

The CBI: a case study in incoherent thinking

Published: January 13, 2026, 6:50 am

There are moments when I think I should read the barrage of press releases sent at me because I am a blogger - and apparently that makes me worth sending these things to, even when I do not solicit them. Yesterday the CBI sent me such a press release.

They're in Brexit despair. Which is fair enough. Their solution is to have a cross-party coalition for British business in which, once established politicians will apparently not interfere. Of this they say:

This partnership should have three goals.

First, show the world the UK is a great place for business. Brand Britain is a powerful calling card. But ongoing uncertainty has raised questions about our stability, and not solely because of Brexit. Threats of renationalisation, continued doubts over vital projects like Heathrow, HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, and unreformed business rates are just a few of the other challenges that make investors think twice. It's time to restore the UK's reputation as the stable and trusted country to start and grow a business.

Second, build a bold and compelling vision for the UK's future on the world stage. Lift the modern industrial strategy from textbook to reality, so it unlocks the animal spirits of enterprise. Make it long term and cross-party. Don't allow it to be torn up every time there's a change at the top. Ensure every policy and business investment is targeted at the same goals, whether tackling climate change, equipping our young people for the future, or reducing the blight of regional inequality.

Third, back efforts to demonstrate that good business is good for society, that profit and purpose go hand in hand. Business knows it needs to work harder to show it's a problem solver, not a problem to be solved. But there's proof all around us. Building on the example of leading firms, more are making bold changes to improve employee engagement and ownership. Britain has world-leading numbers of businesses already working in schools to challenge gender stereotypes and build skills for work. Across the country, firms are taking action on issues from prompt payment to pay gaps.

Government backing will accelerate this progress.

So let's stand back and consider that for a moment, using just one lens for appraisal (although others are available). Let's use climate change.

In the second paragraph it says every policy should be targeted on such a goal.

But in the first it demands a commitment to expanding Heathrow and building HS2, both of which (and most especially Heathrow) are bad news for climate change.

And despite this obvious conflict the CBI says in the third paragraph that such conflicted thinking is good for the UK.

With respect, when the CBI can show it can think an issue through and reach logical conclusions I might just give some credence to such claims. As it stands, this is literally incoherent propaganda.

Try again, CBI. And this time get climate change right. And in that case commit to a Green New Deal.