

Photonics Leadership Group Meeting Minutes



Thursday 29 January 2026, 14:00-17:00,
Virtually on Teams

www.photonicsuk.org

Attendees (45) online, for whole or part:

Ian Alderton, Alrad; Ric Allott, STFC; Yann Amouroux, Optica; Simon Andrews, Fraunhofer UK; Andrew Bainbridge, OptiC, Glyndŵr University; Karin Burger, SPIE Europe; Tom Carney, University of Southampton; Chris Carson, Department for Business & Trade; Richard Carter, Heriot-Watt University; Russell Childs, Intel (Optoscribe); Iwan Davies, IQE; Tom Dickson, InnovateUK; Chris Dorman, Coherent Scotland; Sandra Dressler, Edmund Optics; Daniel Esser, Heriot-Watt University; Clive Grafton-Reed, Rolls-Royce; Duncan Hand, Heriot-Watt University; Tom Harvey, CPI; Susannah Heck,; Lewis Hill, Future Photonics Leaders; Richard Hogg, Aston Institute of Photonic Technologies; Hazel Hung, CS Connected; Shahida Imani, Singular Photonics; Dimitris Karnakis, Oxford Lasers Ltd; Stratos Kehayas, GandH; John Lincoln, Harlin; Anke Lohmann, Anchored In ; Valerie Lyttle, Yelo; David MacLellan, AILU; Roy McBride, PowerPhotonic; Owen McGann, GTS; Alison McLeod, Technology Scotland; Antony Murphy, AMIC; Chris Payne-Dwyer, University of Glasgow; Auro Perego, University of Aston; Richard Pitwon, Resolute Photonics; Howard Rupprecht, CS Connected; Stephanie Russin, EPSRC; Philip Sibson, Thales UK; Matthew Wasley , Innovate Connect; Scott Watson, University of Glasgow; Tom Watson, Cambridge Consultants; Philip White, Department for Business & Trade; Ben Wood, Thorlabs; Nicholas Wood, Thales UK.

Direct Apologies:

**Post meeting and editorial input in italics*

1) Previous Minutes and welcomes

Those attending their first PLG meeting or attending on behalf of a new organisation were formally welcomed, including

- Scott Watson, University of Glasgow,
- Chris Carson, Department for Business & Trade
- Antony Murphy, AMIC
- Auro Perego, University of Aston
- Tom Carney, University of Southampton

Minutes from previous meeting on 9 October were accepted without revision. These, along with all previous minutes are available at <https://photonicsuk.org/contributors/minutes/> with access code "PLGcontribute" (case sensitive).

2) Updates from Photonics West & Current affairs

a) Photonics West

Whilst overall attendance at Photonics West was reported as being lower peak years (23k vs 27k) UK attendees noted it was still a vibrant and very busy meeting. Exhibitors reported good traffic and quality leads. Academic presentations from the UK were once again reported as very strong. The Department of Business and trade was noted as doing an excellent job in supporting the event. The appearance of the UK pavilion in particular was noted as significantly improved over previous years with a clear UK identity. Photonics Scotland also ran a number of additional well received breakfast events.

Highlights include two UK winners at the Prism awards:-

- Phlux Technology in the sensors category
- Cerca Magnetics won a Catalyst award.

Noted that whilst the Quantum West exhibit had moved into the main exhibition hall, this did not appear to be thriving, with the larger photonics players covering their quantum offerings in from their main stands.

b) Current affairs

Around Photonics west global current affair were dominated by the threat of additional 10% tariffs on the UK and other EU countries over Greenland.

On request the PLG provided rapid response input to DBT on the potential impact of additional 10% tariffs. The PLG response highlight that industry predominantly waited to see what tariff action was actually taken / imposed and noted that the change in dollar value over the last 12 months accounted to more than a 10% cost/price shift, depending on whether companies priced in USD or GBP.

The wait and see approach was confirmed by the subsequent withdrawal of the additional tariff threat.

3) Review of Government asks from Photonics

UK industrial policy remains strongly steered by the growth foci of the 2025 Industrial strategy (the IS8). Frontier technologies are the primary focus within Digital and Tech theme.

Whilst photonics is not called out specifically in any of above, except within semicon,, the importance of photonics in advancing Frontier technologies and growth in the IS8 is increasingly being recognised and identified by expert advisors to government. As noted previously photonics has an increasing range of photonics champions.

The result is a number of photonic initiative including the TechUK sprint and photonics as one focus of the National Semiconductor centre as it stands up. The latest is a letter from the Prime Minister's Council of Science and Technology, entitled '[Photonics: Capturing the Opportunities for Growth and Global Leadership](#)'. This has now been published in full on gov.uk with full supporting evidence pack from the PLG .Peppered with stats from the PLG the letter has three recommendations that are understood to have been well received.

1. **Government should develop a national photonics roadmap by April 2026 to better coordinate funding, leverage existing clusters and build on technological strengths.**
2. **Government should use public procurement to support domestic industries and reduce reliance on global supply chains to build sovereign capabilities.**
3. **Government should expand international partnerships and export activities to support growth**

In addition we have a Parliamentary and Scientific Committee (PSC) meeting on Photonics (below) booked for 8 September 2026

As a result of these activities, we expect additional focus from gov agencies and departments and the common politicians questions 'what can we do for you?' to be asked more often in the next few months.

A mentimeter poll was deployed in advance of and during the meeting to gather participants input on priority asks from government. The draft results are documented in an annex to these minutes, "**Photonics requests from Gov: community input Jan 2026**"

4) Parliamentary Scientific committee on Photonics

A Parliamentary and Scientific Committee (PSC) meeting on Photonics is booked for 8 September 2026. The format is one tried and tested by the PSC

- Themed discussion 17:15 Portcullis House, Westminster
 - MPs and Lords + Three guest speakers

- **Industry strategy:** eight growth driving sectors:-
 - Advanced manufacturing
 - Clean energy industries
 - Creative industries
 - Defence
 - Digital and technologies
 - Financial services
 - Life sciences
 - Professional/ business servs
- **Frontier technologies**
 - Cyber security
 - Engineering biology
 - Quantum technologies
 - Semiconductors

- Drinks 18:45
- Followed by dinner 19:30 ~40 in parliament (Bellamy's)

The audience and attendees being MP and Members of the Lords + life members such as Stephen Metcalfe + representatives from other PSC members including most of the learned societies, gov labs, major universities, livery companies etc.

Sponsors of meetings often contribute related editorial to the 14/y Science in Parliament magazine that is sent to all parliamentarians.

We need to define the focused topic of discussion for Sept. Discussion concluded **'Light: enabling UK growth and resilience'** or similar combining a focus on economics impact and underpinning of defence and security.

For the three discussion topics following consensus

1. Health & Life science OR more all encompassing summary of photonics impact
2. Security and Defence
3. AI and Advanced connectivity (incorporating semi QT big data comms)

Noted that in addition to the topics it is essential to determine the key focus of the discussion and properly prepare for the Q&A (see key asks above). A focus and asks that resonate with the other PSC member organisations tend to resonate more and gain more support.

The PSC parliamentarians will look to generate a tangible output e.g. request from minister, request for a select committee enquiry etc.

Actoin all> volunteers to sit on a sub committee to prepare for the PSC

5) A roadmap for UK photonics – how to make useful

Given there are multiple calls for a UK Roadmap in Photonics it is important to define the scope and framework so the resulting roadmap is of maximum use and relevance to industry, investors and policy makers. Well constructed, a roadmap should add-value by:

- Coordinate policy, funding and skills planning
- Build on QT and Semicon strategies
- Support existing UK photonics clusters
- Enhancing support for skills, funding, scale-up infrastructure, manufacturing and collaboration.
- Enhance coordination with UK Research and Innovation, Innovate UK, the British Business Bank and National Wealth Fund

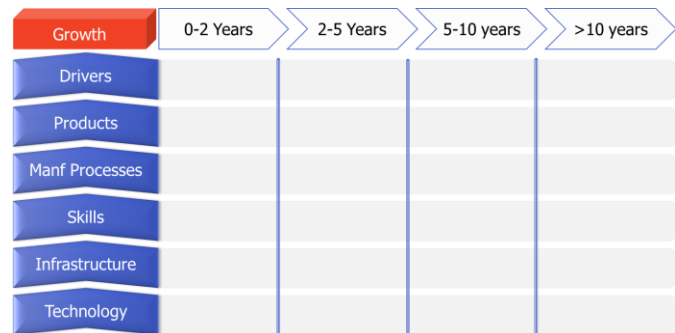
However it was noted that previous roadmaps in photonics and parallel fields have suffered from a number of shortcomings including:

- Being too generic in coverage of macro trends. Such drivers are covered well in the industry strategy and the Roadmap needs look at the specific relevant and framing of drivers to photonics
- Product release plans, especially in the nearer term (<2 years) are commercially sensitive. On this timescale, products will already be in the late stage of development and undergoing qualification and testing. Such sensitivities can be mitigated by identifying product groups/ types at a higher level
- Roadmaps often under play the importance, difficulty and timescales to develop and integrate new manufacturing processes and how these are connected to volumes
- Skills elements can often be overly generic e.g. more STEM graduates, and underplay the timescale required for skills initiatives to have impact
- Infrastructure can play a critical role in technology development, scaleup of manufacture, test and qualification. The timescales to put infrastructure in place are often underestimated
- Many roadmaps are overly focused on technology, can appear as technology push and been inaccessible to the non-expert

The following draft framework was proposed

The meeting was invited to provide open responses to following roadmap questions via Mentimeter.

1. What should a UK photonics roadmap for industry include?
2. What should a UK photonics roadmap for industry not include?



The draft results are documented in an annex to these minutes, “**UK Photonics Roadmap – defining scope and coverage**” Additional to John L are welcome.

Given the accelerated timescale it was noted any roadmap would need to heavily leverage recent and concurrent related projects including the updating of the Photonics21 European strategic multiannual innovation Agenda (SRIA), recent vision documents from Photonics Scotland, Innovate Connect deep dive horizon scan for long term disruptive innovation in photonics etc.

A high-level committee is likely to be required to put together the roadmap. The PLG will continue to work with Gov’s Council for Science and Technology to develop this and the rest of the process in a timely fashion.

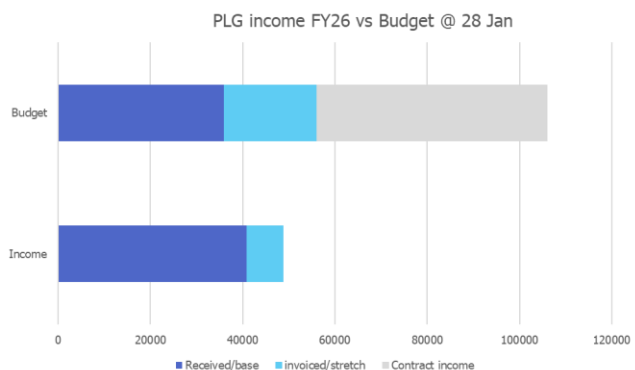
6) Progress in recruiting PLG network Manager

At the October PLG AGM it was agreed to recruit a PLG Manager as permanent 50% FTE position. The recruitment has been live since December and closes 31 Jan. *Seven applications were received in total.* Shortlisting takes place Monday 2 Feb with online and inperson interviews to following. *An offer to an outstanding candidate has now been made and will be announced once contracts are in place.*

To support the PLG are closely monitoring contribution income. As of the meeting date 25 contributions have been received with a further 7 pending from a pool of ~60 eligible participants. Income vs budget is shown.

Action> If anyone has yet to have a quote or needs an invoice please let Karin B or John L know.

Many thanks to Karin B for helping chase contributions.



7) Community updates

a) Innovate_UK

Funding is starting to flow from the spending review. We can expect several competitions to be launched in the next few weeks for spending in the new financial year post April. These will be across the range of Frontier technologies under the IS8 digital technology areas such as AI, Quantum, Advanced Connectivity, Smart electronics etc. Photonics will be relevant to most if not all of these and there should be many opportunities to apply for funding. Indeed the one challenge will be the very volume of different calls with subtle differences making the choice of which to apply for interesting.

Noted that Innovate may be taking the opportunity to revise some of the application questions for some competitions – so ready the details of each closely.




Keep an eye on LinkedIn for announcements – the PLG will capture the most relevant on the PLG website/blog.

Increased international activity and support is also anticipated.

b) Future Leaders group

The PLG's Future Photonics Leaders Group has been successfully rejuvenated with the election of three officers for the group.

A number of events are planned for 2026 including a panel at Photonics Europe in Strasbourg, Light talk events in the UK and contributions to the Quantum industry summit in June

<p>Secretary</p>  <p>Dr Scott Watson Senior Lecturer University of Glasgow</p>	<p>Chair</p>  <p>Dr Lewis Hill Senior Scientist Max Planck Institute for the Science of Light</p>	<p>Vice-Chair</p>  <p>Dr Andrew Bainbridge Optical Metrologist Glyndwr Innovations Ltd Wrexham University</p>
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c) Europe , Photonics 21

Photonics21 working group are progressing with updating the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA). This is now entering the drafting phase – an ideal point for PLG members to contribute adding small refinements that historically have been shown to significantly improve the SRIA. This will be presented to the EU commission at the P21 AGM 9-10 June. Early bird registration is open.

At a high level Photonics21 continues to position photonics with the next 7 year multiannual framework program (FP10). Photonics will mostly likely be contained within the next iteration of the EU chip Act will scope expanded to include systems as well as component support. To facilitate continued input into the research areas support P21 is likely to become a full partner in the chips act

d) UK and international meetings

UK meetings in bold. All are on the PLG events directory

- **24-25 Feb Teleco Optics & Photonics (TOP)**
- 15-16 March OFC
- 12-16 April Photonics Europe
 - exhibit space selling out fast
- 20-22 April CS International Brussels
- 9-10 June P21 annual meeting
- **31 Aug-3 Sept Photon 2026**
- **14-17 Sept SPIE Sensors+Imaging / Defence & Security** (call for papers open)
- 25 Sept Global Photonics Economic Forum
- **16/17 June Quantum Industry Summit**
- **1-2 July, Uk Semiconductors 2026**
- **29-30 Sept Microelectronics UK)**
- **30/9 Fraunhofer Centre for Applied Photonics annual symposium**
- **1 Oct Photonics Means (+PLG & dinner)**
 - Northern Ireland cluster focus
- 6-8 Oct Vision Stuttgart
- **Dec BiCOP 2026** (TBC)

e) AILU

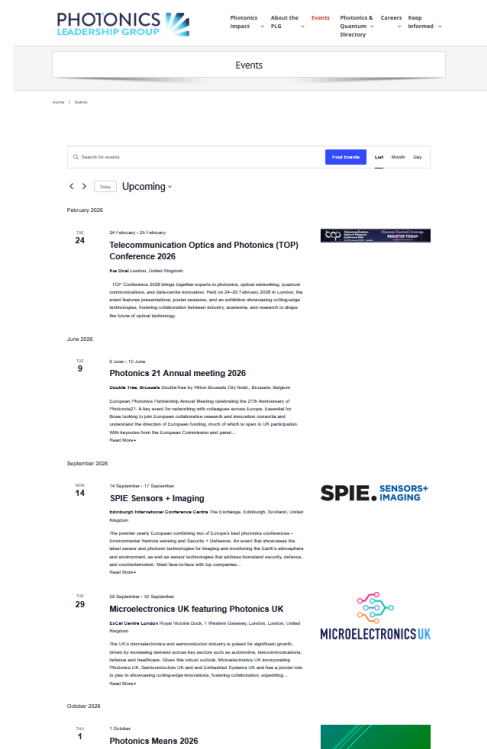
- AILU will be walking floors at Southern Manufacturing 3-5 Feb
- 12 Feb Optics and Bean delivery workshop @ MTC
- There will be a Laser Zone at MACH, NEC, Birmingham 20-24 April
- AGM 4 June with workshop on handheld laser welders @ TWI

f) Photonics Scotland

Currently working on a capability map for the super cluster, do contribute if you have a Scottish operation.

Cluster showcase, Holyrood March 2026

SU2P relaunch underway



g) **Wales**

Looking to put in place another local innovation partnership fund

a) **TechUk Photonics Sprint**

Wrap-up 3-5pm 5 February, London. Will leverage further to considered key scope of UK photonics roadmap.

[What does the UK's photonics industry need to succeed?](#)



8) **Next PLG meeting(s)**

To support improve participation we are attempting to diarise PLG meeting further in advance. The following dates are draft.

- Thursday 23 April 14-17:00 (TBC) In person
 - Volunteers to host. Date can be modified to fit
- Thursday 16 July 14-16:30 online
- Wednesday 30 September PLG Dinner, Glasgow
- Thursday 1 October Time TBC PLG AGM , Glasgow

9) **AOB**

University of Aston have launched a Bachelors / Master in Electronics and Optical Engineering. Looking for industry to host placements. Contact Auro Perego, o any of the Aston photonics team