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What we've been doing on your behalf

UKFT Q1 2026

www.ukft.org

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A Letter from Adam Mansell

The first quarter of 2026 has seen continued growth across all membership sectors, with particular interest in our regulatory and compliance support. Our focus remains clear: supporting members through practical guidance, strengthening skills and education and ensuring the sector’s voice is heard at home and internationally.

Member engagement remains high through targeted visits, spotlights and roundtables, including a second Policy & Regulation roundtable for our very large members with 50 attendees. Our textile members participated in the first Industry Advancement Day, with strong feedback highlighting collaboration and innovation opportunities. Reuse & Recycling members engaged via a dedicated Compliance101 webinar, supporting practical guidance and sector-specific resources.

We continue to press HM Government across departments on key issues of importance to the industry. In particular, we are campaigning for better access to defence procurement, a textiles EPR, a new tradeshow support scheme, a new UK VAT Refund Scheme and a better support for UK manufacturing. We are engaging with the Department for Business & Trade on the potential renegotiation of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and to talk to the industry about the India FTA. This quarter we have also held meetings with representatives from the Welsh and Scottish governments.

We continue to have a very close relationship with our European organisation, Euratex, and also maintain a relationship directly with the European Commission. The EU Delegated Act that will set out the parameters of the EU’s Digital Product Passport (DPP) will be published in the coming months, due directly to UKFT lobbying the implementation phase for DPP will be extended from 18 month to 24 months.

Our international business team found the mood at the January to March tradeshow for both fashion and textiles to be more positive than expected, despite ongoing turmoil in global markets. We launched a new brochure to promote British textiles at VIATT in Vietnam and promoted the technical textile sector at Techtextil in April.

Our regulation and compliance team produced a raft of guidance, resources and support for members on a wide range of compliance topics, with particular interest in the Packaging and Packaging Waste regulation and new system for e-filing in the US.

This quarter we launched a new monthly Regulation and Policy Newsletter to help members navigate accelerating legislative change. The first edition attracted 90 subscribers from major retailers, brands and manufacturers, reinforcing demand for structured, practical regulatory insight.

Our skills and training team are planning for the upcoming Education Partner conference in May, have been working on new National Occupational Standard suites for hand sewing and circularity. New industry courses have gained UKFT Approved status including for knit, jersey and wovens, and we have promoted careers in our sector at events in Leeds and Glasgow.

We provided a wide range of tailored sustainability support to a variety of members. We launched the findings from our 2025 sustainability survey which informed our new topic for the year for our Sustainability 101 series focused on nature. We have since held two well attended webinars on biodiversity and fibre fragmentation. We are now planning for the next Sustainability Conference in September, which will have a strong focus on Innovation.

More than 663 people have attended our events in the first quarter, with compliance-focused events continuing to attract the highest participation.

The conflict in the Middle East is creating cost and supply chain pressures across the fashion and textile sector, from freight and raw materials through to the global second-hand clothing trade.

UKFT member: Solena Materials

Membership



Membership

We provide businesses from across the industry with knowledge and support that covers business essentials, sustainability, international business, skills, compliance, manufacturing and more.

As part of UKFT’s broad and valuable network, members can make new connections, stay up to date with the latest industry insights, join exclusive events, and access benefits and services from our partners.

UKFT membership offers opportunities to showcase your business, get involved in UKFT campaigns and activity, shape debates and influence key issues for the industry.



UKFT member: Creation Mill

IN Q1, NEW MEMBERS INCLUDE:

- VF Corp
- Joe Brown’s
- ERDEM
- Aura Bespoke
- Ponda
- Gemell
- London Metropolitan University
- Mansfield Town Footwear & Clothing
- D Robinson & Co Ltd
- Seven Star Textiles (UK) Ltd
- Matoha
- Recycling Rags UK Ltd

IN Q1 2026, WE...

- Visited more than 22 members in their offices, studios, factories and stores.
- Published 16 member spotlights
- Shared a steady programme of member opportunities
- Held our second Policy & Regulation roundtable for very large members and retail partners
- Launched a new focused newsletter to highlight regular regulation and compliance updates for members
- Published a useful article outlining UK garment and accessory manufacturers that work with small and emerging fashion brands
- Continued our textile industry roundtable series
- Visited a wide range of events including Spring Fair, Harrogate Fashion Week, Source Fashion, London Fashion Week, MRE (Material Research Exchange),
- Held the first specific Reuse & Recycling Compliance101 webinar held on to help businesses understand the compliance requirements for reuse and recycling across key markets.
- Held the first textile Industry Advancement Day attended by 30 people at the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre in Sheffield to discuss opportunities for collaboration, new developments and barriers to New Product Development & Innovation

Membership:

WHAT OUR MEMBERS SAY:

“

I joined UKFT to connect with a network of experts and fellow fashion professionals who can support the growth of my brand. Access to guidance, industry insights, and practical resources will be invaluable as I look to scale while maintaining the creative and design-led values at the heart of my business.

- Isabelle Pennington-Edmead

“

We have joined UKFT in recognition of the significant and ongoing changes within the industry, particularly in relation to compliance, legislation, and sustainability requirements. In this increasingly complex landscape, it is challenging for brands to remain fully informed and up to date without the foundational guidance and support that UKFT is uniquely equipped to provide.

- Joe Browns



Membership

WHAT OUR MEMBERS SAY:



UKFT member: Fermoie



UKFT member: Stephen Walters

“

Your feedback is fantastic, thank you for taking the time to do this, it's really appreciated. I'll be sure to share this with the wider team

- Camira

“

Thank you once more for these guides. I just don't know how we would do it without UKFT help. Very grateful.

- Fermoie

“

It's invaluable to get your input on our website copy and how we can strengthen what we already have and put some evidence behind what we're saying

- Stephen Walters



UKFT member: Pigeon Organics



UKFT member: Project Re:claim

Voice of the Industry



Royal visit to Abraham Moon

Voice of the Industry

As the voice of UK fashion and textiles, UKFT is committed to creating the best environment for our industry. We represent the entire fashion and textile supply chain, promoting our industry in the UK and overseas.

We demonstrate the strategic and economic value of our vibrant industry to government and policymakers, ensuring the key issues are on the agenda. We champion our diverse and valuable industry through campaigns and targeted projects.

In Q1 2026, we continued to press the government across departments on key issues of importance to the industry. In particular, we are campaigning for better access to defence procurement, a textiles Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme, a new tradeshow support scheme, a new UK VAT Refund Scheme and a better support for UK manufacturing. Our arguments are well made and supported by industry. They are also supported within government. However the blockage is and remains the Treasury.

At the start of the year we met with Minister Dearden from the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) to discuss a range of issues, we were briefly joined by Secretary of State, Peter Kyle. We also met with the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and

Treasury officials to discuss our call for a textiles EPR for the UK. We have since heard that the publication of the Circular Economy Plan, which would feature a textiles EPR has been delayed again to May at the earliest.

We are engaging with DBT on the potential renegotiation of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (FTA). We are also working with DBT to talk to the industry about the India FTA.

The quarter we have also held meetings with representatives from the Welsh and Scottish governments.

It is worth noting that in none of our interactions with government has there been any mention of the planned renegotiation of the UK-EU trade agreement which is due to happen in 2026. We continue to raise the barriers in trading with the EU as the industry’s biggest challenge.

We continue to have a very close relationship with Euratex, the European Apparel and Textile Federation, and also maintain a relationship directly with the European Commission. The EU Delegated Act that will set out the parameters of the EU’s DPP is due to be published in the coming months, and we expect the implementation phase for DPP will be extended from 18 month to 24 months as a direct result of UKFT’s lobbying.



Royal visit to James Dewhurst Limited

Voice of the Industry

ROYAL VISITS

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal has served as President of UKFT for 40 years and continues to champion the UK fashion and textile sector. Each year, she visits member companies to recognise the innovation, creativity and craftsmanship that define British manufacturing. This quarter, she visited James Dewhurst in Lancashire and Abraham Moon & Sons in Yorkshire.

Founded in 1837, Abraham Moon & Sons is one of Europe’s leading vertical woollen mills and among the few UK manufacturers to carry out every stage of production on a single site. From dyeing and spinning to weaving and finishing, the company produces premium woollen fabrics for global fashion and interiors markets.

Rod Brown, Managing Director, said: *“We were delighted to welcome HRH The Princess Royal. The visit recognises the strength of British manufacturing and the dedication of our team, who continue to produce high-quality woollen cloth from our Yorkshire mill 190 years after the business was founded.”*

Adam Mansell, CEO of UKFT, said: *“Abraham Moon combines long-standing heritage with continued investment in people and skills. Its ability to deliver high-quality, contemporary fabrics for global markets reflects both technical expertise and strong commercial focus.”*

The visit to James Dewhurst recognised the scale and international reach of the UK’s technical textiles sector.

Founded in 1933, the company has grown from a small weaving business in Clitheroe into a global manufacturer of engineered and reinforcement textiles. Its woven, laid and laminated fabrics support applications across construction, automotive, transport, geotextiles, health and hygiene, packaging and other industrial sectors. The Altham site remains central to operations, alongside a US facility, with around 80% of production exported to Europe.

Adam Mansell said: *“This visit highlights the depth of technical expertise and sustained investment across UK textile manufacturing. Companies such as James Dewhurst play a vital role in supporting key industries and delivering high-value exports.”*

Jean-Charles Joris, Company Director, said: *“We were honoured to welcome HRH The Princess Royal to our Altham site. Her visit recognises the important role our industry plays in the UK manufacturing landscape and the skill, innovation and commitment of our team.”*



UKFT Royal visit to Abraham Moon

International Business



Milano Unica, February 2026

International Business

UK fashion and textiles have a global reputation for quality, creativity

UKFT ACTIVITY AT INTERNATIONAL TRADE SHOWS, MISSIONS, EVENTS

We have completed the A/W shows for 2026/7 with the final show being Paris Women’s Fashion Week in early March. All the shows have been very successful with companies reporting good business and new connections.

We have recently been to Vietnam for the second time to attend VIATT. Overall, the show continues to develop as a growing regional platform with increasing international participation and relevant commercial opportunities for UK textiles, despite some attendance limitations this year due to timing.

For the rest of 2026 we will be present at the following tradeshow:

- Techtextil Frankfurt, April
- INDEX (nonwovens), Geneva, May
- Pitti Uomo, June
- Textile Recycling Show, Brussels, June
- Paris Men’s Fashion Week, June
- Milano Unica, July
- Chicago Collective, August
- Intertextile Shanghai, August/September
- CINTe Techtextil, September
- Première Vision, September
- Paris Women’s Fashion Week, October

SOURCING ACTIVITIES

We will soon be publishing the first of our UKFT Sourcing guides, starting with Ethiopia and Jordan.

Our sourcing activities will be complemented by additional activity at UK sourcing tradeshow Leicester Made & Regions, Fashion SVP and Source London.

International Business

MEMBER SUPPORT

There have been many calls about the end to US De Minimis Rules and the removal of the US additional tariffs and the implementation of new additional tariffs. Additionally, companies have been affected by the volatility around the US tariffs in China and India with companies increasingly looking to safe-shore their manufacturing.

We are talking with HMG about whether some of the new EU compliance requirements form a technical breach of the UK-EU trade agreement.

In addition to tariffs, we are talking to members about new markets, the new US environment and raising awareness of US e-filing for customs.

Business remains challenging but positive in most markets and the US President's erratic tariff manoeuvres make life exceedingly difficult.

SUCCESES THIS SEASON FROM OUR INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY

Mitsui, one of Japan's larger trading houses, have asked UKFT to support their work in launching a collaboration with a UK manufacturing duffle coat brand.

UKFT supported the Walpole Group at a special event organised in conjunction with the British Museum looking at Japanese business with UK luxury brands.



Paris Women's Fashion Week (March 2026)

Regulation & Compliance

April at the OECD Forum in Paris



Regulation & Compliance

Supporting members to comply with international regulations

Providing in depth analysis of existing legislation, guidance to members on international compliance and very active engagement with policy makers about new legislation is a very important part of UKFT’s membership offer, particularly to large brands and retailers. It is also becoming important in our offer to all other parts of UKFT membership.

It encompasses support and guidance relating to labelling, regulation, product standards & testing, EPR obligations and trade regulations, as well as policy development.

RESOURCES RELEASED IN Q1

- C101 Global Regulatory Overview webinar to members.
- C101 US eFiling webinar with Intertek to support with new US entry requirements for 2026.
- C101 Chemical Compliance webinar.
- C101 webinar for Reuse & Recycling Members covering exporting and Environment Agency enforcement on preventing shipment of waste.
- UKFT Guide to the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR) Destruction of Unsold Goods derogations.
- UKFT Guide to the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) and a Guide to the Declarations of Conformity under the PPWR
- First Issue of the Regulation & Policy Newsletter
- UKFT Guide to the UK Modern Slavery Statement
- UKFT Guide to the Animal By-Products Regulation
- UKFT Guide to Quebec Bill 96
- UKFT Guide to the EU Deforestation Regulation
- UKFT Guide to the UK Plastic Packaging Tax
- UKFT Guide to the French PFAS ban
- UKFT Guide on Pricing Compliance
- UKFT Guide to the new Rules of Origin under the UK’s Developing Country Trading Scheme
- UKFT Guide to the EU De Minimis Removal

LAUNCH OF THE UKFT REGULATION SUMMIT: 9 JUNE 2026

The UKFT Regulation Summit ‘Exploring the legislative landscape of circular textiles’, will bring together UK, EU and US regulatory experts, including speakers from the American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA), SUEZ and the European Apparel and Textile Confederation (Euratex), alongside compliance specialists and sustainability professionals to provide an international update on the evolving regulatory landscape for apparel and textile businesses. The event is designed to prepare stakeholders across the industry, with insights into upcoming legislation, compliance expectations and strategic implications for the sector.

Skills & Training

UKFT Futures stand at Glasgow Career Fair



Skills & Training

Addressing critical skills gaps and developing industry-led solutions



The UKFT Annual Education Partner Conference 2026 will be held at The University of Manchester on 19th May, with the university sponsoring the conference. The conference supports retention of existing members and the opportunity to promote the community to non-members for potential membership conversions.

SECTOR SKILLS BODY ACTIVITY

At a time when education provision is in turmoil UKFT is ensuring the industry’s voice is heard and recently we have responded to two government consultations:

- DfE Post 16 Level 3 and Below Pathways
- Ofqual Accreditation of Technical Qualifications within T Levels

ENGLAND:

Skills England Assessment Plan Review

Skills England have started the review of their portfolio of 700+ apprenticeships. While no fashion and textiles apprenticeships were included in the first tranche, we know that four will be in the second tranche. They are:

- Level 2 Leather Craftsperson
- Level 3 Bespoke Saddler
- Level 3 Garment Maker
- Level 5 Bespoke Cutter and Tailor

The review is controversial with many sector bodies stating Skills England was “bulldozing” through changes without properly consulting and listening to employers and sector experts. It is widely seen by industry as ‘dumbing down’ assessment and a ‘race to the bottom for competency’.

Fashion and Textiles GCSE

In late 2025, UKFT was contacted by an Awarding Organisation in England for support in the development of a pre-16 qualification for Schools. UKFT supplied a letter of support and has now signed an NDA with the AO.

A submission to the DfE is due in March/April but is highly dependent on the parameters and outputs of the recently announced GCSE review. If allowed to progress it is intended first starts in schools will be September 2027.

This means that progression from school to either workplace entry or vocational training would be fully supported for the first time in many years.

Skills & Training

SCOTLAND:

Kilt Making

The SVQ in Kilt making was highlighted as a potential qualification for withdrawal due to low/no enrolment numbers or training providers currently listed to deliver. However, due to pressure from UKFT this vital qualification has been maintained for a further two years.



COLLABORATION

UKFT Approved CPD

Three ‘My Trained Eye’ courses have now been reviewed and approved:

- Professional knitwear course for the fashion industry.
- Professional jersey course for the fashion industry.
- Professional wovens course for the fashion industry.

Education Partner events

As part of our mission to help bridge the gap between academia and industry, UKFT connected with our Education Partner network to share insights with students on the skills required for industry. Through presentations, workshops and networking events, the skills team supported students to better understand career opportunities and prepare for the world of work.

This included:

- facilitating an alumni panel discussion on ‘What the Future Fashion Industry is Looking for in Graduates’ at Nottingham Trent University’s annual Creative Futures event
- visiting Manchester College in March and delivered our ‘Explore careers in fashion and textiles’ presentation to students studying fashion.
- attending Heriot-Watt University’s annual Industry Networking Day
- hosting a careers session at the University of Leeds as part of their Employability PGT

Employability and Partnerships Coordinator at Manchester College, Kate Heaton said *“The students really enjoyed hearing from UKFT about future opportunities in the fashion sector, and the insights into career pathways and industry expectations were inspiring and helpful. It makes such a difference for students to hear directly from a team with experience of industry, so we really appreciate UKFT taking the time to come in and share their knowledge.”*

Skills & Training

PROJECT UPDATES

Production Sewing Machinist (PSM)

UKFT’s industrial sewing machine training course continues to be offered to prisoners and others. So far 311 individuals have started their training along with 28 instructors from prisons and 2 instructors at private training providers.



Careers Campaign

As part of our annual Careers Campaign programme, the UKFT Skills and Training team has been travelling across the UK to connect with young people aged 14–19, as well as parents and careers professionals. Through these engagements, we showcased the wide range of opportunities within the fashion and textiles sector, demonstrating that careers in the industry are both tangible and accessible from an early stage.

During the quarter, we attended:

- The Leeds Apprenticeship Recruitment fair (accompanied by the Textile Centre of Excellence)
- The Scottish School and College Leavers Festival in Glasgow (accompanied by Heriot Watt University and Glasgow Clyde College)
- The National Apprenticeship and Education Show in Salford (accompanied by Manchester College)

We also hosted an evening session at The Scottish School and College Leavers Festival in Glasgow with members of the employer TEG group, including Terumo Aortic and the Edinburgh Kiltmakers, in collaboration with Skills Development Scotland. This session highlighted the new **BIIAB Level 4 Award in Fashion and Textiles**, developed in partnership with SDS, UKFT and the employer TEG group. The qualification, introduced in Scotland in August 2025, was presented to individuals, parents and careers advisers, who play a key role in shaping young people’s career decisions.



Innovation & Sustainability

UKFT member: Epoch Biodesign





Innovation & Sustainability

Helping to accelerate circularity and inform best practice

MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITY

The team delivered targeted sustainability support to a wide range of members across areas including Science Based Targets, Ethical Trade, Scope 3 emissions, guidance on selecting appropriate tools, waste materials, green claims, certification and auditing, as well as support on sustainability standards and compliance requirements.

SUSTAINABILITY 101

As part of our Sustainability 101 series, we held webinars on:

- Nature, Biodiversity and Fashion: Practical Introduction for UK Businesses
- Tackling Fibre Fragmentation Across the Textile Supply Chain

We delivered a workshop to members exploring green claims as part of “A Marketer’s Guide to Sustainable Storytelling” in collaboration with the Comms Team. After the workshop, we also provided individual support on their own company sustainability claims, providing guidance to where greenwashing may occur and how to mitigate it.

The team advanced industry knowledge and collaboration through a programme of resources, education and events focused on circularity and sustainable fashion and textiles. Key activity included the launch of the Sustainability Survey Report, development of new toolkits and research publications with academic and industry partners, and planning for future project outputs on environmental impacts and post-consumer textiles.

Work on skills and education included workshops with members and universities on future skills for a circular fashion and textiles industry, alongside lectures and seminars delivered with leading fashion institutions.

The team also contributed to a broad range of industry events and working groups, including WRAP’s Design for Circularity group, Innovate UK’s Materials Research Exchange, the Denim Deal event, UKRI’s GRIPS programme, and discussions focused on circular materials and child labour.

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