

CEO Breakfast

Date: May 2010

Chair: Charlie Wagstaff, Managing Director, Criticaleye

(This event took place a few days before the UK general election)

On the eve of Britain's most critical public vote in decades, the group at this CEO Breakfast seemed downbeat in the face of the uncertain impact of the results. The group felt that Britain was at a watershed moment and, owing to the uncertainty of the election, questioned the country's future as an economic centre.

The group anticipated that the UK will not see much growth over the next five years and that taxes will rise. One Member questioned if he should bother undertaking business in Britain?

However, Britain may be at a significant crossroads, but it is and will remain a key European country. Other parts of the world may offer seemingly 'better' places to do business, but they also carry accompanying risks. Further, a focus on emerging markets, but successful operations require a good deal of knowledge transfer and strong relationships

Is there a future for UK plc? Doing business in the UK is currently challenging as consumers are still lacking confidence.

There are often comparisons to the German economy – a country with high overseas investment, a prosperous export market and many SMEs.

However, the UK does innovate in different ways. Should the British economy be based on SMEs? Should the Government be incentivising the creation of new businesses?

UK plc needs to tap into global opportunities. We have to work globally but retain UK plc and SMEs. Politicians should be looking after UK plc and encouraging business growth.

The group considered the key strengths of UK plcs:

- Support services
- Knowledge transfer
- New technology
- Heritage
- Natural traders
- Idea generation
- Strong in retail
- Competence at running global companies
- Partnerships
- Environment and renewables

After the discussion, the chair held a straw poll asking the participants who they thought would win the election. It was thought that the Conservatives would have a resounding win, with either a hung parliament or a Liberal Democrat coalition. It seems that our group, although slightly pessimistic, were none-the-less rather insightful.