

Speech: Matt Hancock speaking at the Future of Work Summit

Part of the job of the Digital Secretary during London Tech Week, and we've never had a Digital Secretary during a London Tech Week before so this is very exciting, is to get out there and bang the drum.

And to make sure that we get our message across about the deep and rich ecosystem that we've got and that we're building here in the UK.

We doubled tech investment in the last year.

We are the biggest destination for tech investment outside of the USA and China.

As a politician elsewhere elsewhere in Europe might put it, we are en marche. And this isn't just about the rhetoric; it's about the depth of the ecosystem and its richness.

But the reason I specifically wanted to come to this event is because whilst the enthusiasm for the potential that tech has is unambiguous and is very strong, we also must ensure that we harness it for the betterment of society.

And the question of the future of work and the impact of technology on work is of course a very live one, which is why we're all here today.

I think that it's very important that tech companies, big and small, are addressing this question. Firstly, we think that the exponential nature of artificial intelligence means that by its nature, by the fact that it learns for itself, it has the potential to have a bigger impact than almost any technology yet invented.

As I like to put it, people talk about accelerating change. I like to think of it the other way round. Which is that we are currently living through the slowest rate of change that we're going to experience for the rest of our lives.

At the same time, we are living in an era of record levels of employment, both in the UK and around the world.

The figures out this week showed employment at record levels, both in absolute and percentage terms.

It showed womens' employment at a new record high.

And it showed real disposable income at record levels.

So the labour market performance in the UK is very, very strong. And around the world there are record employment levels in many different countries.

And this is happening at the same time as an understandable concern about the impact of technology and a sense that people don't feel this very positive economic performance for a complicated set of reasons.

So we need to understand it properly, not just with the 'lump of labour fallacy' that the robots are trying to take the existing jobs and therefore people will have nothing to do.

I think that view is static and wrong and it misses the point of human ingenuity. That it is people who create jobs and that the technology itself is creating jobs too.

But it seems to be that the risk is not that we adopt new technologies that will change jobs.

That is not the risk, because that's going to happen whether we choose for it happen or not, because that is the nature of business.

I think the risk comes from not adopting new technologies and from failing to create jobs of the future.

And that means that we have this difficult balance between the need to support the disrupters who are creating new technologies, creating the new jobs and ultimately generating productivity growth.

And at the same time supporting those who are disrupted. Because whilst in the long term improvements in technology improve productivity, we live our lives in the short term.

And it's no good having a job in the long term if you don't have one in the short term.

So we need to make sure that we support those who are disrupted as well as supporting the disruption itself.

We want to see redeployment not unemployment, by creating the jobs of the future and making sure people have the skills and capabilities to excel to accept them and generate them.

And the nature of work of course is also changing as part of this. The mundane tasks and some of the dangerous tasks are going and this is a good thing.

Take the mining industry, which has far fewer people underground than they ever have before around the world. And at the same time capabilities and human skills like empathy will be more important than ever before.

I'm an optimist for human nature. I think there are things that human beings can do that machines will never be able to do, like connecting between people and having creative sparks that make life worth living.

And this greater productivity also has a big potential upside, not only in terms of prosperity but also in terms of work life balance.

People throughout time have always worried about the impact on employment.

I declare a historic interest because when I was researching this I discovered that my forebearers were leaders of the Luddites.

And a certain Richard Hancock in the early 19th century led a gang of a thousand people in Nottinghamshire, who had been employed in the hand weaving industry. And they went and smashed the Arkwright loom all the way across Nottinghamshire and he was eventually deported to Australia.

I'm glad to say that the Hancock family has learnt a thing or two over the following two centuries and now we accept that they should have been on a digital skills training programme...

But the advantage of this greater prosperity is also an improvement in work-life balance.

Since then the amount of work that anyone has had to do on average in the UK, in order to feed themselves or feed their family and live a decent life has collapsed, in terms of the number of hours. Even over the last couple of decades this has continued. In 1995, Britons worked on average 39 hours a week and now it's 37.5 hours a week.

In my view that is using some of the increase in prosperity of the last few decades to work a bit less. Because whilst many of us love our jobs and work incredibly hard and probably work more hours than we absolutely need to, that is not true for everyone. They might prefer a better work life balance.

And then, of course, there's the skills piece, which I'm glad is now an absolute core of the debate about the future of work.

And we need to make sure everyone is able to increase their skills and capabilities to succeed in the digital age.

People who have never been online before all the way through to the very top PhDs and that we are attracting the brightest and the best from around the world.

And we're making progress on both of those matters as you may have seen in the news over the last couple of days.

Ultimately I'm optimistic that so long as we get the policy response right and so long as the tech industry more broadly responds to this challenge in the right way, then we can make a success of it.

After all, we are attracting the jobs to the UK that are building that technology driven future.

We are making sure that the UK is at the leading edge of these changes in order to try to bring that prosperity here.

And we're doing everything we can to ensure that prosperity is shared. For instance, with the new National Living Wage, which has led to the fastest

rise in pay to the lowest paid quarter of the population in history. So making sure that jobs are available, that people get the skills and that we can benefit from this technology.

But we cannot be complacent about it and we must make sure we get the analysis correct so we get the response correct as a society. And make sure that this great technological revolution that we are all involved in and living through works for everybody in our country.

That is our goal.

Press release: Rapist has sentence increased after Solicitor General's referral

A man who attacked and raped a woman has today had his sentence increased after the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, referred his sentence for being too low.

Samuel Simms, 45, attacked his victim before forcing her to the floor and raping her. Afterwards, in a conversation partially recorded by the victim, Simms threatened to kill both himself and the victim while gesticulating with a knife.

Simms was originally sentenced at Woolwich Crown Court in April, where he was given a sentence of 5 years' imprisonment. Today, after the Solicitor General's referral, the Court of Appeal increased his sentence to 8 years.

Commenting on the sentence increase, the Solicitor General said:

Simms subjected his victim to a callous attack which resulted in serious emotional trauma. The results of his actions will be long-lasting, and I hope that the increased sentence handed down today will more accurately reflect this.

Press release: Welsh Secretary visits

West Wales business success stories

From global denim brands favoured by Royalty to a gas terminal helping to boost the UK's energy security, Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns has visited the west Wales coast today to meet members of the region's workforce helping to drive the nation's rural economy forward. (14 June).

The Secretary of State visited premium denim brand Hiut Denim Co – a label recently propelled into the global spotlight when the Duchess of Sussex wore one of their designs during a visit to Cardiff in January.

The Cardigan based family owned firm has since been flooded with worldwide attention and orders, sparking an imminent move to larger premises in the Ceredigion town later this year and a global order waiting list of three months.

The Secretary of State – who supported Hiut when they co-exhibited at London Craft Week with Danish furniture designers Carl Hansen & Son, was welcomed to the company's HQ by David Hieatt. David founded the brand with his wife, Clare in 2011. Fiercely proud of their Welsh roots, the couple moved from London back to Cardigan and set about breathing life back into the town's denim manufacturing history when it was home to clothing manufacturer, Dewhirst.

Mr Hieatt introduced Mr Cairns to the team of Grandmasters, so called due to their decades of denim experience at Dewhirst. Each are living examples of the company's motto of "do one thing well" by singlehandedly crafting each pair of jeans for customers all over the world.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

Hiut is a company that prides itself on doing one thing well – setting itself apart from the highly mechanised industry giants and helping to propel the 'Made in Wales' stamp around the world.

With its expansion plans and continued investment in the local economy, Hiut Denim Co is a shining example of a company looking to capitalise on the global demand for their goods – and showing how a little Welsh endeavour can go a long way.

The UK Government is ready to support any Welsh business looking to follow in their footsteps and take advantage of every opportunity available to them to grow and expand into new markets.

David Hieatt, co-founder of 'Hiut Denim Co said:

Over the last six months, we have gone through the biggest growth period in the company's life. We are already over 60% up on 2017.

This is mostly thanks to the media coverage we received in December 2017 and, of course, since Meghan Markle was seen wearing our jeans in January.

Since then we have hired four new apprentices in the factory. We have also outgrown our current factory and will be moving to a larger factory in the next few weeks. We will be hiring more Grandmasters to work in the factory once we have the new factory up and running.

Hiut Denim Co. is a global denim company making jeans for the creative man and woman of the world. It's quest is the same as was on day one: To get 400 people their jobs back.

We are fighting for the right to make. This is a maker town. We are passing those skills on to the next generation.

The Secretary of State also highlighted the region's energy rich landscape with a visit to South Hook LNG Terminal in Milford Haven. The Terminal has been importing liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar since it was fully commissioned in 2010. With capacity to process around 20% of the UK's current natural gas needs, it is one of the largest terminals in Europe.

Alun Cairns added:

South Hook plays a crucial role in the fabric of Wales' energy sector and the facility at Milford Haven is a key element in ensuring UK energy security. Employing just over 200 people in Milford Haven, with the vast majority coming from Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire, it is a key employer in the West Wales region.

Qatari investment in London, including the recent introduction of the daily Qatar Airways flight from Doha to Cardiff, shows that the UK is highly attractive to investors abroad, creating jobs and growth at home.

Rob Else, General Manager South Hook LNG Terminal said,

We were delighted to welcome the Secretary of State for Wales to our Terminal, where operational reliability is underpinned by the highest of safety standards.

Mr Cairns rounded off his day with a visit to the studios of Mumf Cartoons near Cardigan. While Wales' reputation as a hotbed of creative and animation talent has been growing worldwide over recent years, Mal Humphreys has plied his trade as a full-time cartoonist since 1991 with his work gracing the pages of the broadsheets and S4C television screens.

Notice: RG7 4PR, AWE PLC: environmental permit issued

The Environment Agency publish permits that they issue under the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED).

This decision includes the permit and decision document for:

- Operator name: AWE PLC
- Installation name: Aldermaston Carbon Activity
- Permit number: EPR/WP3436UJ/V002

Press release: Sea change for migrating smolts

The Environment Agency has carried out underwater sonar surveys to check for young salmon using a new route across the Tees Barrage gates.

And the results show the juveniles – known as smolts – successfully making their journey from spawning grounds upstream out to sea.

It follows changes to the operation of the Tees Barrage in 2015, which means on every tidal cycle the gates are lowered to allow fish to pass both upstream and downstream.

Surveys have shown the barrage gates are the main route for salmon migrating upstream and the automation of the gates has resulted in an extra 1,500 hours per year of fish passage for returning adult salmon to reach their upstream spawning grounds.

It's in addition to the other routes that salmon use including the Barrage's navigation lock, the Denil fish pass, the fish pass in the white water rafting centre, and the main canoe slalom.



Downstream migration improved

Phil Rippon, Fisheries Technical Specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

As well as improving the routes for returning adult fish we are also looking to improve the downstream migration of these precious fish and maximise the number of smolts reaching the North Sea.

By lowering the main barrage gates at set times, it means that as well as providing an additional upstream route for adult salmon we are providing a much easier route for the young salmon moving downstream as well. It is known that the sooner the smolts reach the sea the better their survival chances are, resulting in more returning adult fish.

Our recent work using an underwater sonar has shown large numbers of smolts using the gates to pass successfully downstream. It's really positive to see yet more evidence that salmon are spawning upstream and these youngsters have been living in the river for up to 3 years before they move out to the sea.

Every year smolts, which are between 1 and 3 years old, leave the river to start their feeding migrations to the sea – travelling as far as Greenland – where they will spend up to three more years as an adult salmon before returning to the river to spawn.

Smolts are vulnerable throughout their migration and only around 5% of those that leave the river will return to spawn the next generation of salmon.

[Underwater sonar footage of River Tees smolts crossing the Tees Barrage](#)

Steering group

The Tees Barrage Fish Pass and Operation Steering Group, made up of Tees Barrage owners the Canal & River Trust, the Environment Agency, Angling Trust, Salmon & Trout Conservation Trust, Tees Rivers Trust, Industries Nature Conservation Association and Tees Barrage International White Water Centre, oversees the monitoring and research of fish and seal populations and carried out action to improve fish passage.

Research to understand the preferred routes through the barrage for fish and how to make it easier for them while reducing seal predation has been the focus of recent surveys.

Last year also saw the use of an acoustic deterrent device (ADD) to deter seals from entering the navigation lock, which showed promising results. Phil added:

We're working really hard together with our partners to understand how fish naturally try to pass through the barrage and then to make it as easy as possible for them. We've changed the way the main gates and navigation lock operate to allow more fish passage, and we'll be using an acoustic deterrent device again this summer.

We want as many fish as possible to make it upstream to their spawning grounds to ensure the River Tees continues to improve.