Engaging with Reform UK in 2026

What you need to know

Reform UK and the road into 2026

In 2024, Reform UK operated primarily as a protest vehicle, giving millions of voters a way to express frustration with a two-party system they felt was no longer working. By 2025, that protest vote had translated into power. Reform took control of councils from Kent to Durham, creating an immediate test of whether it could move from opposition to delivery.

As the party enters 2026, it faces its most important transition yet. Having demonstrated its ability to mobilise voters, Reform must now show it can sustain support by governing competently and delivering on the scale of change it has promised. The central challenge is clear - retaining the energy and authenticity of an insurgent movement while becoming a professional and credible national party that voters and institutions trust to deliver on their commitments.

That tension will play out differently across the country. Reform is now focused on securing devolved breakthroughs in Wales and Scotland to strengthen its claim to be a genuinely national force rather than an English protest party, helping position it as the leading national party on the right, displacing the Conservatives rather than merely pressuring them. At the same time, Reform is stepping up its ambitions in London.

Choosing Laila Cunningham as its mayoral candidate shows the party is trying to turn profile into real electoral support across the capital. Any breakthrough there would signal appeal beyond its core base and place Reform under far greater scrutiny on competence and delivery.

This sits alongside a broader effort to professionalise the party, including stronger organisation, tighter candidate control and more developed policy positions. For businesses, this matters. Reform is no longer a movement to watch from a distance, but a political force exercising power. Even if polling fluctuates, it is likely to remain a significant presence for years to come and failing to engage early risks leaving organisations on the back foot.

Who should you engage with?

While polling appears to be plateauing, Reform continues to outperform other parties in projections for the next General Election. For those looking to cut through, engagement is no longer just about talking to the few leading figures. Instead, influence within Reform is increasingly distributed across a wider leadership, advisory and policy ecosystem.

Reform UK leadership and core team

NIGEL FARAGE MP, Leader
Overall responsibility for leadership of the Party.

ZIA YUSUF, Head of Policy
A central operational figure in the party's professionalisation, with a growing team. Yusuf is leading policy generation, overseeing the development of Reform's proposed "DOGE-style" department, and shaping how ideas are translated into campaign-ready proposals.

RICHARD TICE MP, Deputy Leader
A key voice on national messaging and donor engagement. Tice remains the bridge between Reform and traditional business audiences, particularly on deregulation, tax and growth.

DANNY KRUGER MP, Government preparation
Plays a central role in shaping Reform's thinking on the practicalities of governing. Particularly influential on civil service reform and institutional change, and a key figure for more detailed policy engagement.

EDWARD SUMNER, Director of Communications
Heads up the party's communications function and press team, working closely with policy colleagues to drive the drumbeat of announcements we've seen to date and should expect moving forward.

MATTHEW MACKINNON, Director of External Affairs
Leads all external engagement between the party and industry, acting as a crucial conduit for businesses to shape decisions and gain a deeper understanding of thinking at the centre.

JOHN GILL, Communications and External Affairs Manager
Works closely with Matthew and Edward to support stakeholder engagement and communications activity.

JAMES ORR, Senior Adviser to Nigel Farage
A senior academic with close ties to the Centre for a Better Britain, James plays a key role in shaping Farage's thinking and the party's overall strategy.

Advisers, thinkers and the wider ecosystem

Beyond the formal party structure, a growing network of formal and informal advisers is shaping Reform's policy development and narrative. While often grouped together, two organisations are playing an increasingly important role in shaping the party's policy development, the Centre for a Better Britain and the Jobs Foundation.

Centre for a Better Britain (CFABB)

The Centre for a Better Britain currently functions as Reform's primary policy developer and ideas generator. While formally separate from the party, the relationship is close and, in practice, the boundaries are increasingly blurred. Reform's leadership remains heavily focused on campaigning, with much of the detailed policy thinking taking place within the CFABB ecosystem.

A key example of CFABB's role and importance was seen in the autumn, when Richard Tice looked to the think tank to deliver policy recommendations on revamping financial services regulation, commissioning working groups looking at rules covering the Bank of England and the Financial Conduct Authority, pensions, small businesses, and tax simplification.

Key figures include:

JONATHAN BROWN, CEO
Oversees day-to-day operations and acts as a gatekeeper for policy ideas entering the Reform ecosystem.

JONATHON KITSON, Head of Energy Policy
Leads the think tank's work on energy and infrastructure policy.

ARCHIE MANNERS, Head of Communications
Leads external affairs, digital and communications strategy, with a focus on younger and disengaged voters.

The Jobs Foundation

The Jobs Foundation plays a different role. Set up in 2023 by lobbyist and Tory peer Lord Matthew Elliott alongside Georgiana Bristol, it seeks to champion the role of business as a force for good and its insights are playing a behind the scenes role in shaping Reform's enterprise-led approach to growth and productivity.

LORD MATTHEW ELLIOTT, President
A veteran campaign strategist, including famously as Chief Executive of Vote Leave, who provides political direction and strategic framing.

GEORGIANA BRISTOL, Chief Executive
Oversees the organisation's strategic direction and areas of focus.

For organisations looking to engage on growth, deregulation and the business case for reform, the Jobs Foundation provides another business-focused route into the Reform ecosystem.

Key milestones to watch in 2026

January–April 2026
High-tempo rollout of campaign-ready policy announcements, focused on the Party's retail offer to voters ahead of the Local Elections.

Devolved Elections, May 2026
Elections in Wales and Scotland will test Reform's ability to break through beyond England, with internal expectations of strong performances in both nations.

Local Elections, May 2026
Reform is expected to perform strongly across England as Councils go to the Polls.

June–July 2026
Post-election positioning focused on consolidating Reform's claim to be the dominant force on the right, particularly if Conservative performance falters.

September 2026
Reform Party Conference, set to be 'bigger and better' than last year.

What are the issues to think about?

Based on public statements, policy signals and early positioning, the picture that emerges so far is of a party focused on delivery, cost and visible impact over long-term targets, large-scale programmes or state-led intervention. To cut through, it is important to bear the following in mind:

Energy

This is about security and cost, not targets. Domestic supply and lower bills matter far more than net zero, which only lands where it does not undermine either.

Public spending

There is a strong view that the state is bloated and inefficient, with too much money tied up in waste and bureaucracy instead of frontline delivery.

Transport

The priority is practical, local transport improvements over big national projects that are slow, expensive and feel disconnected from everyday life.

SEND

Support for children with SEND is widely seen as failing families despite rising spend. Reform views the system as overly legalistic, inconsistent and expensive, with funding absorbed by process rather than outcomes.

Planning

Planning rules and regulation are seen as a key blocker to growth, housing and infrastructure, stopping things from being built at pace.

How can business cut through?

Be prepared to think 'retail'

Reform remains a campaigning party at its core. Policy detail matters, particularly as the party professionalises, but engagement is most effective when ideas can be expressed as a clear, voter-facing proposition. If it cannot be explained on a doorstep or in a short social clip, it is unlikely to gain traction with the leadership.

Anchor arguments in growth and delivery

Reform is most receptive to policy proposals framed around cutting the cost of living, removing barriers to growth and improving delivery. In practice, this means finding a way to align your message with their focus on deregulation, reducing friction in planning and regulation, lowering energy costs and limiting long-term reliance on subsidy in favour of private investment.

Engage early

Much of Reform's policy platform is still being developed and tested, often outside formal party structures. This creates a window for businesses to engage early, while ideas are still fluid, rather than once positions have been fixed for elections or manifestos.

Advocacy is key

Reform remains a relatively small organisation, and influence is not strictly hierarchical. MPs, senior advisers and aligned organisations such as the Centre for a Better Britain and the Jobs Foundation all shape decision-making. Trusted advocates across these circles will help ensure your case cuts through, is understood and factored into wider thinking.

Be prepared to be agile

Compared with the established parties, Reform operates with a much tighter and faster decision-making loop. Capacity is scaling quickly, but engagement is often informal and moves at pace. Processes are lighter, and timelines can shift rapidly.

Conclusion

Reform's transition from protest party to governing force is reshaping the political landscape at pace. As the party professionalises, broadens its reach and tests its appeal beyond its core base, the assumptions that have traditionally underpinned political engagement are being rewritten.

For businesses, the challenge is no longer whether Reform matters, but how, where and when to engage as its policy positions and priorities continue to evolve. Navigating this environment requires a clear understanding of Reform's internal dynamics, its wider ecosystem of influence and the direction of travel into 2026. To discuss what this means for your organisation and how to engage effectively, please contact **Lauren Maher** at **laurenmaher@wacomms.com**

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