

# Baroness Morgan speaking on how we can make technology work for everyone

Good morning.

I am delighted to be here at this event today and to show my support for the Tech Talent Charter.

The Charter is a fantastic initiative which is working hard to promote diversity in the tech workforce, and I am proud that my department has given it our backing.

Thank you to all of you who have signed up, and those of you who haven't, please make it one of your New Year's Resolutions to get signing.

Greater diversity is all about making sure the incredible benefits of technology are spread more widely and more fairly and that is what I wanted to talk about today.

We are in the early stages of a new year, a new decade, and indeed a new Government.

And that makes this the perfect time to look ahead and think about what we want to achieve over the coming years.

DCMS officially became the department for digital in 2017, and even in that short period we have seen huge growth in our digital economy.

Digital is touching more parts of our lives, providing new opportunities and new challenges to grapple with too.

And in this period we have also seen a tech sector that has gone from strength to strength.

Just look at the stats that were published this morning.

Last year venture capital investment in UK tech reached a record high of 10.1 billion pounds, up 3 billion from 2018.

The UK is producing twice as many unicorns – billion dollar value digital companies – as Germany and three times as many as France.

And the rate of growth of money pouring into our tech sector is outstripping the US and China.

The power of digital is transforming our economy, our public services, how we learn and connect, the entertainment we enjoy, and the communities we live in – and this pace of change will only intensify in the future.

And we are starting from a very strong foundation – thanks to our country's

world-beating innovators and entrepreneurs and thanks to the investment this Government has made.

But as we look to the future, the question is how do we ensure a thriving economy, driven by world-leading technology, that works to the benefit of all citizens?

That is our vision as a Government and there are five key principles that I think will help us to get there.

### **Pro-technology government**

The first principle is that we will be an unashamedly pro-technology government in all that we do, because we believe that, harnessed properly, technology is an immense force for good.

Digital innovation and enterprise is a major driver of opportunity, productivity and creativity.

There are over two million people working in digital tech jobs in the UK.

These are high quality futureproof positions, and demand for these roles is growing at pace, at almost three times the rate of the financial services sector.

We have a tech landscape that combines some of the world's major players, alongside thriving new start ups and scale ups.

These in turn boost our other competitive strengths – from creative industries to professional services to advanced manufacturing.

But we need to think about how we can sustain, intensify and spread this growth.

There is so much potential if we can help support the development, application and the adoption of next generation digital technologies – across all of our industries.

And we are well placed to do so, as we have eight of Europe's top 20 universities right here in the UK, working closely with our cutting edge tech businesses.

There are of course broader social benefits too.

These technologies, if developed responsibly, are central to the future of our communities...

They will help transform public services and the relationship between Governments and citizens...

And through the flourishing tech for good industry, they will help us tackle some of the world's greatest challenges.

For example, we are already seeing the use of AI to detect breast cancer more

accurately, predict areas at risk of flooding and identify sites where modern slavery is taking place.

So the opportunities here are vast.

As we expand our trading relations around the globe, I can assure you that we are passionate about the opportunities provided by digital tech.

And that they will be at the heart of the government's trade policy in the years ahead.

### **Sharing the benefits of technology widely and fairly**

Our second principle will be to make sure the benefits of technology are spread more widely and shared more fairly.

One of the Government's major priorities is to help transform communities who feel like they have not felt the benefits of the change we have seen in recent years.

As the Prime Minister said outside Downing Street just last month, we need to unleash the potential of the whole country and deliver opportunity across the entire nation.

And we can only truly view the digital revolution as a success if its positive forces – the jobs, the investment and the creative opportunities – are used to break down barriers, rather than to entrench them.

That means ensuring all people and all businesses have the tools they need to adopt and benefit from digital technologies – the connectivity, the capability and the confidence.

And it means making sure our tech sector is an engine of social mobility, with a focus on tech clusters outside of the capital.

Last week I was in Manchester, a city which is becoming a true tech titan, with a turnover of 3 billion pounds.

In 2018 there were over 160,000 new job openings in Manchester's digital tech sector and it has as many tech 'unicorns' as Barcelona and Madrid combined.

I also visited the Digital Catapult here in London last week.

And I saw first hand how our thriving digital sector is benefiting other industries that rely on digital innovation all across the UK, including our creative industries.

Like Creative XR, a joint project between Digital Catapult and the Arts Council.

This gives arts organisations the support they need to prototype new storytelling techniques, using emerging technologies like Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality.

So the benefits are clear – not just for an area’s digital economy but for their economy as a whole.

But we need to make sure all areas of the country are able to access these benefits. And DCMS is well placed to support this mission.

First, there is the physical infrastructure, like broadband.

Digital connectivity is a motor of economic growth, productivity and social inclusion.

It makes areas more attractive to live.

It gives people the freedom to live and work more flexibly.

And it helps communities to develop thriving digital economies.

Through embracing 5G and full fibre we can deliver greater capacity, faster speeds and more reliable networks.

And we can streamline the way we interact with public services and lay the foundations for the industries of the future.

We will soon be announcing the winning projects of our 30 million pound competition to spark a tech revolution in the countryside and help rural Britain seize the opportunities of 5G.

And we are also aiming for nationwide deployment of full fibre and gigabit-capable broadband by 2025, and we will pass legislation to make rollout quicker and easier.

This is a hugely ambitious challenge. It will involve unprecedented changes to the UK broadband market.

And it requires all parts of government, industry and the regulator to work together on this national mission.

Physical infrastructure is part of the picture.

But if we are to truly spread the benefits of digital we also need competitive digital markets.

So that companies with new services to offer can compete fairly...

And so that consumers get better products and content, cheaper prices and greater choice and transparency.

Over the coming months we will build on the important work of the Furman Review, the Cairncross Review and the current CMA market study to support this.

And alongside this, we need a focus on digital skills, which are an incredible engine of social mobility.

They are now as important to employability and participation in modern Britain as English and maths.

Digital transformation is creating fulfilling and productive roles at all levels.

So we need to make sure that people from all backgrounds have the skills they need to fill them and build lasting careers.

Not just in our tech sector, but in all the parts of the economy that rely on digital skills.

This isn't just about school classrooms. As the pace of digital change intensifies, retraining opportunities for adults to refresh their digital skills will become even more important.

So this year, we will introduce an entitlement so adults without basic digital skills will have the opportunity to undertake new digital qualifications free of charge.

And we will invest an additional three billion pounds over the course of this Parliament to support the creation of a National Skills Fund.

This will be an important step towards ensuring every citizen has the right to retrain at any point during their lives.

If we get this right, we will not only have a more highly skilled economy but also one that is more representative of the country we live in.

Now you don't need me to tell you why this diversity agenda is so important. You are here showing your commitment.

Whenever I speak to leaders in our tech sector, I always reinforce this important point.

If we do not work to open the door to underrepresented groups in our tech sector, not only will we deny them life-changing opportunities...

But we will be robbed of the diversity of thought that we need to drive cutting-edge innovation and shape the technologies that can benefit the whole of society.

Your Annual Report, published today, shows some brilliant success stories, but there is still way more to do.

I was proud to serve as Minister for Equalities for two years.

And I was the first female chair of the Treasury Select Committee, where I oversaw the publication of a landmark report on Women in Finance.

So I know how hard it can be to drive the change that we want to see.

But if we are committed to being a country where everyone has the chance to flourish, then diversity in our tech sector is imperative.

And so we must redouble our efforts to get underrepresented groups studying science in schools, taking on digital roles and having seats at the table where big decisions are made.

### **Pro-innovation regulation**

As digital technology matures, it is time to move away from the view of new technologies as a utopia.

But we must also move away from making technology the scapegoat for all of the problems in the world.

We need to look towards a third approach. In which technology is neither the cause nor solution to all ills, but a tool which we can harness as we choose.

Where users of technology are empowered to make choices over how it impacts their lives...

Companies are responsible for the implications of their choices...

And in which governments act where they need to, to promote good and protect from harm.

And so our third principle for digital will be to drive growth through pro-innovation regulation.

When carefully designed and implemented, regulation drives growth and stimulates innovation and new ideas.

It gives confidence and certainty to innovators and investors, and builds trust amongst consumers.

And this, in turn, increases demand for digital products and services.

Our world-leading regulatory regimes have made the UK the 'go to' place for science, research and innovation for decades.

The OECD has given the UK its highest overall score for the quality of our regulatory practices.

More than 20 countries have adopted the 'sandbox' schemes pioneered in the UK to foster the development of innovation.

And our ground-breaking Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation is looking at complex emerging policy issues, as diverse as facial recognition technology, deep fakes and bias in algorithms.

And I am determined that we will build on this.

We have an incredible opportunity to lead the world in nimble, proportionate and pro-innovation regulation, giving us a competitive advantage at this important time in our history.

So we are developing a new strategic and joined up approach for regulating

and governing digital technologies.

Working with industry and across sectors, so our regulations and our regulators are equipped for the digital age.

As well as our groundbreaking work on online harms and digital competition, over the coming months, we will work to:

Foster fair, transparent and ethical online advertising, so this market delivers the right outcomes for businesses and consumers.

Develop our National Data Strategy, so we can fully and responsibly unlock the power of data, for people and organisations across the UK.

And set out our response to the Cairncross Review into the sustainability of high quality journalism in the digital age.

Critically, we will work to make sure our approach to digital governance and regulation is coherent and is able to adapt as technologies evolve.

And rather than simply tackling each new issue as it arises, we will make sure that we have the tools and the institutions so we can respond strategically, to support the whole of the digital economy.

### **Protecting the vulnerable and ensuring safety and security**

Our fourth principle is making sure that our online spaces are places where anyone can feel safe and secure.

Although I am optimistic about the power of technology, it cannot be denied that its widespread adoption has brought new threats.

If we cannot be confident that digital technologies are safe and secure, then we will lose the trust that is the lifeblood of any digital economy.

And we will discourage the adoption of the new technologies that are vital if we are to truly unleash Britain's potential.

We can only keep the benefits of the digital economy – the opportunities for commerce, and the fast flow of transactions and ideas – if we can improve trust and confidence in technology, and tackle what erodes it.

This is what our groundbreaking work on online harms seeks to do.

79 per cent of 12 to 15 year olds have had at least one potentially harmful online experience in the past year.

And while there has been good work done voluntarily by industry and others in this area, it has not gone far enough.

We cannot allow our online spaces to become fertile ground for those who want to abuse, harass and promote terrorist content.

So our Online Harms White Paper has set out plans for a new statutory duty of

care, overseen by an independent regulator.

The security of our digital platforms is also essential.

Nearly a third of businesses suffered a cyber breach or attack in the past twelve months.

Businesses can only fully realise the benefits of being online when they and their customers are confident their money and data are secure.

So good cyber security has to be at the heart of a modern digital economy.

Through our National Cyber Security Strategy we are investing 1.9 billion pounds to protect the nation online.

But top down action from Governments can only reach so many and can only go so far.

As with all new developments, we must all learn to adapt – as citizens, as businesses, and as parents.

If we can help users learn how to use digital technologies in a secure and responsible way and differentiate fact from fiction, then we can have a huge impact.

And we can combat the corrosive effects of disinformation and extremism which threatens our democracy and civil society.

Part of the answer lies in promoting the sustainability of high quality journalism and public service broadcasting, and this is a big priority for me and my department.

We are also developing a media literacy strategy, which we will publish this Summer, as part of our programme of work on the Online Harms White Paper.

And together with the National Cyber Security Centre, we are developing a new public cyber security campaign, planned to launch early this year.

This will shed light on the proactive steps anyone can take to protect themselves against cyber attacks.

All of us have a shared responsibility for the safety and security of our online spaces.

And we will play our role as a Government to give people the tools and frameworks they need to be confident and informed digital citizens.

### **A free and open Internet**

The fifth principle is a commitment to a free and open Internet.

The UK will continue to be a global champion of the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance, in which a variety of different actors play important roles in how the Internet itself is run.



It is thanks to this model that the Internet has developed, expanded and brought so many benefits around the world.

We will continue to oppose those authoritarian governments that want to bring the management of the Internet under inter-governmental control.

And we will remain a global champion for human rights online. This is more critical than ever when we see Internet shutdowns and other restrictive measures introduced elsewhere in the world.

Our Online Harms White Paper shows our commitment to tackling public policy concerns in a way that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, like freedom of expression.

Reaching a shared understanding of what it means to be a digital citizen in a free and open society – the rights and the responsibilities – will always be a difficult endeavour but it is one that we must tackle.

So we will capitalise on our internationally respected regulators, our standards and our expertise, to influence this agenda.

And we will strengthen our alliances with like-minded nations so that we maintain the values that we hold dear.

So we can allow future generations to benefit from a free and open Internet.

## **Conclusion**

In these crucial five years for our country, I see these five areas as being critically important if we are to achieve our vision.

These principles are what I want us to work towards together.

And I want you to tell us if you think we aren't practising what we preach.

Of course, these five areas are not standalone silos.

They are all deeply connected; the infrastructure, the investment, the policy and regulatory environment, and the skills and the security.

We need each and every one of these if we are going to harness technology in a way that works for us all.

Governments – and societies – that truly flourish in the digital age are those that see digital policy as a coherent, horizontal whole and who look at all parts of the equation.

Which is exactly how DCMS intends to approach this digital policy area.

And if we hold firm to these five principles, we can make sure that we are not just driving growth.

But that we are driving innovative, transformative, inclusive, and responsible growth.

So we can heal divisions rather than exacerbate them.

And make sure that the innumerable benefits of this digital revolution can be felt far and wide.

That is the challenge ahead and I'm looking forward to working with you all to get this right.

Thank you very much.