

Minister Chris Philp's speech at the AI Summit launching the National AI Strategy

Good morning and thank you for inviting me to the AI summit.

This is the first event I have spoken at since being appointed as Minister with responsibility for Technology last week. As one of very few MPs or Ministers to have a science background, having studied Physics at Oxford, I have always taken an interest in the intersection between technology and business. In fact, when I was 21 I co-founded a distribution business that we later floated on AIM and, two takeovers later, is now part of Tesco. That business was substantially tech enabled. It used predictive stock ordering to reduce inventory to minimal levels while enabling next day delivery at high fulfilment rates. You would consider what we did then extremely rudimentary, but back in the year 2000 we felt quite pleased with what we did. So anyway, I'm very happy to be here with you today.

I'm especially happy to be here because the UK's tech industry as a whole is an extraordinary success story. We saw figures earlier this week that in the first half of 2021 1,400 private UK tech firms collectively raised £13.5 billion, by far the highest in Europe – and over double the amount raised in second-placed Germany.

So the UK is in an admirable position, with a rich legacy of spearheading many of the greatest leaps in AI over the decades; we have advanced scholarships at universities and research centres across the country; and, in London, the most vibrant startup scene outside of San Francisco – with companies like Deepmind, Benevolent AI and Improbable pushing the envelope of what's possible in AI in their respective fields.

The UK saw 20 tech firms reach Unicorn status in the first half of this year, including Tractable and Zego. We have ten privately owned tech firms valued at over \$10 billion. And in your field, Exscientia, which uses AI to discover new drugs, raised nearly a quarter of a billion dollars this year. From Alan Turing to Demis Hassabis, the UK has always led.

The Government is completely committed to maintaining and building the UK's leading tech position, including in AI. The UK is the clear European leader in AI and third globally behind only the USA and China – and I know we can catch them up. So let me say today: we want AI innovators to locate and scale up in the UK. We want you to succeed in the UK. We want the UK to lead the world in this field. It is a critical national priority.

It is critical because AI is a profound technology. It is the future. Your field has the potential to – in fact it will – infuse every aspect of our personal and business lives in ways we cannot currently imagine. As Andrew Ng has argued, AI will fulfil a similar role in the coming century to the one

that electricity and then regular computing played in the last century – a meta-enabler which underpins activity in a huge range of fields, including those without initially obvious applicability.

So it's important for Government to engage with technology, which of course includes AI technologies, because of how inextricably linked they are with each and every one of our lives – something the pandemic has made clear.

And this AI Summit is timely, because as many of you will have seen, and as the Secretary of State trailed on Monday, the Government has launched its ambitious [National AI Strategy](#) today.

For the first time, the Government has set out its strategic vision for how we remain a pre-eminent AI nation. Building on the investments we've made through the AI Sector Deal and since, and the kinds of successes we've seen this week in terms of our startups, we want to ensure the UK remains an AI superpower for years and decades to come.

A number of important steps have already been taken. In the last seven years the Government has invested £2.3 billion supporting AI. This has included a quarter of a billion pounds to develop the use of AI in the NHS, the same amount again for the Centre for Connected and Autonomous vehicles and £100 million to fund 1,000 AI PhDs. The British Business Bank has already invested £372 million in UK AI companies. And this is just the start.

Undoubtedly the investments we've made to date have kept us at the forefront of AI – only behind the USA and China – far ahead of the chasing pack of other countries. But we have more to do to keep and build our position.

Many of you who have had a glimpse of the AI Strategy will see how neatly it links up with other Government Strategies.

It wouldn't have been possible without the independent AI Council, who pivoted their expertise first to helping Government understand the potential for AI to help with the initial crisis during the pandemic, and then to setting out their vision for how AI could help us rebuild our economy. I thank them for their work.

It wouldn't have been possible without detailed analysis, consultation and collaboration across the whole of Government.

And it wouldn't have been possible without the help of many of you. In fact, since the publication of the AI Council's Roadmap, the Office for AI – who led on developing the Strategy – has spoken to literally hundreds of organisations and individuals to capture the collective vision of the ecosystem.

So what's in the Strategy?

Let me tell you: this is an ambitious and inclusive strategy. It aims to build on our leadership in delivering responsible AI, to point to how we drive growth across every sector while ensuring that the benefits and the opportunities are spread across society.

The Strategy is structured around three pillars:

- Investing in and planning for the long term needs of the AI ecosystem to continue our leadership as a science and AI superpower;
- Supporting the transition to an AI-enabled economy, capturing the benefits of innovation in the UK, and ensuring AI benefits all sectors and regions;
- Ensuring the UK gets the national and international governance of AI technologies right to encourage innovation, investment, and protect the public and our fundamental values.

But just as this Strategy is being published, we want you to know we're serious about delivering it.

That's why we commit to delivering from day 1:

We'll... Support our future skills and diversity needs through Turing Fellowships, Centres for Doctoral Training and Postgraduate Industrial Masters and Conversion Courses and visa routes – such as the Global Talent visa and the High Potential Individual Route and the Scale-Up route to make sure the brightest and the best can come here easily; Support the National Centre for Computing Education to ensure programmes for children in AI are accessible and reach the widest demographic; Publish a report into the UK's future computation capacity needs to support AI research, development and commercialisation. Continue to support academic R&D into AI and its commercialisation and work to ensure better access to the big data needed to support AI projects.

We'll also... Support the Levelling Up agenda by launching a joint Office for AI & UKRI programme aimed at developing AI in sectors beyond London and the South East; Launch a Defence AI Strategy later this year and the new Defence AI Centre through the Ministry of Defence; Work with teams across government to identify where using AI can provide a catalytic contribution to strategic challenges, and consider how Innovation Missions can include AI capabilities to promote ambitious mission-based cooperation.

And finally...we'll: Pilot an AI Standards Hub to coordinate UK engagement in AI standardisation globally – so UK startups and data scientists can feed into their development; Undertake an analysis of algorithmic transparency with a view to publishing a cross-government standard; and Update guidance on AI ethics and safety in the public sector.

One of the most crucial areas we will work on is setting out our pro-innovation policy position on how we'll get AI governance and regulation right, within the next few months. So far we've been pragmatic in delivering guidance for the public sector, working with the World Economic Forum, Alan Turing Institute, ICO and others, but this work will be a wider vision that gives greater clarity to businesses about how we think AI should benefit society. We will seek to give certainty, support innovation and deployment, reassure the public and set a standard that could be adopted globally. We will seek to keep regulatory intervention to a minimum, generally seeking to use existing structures and to approach the issue with the permissive mindset

that we want to make AI innovation easy and straightforward, while avoiding any public harm where there is evidence it exists.

We'll also be looking at how we continue to support the most advanced research in AI – whether in a university, a startup or large company. We'll launch a UKRI National AI Research & Innovation Programme to support the transformation of the UK's capability in AI and better coordinate and join up their activities;

Finally, we'll examine, together with employers and providers, what skills are needed to enable employees to use AI in a business setting, and work with the Department for Education to explore how skills provision can meet those needs.

The conversations that Government has had with the tech and AI ecosystem haven't ended, and indeed this Strategy isn't the end of the conversation on AI, as you have now heard. It's the beginning of a new conversation. It started with the AI review and Sector Deal, and has continued with the AI Council and all of you as we developed the Strategy.

Now, our strategic vision is set out, and we'll continue to engage with you as we work hard to implement and deliver it.

To finish: I'll echo a sentiment I touched on earlier – AI is a truly transformative technology, with the power to not only help us to recover as a country economically, but the potential to dramatically improve lives and livelihoods across the UK, and make us a global leader in tackling the biggest challenges humanity faces. To make us a true AI and science superpower.

And to echo my colleague, the Secretary of State in the foreword of the Strategy, AI is here now. It is improving our lives now. We want to make sure the UK can lead the world in ensuring AI works for people and delivers on its potential. And with this Strategy, I believe we can do that.

Enjoy the AI summit!