

BCC election manifesto: Brexit and Beyond

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) has today (Tuesday) launched 'Brexit and Beyond', the Chamber Network manifesto for General Election 2017.

The Chamber manifesto calls for the new government, which will be responsible for negotiating the terms of the UK's departure from the European Union, to provide business communities with clear answers to the pragmatic and practical questions around how Brexit will affect their day-to-day operations, including hiring, customs procedures and regulation.

However, business communities across the UK send a very strong message that the election cannot – and must not – be about Brexit alone.

The next government must deliver a bold and clear strategy to support economic growth across all regions and nations of the UK. Action is needed on a range of domestic fronts, including improving the competitiveness of the UK's business environment, upgrading physical and digital infrastructure across the country, and supporting local growth.

Chamber business communities across the UK will judge the next government against five key criteria:

- **Business Environment** – deliver a globally competitive business environment. Ensure the best business environment possible with a relentless drive to improve the skills set of tomorrow's workforce, without clobbering firms with ever-higher upfront costs.
- **Local Growth** – unlock the potential of local business communities. Deliver clarity on future devolution deals – ensuring a strong local business community voice and maintain the place-based focus of the Industrial Strategy to ensure growth across the whole of the UK.
- **Infrastructure** – revolutionise the UK's physical and digital infrastructure. Ensure that the whole of the UK has access to super-fast broadband, better mobile connectivity, and delivering investments in the strategic schemes that will unlock the economic potential of the regions and nations.
- **Trade** – support UK exporters to drive economic growth. Expand trade support programmes, secure continued access to existing Free Trade Agreements, develop trade policy with business, and leverage Chambers of Commerce, which are best placed to provide stable export support in all regions of the UK.
- **Brexit** – work with businesses to secure the best possible deal with the EU. Protect the status of EU nationals in the UK, develop future customs procedures in partnership with business, create a future UK immigration system that is responsive to economic needs and skills shortages at all levels, and ensure that there is no hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce, said:

“While businesses all across the UK want a good Brexit deal, they are very clear that decisions taken here at home matter as much – if not more – to our future growth prospects. The best possible Brexit deal won’t be worth the paper it’s written on if firms cannot recruit and train the right people, get decent digital connectivity, or get their goods to their market.

“At this election, business communities want a clear commitment from all parties to create the best possible conditions for growth, in every region and nation of the UK. Westminster must stop and reverse the relentless increases in the up-front cost of doing business in Britain, and give firms the confidence to drive investment, job growth and exports through the Brexit transition and beyond.”

The Chamber Network’s priorities for the next UK government include:

- Deliver frictionless future trade arrangements with the EU, and ensure that business continue to benefit from existing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).
- No new upfront taxes on businesses for the duration of the next Parliament.
- Develop a new UK regional funding system with maximum local autonomy, a strong voice for business and focus on economic growth.
- Deliver promised investment in road and rail infrastructure, and ensure businesses in all parts of the UK have access to world-class digital infrastructure.

Dr Marshall continued:

“The key to a successful Brexit – and future economic growth – is to do everything to unlock the growth potential in our towns, cities and counties. Implementing an Industrial Strategy which harnesses the power of local areas should be a priority for the new government, alongside a commitment to secure the appropriate support and funding for its implementation.”

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Notes to editors:

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

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