

# Photonics Leadership Group

## Meeting Minutes



Monday 27 April 2026, 14:00-16:45,

In Person at the University of Southampton and Virtually on Teams

[www.photonicsuk.org](http://www.photonicsuk.org)

### Attendees (53) online, for whole or part:

Ian Alderton, Alrad; Ric Allott, STFC; Yann Amouroux, Optica OSA; Simon Andrews, Fraunhofer UK; Karin Burger, SPIE Europe; Max Buttinger, Thales UK; Tom Carney, University of Southampton; Chris Carson, Department for Business & Trade; Julia Coym, Seagate Technology Ltd; Iwan Davies, IQE; Helena Diez, Optica OSA; Rachel Doherty, NI-PIC; Daniel Esser, Heriot-Watt University; Lea Fave, Edmund Optics; Tabea Gerlach, EPSRC; Mark Goossens, CS Applications Catapult; Tom Harvey, CPI; Jon Heffernan, University of Sheffield; Lewis Hill, Future Photonics Leaders; Mark Johnson, AFE; Louise Jones, Photonics Connected; Dimitris Karnakis, Oxford Lasers Ltd; Peter Kean, GandH; Christopher Leburn, University of Strathclyde; John Lincoln, Harlin; Callum Littlejohn, University of Southampton; Anke Lohmann, Anchored In ; Valerie Lyttle, Yelo; Iain Mauchline, InnovateUK; Karen McGeachy, Laser 2000; Alison McLeod, Technology Scotland; Cillian McPolin, Digital Catapult; Ben Mills, University of Southampton; Emma Modrate, PowerPhotonic; Ian Murgatroyd, Oxford Fiber; Antony Murphy, AMIC; Elizabeth Patterson, Seagate Technology Ltd; Chris Payne-Dwyer, University of Glasgow; David Payne, University of Southampton; Richard Pitwon, Resolute Photonics; Graham Reed, University of Southampton; Joanne Rout, University of Durham; Andy Sellars, University of Southampton; Philip Sibson, Thales UK; Everlyn Toma, University of Glasgow; Ben Walden, DSIT; Mike Wale, UCL; Matthew Wasley , Innovate Connect; Scott Watson, University of Glasgow; Philip White, Department for Business & Trade; Ben Wood, Thorlabs; Aidong Xu, Wave Photonics; Michalis Zervas, University of Southampton

### Direct Apologies:

Dom Brady, Fibercore/ Humanetics; Richard Carter, Heriot-Watt University; Peter Collins, Laser 2000; Chris Dorman, Coherent Scotland; Glenn George, Bay Photonics; David Gillett, Laser 2000; Shahida Imani, Singular Photonics; Kevin Mackrodt, Novanta; Stephanie Russin, EPSRC; Toby Scrivener, Laser 2000

*\*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

- Julia Coym, Seagate Technology Ltd
- Rachel Doherty, NI-PIC
- Tabea Gerlach, EPSRC
- Karen McGeachy, Laser 2000
- Ben Mills, University of Southampton
- Emma Modrate, PowerPhotonic
- Elizabeth Patterson, Seagate Technology Ltd
- Joanne Rout, University of Durham
- Everlyn Toma, University of Glasgow
- Ben Walden, DSIT
- Michalis Zervas, University of Southampton

Minutes from previous meeting on 29 January 2026 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 on progress to a UK National Photonics Roadmap

### a) Process, Objectives, priorities

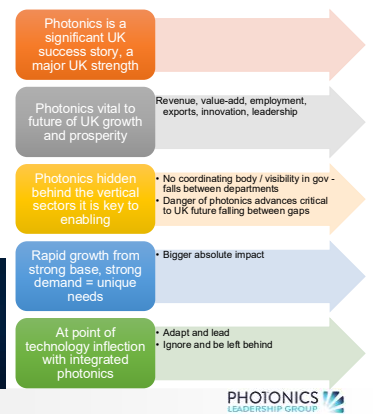
Development of a national photonics roadmap follows the [Council of Science and Technology's first recommendation to gov](#). The CST advice includes significantly more information within the text notably highlight photonics as a significant UK success story with highlights including ..seizing Opportunities.. investing for security.....Skills, funding, dedicated team, PIC foundry, exports.....photonics sector currently lacks coordinated government oversight... . The three recommendations are in summary



1. **Develop a national photonics roadmap**
  - To coordinate funding, leverage existing clusters, build on technological strengths.
2. **Use public procurement to support domestic industries**
  - Reduce reliance on global supply chains, build sovereign capabilities
3. **Expand international partnerships and export activities**
  - To support growth.

The report has been warmly received across government, perhaps more so than expected. The success of UK photonics being widely acknowledged. The objective of the roadmap being to provide a shared view of the most significant opportunities for photonics and in particular to stress the alignment to the sectors highlighted in the 2025 industry strategy vital for future of UK growth and prosperity ie. AI, Clean Energy, Connectivity, Defence, Life Sciences, Quantum, Advanced Manufacturing.

- A shared view of the most significant opportunities for photonics in the UK in the next 10 years
  - Barriers and enablers to maximising those opportunities
  - Top-down industry driven



Noted that whilst it may have been an omission to not flag the vital role of photonics in the industry strategy this cannot be undone and therefore making a strong link between Photonics and UK progress in the IS8 area and frontier technologies is vital.

The process for developing road map will broadly follow.



In contrast to many roadmaps, it is the CST requested (aligned with the PLG input) that the National Photonics roadmap will be industry focus working top down from drivers through the industry opportunities these create through the blockers and enablers to maximising those opportunities for the UK.

### b) Online and in-person consultation

Two key inputs being the online consultation and the in-person workshop on the afternoon of 11 May in London. Both of which will focus on the following key questions

1. Where and how will UK photonics play a future role in sectors vital to the UK's interests
  - AI, Clean Energy, Connectivity, Defence, Life Sciences, Quantum, Advanced Manufacturing
2. When will demand appear / when will it be too late for UK companies to compete (*this will be covered in the in-person workshop once the opportunities are captured in the online consult*)

3. What blockers in the UK are hindering exploitation of these opportunities by UK industry? How can they be realistically addressed?
4. How will the UKs enabling environment (skills, R&D, infrastructure, regulation ..) need to adapt to facilitate opportunities?
5. Who are the UK sector's potential international competitors?
6. Who are the UK sector's potential international collaborators that would support UK exploitation of these opportunities?

Note the focus is on UK opportunities relevant to UK industry. There will be areas where photonics will have significant global impact but are less relevant to the UK which are not the focus of the UK roadmap. An expression of interest to participation in the in-person workshop and the online consultation is open at <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/cG9LGgnsGp>. Invitations from gov are expect any day and the earliest response to the Eoi is recommended to be considered for inclusion (final invites are at the discretion of DSIT). It is anticipated that wider inputs from the sector would be very welcome. The PLG will endeavour to make sure all have opportunity to input.

**ACTION all> prepare answers to the consultation questions across all domains relevant to your interests. Please do not assume any opportunity/ impact is obvious. Avoid jargon- the analysis will not be by those skilled in the photonics arts. Do make it clear which priority downstream sectors are relevant. Do think UK. Be ready to comment on the relevant industry timescale.**

The impact of the roadmap should be to enable improved coordination accross gov, in particular the inclusion of photoincs wihtin the scope of industry strategy interventions including from funding agencies which are being strongly orientated to the IS8.

Responding to questions it was noted that the roadmap process is being driven out of CST and National technology advisors with strong support from DSIT. Ben Walden has been temporarily seconded to DSIT semicon team to help develop strategy, roadmap

and response to the CST advice, working at a higher cross gov level than just within the semicon team.

Opportunities to input into the consultation should be open to all and whilst invitations to the in-person workshop are being the consultation is being driven by gov and will be analysed by them.

The process is being run at pace and a frist draft is anticiapted potentially as early as late May. To support this the PLG have started drafting potential section that such as analysis of external drivers imacting UK photonics.

**Action all> please review the initial draft of the External drivers that are inpacting and creating opportunities for UK photonics at [External drivers impacting UK photonics working draft 0 1.docx](#) Please either comment in the document or send sugesstion for change to john L by 8 May 2026.**

- No additional funds
  - 'Allocation' from spending review pots
- Removal / adjustment to barriers
- Focused international support
- Inclusion / id of photonics in
  - Skills
  - Investment
  - UKRI / Innovate / EPSRC
    - As enabling
- **Signalling**
  - **We don't get UK Growth and reliance without photonics**
  - Voice of photonics in gov

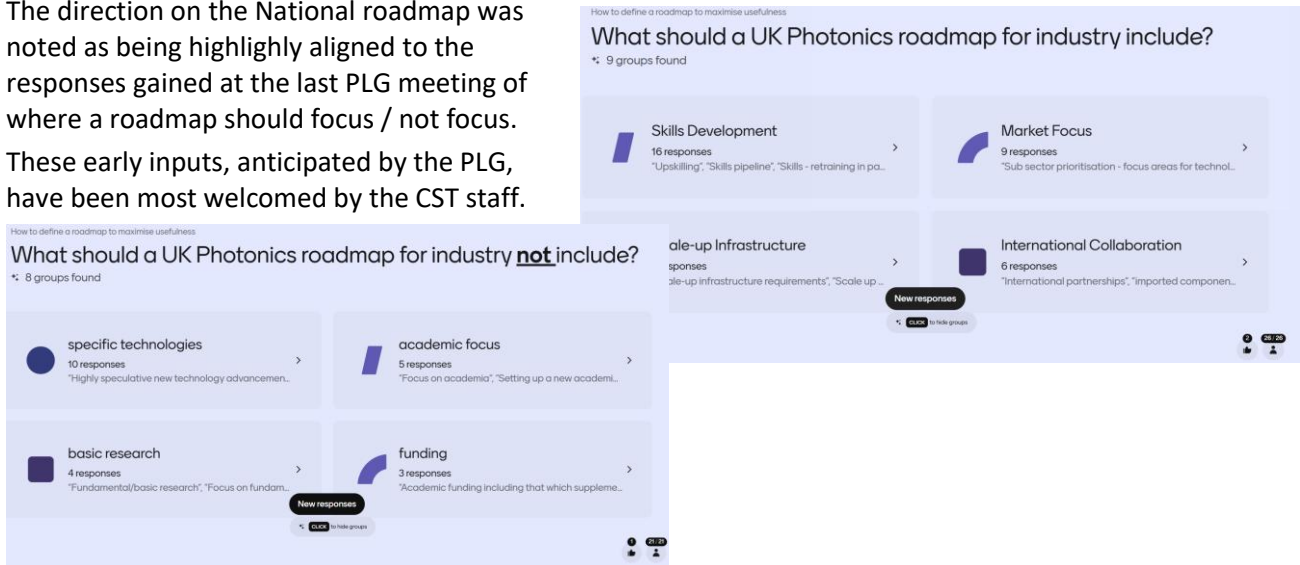
- Can't change past
- Industry strategy is the industry strategy
  - UKRI, Innovate... strategies are what they are
- Work within structures
  - Adapt, refine, adjust



### c) Review of inputs from last PLG meeting

The direction on the National roadmap was noted as being highly aligned to the responses gained at the last PLG meeting of where a roadmap should focus / not focus.

These early inputs, anticipated by the PLG, have been most welcomed by the CST staff.



### 3) Plans for the Westminster PSC meeting 8 September

A Parliamentary and Scientific Committee (PSC) meeting on Photonics entitled **Light: enabling UK growth and resilience** is booked for 8 September 2026. The format is one tried and tested by the PSC

- Themed discussion 17:15  
Portcullis House, Westminster
- Drinks 18:45
- Followed by dinner ~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. Noted that two clear audience segments – parliamentarians and other members, both of whom need take aways.

We have formed a working Sub-committee to facilitate the organisation and submitted the synopsis (right). We are grateful to Seagate and Thales for agreeing to present. We will be working to make sure we are prepared with responses to the obvious questions e.g. what can we (parliamentarians) do for you (photonics)

As sponsors of the meeting we will have a number of additional places which the sub-committee will consider how best to distribute these to ensure we have all applications basis covered at the meeting.

Sponsors of meetings often contribute related editorial to the 14/y Science in Parliament magazine that is sent to all parliamentarians. We will seek to build content around the National Photonics Roadmap.

The parliamentary scientific committee meeting on photonics, *Light: enabling UK Growth and Resilience*, will set out how photonics underpins UK productivity and strategic resilience. A presentation from the Photonics Leadership Group will focus on the 2026 national photonics roadmap—developed in response to advice from the Government’s Council for Science and Technology—and on the contribution photonics will make to delivering the UK’s industry strategy. Further talks from Thales and Seagate will highlight photonics’ role in security and defence capability, as well as the infrastructure demands created by AI and advanced connectivity. Speakers will also cover how UK manufacturing can help meet these needs and the scale of the growth opportunity. Discussion will consider the barriers and enablers for the UK to sustain its 200 years of leadership—and to continue manufacturing and innovating domestically—at a time when new integration advances are reshaping traditional solutions and supply chains.

#### 4) Introducing the New PLG General Manager

We are pleased to confirm that Dr Lewis Hill will take up the position of PLG General Manager from the 1 September 2026 [Dr. Lewis Hill | LinkedIn](#). Lewis is currently chair's of the Future Photonics Leaders group chairing a number of high impact panel discussion at Laser World of Photonics, Photonics Means and recently Photonics Europe.

Lewis will be the PLG's first employee working ~50% basis for the PLG.

We will be working with Lewis to develop a future looking plan for the PLG's growth over the medium to long term that will be presented at the PLG AGM in the Autumn.



#### 5) PLG status / finance update

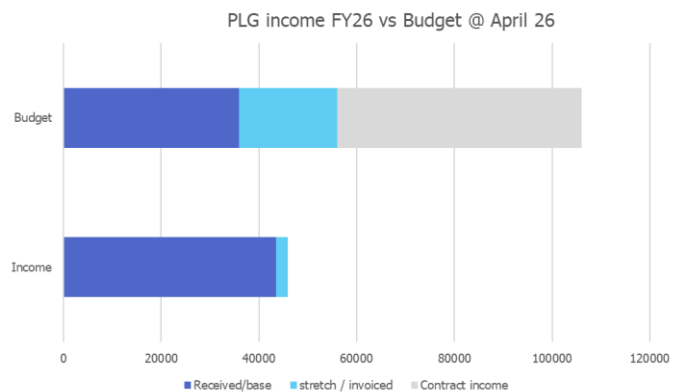
With gratefully received support from Karin B we have to date received 33 contributions to the operation of the PLG this year (34 by close of play 27 April) We still await contributions, especially from a number of the larger organisations who regularly attend. Note only current contributors awill have logo indluced on publications and presentations.

We are pleased to confirm the PLG has been included as a partner in the PhotonicsHorizon European CSA project to a value of €42,375 over 3 years from Jan 2027. This CSA provides the

secretariate to Photoncis21 as well as supporting EU clusters to make the case for Photonics in Europe. The number of clusters included has been significantly reduced in the current proposal and we are pleased to have been able to secure a place. As noted below the CSA will be lead by EPIC, VUB and Photondelta with EPIC taking over the running of the P21 secretariate from VDI.

With Lewis support we hope to be able to securer additional grant income to the PLG in the future. In-line with the CST advice to government and development of the National Photonics roadmap we are also asking gov to match the contributions the PLG receive from industry. We have yet to receive a response

Note the current national photonics road mapping activity and associated gov liaison whilst very welcome is consuming significant resources. No funding the road mapping activity has been forthcoming from gov.



#### 6) Plans for UK PIC and Photonics Semiconductor Pilot lines

In response to the UK Semiconductor strategy and semiconductor infrastructure review there has been significant interest in the UK integrated photonics and photonics semiconductor capabilities. Unlike logic or memory, photonics is seen as one of the few high value semiconductor markets where the UK can have significant global impact (alongside power electronics). Industry have frequently flagged the need access prototype and scale-up facilities to enable increased access to integrated and photonics semiconductor markets.

DSIT has therefore been in discussion with the leading groups working at the interface of research and industry in photonics PICS and semiconductors to understand more details on potential photonics semiconductor investments. Everlyn Toma, University of Glasgow and Callum Littlejohns presented a summary of current outline thoughts and discussions.

##### d) James Watt Nano Fab, / Kelvin Nanotech

Everlyn Toma, University of Glasgow presented an overview of Jame Watt Nano Fab (JWNF) and the Kelvin Nanotechnology. Whilst owned by Uni Glasgow one of the key distinguishing feature of Kelvin Nanotech is it constitution as a separate legal entity enabling its ~25 staff to leverage JWNF capability to deliver on commercial contracts for inclusion by customers in downstream commercial products.

In addition photonics laser and detector fab, JWNF have developing expertise in hybrid and heterogeneous integration and lithium niobate platforms.

Forward looking plans are considering a relocation and significant expansion of JWNF to the Mary Hill science Park to enable increased industrial production and additional training capacity.

#### e) **Cornerstone**

Cornerstone have been working up proposals for a national silicon photonics as gov request, to increase to pilot production of up to 25-50 wafers per batch (10X current levels) incorporating front end Sol and Lithium niobate wafer fab, mid end processing to prepare wafer / chiplets for integration (e.g. vias ) plus back end processing to compliment UK industrial capability. Considering a not for profit grant back funding model similar to Catapult / Fraunhofer.

Questions highlighted the importance of interfacing with Silicon catalyst (in-hand) and the need for robust performance indicators with recommendation to liaise with Fraunhofer UK experience in developing such.

Both groups are continue to work with each other understand synergies and await feedback from the semicon team in DSIT.

### 7) **Community Updates**

#### a) **Innovate UK**

A wide range of Innovate funding programs are already or will shortly be [announced](#) including

- Quantum
  - UK Quantum Missions, including Supply Chain, Testbeds, Networking & PNT competitions
- Collaboration & Knowledge Transfer
  - Knowledge Transfer Partnerships Rd 2
- Defence & Dual-Use
  - Dual-Use Technology Innovation
- Net Zero, Energy & Climate
  - Offshore Wind Innovation...
- Advanced Manuf & Materials
  - Advanced Manufacturing CR&D
  - National Materials Innovation Programme – Feasibility
- Advanced Connectivity Tech (ACT)
  - ACT – CR&D
  - ACT – Contracts for Innovation
  - ACT Academic Start-up Accelerator

Watch <https://www.ukri.org/opportunity>

Innovate have also released a [new prospectus](#) indicating a change in direction of future funding to a more account management approach termed Velocity focused on supporting select high potential businesses in the IS6 of 8 and Frontier technologies.

- Advanced manufacturing
- Clean energy industries
- Creative industries
- Defence
- Life sciences
- Digital and technologies, including the six frontier technologies: artificial intelligence, advanced connectivity technology, cyber security, engineering biology, semiconductors, quantum

The move to 'Velocity' is being trailed in life science calls and will be rolled out more broadly over the next ~2 years. How one gets onto the Velocity program and what this means to thematic type calls are all areas of debate.

#### b) **UK and global meetings** also online at [www.ukphotonics.org/events](http://www.ukphotonics.org/events)

- 11 May National Photonics Roadmap workshop, London

- 21 May Pic Europe meeting Barcelona
- 21/22 May UK NL PIC meeting (online) see Anke
- 9-10 June P21 annual meeting, Brussels
- 4 June AILU Handheld laser workshop, TWI
- 8 June AILU early career group @ Micrometric
- 15-18 June Quantum Industry Summit & Quantum 2.0, Bristol
- 16-17 June Commercialising Quantum Global 2026, Economist, London,
- 1-2 July, UK Semiconductors 2026, Sheffield
- 31 Aug-3 Sept Photon 2026, Newcastle
- 8 Sept Parliamentary and Scientific Committee Light: enabling UK growth and resilience
- 14-17 Sept SPIE Sensors+Imaging / Defence & Security
  - Call currently open
  - Note there are currently no UK paper submission in some of the key conferences such as **High-Power Lasers and Technologies for Optical Countermeasures**
- 20-24 Sept ECOC, Malaga
- 24-25 Sept Global Photonics Economic Forum, Malaga
- 30/9 Institute of Photonics symposium, Glasgow
- 30/9 Fraunhofer Centre for Applied Photonics annual symposium, Glasgow
- 29-30 Sept Microelectronics UK, London
- 1 Oct Photonics Means, , Glasgow
- 6-8 Oct Vision Stuttgart inc Quantum effects
  - BiCOP currently not running 2026

In news from recent meeting photonics Europe in Strasbourg was reported by many to be 'jumpin' and very well attended with big increase in papers attendance and exhibitors.

**Action all esp Academia**> please support local events with quality paper submissions. UK gov representation at such meetings is now more likely (international travel less likely) and the absence of UK papers more likely noted.

#### c) **Photonics21**

Epic have been formally adopted to provide the Photonics secretariate from Jan 2027, taking over from VDI THE new and update strategic research and Innovation Agenda will be handed over to the Commission at the AGM in June

Efforts to get photonics fully included in the next EU framework programme continue. EPIC are collecting signatures on a key position paper for the EU commission

**Action**> Please review the EPIC paper <https://epic-photonics.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/EPIC-Position-Paper-2026-Strategy-for-European-Competitiveness-in-Photonics.pdf>

and if you agree to support please contact [carlos.lee@epic-photonics.com](mailto:carlos.lee@epic-photonics.com)

#### d) **Future Leaders group**

Ran a successful highly successful careers panel within the industry sessions at Photonics Europe and have now been invited to repeat at Photonics West 2028 and Quantum Innovation Summit in UAE.

Will connect to ECR focused funding call due from Cornerstone in 2026

#### e) **AILU**

Workshops on handheld laser 4 June and early careers 8 June coming up (above)

Ailu are also working on a number of policy and positioning statements in a focused effort on increasing broader engagement.

#### f) **Photonics Scotland**

Scottish Supercluster capability map is now online with 170 entries and rising- <https://techsupercluster.scot/capability-map/>

### g) Northern Ireland

Applications are open the next Smart Nano photonics bootcamp in Belfast, covering integrated photonics and devices. <https://www.digicatapult.org.uk/apply/opportunities/opportunity/photonics-bootcamp-2/>

### h) Wales

LIPF from Cardiff Capital region will have a focus on Compound Semi - call open now, key scope - *The scale and distribution of impact across the Cardiff Capital Region, beyond a single organization or site* <https://www.cardiffcapitalregion.wales/investment-ops/local-innovation-partnerships-fund/>

## 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 16 July 14-16:30 online
- Wednesday 30 September PLG Dinner, Glasgow
- Pm Thursday 1 October Or Pm Wednesday 30 September PLG AGM , Glasgow

## 9) AOB

### Government consultation

The science Innovation and Technology Committee have an open consultation on Low-energy computing [Low-energy computing - Committees - UK Parliament](#) that makes specific reference to integrated evidence

**Action> please submit evidence / inputs direct to the select committee by 14 May.** Quantitative figures and direct industry input are particularly impactful.

### PLG Treasurer

A volunteer is sort for the role of PLG Treasurer from the AGM in October as Anke L will be stepping down. This role has increased significance with the taking on members of PLG staff. Contact Anke L or John L to discuss if interested