

THE Windsor Debates PROGRAMME



MARCH 2026

INFRASTRUCTURE

Vicars' Hall, St George's
House, Windsor Castle

In partnership with



Co-Sponsored by **Heathrow**

INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure acts as a fundamental driver of economic growth by providing essential, foundational systems - such as transportation, utilities, and digital networks - that boost productivity, reduce business costs, promote inclusivity, and stimulate employment. High-quality, strategic infrastructure investment increases economic efficiency; some research indicates that every £1 invested can raise GDP by up to 20% in the long run.

Infrastructure investment impacts nearly every sector, including the eight growth sectors identified in the Government's Industrial Strategy. However, some industries experience particularly transformative effects, including:

- **Transportation and Logistics** – Upgraded roads, railways, and ports improve supply-chain efficiency and reduce transit times, benefiting businesses that depend on timely deliveries.
- **Manufacturing** – Reliable energy grids and transportation systems help manufacturers streamline production and distribution processes, lowering costs and increasing competitiveness.
- **Energy and Utilities** – Investment in renewable energy sources and smart grids promotes sustainability and ensures a reliable power supply for homes and industry.
- **Technology and Telecommunications** – High-tech infrastructure development, such as 5G networks and data centres, fosters innovation and supports the digital economy.
- **Healthcare** – New hospitals, clinics, and telemedicine networks improve access to quality healthcare and enhance patient care.
- **Retail and E-commerce** – Efficient transportation and robust digital infrastructure enable faster deliveries, helping businesses meet growing consumer demand.
- **Tourism and Hospitality** – Improved airports, hotels, and attractions boost tourism, contributing to job creation and local economic growth.



THE WINDSOR DEBATES

The Windsor Debates importantly provide time for business leaders to discuss, listen carefully and argue cogently; the opportunity for participants to disagree civilly, test each other's intellectual position, find common ground and perhaps even reach consensus.

To facilitate this engagement the Debates operate under the Chatham House Rule so, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

TIMINGS

09:00 - 09:30	Arrival and Registration, Vicars' Hall
09:30 - 09:55	Welcome and Introduction
09:55 - 10:55	Session One: Fit for the Future
10:55 - 11:25	Coffee Break
11:25 - 12:30	Session Two: Planning and Infrastructure – are we about to get it right?
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch
13:30 - 14:45	Session Three: Railways as a driver of economic growth
14:45 - 15:10	Coffee Break
15:10 - 16:10	Session Four: Resilient Infrastructure Networks
16:10 - 16:35	Reflections
16:35 - 16:40	Closing Remarks
17:00 - 17:50	Evensong In St George's Chapel (optional)
17:50 - 18:50	Drinks Reception at No.25 The Cloisters
19:00 - 21:15	Evening Dinner With Keynote Speaker <u>Dr Wei Yang, OBE,</u> Chief Executive Officer, Digital Task Force for Planning
21:15 - 22:00	Private Guided Tour of St George's Chapel (optional)
22:00	Event Close

FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Considering the economic opportunities of an expanded Heathrow, Becky will cover the supply chain benefits, careers and skills development and how global connectivity (more routes both domestic and internationally) are ensuring businesses, the Thames Valley and the wider UK gain from benefits such as higher value and volume FDI and international trade flows.

In the context of a world of changing digital connectivity, Clayton will provide an overview of the telecoms market-place, what's changed and indeed changing, key challenges, and how much economic growth is on the table. He will also cover predictions for the way forward, as well as societal and environmental benefits and opportunities.

1 SESSION

SPEAKERS

Becky Coffin,

*Communities and Sustainability Director
Heathrow Airport*

Clayton Nash,

*Strategy Director
CityFibre*





PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE – ARE WE ABOUT TO GET IT RIGHT?

Outlining the scrutiny role of the Transport Select Committee of which she holds the position of Chair, Ruth will offer comment on some of the key issues, such as decarbonising transport and delivering networks (EV charging and rail infrastructure), surface access to Heathrow and integrated public transport and modal shift. She will also provide personal comments on how these, and other opportunities, can best benefit business our region.

As an advocate for infrastructure through the National Infrastructure Planning Association (NIPA), and in the context of a culture shift in planning, Tom will reflect on how infrastructure is now “coming out of the shadows” under the current Labour government. He will consider how we can - and should - rethink the effective and efficient delivery of nationally significant infrastructure projects: what is working well, and how Thames Valley businesses should engage to ensure these projects maximise business benefit.

SPEAKERS

**Ruth
Cadbury,**

Chair
Transport Select
Committee

**Tom
Carpen,**

Board Chair
National Infrastructure
Planning Association

RAILWAYS AS A DRIVER OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

2025 was the 200th anniversary of our railways. Mark will provide a 'state of play' of GWR, including updates on the transition to GBR and new Oxford to Bristol service. Looking ahead, he will talk about the importance of connectivity and his bold ambitions to kick-start economic growth, closing with a call to arms to business to speak up with regards to helping secure continued investment in our railways.

Reflecting on some of the key projects, being discussed and developed, across the Oxford-Cambridge Growth corridor, e.g. East West Rail, Charlotte will offer some challenge to the current degree of focus placed on the region and ask, are we truly focused on the wider prize/s and maximising returns on investment for wider economic growth and benefit? What is the role of business in holding HMG and other stakeholders to account?



SPEAKERS

Mark
Hopwood,

Managing Director
Great Western Railway

Charlotte
Horobin,

Chief Executive Officer
Cambridgeshire
Chamber of Commerce



4 SESSION

RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORKS

As the UK rapidly electrifies heat, transport and industry, and integrates renewables into the grid system, Jacopo will consider the environmental and economic costs and the growing challenges for a net-zero electricity system. He will explore the role of demand-side flexibility and how deployment/data management has the potential to release (£3-4 billion p.a.) in economic benefit.

Nevil will outline how Thames Water's (TW) three core challenges of climate change, population growth and a need to protect the environment are driving water shortages in the region, and how TW are addressing this risk. This includes their investment in the new Oxon reservoir, and action to tackle leakage and helping customers use water wisely. He will comment on HMG's [new vision for water](#) and outline what this means for the Thames Valley, including potential supply chain opportunities.

SPEAKERS

**Jacopo
Torriti,**

*Professor of Energy
Economics and Policy
University of Reading*

**Nevil
Muncaster,**

*Strategic Water
Resources Director
Thames Water*