN INDUSTRY**
A sneak preview of the UK Logistics Finance and Investment Insight Report

EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

No 30 ★ July 2026

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Contents

VIEWPOINT
Our day in Westminster 3

NEWS IN BRIEF 4

NEWS 5

IN PROFILE
Rachel Wolf, Public First CEO 10

FEATURES
Annual Conference 2026 16
Investing in industry 30

POLICY CAMPAIGNS
Fuel Duty increase to be deferred until 31 December 32

EVENTS
Exclusive events and networking opportunities 34
Upcoming events 35

Our day in Westminster

It was a pleasure to meet and talk to so many of you at our Annual Conference on 3 June in Westminster. Despite only being our second of these events, it already feels like it is establishing itself as an annual fixture in the industry's calendar. If you didn't get an opportunity to attend in person, or would like a recap of what was said, there is a full conference report published on page 16.

Following the conference, we held our third Sir James Whitehead Address where we welcomed Rachel Wolf, political insider and CEO of public affairs agency Public First, who shared her fascinating take on why she thought there were striking parallels between the Britain of today and the Britain of the 1970s. *Executive Insight* caught up with Rachel after the lecture and you can read her thoughts on politics, trade and the state of the nation in an interview on page 10.

As we take a short break for the summer, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support of our Executive Membership programme.■

Phil Roe,
President, Logistics UK

UNLOCKING LOGISTICS GROWTH – AN EVENING ON INVESTMENT AND FINANCE

Any business sector that stands still for too long risks going backwards, and logistics is no exception. Investment is key to the sector's continued progression and for many businesses, identifying and accessing the right financing solutions are the tools to unlock that growth. ■

Find out more

DEFENCE AND THE ROLE OF LOGISTICS

Join fellow Executive Members for an exclusive lunch exploring one of the most strategically pressing issues of our time: defence and the pivotal role of logistics. As geopolitical pressures reshape supply chains and national resilience, this discussion will examine how our sector underpins operational readiness, supports emerging defence priorities and strengthens the UK's ability to respond in an increasingly complex world. ■

Find out more

DSIT LAUNCHES PRO-WORKER AI ADOPTION PRIZE

AI is advancing rapidly and will have a transformative impact on the UK's society, economy and workforce. To promote AI adoption that benefits workers, the UK Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) is launching the Pro-Worker AI Adoption prize. Chaired by Nobel Memorial Prize winner Simon Johnson, it recognises and promotes UK organisations for exemplary adoption of pro-worker AI. Nominations are open until 30 September 2026. ■

Find out more

Logistics is the stabilising force powering the UK economy

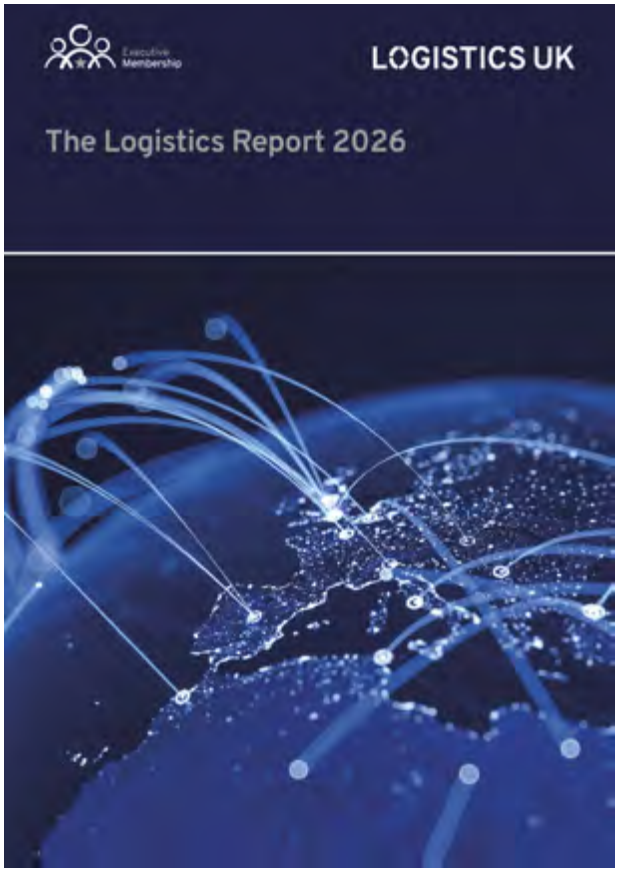
Amid ongoing economic turbulence caused by trade tariffs, and intensified by the recent Middle East conflict, it is the UK's logistics sector that has emerged as a critical, stabilising economic force. It has responded with speed, agility and resilience to keep the country's growth prospects moving upwards, Logistics UK has said.

The organisation's annual *Logistics Report 2026*, published on 3 June, demonstrates the scale of the sector's contribution to the UK's economic health and shows how, by ensuring continuity of trade and enabling businesses and consumers to access goods reliably, logistics has not only supported the economy through recent disruption but actively helped to sustain it. In fact, the business group calculates that the sector contributes £175 billion to the UK economy, a 3% increase year on year.

Speaking at the report's launch during Logistics UK's Annual Conference, Chief Executive Ben Fletcher said:

"The last few months have shown how critical UK logistics is to our way of life. While businesses across the UK continue to contend with disrupted supply chains, rising costs and geopolitical uncertainty, logistics

Logistics is the stabilising force powering the UK economy



operators have stepped up to reroute goods, absorb shocks and maintain the steady flow of essential supplies.

"With the sector increasing its annual GVA contribution to £175 billion, it is clear that logistics is the engine room of the UK economy. Nothing moves without logistics and it is our sector that works round the clock finding solutions to disruptions in the supply chain, however big or small, so businesses and consumers can get on with their lives as normal."

The Logistics Report 2026 combines the latest official statistics with insight from industry experts and shows how development and adoption of technology throughout the logistics sector continues at pace. Logistics businesses are prioritising technology and innovation investment that support operational efficiency, cost control and the transition to lower-emission operations. Almost two-thirds of respondents (64.3%) indicated an intention to invest in vehicle technologies, reflecting the adoption of cleaner vehicles. Investment plans also reflect the importance of data and digital transformation with more than half of respondents expecting to invest in fleet management data systems (57.4%); transport planning and route optimisation technologies (50.7%); and data systems for order processing, inventory management and overall supply chain control (52%).

Technology is also enabling the sector to transition to low carbon operations and investment in alternative fuels is led primarily by battery electric vehicles, with two-thirds of respondents (66.4%) reporting investment in electrification. The report also reflects the importance of hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) with 41.8% of respondents adopting the technology, with the report suggesting this is likely because the fuel reduces carbon emissions significantly and can often be used in existing diesel engines without major vehicle modifications. ■

Find out more

Government hears the voice of logistics "loud and clear" says minister

The work of the logistics industry, and the support provided by Logistics UK, has been recognised by Minister of Aviation, Maritime and Decarbonisation Keir Mather MP in his keynote address opening this year's Logistics UK Annual Conference.

Speaking at London's QE2 Conference Centre, Mather commented that despite ongoing economic uncertainty, "logistics keeps delivering for the UK," and that the industry's workers are "the unsung heroes that will keep Britain moving." He and his colleagues in government are well aware of the role that the industry plays in helping to drive growth across the economy and hears the voice of Logistics UK "loud and clear."

The Minister was speaking as one of three keynote presenters to open the business group's annual event, which brings together the leaders of businesses from all modes across the industry. Opening a packed programme of expert speakers, Mather was joined by Andrew Griffith MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Business and Trade and Chris McDonald MP, Minister for Industry at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, who paid tribute to the hard work and resilience of those

working in the sector:

"When supply chains work, they don't make the news, and the government recognises the importance of the sector and the efforts it makes to ensure that the economy works.

"Global instability, including the events in the Middle East, has created huge challenges, but I am really struck by the fact that despite that uncertainty, time and again, logistics continues to deliver for people across the United Kingdom." ■

Find out more

Progression of SPS deal confirmed, to deliver £5 billion trade boost

The recent announcement that the UK and EU intend to scrap trade barriers affecting fresh food movements from mid-2027 has been welcomed by Logistics UK.

The move has the potential to boost the UK's economy by £5.1 billion annually, according to Logistics UK Chief Executive Ben Fletcher:

"Our members have invested significant amounts of time and money to smooth the movement of fresh food across the UK's borders, but trade friction has persisted as a result of the checks introduced after our country's departure from the EU so we welcome the negotiation of this agreement by His Majesty's Government," he said. "Any border delays hinder our industry's ability to keep the UK's businesses trading with European customers so the recent announcement is a common-sense solution that acknowledges the challenges that we have faced since Brexit."

Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) checks were introduced as a result of the UK's deal with the EU to prove exported goods meet EU standards, and then later introduced by the UK on imports from the EU. Under the deal being negotiated, products moved from Great Britain into Northern Ireland would also no longer require additional certification, specialist labelling or routine inspections.

"Our industry's aim is always to deliver for our customers as swiftly and efficiently as possible," Fletcher continued. "This announcement will increase confidence over the removal of significant hurdles of cost and delays that have hamstrung our industry's ability to support the UK's fresh food producers to sell to their European customers, support UK jobs and help to drive growth nationwide. We will now work with the government to ensure that the new regime can be implemented as seamlessly as possible by mid-2027." ■

Find out more

Reasons for optimism, says Rachel Wolf in Sir James Whitehead Address

In comparing today's political landscape to the 1970s, a period of economic stagnation and industrial strife, Rachel Wolf, CEO of Public First, said that there are still reasons for optimism – including taking lessons from history and the possibility of returning to an era of trade globalisation.

These remarks came during the Sir James Whitehead Address Wolf delivered following Logistics UK's second Annual Conference.

Wolf remarked on the similarities between the 1970s climate and today and the lessons business could learn from the situation. Back then, she said, "Britain was the sick man of Europe and people felt that despair, anger that we're so familiar with today. People felt very deeply the decline of the country and the sense that we were not in control of successive parties."

Public First, as a consultancy firm that regularly polls the public to support governments and other institutions to tackle policy challenges, has witnessed a drop in people engaging with politics and feeling that their vote counts towards real change.

"We're not the only country that sees anti-political sentiments, but from our international tracks, we are

rising," she said.

Restrictions in planning regulation is a contributing factor to this sentiment, Wolf explained, as well as other decisions made by politicians that seem difficult to understand.

However, growth experienced following the 1970s leading up to Blair's Labour government in the 1990s demonstrates that this can be achieved again and the ongoing period of digital revolution and technology that we are in are causes to be hopeful. ■

Find out more

Rachel Wolf,
Public First CEO

RACHEL Wolf is the CEO at Public First, leading the agency's policy work. She co-authored the Conservative Party's Election Manifesto in 2019. Previously education and innovation adviser to the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street, Wolf was also Senior Vice President for technology company Amplify in New York City, running one of its main product divisions. She founded and ran the New Schools Network – the charity that helped develop and implement the government's free schools programme. Wolf has written for national think tanks and most major broadsheets and she has appeared on all the major broadcast shows.

Wolf began her career as an education and political adviser to the Conservative Party and was a policy adviser to Boris Johnson on his first mayoral campaign and in his earlier role as Shadow Higher Education Minister.

On 3 June 2026 she delivered the third Sir James Whitehead Address, an annual lecture series hosted by Logistics UK.

You mentioned in your lecture that you had spent 20 years in politics. How did you get your start?

Oh, this was a random story. I did chemistry at university and I was planning to go and be a chemist. And then when I was backpacking around Mexico with my friends in the days of internet cafes, my university pinged a job with Boris Johnson. It was an essay competition, and you had to write two essays. I just thought it looked fun. So I wrote two essays while in internet cafes in Mexico and then ended up getting an interview with Boris, where he asked me some very random questions. And I got the job being his researcher when he was doing shadow universities policy. So, I did higher education for a while and then in the way that often happens in careers, opportunity leads to opportunity leads to opportunity and I ended up staying.

You were previously education and innovation advisor to Prime Minister David Cameron at Number 10. What were your key takeaways from working at the heart of political power?

Number one, Downing Street really is a court. And it's a very odd institution because it is a Georgian house with a king or queen in the Georgian house, sitting on top of a massive modern government, and everything is about the principal. We are, of course, also a very centralised country, so it really is about the principal and his ability to marshal a majority in parliament. I think people from outside maybe don't realise that.

The other thing that I certainly realised in government was that it's very easy to fool yourself when you're in the centre, that if you give the right press release or announce the right wodge of money, your job is done and you can move on. Then you discover three years later that things haven't quite, the money hasn't even left the door, let alone happen in the way that you thought it would. So there's a huge disconnect between the incentive to announce and the way that the central government thinks about that and what actually happens on the ground.

You co-authored the Conservative Party's Election Manifesto in 2019. What do you think were the key factors that helped the Conservative Party win a landslide at that election?

I think the two main ones were that before the 2019 election, a huge

Rachel Wolf, Public First CEO

"Public First isn't really a public affairs agency, it's predominantly a research agency. It helps create polling and economics and policy content for people who want to make a case."

proportion of the country felt deeply frustrated at the gridlock in Parliament over Brexit. Even many of the people who voted remain thought that it was frustrating and inappropriate that Parliament seemed to be unable to enact the will of the referendum and people were desperate to not only do it but the term was 'Get Brexit done'. They wanted to just stop talking about it and thinking about it. They wanted to move on. So, I think not only Brexit, but just moving off the gridlock and the endless debate on it was a huge part of it.

I think the second was that people started to be really quite worried about Jeremy Corbyn and felt that he was somehow not on Britain's side. That came across more and more strongly. So I think the sort of anti-Corbyn vote was a huge part of it.

Then I think the third was that the reason people voted for Brexit was a combination of frustration over immigration, but also a sense that they were in places of slow decline, often in local economies of slow decline. And the data backs that up, we have had a very, very bad couple of decades since the financial crisis. They wanted to see their local high street improve, their jobs improve. They wanted to feel like they were in a place that was being paid attention to and invested in again. And the levelling-up agenda that was talked about in the 2019 manifesto was helpful in reflecting that.

In 2016 you became a Founding Partner of Public First. What was your motivation for establishing a public affairs agency?

Public First isn't really a public affairs agency, it's predominantly a research agency. It helps create polling and economics and policy content for people who want to make a case and want to talk about what's happening in public policy. And the reason we did Public First is because in government we were endlessly lobbied by or having meetings with people who'd pay all their attention on getting the meeting and getting the access and then weren't very compelling when they were in the room. They didn't understand what we were trying to do. They didn't have concrete good ideas. They hadn't thought through the politics and our own constraints and our own objectives. So we thought

there was a much better way of helping organisations articulate what they really wanted and why the people they were talking to should do it.

What does your current role as CEO entail?

What does being a CEO entail? As I'm sure lots of your members will recognise, it's everything from panicking over cash flow one day to flying around the world the next day to present results, to figuring out how to promote, to dealing with, it's all the things, a CEO is a jack of all trades and none.

During the recent Sir James Whitehead Address, you said that you had rewritten your speech following Tony Blair's recently published essay. Why so?

I think there were two things that came out from the Blair essay and the aftermath. The first was we were also talking about the 1970s again and Blair kind of set us up, but Burnham much more in his response in the by-election talked about the Thatcherite period and beyond as the thing that needed to be reversed or changed in Makerfield. And so I thought it was important to look at the 1970s in two ways. The first was, this is what Blair talked about in his essay, it was a moment of great political bravery and clarity. You might really disagree with what Thatcher did, but I think she, and actually Blair in many ways, Cameron in many ways, set out very clear dividing lines and a very clear agenda and had a mandate to change things. And a lot of what Blair was arguing for was that. So I think it was interesting to look at that and the crisis that she came from, which have some echoes

Rachel Wolf, Public First CEO

today. We also have energy crises. We also in Birmingham have bins on the street that are not being cleaned. There are some echoes of that. Then I thought it was important because growth has to be the overriding objective of this government to look at what allowed the economy to grow after the 1970s. And I think the point that I was trying to make (although I personally think many of the things that Thatcher did were very important and necessary to liberalise the economy), was there were some big tailwinds that helped us from the 1980s and 1990s and actually really helped the Blair era, which have now kind of gone.

In your address you said that one of the biggest demographic changes during the 1970s was the number of women entering the workforce. Why do you think this trend is so significant?

One of the two tailwinds I focused on most was we had this massive expansion in the labour market because women entered the labour force in huge numbers. And then just as they were tailing off, we had this huge whack of immigration. It is debatable on how much it improved GDP per capita, but it certainly improved GDP.

What was the other big tailwind?

The second tailwind from the 1970s onwards was the massive expansion of trade. It's a great opening and a rise of various emerging economies. And those aren't coming back. And so we have to ask what our causes of growth are going to be and what a dynamic economy of the UK now looks like, because we can't really go back to the 1970s. So I think we can go back to the 1970s in the broadest political sense, like we can return to an era of clarity and bravery, but we do have to find different solutions for growth.

You posed the question of whether Britain is ungovernable. Why do you think there has been such a rise in anti-political sentiment in recent years?

I have a very simple answer for this, which is we have had a series of

periods where, one, lots of promises have been made to the electorate and not delivered. So again, your readers may have very different views on immigration policy, but it is the case that in every single election since 2010, the winning party has promised to reduce it dramatically and then seen it go up. So people are not getting what they were promised and that makes people understandably angry. Maybe it wasn't deliverable, maybe it wasn't a good thing, but they were promised it and they voted on that basis and they weren't given it. And then there has been a series of seemingly totally self-inflicted crises from Partygate with Boris to the Truss debacle to almost immediately on Keir Starmer entering office questions about whether he'd been a hypocrite in attacking people for gifts that they'd received and his own decisions. So I think there have been a number of moments which have made people really question the political class. Underlying all of that, more important than anything, we still haven't grown. We are still in the situation where wages are not only stagnant but actively declining for a lot of people. If you look at a 30-year-old now versus 20 years ago, their wages are lower even before you get to housing costs. So, I think it's unsurprising people are angry.

Looking ahead, do you see any reasons for optimism?

"There have been a number of moments which have made people really question the political class. Underlying all of that, more important than anything, we still haven't grown."

I actually am an optimist because I don't think Britain is ungovernable. I think that if we can return, as Blair set out in his essay, to a period where politicians feel able to articulate a vision and seek a proper mandate, it's entirely possible to see growth and improvement in our public realm. It's not that I think these problems are insoluble. I think there are many ways in which Britain is actually very well set up for the next few decades. We are remarkably good at creating unicorns. We really do have a depth of talent in some of the great technologies of the next era. I think we're doing some sort of deliberate harm to ourselves on things like planning regulation, which mean that if you release them, it should be possible to grow. So, I am an optimist, but it does require us to think, to return to a period where we were willing to ask the electorate to make real choices. ■

Annual Conference

Wednesday 3 June 2026 • QEII Conference Centre, London

BUSINESS leaders and industry experts from across ports, air, maritime, road and rail logistics gathered at the QEII Conference Centre in the heart of London's Westminster on 3 June 2026 for Logistics UK's second Annual Conference. Delegates heard first-hand from government ministers and industry leaders on major trends shaping the sector, from emerging supply chain risks to the impact of AI on its future.

CHAIR'S WELCOME

Ben Fletcher, Logistics UK's Chief Executive, opened the conference by announcing the launch of the organisation's annual *Logistics Report*. He said its findings mirrored conversations with members, industry stakeholders, policymakers and infrastructure leaders during his first six months in post.

The report's key findings centred on three major themes, the first being

Logistics UK Annual Conference 2026
QUEEN ELIZABETH II CENTR

2026

Ben Fletcher

the sector's contribution to the wider economy:

"Logistics is an economic powerhouse," he said. "It contributes £175 billion worth of GVA [Gross Value Added], and it supports 2.6 million jobs – that's around 8% of all of the UK's workforce. That £175 billion figure, which we share for the first time today, is over a 3% year-on-year increase in the direct impact of our sector on the economy."

The second theme, he continued, was that logistics is being forced to operate in a highly challenging geopolitical environment.

"Global events are having a direct and a growing impact. The conflict in the Middle East has disrupted energy markets, I think that's a huge under-exaggeration. I think we're living through a major change in how energy markets work. And very worryingly, I think we're living through a change that will not be short-lived, even when the Strait of Hormuz eventually reopens."

The third point was recognising that even in the face of acute economic headwinds, logistics was proving itself to be an incredibly adaptive and resilient sector:

"Even in a difficult and challenging year, and with further challenges ahead, the sector has maintained an incredible level of service reliability," he said. "I hope everyone here in this room is incredibly proud of that. Whether it's rerouting goods, absorbing shocks, or adapting to sudden disruption, logistics businesses continue to find real solutions in real time."

Outlining the conference programme, Fletcher said the agenda reflected both the opportunities ahead and the challenges that the industry must address together.

"We will confront directly some of the most pressing issues facing the sector – infrastructure constraints, decarbonisation challenges, skills gaps, trade friction, and the growing importance of supply chain resilience in an increasingly uncertain world," he said. "These challenges are interconnected, and they require coordinated, cross-sector solutions."

KEYNOTE: MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY ADDRESS

The first keynote was delivered by Chris McDonald MP, Minister for Industry across the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and the Department for Business and Trade.

Referring to the employment and £175 billion GVA figures contained in the *Logistics Report*, McDonald said that in a predominantly services-led economy like the UK's, there was a risk that the public can become detached from the sectors which underpin the economy.

In a recent visit to the East Midlands Gateway with Logistics UK, he had been struck by the fact that the work of the logistics sector is often overlooked, partly because of its own success.

"When supply chains work, they don't make the news. It's only when there are supply shortages that they do," he said.

This was a testament to the sector's resilience and the efforts of its workforce. Drawing on 20 years in the steel industry, he added:

"I want you to know that your sector is very much appreciated and it's very much understood as well."

However, he acknowledged that rising customer expectations and shifting costs are increasing pressure on supply chains, requiring continuous efficiency gains and adoption of new technology.

On government's role, he emphasised

Chris McDonald

the importance of unlocking productivity: "For me as Industry Minister, it's also about releasing our productive capacity in industry as well. I don't want that productive capacity to be constrained by logistical choke points."

Reflecting on a past visit to a Nissan factory where he had witnessed just-in-time manufacturing in action, he said that manufacturers controlled their working capital by putting it into the hands of logistics.

"The unsung story there really was that what was seen as an improvement in manufacturing was actually delivered by heroic efforts in logistics."

He highlighted government support across infrastructure, trade and energy security.

"Energy security is the biggest lever that we can pull in our transition to net zero."

Reflecting that historically the approach to infrastructure has been reactive, he said: "Infrastructure of course is inherently future facing and a short-term approach really doesn't deliver the economic growth that we need."

For this reason, the government's Infrastructure Strategy (published in June 2025) is focused on the next 10 years because, he added, the government knows that roads and railways and runways take time. The government is also reforming the planning system so that projects can progress more quickly, and it is improving capacity to make the network more reliable, work which is complemented by the Highways Bill, which will enable a new financing approach to large-scale road schemes.

"Investment in infrastructure supports your sector, but of course it supports the whole economy by enabling goods to move, but also ensuring that we can connect people with jobs and opportunities," McDonald said.

On trade, the Minister said it had been a key focus since the government came to power. Citing trade deals with the US, India and the EU, he said the UK was the first G7 nation to sign a deal with the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Moving onto the situation in the Middle East, McDonald said the only real long-term response was energy independence.

"Ultimately, energy security is the biggest lever that we can pull in our transition to net zero and it's the biggest thing that we can do to create economic stability as well… And it is again very much a long-term commitment and one to which logistics is absolutely central."

While new vehicles and new fuels will change how goods move, they will also fundamentally change the processes and systems in logistics businesses.

"Government's role is to ensure that we make that transition as smooth as possible by enabling you to invest in zero emission vehicles by supporting infrastructure and by working closely with the industry so that we can remove barriers for business."

KEYNOTE: THE GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITIES FOR THE LOGISTICS SECTOR

The second keynote was delivered by Keir Mather MP, Minister for Aviation, Maritime and Decarbonisation, who began by thanking Logistics UK for advancing important discussions on decarbonisation.

Keir Mather

"I hope that everybody in this room feels that with two government ministers here today that shows the strength of our commitment to this sector, our willingness to listen and to work proactively with you," he said.

Outlining the vital role logistics plays in the wider economy by helping British firms to connect with a global marketplace and supporting millions of jobs across every region and nation of the UK, he said: "Logistics UK has expertise that has been invaluable in delivering our plan for freight. And I'm grateful for how you and partners across the sector have engaged with it. Logistics UK ensures that when we make decisions in government, we do so with our eyes wide open. And it helps us to focus on the issues that I know matter the most, whether that be resilience, growth, or investment."

Citing Logistics UK's Nothing Moves Without Logistics campaign, Mather said that it highlighted the need for lower costs, better infrastructure and a fair green transition, all of which makes good business sense for the sector.

"Government hears that message loud and clear, from strengthening the role of freight in our local transport plans to major investment in schemes such as the Lower Thames Crossing, as well as improving connectivity between ports, logistics hubs and beyond, we want to put freight at the centre of a better-connected United Kingdom."

However, he acknowledged the immense pressures and huge challenges that the sector is facing owing to events in the Middle East and wider global instability.

"The government wants to work really closely with industry to understand all of the issues that are at play as these challenges unfold. And we've been clear that our top priority is delivering that immediate support."

In response, the government had extended the 5p per litre cut in Fuel Duty until the end of the year and announced a 12-month road tax holiday for HGVs. Recent events had also underlined the urgent need to reduce the UK's reliance on fossil fuels to improve its resilience.

"I believe personally that decarbonisation is not just an environmental obligation, it is an era-defining opportunity to improve our resilience and deliver energy security. And nowhere, in my view, is that ambition clearer than in road freight."

The government's vision is for a freight system that is predominantly powered by electricity, with goods taking the greenest route from A to B wherever possible and low carbon fuels supporting those modes which are more difficult to decarbonise.

While acknowledging the progress the industry had made thus far in cleaning up freight, he said: "To put it simply, it's my view that we need to go further and we need to go faster. And the government wants to work with you to unlock the possibilities that that can bring."

On the industry's call for greater certainty around the transition to zero emission HGVs, Mather said his department was consulting on a future regulatory framework and was developing a zero-emission HGV, coach and infrastructure strategy. Plus, it had brought electric van regulations in line with their diesel equivalents and was supporting the use of low carbon fuels to deliver immediate savings.

On charging infrastructure, the government had invested £120 million into growing the national charge point network. A further £1 billion had been committed to reducing the upfront costs of switching and the depot charging scheme had been extended to offer further support.

"We know that grid capacity issues are a real threat to this progress and are a practical blocker in terms of you taking the ambitious steps that you want to."

Touching on the perennial skills issue facing logistics, he added: "A strong workforce is going to be essential in shaping that future for the logistics sector that we all want to see. So, I know that we need to tackle some of those recruitment and retention challenges head on."

Keen to encourage more young people to begin their career in logistics, the Department for Work and Pensions is supporting local employers to train the next generation of HGV drivers.

Concluding, the Minister expressed the hope that by government working in partnership with the logistics sector, together they could build a greener and more resilient industry that offers rewarding careers for people across the country.

"The last few months I know have been immeasurably difficult for this industry but time and again you have risen to the challenge, keeping those goods flowing, keeping our economy turning and keeping Britain moving," he concluded.

KEYNOTE: THE OPPOSITION'S PRIORITIES FOR THE LOGISTICS SECTOR – HELPING THE ECONOMY GROW

Recognising the importance of engagement across the political spectrum, Logistics UK welcomed Andrew Griffith MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Business and Trade, to deliver the third keynote.

Griffith congratulated Logistics UK on being firmly on the map in Westminster: "Such a vital industry, the connective tissue of any economy that keeps food on our table, that keeps our health service operating, that allows people to travel, transport themselves to their place of work."

Acknowledging that the UK was currently going through tough times, he said it had to compete, to grow and to increase prosperity and the standard of living.

On the Conservative Party, he said: "My party has changed. There were things we did well in government that I'm proud of. And there were mistakes, things we didn't get right. We're under new leadership. Organisations can and do change."

He then outlined the bones of the policy framework that he was thinking about as Shadow Secretary of State, should the Conservatives return to office.

The first principle to help all businesses

Andrew Griffith

to grow and help young people find jobs, he argued, should be to do no harm: "You don't need to change those National Insurance thresholds. That's really made it hard to hire young people. You don't need to go and reverse a 30-year consensus on the balance between employers and employees. We had a good system, we had a good balance here in the UK. The 330-page red tape Employment Rights Act hasn't really done anything to move that forward."

On Fuel Duty, he said the Tories would permanently remove the threat of the 5p increase and look to properly rebalance the tax system so that logistics, which he described as "the connective tissue, the lifeblood of the economy", is not overtaxed.

Griffith shared a four-point plan for

business and trade. The first is to get competitive energy costs: "There is no basis on which the UK economy can compete, particularly our successful manufacturing businesses, if our energy costs in Birmingham, West Midlands are four times those of Birmingham, Alabama, and two-and-a-half times the cost of continental Europe."

One way to address this would be to reduce some of energy's on-costs, for example renewable subsidies, carbon taxes, trading schemes and policy costs. Another part of the answer, he argued, would be to extract more domestic fossil fuels: "We have got to fully maximise the billions, trillions of barrels of oil and gas that lie within our own continental shelf. They will help our energy security, but they'll also flow much needed tax revenues into the Treasury, which can then be reinvested in things like defence and a modern system of infrastructure that we all want."

Griffith's second point would be to lower and simplify taxes: "An economy in which the state spends 45 pence in every pound in the economy is just too hard a dead weight. You all operate in competitive markets. There's always someone younger and hungrier and leaner trying to take your business. Well, the same is true of our economy."

He suggested removing some of what he described as "distorted friction taxes" and changing the conduct of HM Revenue and Customs so that it was more on the side of private enterprise.

His third point was to reduce the burden of red tape and regulation, citing as an example the packaging tax, which he maintained costs as much to administer as it will ever raise for the Treasury, describing it as "a disproportionate burden on businesses that are based here rather than businesses based abroad."

Returning to the Employment Rights Act, he described it as an attack on seasonal and flexible working: "It's really difficult for businesses that have surge periods, whether it's summer tourism or whether it's the winter rush as people build up stocks ahead of the Christmas period."

If the Conservatives got back into government, they would repeal that law and restore the status quo as it existed for many years, under Blair and Brown and other preceding governments.

"Why? Because we just understand that employers are trying to do the right thing. Most employers are good. They're trying to give people opportunities."

On the one in six young people who cannot find work and are not in education or training, Griffith said: "That is an existential crisis for our economy even before you start to look at what the ravages of AI and

technology change may be."

His final overarching point was that the UK needed a government that was once again on the side of people who take risk, even if they sometimes fail or become personally wealthy as a result.

"We can't attack the golden geese, the wealth creators, the businesses, the enterprises, the people that form a small business full of hope and ambition because Westminster politicians just don't get business," he concluded.

KEY INDUSTRY PANEL: ACHIEVING GROWTH FOR THE FUTURE OF THE SECTOR

The first panel debate of the conference focused on the future growth of the logistics sector. Chair Ben Garratt, Interim Director of Policy & Communications, Logistics UK, was joined by panellists Doug Bannister, CEO, Port of Dover; Jim Hartshorne, Managing Director – Commerce, Unipart; Nicholas Mazzei, VP of Sustainability at DP World; Paul Murray, Business Unit Director, XPO Logistics; and Adrian Sullivan, CEO, Pass Logistics.

The panel explored how the logistics sector can achieve sustainable growth over the next decade against a backdrop of economic uncertainty, geopolitical disruption, changing trade relationships, rising costs and the urgent need to decarbonise. Panellists underlined the importance of improving infrastructure, increasing operational resilience and using technology such as AI, automation, live data and predictive planning to move from reactive responses to more efficient, forward-looking logistics

Maxine Bulmer

systems. There was a strong emphasis on the need for stable regulation, economic confidence, better UK-EU trading arrangements and renewed investment in UK manufacturing, alongside practical opportunities to improve efficiency through fleet utilisation, modal shift, rail freight, electrification and smarter energy management.

The discussion also stressed that growth depends on people, skills and collaboration. Panellists asserted that logistics must do more to present itself as a dynamic, technology-led and diverse sector with opportunities across operations, data, sustainability, finance, strategy and leadership. Climate adaptation was framed not only as an emissions challenge but as a business resilience and national security issue, affecting energy, infrastructure, food supply chains and customer demand. Panellists' closing messages focused on the need to invest in manufacturing, renewable energy, skills, data sharing, predictable policy and collaborative approaches that allow the sector to lead change rather than simply respond to it.

CONTINUED IMPACT OF AI ON THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY

Business leaders appear either terrified of AI or incredibly excited by it, sometimes both, commented Ben Fletcher when introducing the next speaker. AI is intrinsically linked to electrification and automation, so it is increasingly hard to imagine a scenario in which AI is not a critical part of what the industry does, he said.

This session built on the possibilities that AI unlocks and builds on the conversations that Logistics UK had at conference last year. The speaker Maxine Bulmer hailed from CGI, a Canadian IT outsourcing company working across 40 countries, and she acted as CGI's Ambassador to the National Cyber Resilience Centre.

Bulmer argued that AI should not be adopted simply because it is fashionable; businesses need to assess whether it is right for them, ensure they have the right skills, and build in cyber security and governance from

the outset. Highlighting the risks from using the technology, including deepfakes, data manipulation, cyber attacks on supply chains, and long-term fraud attempts, she underlined the need for human oversight, due diligence and 'secure by design' approaches.

A key takeaway was that resilience, preparation and cyber awareness are essential for organisations of all sizes, including SMEs deep within supply chains. She advised businesses to think early about AI governance, adopting Cyber Essentials, training, future skills, and emerging risks such as quantum readiness. She also urged delegates to make full use of the support available from Cyber Resilience Centres to strengthen their abilities to operate securely and confidently as AI becomes further embedded in the sector.

PANEL SESSION: PROGRESS OF EHGV ADOPTION IN THE INDUSTRY, RESULTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE FUTURE OF THE SECTOR

The second panel session of the conference discussed the progress of electric HGV adoption across the logistics sector. Chair Lamech Solomon, Head of Decarbonisation Policy, Logistics UK, was joined by panellists Michael Boxwell, Founder and Corporate Development Officer, Voltempo; Sam Clarke, Chief Vehicle Officer, Gridserve; James Stephens, Vice President Corporate Affairs, DHL; Angus Webb, CEO, Dynamon; and Tom Williams, Deputy CEO, Maritime Transport.

There was a broad consensus among panellists that while the transition is still at an early stage, it is gaining momentum. Speakers shared their practical experience with vehicles, depot and public charging infrastructure, as well as data-led route planning, grant-funded projects and collaborative trials. A recurring message was that electrification is becoming increasingly viable for some routes and vehicle types, especially where operations are predictable, depot charging is available and grant support helps reduce upfront costs.

However, key challenges remain, particularly around grid connections, planning delays, payload and vehicle

regulations, charging costs, contract lengths and the complexity of scaling from pilots to wider deployment. Panellists variously recommended starting with the easiest routes rather than the most difficult use cases, planning charging and grid requirements in parallel with vehicle procurement, modelling total cost of ownership rather than focusing on purchase price, and learning from existing ZEHID consortium reports and partners. Overall, the discussion framed eHGV adoption as ultimately achievable but requiring patience, data, collaboration and supportive policy to unlock wider industry uptake.

INDUSTRY PANEL ON SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE AND EMERGING RISKS

The final panel session of the day focused on supply chain risks and the global economy, highlighting how supply chains have shifted from being seen as operational concerns to strategic foundations for economic growth. Chair James Mills, Head of Trade Policy, Logistics UK, was joined by panellists Julian Carey, CEO, Indurent; Ian Moran, Group Customs & Trade Solutions Director; Gemma Treadwell, Head of Customer Experience, Maersk; and Nigel Milton, Chief Communications and Sustainability Officer, Heathrow.

The major risks to supply chains identified by panellists over the next two years included geopolitical instability, tariffs and non-tariff barriers. E-commerce growth, warehouse capacity pressures, planning delays, cyber security threats and constrained transport infrastructure were also identified as key risks. Speakers underlined that disruption is now more frequent, global and interconnected, making flexibility, alternative routes, stronger international arrangements and greater warehousing capacity increasingly important.

Suggestions for practical solutions centred on reducing friction and improving decision making across the logistics system. Panellists variously

called for a single trade window, earlier co-design between government and industry, more efficient planning processes, and better commercial land allocation. Heathrow expansion, stronger cyber resilience and smarter use of AI to improve routing, documentation, customs processes and airport cargo flows were also recommended. One of the salient points to emerge from the discussion was that government must better understand the cumulative impact of regulation, taxation and infrastructure constraints on UK competitiveness, while industry should invest in agility, digital capability and resilience without compromising accuracy or compliance.

KEYNOTE: BUILDING LOGISTICS RESILIENCE THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS, COLLABORATION AND SYSTEMS THINKING

Vice Admiral Andy Kyte CB FCILT, Chief of Defence Logistics and Support, delivered the final keynote. Due to the sensitive nature of the content, this session was not reported and remained off the record.

CHAIR'S CLOSE

Returning to the stage to close the conference, Ben Fletcher shared his reflections on the day.

Thanking all of the speakers and panellists, he said: "What you have

Andy Kyte

hopefully got from today across a range of two ministerial speeches, a senior opposition spokesperson, our colleagues in the military, and fascinating insights into the world of AI and the logistics industry, is that there is a very clear call to action, reflecting the changing environment in which we live and the challenges which may come over the next few years."

He concluded: "What I hope your involvement with my organisation will help you to do is navigate those challenges, find solutions, and provide a context where we can share experience and best practice in a way that benefits everyone." ■

Find out more

Investing in industry

Capturing the latest sentiment on investment and finance in the logistics sector

INDUSTRY investment is the topic of the next Insight Report to be published as part of Logistics UK's Executive Member programme. Based on research from Analytiqa undertaken on behalf of Logistics UK and HSBC UK, the UK Logistics Finance and Investment Insight Report 2026 will take a deep dive into the industry's investment intentions for this year and next.

KEY INVESTMENT DRIVERS

In terms of motivation, the top three drivers of respondents' investment strategy are: targeting growth and opportunity; refreshing existing assets; and protecting existing business. The research shows that firms are prioritising growth, but with a strong focus on asset refresh, resilience and productivity. The fact that almost four out of 10 responses (38.8%) report targeting growth and opportunity suggests that investment intent appears offensive rather than purely defensive.

INVESTMENT BUDGETS

One of the headline findings from the report is that when comparing this financial year's investment budget

to last, 85% of respondents said they would invest more or the same, with slightly more than one in seven reporting that they would invest less. This suggests that the investment environment is stable to cautiously constructive, rather than recessionary.

Looking ahead to investment intentions for next year, more than nine out of 10 respondents (90.3%) reported that they intended to invest the same or more, a 5.0% increase

on current financial year investment plans. This suggests that many firms are effectively signalling they must invest, whether that be fleet renewal, compliance, sustainability or AI, to stay competitive and reliable as standing still risks falling behind – especially in an evolving regulatory environment.

AREAS OF INVESTMENT

Compared to the previous year, the three areas where respondents had increased their investment by the most are technology, people and fleet. Technology topped the poll, with almost eight out of 10 respondents (77.1%) intending to invest more in this area, while under half (46.3%) said they would invest more in people, and slightly more than four out of 10 (40.9%) will invest more in fleet.

The fact that technology was the standout area for investment strongly implies an external environment where service expectations, cyber risk, and efficiency requirements are rising fast enough that technology spend is becoming non-discretionary.

Respondents' expectations of how their investments will change next year are broadly similar to their current investment priorities, with a slight shift in emphasis. More than seven out of 10 (70.4%) thought they would increase their investment in technology, and four in 10 (39.9%) expected to increase their investment in their traditional fleet.

DECARBONISATION

On respondents' intentions to invest in sustainability projects, more than one in five (21.5%) said they would focus their investment in optimising fuel usage. This focus is unsurprising given that fuel is a major, volatile cost line and efficiency measures can deliver immediate savings. The sector is pursuing sustainability in a way that protects margins by prioritising initiatives that reduce cost and emissions simultaneously.

TECHNOLOGY PRIORITIES

Technology adoption in freight and logistics has transitioned from a competitive edge to an operational necessity for resilience. AI and machine learning can drive analytics, automated freight procurement, and dynamic route optimisation software, adjusting for real-time traffic and weather conditions. The research reflects that technology priorities are heavily skewed towards modernising and protecting core operations, with AI and cyber security now firmly mainstream.

The Logistics Finance and Investment Insight Report will be launched at the Logistics Finance Forum in London on 9 July 2026. ■

Find out more

POLICY WIN

Fuel Duty increase to be deferred until 31 December

FOLLOWING ongoing disruption from the conflict in the Middle East, the Prime Minister and Chancellor announced on 20 May that September's planned Fuel Duty increase will be deferred until 31 December.

Alongside this, the government set out a 12-month holiday for HGV Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) and a red diesel duty rate reduction, benefiting rail freight. Logistics UK welcomed the decision and was the first major business group to call for the planned Fuel Duty rise to be cancelled.

Logistics UK analysis suggests the deferral of the Fuel Duty rise will save the sector an estimated £34.5 million compared to the increases that were planned. The VED holiday is expected to deliver a further £220 million in savings across the sector. The red diesel measure is estimated to save £3.6 million for rail freight operators by the end of the year.

In addition to the delay to the planned Fuel Duty rise, since the start of the conflict, Logistics UK has been calling for a wider package of measures to support the sector with rising costs. These include: formal recognition of logistics as a priority fuel user within resilience planning; inclusion in the

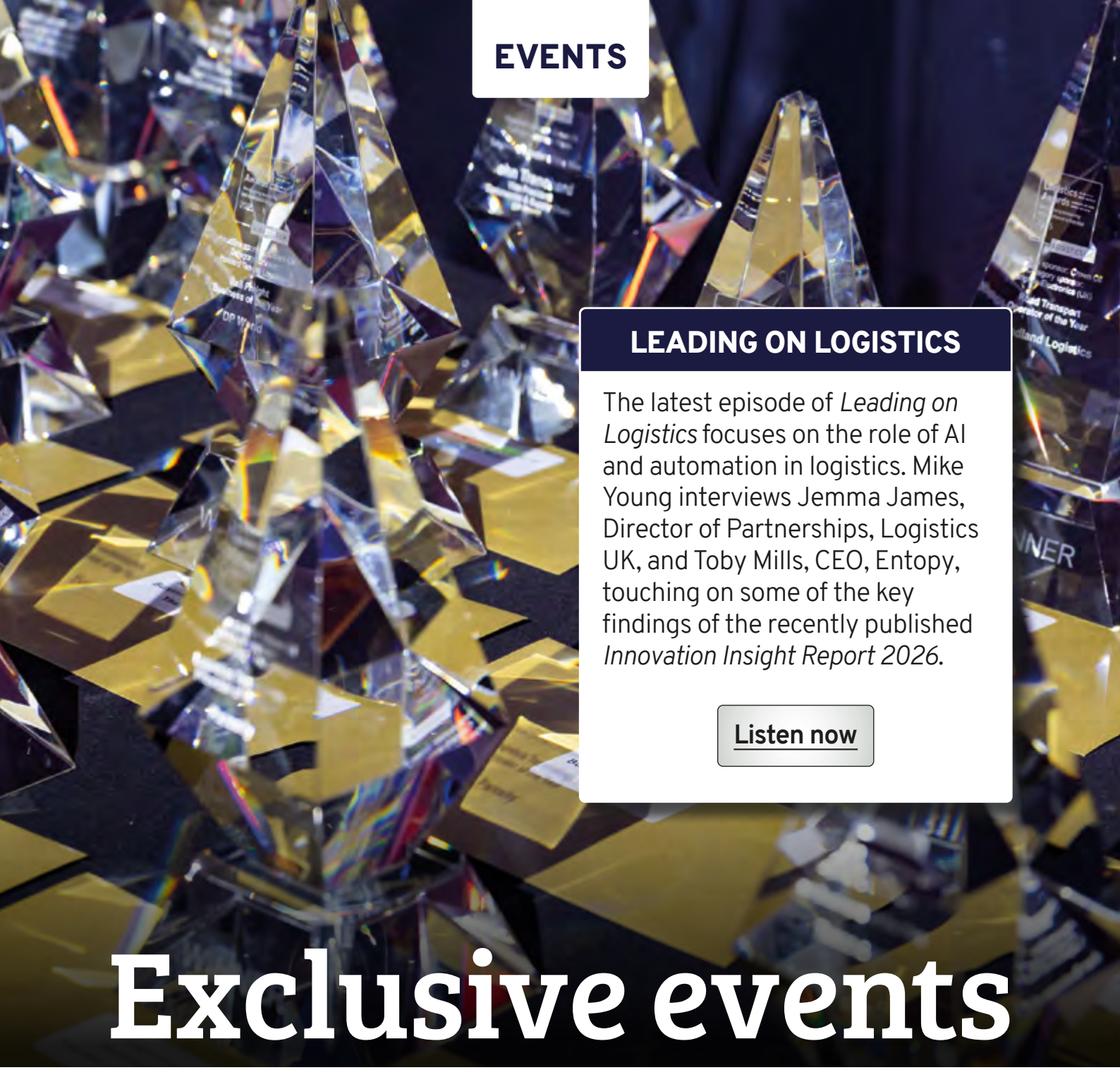
British Industrial Competitiveness Scheme to reduce electricity costs; extension of full expensing to leased zero-emission commercial vehicles; targeted incentives to support uptake of low-carbon fuels; a pause in business rates alongside wider reform to ease cost pressures; and a longer-term approach to mode shift grants.

To support members at this time, Logistics UK has adopted a three-point strategy during this crisis: sharing insight with members; informing government and other key stakeholders of the impact on our sector; and urging government to provide support to our sector.

As part of its work to share insight and inform government, Logistics UK has worked with industry and conducted analysis on the impact of the disruption, drawing from a range of sources, including qualitative and quantitative insight from members, publicly available information, a weekly meeting with government officials, and the leaders of other trade associations in the logistics sector.

The business group will continue working closely with government to make the case for a wider package of support on low carbon fuels, electricity costs and business rates, as well as to keep the situation on Fuel Duty under review. This would not only support short-term resilience but also longer-term investment – particularly in low carbon fuels, electrification and the transition to a more sustainable supply chain. ■

Find out more



LEADING ON LOGISTICS

The latest episode of *Leading on Logistics* focuses on the role of AI and automation in logistics. Mike Young interviews Jemma James, Director of Partnerships, Logistics UK, and Toby Mills, CEO, Entopy, touching on some of the key findings of the recently published *Innovation Insight Report 2026*.

Listen now

Exclusive events

and networking opportunities

AS an Executive Member, you have complimentary access to a number of our flagship events and conferences, including AI and Automation in Logistics, Delivering Decarbonisation, Digital Transformation in Logistics and Logistics Finance Forum, as well as our celebratory black-tie Logistics Awards event.

You can also benefit from access to a variety of exclusive networking opportunities with your industry counterparts at frequent roundtables, advisory boards, drinks receptions, breakfasts and dinners. ■

Upcoming events

21 JULY | DINNER

Industry Collaboration Part 2

This second discussion will touch on how various aspects of collaboration – including sharing data, warehousing space and charging infrastructure – can be achieved in the logistics industry.

Register now

7 JULY | WEBINAR

UK Logistics Insights July 2026

Join Logistics UK and transport economists MDS Transmodal at the next UK Logistics Insights webinar, where speakers will draw on the latest data and explore key trends shaping the logistics sector.

Register now

9 JULY | CONFERENCE

Logistics Finance Forum 2026

A dynamic senior engagement event where leaders in the logistics industry come together to delve into the crucial topics of productivity, efficiency and cost management that drive streamlined logistics operations.

Register now

23 JULY | LUNCH

Defence and the role of logistics

Join fellow Executive Members for an exclusive lunch exploring one of the most strategically pressing issues of our time: Defence and the pivotal role of logistics.

Register now

27 JULY | DINNER

Unlocking logistics growth – an evening on investment and finance

Drawing on the key findings of Logistics UK's forthcoming Finance and Investment Insight Report, this dinner discussion will explore what the industry's investment intentions are across a wide range of areas, from technology to decarbonisation, as well as its attitude towards finance and debt to fund those growth ambitions.

Register now

3 SEPTEMBER | DRINKS RECEPTION

Networking on the Thames

Set sail for an exclusive evening of networking on the water as we cruise down the River Thames! Enjoy stunning views, music, drinks and delicious catering while connecting with senior leaders from across the logistics sector.

Register now

LOGISTICS UK

Logistics Finance Forum 2026

Logistics Finance Forum 2026

Annual senior engagement event for leaders within the logistics industry

THURSDAY 9 JULY – HALLAM CONFERENCE CENTRE LONDON

A dynamic senior engagement event where leaders in the logistics industry come together to delve into the crucial topics of productivity, efficiency, and cost management that drive streamlined logistics operations. The Logistics Finance Forum 2026 offers a platform for in-depth discussions, interactive sessions, and enlightening keynotes delivered by top industry experts.

logistics.org.uk/financeforum26

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