

BRITISH PRINTING INDUSTRY A FIVE-POINT PLAN FOR THE NEXT GOVERNMENT

With a turnover of £13.7 billion, Gross Value Added of £6.5bn and employing almost 100,000 people in over 7,000 companies, the UK printing industry remains integral to the country's employment performance and economic growth.

Print businesses across the UK, the majority of which are SMEs, are already working hard to reach environmental targets, train a new generation of young people, and invest in productivity and sustainable growth. While the current Parliament has seen difficult years for UK industry, the resilience and adaptability of our sector has shone through. We are perfectly positioned to support the next Government's drive towards economic growth that serves both people and planet.

However, in 2024 we need a Government that will commit to supporting that upwards trajectory. Our sector cannot continue to achieve, nor to set ambitious goals and reach new heights, without a Government that understands it. The next Government must listen carefully to print, and manufacturing more widely, to appreciate its contribution, and to recognise the support it needs to build on its success.

Within its first year in office, the next Government should deliver:



1. A clear, considered long-term industrial strategy which supports manufacturing sectors to invest in technological innovation, green improvements and developing skills. The industrial strategy should not be about favouring certain regions, or certain sectors of industry, but should include a long term, stable and sustainable package of measures that supports British industries' ability to establish, grow and thrive in a globally competitive environment.



2. To complement the industrial strategy, a review of the current business environment with a focus on SMEs. It should include an evaluation of the impact of business rates, tax reliefs (including Research & Development), payment culture, mandatory wage increases, and access to finance. It should examine existing disincentives to invest in productivity measures and green improvements, with a view to removing them. Following this, the Government should provide certainty and stability in these areas to reinstate confidence and encourage investment.



3. An unquestionable re-commitment to the 2050 net zero target, with an urgent review of existing environmental incentives to support manufacturing on its journey to net zero. There should be a significant boost for businesses to take up environmental and sustainability measures, including energy efficiency, emissions reduction, renewables installation and investment in green technologies.



4. A nationwide, Government-backed scheme to integrate education and the manufacturing industry, which recognises the success and value of independent, sector-expert apprenticeship training providers. It should encourage and incentivise employers to work with such training providers, as well as schools and colleges, ensuring a strong link between learning, training, and job opportunities.



5. A wholesale review of the nation's skills needs, with a view to providing increased skills funding to ensure that UK industry, in particular manufacturing, is fit for purpose – and globally competitive – in the long term.