FRANCO-BRITISH
BUSINESS CONFERENCE

10 June 2026

From Ambition to Action: Franco-British Competitiveness in an Era of Sovereignty

Wednesday 10 June
From 7:30 am to 2:00 pm

Chicago Booth London Conference Centre

emie Souteyrat / CCFGB

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Established in 1963

The 2026 Franco-British Business Conference will take place during a period of significant transformation. Energy systems, defence capabilities, and digital technologies are being reshaped by geopolitical rivalry, supply-chain disruptions, and the accelerating green and AI revolutions.

Businesses face the dual challenge of maintaining resilience while remaining competitive in an increasingly fractured world.

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Key Programme Elements

Sovereignty has emerged as the defining frame across sectors

- **Energy** sovereignty means building low-carbon systems that are both secure and affordable.
- **Defence** sovereignty means ensuring our nations can act swiftly and independently while strengthening alliances.
- **Digital** sovereignty means reducing reliance on external providers, scaling European AI innovation, and enabling SMEs to adopt transformative technologies.

The conference theme highlights the importance of turning high-level declarations into actual results. Business require tangible delivery: quicker procurement processes, innovative financing instruments for SMEs, cross-border skills pipelines, and Franco-British industrial projects that demonstrate the partnership's worth.

Cross Cutting Themes

- **Agility:** how governments and industries can adapt at the pace of technological and geopolitical change.
- **SMEs and mid-tier firms:** ensuring the benefits of cooperation extend beyond large corporates.
- **Skills and talent:** training, mobility, and apprenticeships to underpin every sectoral transition.
- **Sovereignty as resilience:** energy, defence, and AI sovereignty understood as the foundation for competitiveness and growth.

Key Program Elements

Opening Business Scene-Setter – Challenges and Opportunities in 2026:

A leading economist will open the conference with a data-driven overview of the global and European business environment. From shifting energy markets and geopolitical risk to the AI revolution and SME competitiveness, this keynote will set the scene with key facts and figures delegates need to frame the day's discussions.

CEO Interview

Led by a prominent and senior journalist, this high-profile interview with a leading Franco-British CEO will examine how global companies are adjusting to the challenges of energy transition, digital transformation, and geopolitical fragmentation.

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Panel Sessions

Defence & Economic Security
From Doctrine to Delivery

Against a backdrop of rising geopolitical tension, this panel will examine how Franco-British defence cooperation can move from high-level agreements to practical delivery. Themes include aligning procurement and export controls, embedding shared doctrine, and ensuring industry — from primes to SMEs — can adapt at the pace of modern threats while strengthening European security.

AI, Digital & Industrial Innovation
From Hype to Adoption

With the UK showing far higher SME adoption rates than France, and Europe as a whole grappling with questions of digital sovereignty, the discussion will focus on what policies, partnerships and investments are needed to make AI a driver of competitiveness rather than a source of fragmentation.

Energy & Climate Transition
From Security to Competitiveness

This session will explore how the UK and France can leverage their complementary strengths (e.g. French nuclear leadership and UK offshore wind) to build secure, low-carbon energy systems that also promote competitiveness. The discussion will focus on interconnectors, grid reinforcement, meeting demand in growth sectors like AI and data centres.

Closing Fireside Chat – *Where Next for UK-France Cooperation?*

A concluding dialogue between senior UK and French officials will distil the day's discussions into clear, forward-looking priorities. Anchored in themes of sovereignty, skills, and SME competitiveness, the fireside chat is policy-oriented, designed to transfer the key business insights back into government.

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PROGRAMME CONFERENCE 2026

Time	Duration	Agenda	Description	Speakers
7:30 – 8:30	60 mins	Networking Breakfast	Informal networking with speakers, sponsors, and policymakers	
8:30 – 8:45	15 mins	Welcome & Opening Remarks	Welcome delegates + short framing remarks on bilateral cooperation	Welcome: Sébastien Joly, Managing Director, French Chamber Opening Remarks • Emmanuelle Bury, President, French Chamber • Sir Chris Bryant MP, Minister of State for Trade Policy • HE Hélène Duchêne French Ambassador to the UK
8:45 – 9:00	15 mins	Opening Economic Scene-Setter	Challenges and Opportunities in 2026 Hard data on global economic shifts, AI, defence spending, and energy markets	Michael Saunders, Senior Advisor, Oxford Economics & Ex-Monetary Policy Committee, Bank of England
9:00 – 9:45	45 mins	Panel 1 – Energy & Climate Transition	From Security to Competitiveness Balancing resilience and net zero: how nuclear, offshore wind, and efficiency can power competitiveness, with SMEs and skills at the heart of the transition	Prof David Gann CBE (Moderator), Chairman, UK Fusion Energy Ltd Miya Paolucci, CEO Engie UK Alice Williams, VP, Schneider Electric Digital Energy UK Frédéric Turlier, CEng FICE, Deputy Managing Director UK, Bouygues TP
9:45 – 10:30	45 mins	Panel 2 – Defence & Economic Security	From Doctrine to Delivery How Franco-British cooperation can move beyond agreements to rapid, practical action — from procurement and export controls to shared doctrine and industrial agility.	Oriel Petry (Moderator), Senior Vice President, Airbus UK Keith Muir, CEO, Safran Electronics & Defence UK Arnaud Valli, Head of Public Affairs, COMAND AI Andrew Brydon, Partner, Pinsent Masons

*The conference programme is up to date as we speak, though it may still be subject to change or variation.

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PROGRAMME CONFERENCE 2026

Time	Duration	Agenda	Description	Speaker
10:30 – 10:45	15 mins	Coffee Break		
10:45 – 11:30	45 mins	Panel 3 – AI, Digital & Industrial Innovation	From Hype to Adoption Bridging Europe's AI sovereignty gap by mobilising capital, enabling SME adoption, and shaping global standards for trusted digital innovation	Benjamin Guedj (Moderator), Professor of Machine Learning and Foundational AI, UCL & Research COO Pauline Thomson, Head of Data Science and Managing Director in the Infrastructure Team, Ardian Phil Siveter, CEO, Thales UK Thibaud Grandjean, Business Strategic Leader, Dassault Systemes
11:30 – 11:50	20 mins	Fireside Chat – Where Next for UK–France Cooperation?	Policy-facing i.e. designed to take the business takeaways back into government agendas	Kamal Ahmed (Moderator), Executive Editorial Director, Fortune Sam Lister, Director General Industrial Strategy, UK Government Pierre Lissot, Deputy Director of Foresight, Economic Studies, and Evaluation, Ministry of Economy and Finance
11:50 – 12:30	40 mins	Flagship CEO Interview	A leading Franco-British CEO shares perspectives on resilience, sovereignty, and competitiveness	Simone Rossi, CEO, EDF Energy and Group Senior Executive VP Kamal Ahmed, Executive Editorial Director, Fortune
12:30 – 12:35	5 mins	Closing Address by Chamber President		Emmanuelle Bury , President, French Chamber
12:35 – 14:00	85 mins	Networking Lunch	Informal networking with speakers, sponsors, and policymakers	

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