Strengthening the UK aluminium industry

The **Aluminium Federation (ALFED)*** Business Briefing and Annual Dinner focused on the resilience of the UK aluminium industry in a volatile market, and how companies could overcome challenges to build long-term stability. Jess Mills reports.

The Aluminium Federation (ALFED) welcomed a record number of members, industry partners, and guests to its 2026 Business Briefing and Annual Dinner, held at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Stratford-upon-Avon, UK.

Bringing together more than 150 delegates during the day and over 250 guests for the evening dinner, the event, which focused on 'Making Things Happen in UK Manufacturing', marked the largest gathering in the federation's history **(Pic 1).**

The Business Briefing began with an address from ALFED CEO Nadine Bloxsome, who acknowledged the recent challenges facing aluminium. She stressed how the industry had persevered despite high energy costs, trade restrictions, and workforce shortages.

She went on to highlight what ALFED had been doing "behind the scenes", including the development of its latest economic modelling, which estimated that the UK aluminium industry directly contributes around £3.78 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) and supports over 54,000 jobs.

In addition, when including the UK supply chain, this number increases to £5.97 billion and 81,900 jobs, and across the wider economic footprint, it reaches approximately £8.18 billion and over 100,000 jobs.



Nadine Bloxsome, ALFED CEO, acknowledged the recent challenges facing the aluminium industry.



Pic 1 - Delegates at the Business Briefing.

Bloxsome emphasised that underneath these numbers were industries such as automotive, aerospace, defence, and construction, which are all areas that the UK Government is looking to grow.

She continued that to portray the realities of the industry to the Government, ALFED had visited member companies to see investments firsthand and hear about their problems.

She said: "It is our job at ALFED to make sure that when we are speaking to Government, or to the wider industry, we are not talking about aluminium in abstract policy terms.

"We are making sure that the realities

*The Aluminium Federation (ALFED), Daventry, UK, https://alfed.org.uk/



Pic 2 - Paul Williams, Head of Aluminium Analysis at CRU, speaking during a panel discussion on 'UK Aluminium in a Volatile World'.

of your business are within those conversations."

Bloxsome also discussed ALFED's Reindustrialising UK Aluminium Briefing, which argues that the UK has deindustrialised, and that aluminium capability has been lost along the way.

"It's not about pretending that Britain has everything it needs already. [The report] looks at how and where we should become more self-sufficient in a globally traded material.

"It's about properly understanding what we still have, what we've lost, and what we can realistically rebuild as well."

She said the UK needed to consider how it could build stronger capability in terms of sorting, recycling, remelting, rolling, extrusion, and finishing, as well as what the Government needed to do on energy, trade, and carbon procurement.

She concluded that these conditions would need to be further investigated and stressed that reindustrialisation could not just become another buzzword.

In his talk on championing UK manufacturing, John Pearce, CEO of Made in Britain, also outlined that these were "difficult and dangerous times".

He said: "None of us can know exactly what British manufacturing will look like in the next six years. We don't even know what's going to happen in the next six minutes.

"But we do know that there will be a need for business people prepared to invest in the future, and they will need trusted suppliers, materials, and great people. That is why, after more than a decade surrounded by British manufacturers, I remain positive about their future."

He continued that British manufacturers were making commitments to the future every day, whether they were investing in new equipment, hiring young talent, or developing products ahead of market demand.

"There is a tendency in these difficult periods to describe success in manufacturing simply as enduring and surviving whatever comes next. But I think our ambition should be much greater.

"I would like British manufacturers to be profitable enough to invest with confidence. And more than that, I want the Made in Britain trademark to help excellent businesses tell the world clearly and credibly where their products are made and why that matters."

The conference also featured a panel discussion on 'UK Aluminium in a Volatile World', which was hosted by Bloxsome **(Pic 2)**. Speakers were as follows: Christian Mildner, Head of Corporate Sales at LME; Emma Swann, Managing Director of Boal UK; Anna Doherty, Technical Director at the Chartered Institute of Export & International Trade; Roheet Shah, Chief Operating Officer at CarbonChain; and Paul Williams, Head of Aluminium Analysis at CRU.

Williams outlined how the war in Iran had caused major supply disruptions through attacks on key smelters, including the one at EGA's Al Taweelah site. This caused prices to rise, with CRU predicting they could reach $4,000 per tonne of aluminium at its peak.

However, he said production had recovered faster than expected, especially in places like Bahrain. He added that aluminium supply from Indonesia was set to increase, with ten smelters due to come online in 2027.

Therefore, he believed that there would be a major price correction over the next 12 to 18 months, with prices going down to $2,400 per tonne by the end of next year.

Mildner said that the next 12 months were still uncertain, and that the aluminium industry would need to be ready. However, he emphasised that the UK was well versed in navigating volatility, highlighting Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the energy crisis.

He continued that the closure of the Strait of Hormuz was a paradigm shift in how companies manage their supply chains and inventories. Therefore, he believed that UK businesses could emphasise their resilience, as well their local supply chains, as a selling point to customers.

Doherty added that trade remained the industry's biggest challenge, driven in part by recent changes within the UK Government. She went on to highlight the UK-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) trade deal signed in May, stating that approximately 30% of Europe's primary aluminium imports come from the Middle East.

While the agreement could provide a 2% duty reduction, the timeline for its implementation remains unclear. She also believed these savings would offer little support against skyrocketing energy costs and supply chain pressures.

Doherty also said that primary and scrap aluminium faced different challenges and could not be treated as a uniform sector. In light of this, she discussed the European Union's move away from a proposed 15% export tariff towards a ban on scrap aluminium exports to non-OECD countries. She warned that this change could also restrict scrap exports into the UK and shift the market considerably.

Awards

Rising Star Apprentice Award

Amy Reynolds (**Pic 3**), HR Manager at Boal Extrusion UK, was the recipient of the Rising Star Apprentice Award.

Her work at Boal has helped shape the future workforce of both the company and the wider aluminium industry.

By combining a Senior People Professional Apprenticeship with a master's degree, Reynolds turned her research into impactful people strategies, strengthened succession planning, and championed initiatives that attract and develop the next generation of manufacturing talent.

For example, she has led initiatives to develop Boal's future talent pipeline through partnerships with local colleges, work experience opportunities, and engagement with young people considering careers in manufacturing.

She has also made enhancements to Boal's apprenticeship programme and played a key role in creating succession and training plans to protect specialist knowledge and build long-term workforce resilience. For our full interview with Reynolds, please see **page 11.**

Low-Carbon Innovation Award

The winner of the Low-Carbon Innovation Award was the Circular Construction Model developed by Technal (**Pic 4**), Hydro's aluminium building systems brand.

Technal has developed a scalable closed-loop model for aluminium in construction, designed to recover aluminium from end-of-life windows, doors, and façades and return it to equivalent high-value building applications.

The approach combines low-carbon Hydro Circal aluminium with design for disassembly, material traceability, and collaboration across the construction, demolition, and the recycling value chain.

What made the entry particularly strong was that it went beyond simply specifying lower-carbon aluminium and demonstrated how circularity can work in practice.

The model has already been applied across UK projects, including Mercury House in London and the Broadcasting Tower in Leeds, where recovered aluminium is segregated, processed, and returned to the value chain for use in new Technal products. It therefore provided a practical and potentially replicable example of moving aluminium construction from a linear model towards genuine closed-loop use.

Industry Champion Award

Kirsty Davies-Chinnock (**Pic 5**), Managing Director at Professional Polishing Services, was recognised for her outstanding contribution to creating a more connected, inclusive, and supportive metals industry through the development of Women with Metal.

Davies-Chinnock founded Women with Metal to create a community where women from across the metals supply chain could connect, share experiences, develop professionally, and celebrate success.

Under her leadership, the initiative has grown substantially, with an expanding annual conference, strong industry sponsorship, and a community bringing together manufacturers, stockholders, processors, service providers, and industry bodies.

She has also taken the initiative internationally through the Women with Metal Awards, which are held at the ALUMINIUM show in Düsseldorf, Germany. The awards aim to recognise and celebrate women across the global aluminium sector.

The Industry Champion award was named in honour of Mark Allen, former Mechatherm CEO and a past ALFED President, who passed away earlier this year.

Speaking about Allen at the ceremony, Bloxsome said: "He had an incredible ability to challenge the way we thought – he challenged assumptions, he challenged the board, he challenged me, but he did it because he believed the industry could achieve more."

She added that Allen had a vision for ALFED where it was not just a trade association but a focal point for the industry, and where change was not just talked about but actioned.

"I think something else mattered enormously to Mark, the camaraderie within the industry and what brings us together on evenings like this," Bloxsome continued.

"He understood that while our businesses compete, what makes the industry special is the relationship between its people and knowledge we share, and the willingness to come together when it matters.

"He valued that enormously and I think he saw ALFED as that sense of industry where community could thrive."

She described Allen as a mentor and a friend to many within the industry. As well as his humour, he had an ability to make meetings considerably less serious.

She concluded: "We promise Mark that we will keep building the ALFED he believed in.

"We will keep bringing the industry together – as competitors at times, but always as colleagues and friends who deeply care about its future.

"We will keep challenging ourselves to think bigger, not because it is easy but because Mark showed us it is possible."

With thanks to ALFED for supplying the photographs.



Pic 3 - George Bain, owner of George Bain Consulting, presented the Rising Star Apprentice Award to Amy Reynolds, HR Manager at Boal Extrusion UK.



Pic 4 - Donna Manoochehri, UK Communications Manager at Hydro Building Systems, and Martyn Wright, Technal UK Project and Sustainability Consultant, accepted the Low-Carbon Innovation Award.



Pic 5 - Nadine Bloxsome presented the Industry Champion Award to Kirsty Davies-Chinnock, Managing Director at Professional Polishing Services and Founder of Women with Metal.