[Speech: Jeremy Wright's speech at Doteveryone's Responsible Tech conference](#)

Good morning everyone.

The British Library is a monument to ingenuity, to knowledge and to creativity.

If you go to the excellent Treasures exhibition here you can see manuscripts from Mozart, sketches from da Vinci and lyrics handwritten by the Beatles.

Fragments of paper showing how a germ of an idea can turn into something that has a lasting impact on the world where we live in.

But the British Library is also a symbol of how rapidly technology can transform everything we take for granted.

Thirty years ago the British Library was one of the world's largest collections of human knowledge, because of its millions of printed books.

Now it has embraced digitisation and has been partnering with tech firms to bring their collection to more and more people, for the public good.

The tech for good movement is critically important. Important to the future of the tech sector and to harnessing its potential to help us solve the major issues facing us all.

And today I wanted to talk about four areas I see as vitally important if it is to keep going from strength to strength.

Safety and ethics

The first is making sure safety and responsibility are central as these new technologies develop and evolve.

One of the primary roles of any well-functioning society is to protect those within it.

As a policymaker and as a parent, I welcome efforts by the industry to embed features that protect against harm into their products and platforms.

Last year, Government came together with Microsoft and engineers from some of the world's biggest tech firms to develop a prototype tool that can be used to automatically flag potential conversations taking place between child groomers and children.

As more and more of our interactions move online, it is imperative that technology companies are designing systems that are safe, secure and that

protect privacy from the very start.

In October we published a Code of Practice, a set of guidelines to help ensure that the Internet connected products we use in our homes are built to standards that protect our privacy and safety.

And recent events have confirmed what we already knew. That technology companies need to do more to keep people safe online.

We have all heard about the tragic case of Molly Russell and we will all feel condolences for her family.

And I am sure we all feel huge respect and admiration for the dignified way her in which her father has not just borne his family's loss but also sought to see something good comes of it.

And you will know too that the Government will soon bring forward a White Paper which will in essence set out the responsibilities of the online companies, how these responsibilities should be met and what should happen if they are not.

Every new technology creates its own debates around ethics, from the Industrial Revolution raising questions about working conditions, to the motorcar leading to formalised rules of road safety.

Although we are thinking about the newest technologies, this is an age old question.

How can we maintain the exhilarating flow of ideas and information that we love about new technologies, whilst developing the necessary rules of the road?

Especially as the rise of artificial intelligence driven products and services has posed new questions that will impact us all.

Our Digital Charter is a rolling programme of work to agree norms and rules for the online world and put them into practice.

As part of this work, the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation will help us confront these critical issues.

This pioneering body has been established to help government understand the challenges and opportunities presented by AI, and the steps we need to take to ensure those technologies deliver for the good of society.

Talking to all those who have a stake in the way these technologies are developing — citizens and consumers; industry and regulators; civil society and research centres — the Centre will identify how and where we need to regulate to ensure AI is safe, ethical and trusted.

This programme of work is critical. Because trust is the lifeblood of any digital economy. And building that trust should be a shared objective.

Trust is increased if people can see the work done to ensure the risks of technological development have been mitigated, but just as importantly if people can see the good tech can do.

Incentivising responsible technology

And so the second area I want to speak about is the need to incentivise those who want to use their skill and scale to tackle weighty social issues.

It is no coincidence that DCMS has responsibility for both digital policy and for civil society. The intersections between the two are great and the rewards are vast.

We already know how much digital infrastructure like broadband, and 4G and 5G contribute to the growing economic health of the places where we live and work.

Market towns and coastal communities apparently left behind by changes in our economy are reviving because people are able to live there and stay in touch with the big cities, and indeed with clients around the world.

Churches are finding new ways of becoming literally beacons of social connection — by fixing broadband transmitters to their spires.

Government alone cannot achieve thriving communities and social value, but government can help to bring together and support civil society to do so.

And one way of doing this is through using the convening power of Government to support those organisations that are really making a difference.

That is why the UK's Industrial Strategy set four Grand Challenges to harness the power of innovation to benefit society.

Our technology and civil society sectors are, at their core, all about shaking up established conventions and solving problems.

And there are so many social issues where technology can play a part.

Take loneliness, one of the greatest public health challenges of our time.

Up to a fifth of all UK adults feel lonely most or all of the time. And there is evidence showing loneliness can be as bad for our health as obesity or smoking.

We have already seen some fantastic work here.

For example, Goodgym, which matches regular runners with isolated older people who they can visit as part of their daily exercise.

And Activage, a pilot led by Samsung, which aims to reduce social isolation through using the latest Internet of Things technology to monitor falls and vital statistics, so older people can live independently in their homes and communities for longer.

To keep this momentum going, we are investing a million pounds to drive social tech innovation in civil society, to help develop solutions to tackle loneliness and bring communities together.

This Tech for Good Challenge Prize will set inspiring targets to focus the efforts of industry, civil society and government.

Successful participants will be rewarded with a cash incentive and ongoing business support.

I am also proud that we will be supporting this year's Digital Agenda Impact Awards as its official government partner.

These awards, taking place in London on 7th March, will showcase the best innovations in responsible 'Tech for Good' from across UK businesses, government and non-profits.

And we don't just incentivise tech pioneers through grants and awards.

But also through showing the world that we have the best possible environment for businesses to succeed.

And one way of doing this is through embracing innovation friendly regulation.

The Financial Conduct Authority's Green Tech Fintech Challenge is a strong example of that.

It supports a number of firms, including many of our dynamic start-ups, in developing products and services to help our transition towards a greener economy.

The challenge provides guidance and live market testing, which can be essential in helping a product overcome the hurdles faced by businesses that want to try something different for the greater good.

And while investment in UK tech continued to be the highest in Europe in 2018, social tech ventures can often find it challenging to raise appropriate capital at the right time.

We need to encourage greater access to capital as these ventures scale and grow their social and environmental impact.

So we are supporting the foundation of a fund of up to 30 million pounds of equity investment in social tech ventures.

This fund will be run by the Social Tech Trust who have almost ten years of experience in supporting socially-transformative technology.

It will focus on three key areas; communities, health and financial inclusion, where the targeted funding has the potential to transform society.

It is imperative that we get our top talent working on solutions to these

issues, and the big social challenges that concern us all.

And if we succeed, responsible technology can be seen as an attractive pathway for those who want to stay at the cutting edge.

Breaking down barriers

The third way we will support tech for good firms is through breaking down barriers.

Data is a good example of that. The flow of data sits behind all of our online interactions.

Of course, not all data can, or should, be made open. But there are lots of untapped opportunities here.

Currently organisations looking to access or share data can face a range of barriers, from trust and cultural concerns to practical and legal obstacles.

To address them, we are exploring new mechanisms for data sharing, in particular data trusts, which were recommended by the AI Review and committed to in the Industrial Strategy AI Sector Deal.

The Office for AI is working with the Open Data Institute to explore how data trusts can help organisations increase access to data while retaining trust in its use.

Data trusts operate by allowing multiple individuals or organisations to give some control over data to a new institution — the trust — so that it can be used to deliver benefits, for themselves or other people.

That benefit might be to create new businesses, help medical research or empower a community.

By reducing the friction costs of data sharing, we can encourage the safe, fair, ethical and legal sharing of data.

And I am pleased to announce today that we are exploring the use of data trusts to help us make an impact on major social issues. And let me give you two examples.

In partnership with the WILDLABS Tech Hub and conservation charities, we are investigating if a data trust can help make wildlife data from across the globe more accessible, to help us tackle the illegal wildlife trade.

This is ranked as the fourth most lucrative transnational crime after drugs, weapons and human trafficking with an estimated annual revenue of up to 17 billion pounds.

Through sharing image data, we can train algorithms that could help border control officers around the world identify illegal animal products from their smartphones.

Whilst audio data can be used to train algorithms to detect sounds, like gunshots, our the noise of illegal fishing vessels, and share real-time alerts with field rangers.

We will also be working to address another critical issue – that of food waste.

It is estimated each year 100,000 tonnes of food from retailers and food manufacturers – equating to 250 million meals – is edible and readily available but goes uneaten each year in the UK.

We will be working with WRAP and leading food and drink businesses to investigate if a data trust can improve the ability of organisations to track and measure food waste.

This will support global food waste reduction efforts and delivery of the UN's Sustainable Development Goal. It would also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and water usage.

This is exciting, innovative work, where the Open Data Institute will be working in the open with a wide range of interested organisations to design something that is ethical, fair and innovative.

The aim of this first stage is to work with these partners to develop a blueprint for a data trust and then decide how best to take forward the development of the actual trust itself.

These partnerships encapsulate the approach we need to take when it comes to new technologies.

Bringing together government, technology and civil society, to pioneer new approaches to making the world around us safer, cleaner and more fulfilling.

A strong foundation of digital skills

My final point today is about our people. After all, our people are our greatest tech resource.

And the best way to futureproof our economy amidst a time of unprecedented change is to to make sure we have a digitally skilled workforce.

Digital technology is continuing to transform the nature of work and the skills that are valued by employers.

Digital skills are not only essential for those who want to work in our thriving tech sector.

But they are essential for everyone.

Britain needs stronger digital skills at every level, from getting people online for the first time, to attracting and training the world's top coding talent.

Our Digital Skills Strategy has made huge strides in this area.

This month we announced the beneficiaries of our new Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund.

That 400,000 pound fund focuses on tackling digital exclusion amongst disabled and older people, two of the groups most excluded and slowest to adopt basic digital skills.

One pilot project that the fund will support is creating 'smart homes' in rural West Essex.

This innovative project will see home owners trained to help their peers improve their digital skills.

They will receive a digital assessment, before having their homes kitted out in the latest tech.

Supported by younger digital 'buddies', they will then teach their peers how to make the most of this smart technology.

But there is always more we can do.

If we are to make technology a force for good, we need to make sure that everyone has access to these skills, whatever their background.

Just as we encourage diversity in public life, as it improves decision making and leads to a greater diversity of thought, the same applies for technology.

This was the thinking behind the Tech Talent Charter, which gives organisations tangible actions and principles to adopt to help them change their hiring practices.

The Charter has recently celebrated its first anniversary with the publication of its first report, benchmarking diversity in tech roles across industries.

We now have over 290 signatories, from international tech giants right through to start-ups, SMEs and charities. All UK Government departments have signed up.

So change is underway. And it is moving fast.

Automation will have a profound impact on the nature of work, but it will also create new jobs in every sector.

In November, we announced a fund to improve digital leadership skills in the social sector through awarding grants from our one million pound Digital Leadership Fund.

Doteveryone is one of the recipients and there are many more too.

Digital leadership will grow the resilience of the social sector so that charity leaders up and down the country can make informed digital choices and

understand the impact of tech on their beneficiaries.

And we are also working with the Centre for Acceleration of Social Technology and its wide network of cross-sector partners.

Through this partnership, we will explore how we can best provide charities with the support they seek to embed digital in their strategy, services and culture.

By doing so, we can ensure that social sector organisations are able to harness the huge opportunities that tech provides, so they can become more resilient, collaborative and responsive to their users.

Because it is essential for the social sector to play a fundamental and leading role in the digital revolution.

Conclusion

From creating the next generation of digital leaders to developing solutions to tackle loneliness, we are supporting the tech pioneers who will chart our new path.

Tech for good isn't a nice-to-have, a beneficial byproduct of the fourth industrial revolution.

This is the revolution.

So we need to work with new technologies, to maximise its awesome potential, whilst protecting its users from emerging harms.

It is not an easy balance to strike.

But in this country, we are blessed with a pioneering tech sector and thriving civil society.

And forums like this, bringing together people who care about technology and its positive impact, will be crucial.

So thank you for all the work you are doing and for the leadership you have shown on this.

Please keep investing, innovating and inspiring so we can all make the world a better place.

Thank you very much.