Government’s “alarming” strategy neglects brewers and pubs

26/11/2024 by Timothy Hampson

Industry

The British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA) has warned the government’s Industrial Strategy has overlooked brewers and pubs and risks undermining economic growth.  Neglecting the sector risks endangering the economy, job market and government's growth mission, the trade association has said in its consultation response.   The strategy’s consultation, which closed on 24 November, currently fails to include industries like brewing and pubs, despite their significant economic and cultural contributions.  The BBPA said the oversight is alarming and has called on the government to recognise the sectors as vital cogs in the machinery that drives the UK economy. The BBPA says regulatory burdens, high tax rates, access to skills and employment, and the prohibitive cost of doing business which includes soaring energy costs, are all barriers the sector currently faces and must be addressed.  BBPA director of strategy and policy Andy Tighe said: “The Industrial Strategy is a real opportunity for government to enable brewers and pubs to help build a brighter, more prosperous UK. However, it is alarming that the sector is currently overlooked in the strategy. Brewers and pubs pour billions into the economy, support more than one million jobs from farmers to publicans and are at the heart of local economies and communities throughout the UK.   “We stand ready to help government swiftly deliver the change that is needed to break down the barriers that stop our sector from contributing even more to the economy and employing more people than ever before.”  The BBPA said neglecting the sector could not only lead to financial and employment ramifications, but heritage ones too, as it is intrinsically linked to the UK’s cultural and social fabric.   Britain’s brewing industry is world-renowned and is a hugely innovative and diverse market, the BBPA says. Small independents, long-established family businesses, and the world’s largest brewing companies are all part of the UK’s manufacturing sector and must be able to continue operating and investing here. Pubs play a foundational role in creating communities where people want to live and work, which is a core component of the Industrial Strategy’s focus on distributing economic activity across the UK, the BBPA said.  The response came after the BBPA announced pubs employ more young people than ever before, however, the Budget means the sector may have to make difficult decisions to save jobs.  More than half (51 per cent) of the overall pub sector’s workforce was aged 16-24, figures from 2024 Oxford Economics research, commissioned by the BBPA, reveal. That equates to pubs employing one in 10 of all under 25-year-olds in the UK job market.    The data, commissioned by the BBPA, shows pubs employ 350,000 under 25-year-olds, up from 281,770 in 2019 – a 24 per cent increase and one in 10 of all under 25s in work.