

News story: Former Obama advisor to examine digital competition in the UK

- Harvard Professor Jason Furman will lead government expert panel
- he will consider how to guarantee new tech markets support competition in the UK
- data could be worth £60 billion a year to the economy by 2020

Plans to ensure the UK remains at the centre of the digital revolution have been set out today (2 August 2018) by the Chancellor.

A new expert panel – chaired by former US President Barack Obama’s chief economic advisor, Professor Jason Furman – will look at competition in the digital economy, and how to make sure the UK remains a world leader in this field.

While the UK has a competitive and well-regulated economy, rapid advances in the digital sector have led to the emergence of powerful new companies. This has raised questions about how to guarantee a competitive economy, while respecting people’s privacy and ensuring the whole of society can benefit from technological progress.

The appointment was unveiled alongside the [publication of a government report on the value of data](#). This cited evidence that data-driven technology could be worth £60 billion a year to the UK economy by 2020.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, said:

The UK is leading the way in the digital revolution. Our tech sector is now worth over £116 billion and a new digital job is being created in this country every 50 minutes.

This is something to be proud of, but at the same time it is only right that we ask the big questions about how we ensure these new digital markets work for everyone.

I am therefore pleased to appoint Professor Furman to lead this important work. His experience will be invaluable as we ensure that our market regulating institutions are fit for purpose in the digital age.

Professor Jason Furman said:

While digital markets have produced significant consumer benefits, including in the UK, we need to fully understand how competition policy needs to adapt going forward.

Our focus needs to be on ensuring that consumers continue to

benefit from these new technologies while maximizing the innovative potential from the economy.

I am pleased to lead this panel and look forward to bringing my experience to this important piece of work of international interest.

The panel will be made up of thinkers with an in-depth knowledge of competition law and digital markets. It will examine the UK's competition regime in the context of the digital economy. It will consider questions such as:

- how to ensure new firms can adequately compete, allowing choice to consumers and encouraging innovation
- the best approach to handle mergers between tech companies
- the impact on competition of having data held within a few big companies
- the pros and cons of digital markets becoming concentrated, between only a small number of companies

The paper considers ways that the UK can further capitalise on the opportunities presented by an increasingly data-driven economy and will inform the development of the National Data Strategy, announced in June.

The panel will also provide an independent voice to support the ongoing review of competition law announced in the [Modernising consumer markets green paper](#).

Further information

Professor Jason Furman served as the top economic advisor in the Obama administration, including his role as chair of the Council of Economic Advisers from August 2013 to January 2017, acting as both chief economist and a member of the cabinet. In academia, he has conducted research in a wide range of areas including: fiscal policy, competition policy, tax policy, health economics and international and domestic macroeconomics.

The panel will run from Sept 2018 to early 2019, culminating in a final report of recommendations to government.