

The CIS Critical Industry Society
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AGM Chairman's Speech — Critical Industry Society 2025/26.

Ladies and gentlemen, Committee members, CIS Members, Colleagues, and distinguished guests, it is my privilege to welcome you to the 2026 Critical Industry Society, Annual General Meeting.

Each AGM is a milestone, but this one felt particularly significant to me because it is at the year-end of my first Chairmanship of this great society. Echoing all the previous Chairmen and Chairladies, it is an honour and an immense privilege, and I am certainly eager to continue chairing this incredible Society.

Our CIS history speaks for itself. There have been various guest speakers who have graced each Networking luncheon over the last 97 years. I would though, like to reference a quote from our King, which he wittily conveyed to the US congress yesterday, regarding a significant history line, that, "It was just the other day"

However, before we look ahead, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the remarkable individuals who have shared their expertise with us over the past year. Our guest speakers have brought insight, challenge, and inspiration to our industries & society. Their contributions have strengthened our understanding and broadened our perspective, and we remain deeply grateful for the time and thought they invested in us.

Facilitating my very first Networking event was the **Inaugural CIS Conference** on the 10th of July 2025, at the Milner Hotel York, which I hasten to add, was a highly rewarding success for the CIS and myself. We managed to obtain 110 guests to the day conference, and we had 16 guest presenters from an array of companies who enlightened the events centre with so much passion.

We organised for 4 young moderators to host each section of the conference, and I was extremely proud of the class of 2025 young moderators with their flawless introductions that connected with each presenter and the audience. It was also their first experience of co-hosting of such an event, and I am sure they enjoyed the experience. A note for your diary, the 4 young moderators will again be attending the 2nd CIS Conference on July 9th, 2026, to feedback upon their experience, what they learned and where they are now in their respected industry.

The evening was capped off with a fabulous dinner and a guest entertainer **Mr Alfie Moore** of "it's a fair cop" who did a sterling task entertaining us all.

The November networking lunch was another milestone, with an incredible total of **216** guest attendees held in the Milner Hotel, York. The theme was based around "The current challenges and opportunities of bulk commodity logistics in ports and shipping sectors in the UK". We were privileged to have a guest panel of speakers of **Charlie Nettle Port of Middlesbrough, Mark Gibbens of Drax, Charles Holehouse of Fernwood and**

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Matthew Hunt of Port of Sunderland. Our young moderator for the panel discussion was **Chloe Peacock of Hargreaves** who did a fabulous task at introducing each guest speaker. The guest panel delivered great presentations that were engaging with the audience that initiated exceptionally good questions around Ports, Shipping and Logistics.

With the resounding success of the November Networking Luncheon, the March 2026 luncheon became oversubscribed with quite an amount of applicant requests having to be retained on a reserve list, the event was also held at the Milner Hotel York.

This resulted with a full capacity of 252 attendees at the March Networking luncheon which is a fantastic success to all the CIS team and quite unique situation the Critical Industry Society has ascertained. We were delighted to have two high-profile guest presenters within the UK steel industry. **Craig Harvey of British Steel** and **Gareth Lewis of Tata Steel UK** who presented an overview of the history and challenges the UK steel industry has been through. The moderator for the guest speakers was **Harriet Copley of ABP & Vice Chair of the CIS**, who introduced both speakers with her expertise and professionalism.

We are profoundly grateful to all our sponsors for their generous support and additional revenue, which was also pivotal in helping to make the CIS event's a success it has become today. Your support has also enabled us to make a meaningful impact towards funding for industry undergraduates, attending conferences to gain experiences which is vital for all our future engineers and successors. So, thank you once again for your kindness and support and we look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with you in the future and to continue making a difference together.

Our continued growth is certainly instrumental from the guidance and support of the Jayone team of **Jane Isaacs** and **Carol Marson**. The CIS success is a testament to the solid foundation you two have created and along with the rest of the committee's team involvement. The results speak volumes for themselves, and collectively we have built a cohesive and resilient team, which is key to future achievements. We have incredibly gained over 370 CIS members who are representing over 170 companies and, all of your voices matter.

Feedback has been essential in our continued growth and the positive responses from guests and companies has now set a new benchmark for excellence. I have been extremely proud to be part of this ever-growing Society which I know we will all contribute to, to enabling continued growth, sharing ideas and knowledge, and knowing that we are certainly heading towards our centenary year celebrations in 2029.

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The world around us is shifting at a pace, although increasingly worrying times regarding the conflicts in the Far East and in the Ukraine, however, within the Critical Industry Society we can collaborate together to challenge assumptions, tests resilience, and leadership within organisations and societies like ours.

Together we can have an influence by having a voice that can potentially challenge the way we trade with imports and exports by effectively lobbying at the house of commons.

I would like to thank all the CIS committee & members who are on today's online AGM for your patience and support and, I hope we have an even bigger and brighter future in all our forthcoming events in 2026 and beyond, thank you.

Richard Driffill

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CIS Chairman 2025/26.