

Speech: Matt Hancock speaking at the launch of the AI Sector Deal

Good afternoon everyone.

What a fantastic occasion to come together and recognise the importance of artificial intelligence.

I want to stress the importance of this Sector Deal for us in Government and its vital place at the heart of the Industrial Strategy.

And to look forward and talk about what we can all do to create the perfect environment for AI to flourish here in the UK.

After all, this technology is changing things at a greater pace than ever before.

Although, if you think about it, the current pace of change is likely to be the slowest pace of change we'll see for the rest of our lifetimes.

So if you don't like change much then I don't have good news for you..

And that's down to the nature of data technologies, and especially AI.

For while old-fashioned consumption is a one off: once you've eaten the apple, you don't have the apple ...

... and standard investment is additive: build a bridge and you've got a bridge...

... development of artificial intelligence is compound: the system stays with you, and it learns and gets better over time.

So I believe wholeheartedly that we are in the early stages of a revolution that is going to change all of our lives.

And crucially, if we use AI in the right way, we can create a more prosperous economy with better and more fulfilling jobs. We can protect our environment by using this planet's resources more efficiently. We can make governments smarter by using the power of data to improve our public services. And we can make sure we solve problems for other people so they can live better lives. That is what this is all about. McKinsey recently published an assessment of how AI could transform 19 crucial industries.

It estimated that the the potential increase in value that AI can provide to these industries is between 3 and a half and 5 trillion dollars for these 19 industries.

Today's Sector Deal is about showing our commitment to leading the world in the critical AI industry.

We already have organisations at the cutting edge – in biomedicine, law, finance, research, cybersecurity – that all can become even stronger through using AI in their operations, products and services.

We have some of the best facilities available for businesses to develop AI... world-class universities like this one – other universities are available... and a strong startup culture.

And we are already working across Government, and with businesses, to deliver on the ambitious recommendations of the AI Review.

This work is bearing fruit. In December, the UK was ranked first amongst OECD countries in our readiness to implement AI in public service delivery.

And so we feel very strongly that we are at the front of the race to develop AI.

But we are absolutely determined to stay there and I hope you can see from the cross-Government effort today that this is something that unites us across Government.

This Deal has also brought together business, academia and Government to make sure the UK stays at the forefront.

I just want to highlight a few of the things that I found most exciting.

The new doctoral training places. Increasing 8,000 more computer science teachers in school.

Making sure we get the physical infrastructure right. Like the next generation of 5G and full fibre networks – we're investing over a billion pounds in those.

And we need to invest in data too. Because data is part of our infrastructure. Just as maps help us navigate in the real world, data helps us navigate to a decision.

And for AI systems, data is the experience needed to be able to process information and interact usefully with the world around us.

We need to ensure making high quality public datasets available continues to drive policy.

From public transport apps like Citymapper that make it so easy to find your way around London, to flood warning apps that give updates in real time during a flood incident.

To a new app that we saw yesterday, from a company that uses artificial intelligence and data on weather and airline flight schedules, to predict even before the airlines know, the probability of a flight being delayed.

These are some of the many brilliant ideas that are already coming to the

fore in the UK.

And of course a word on the ethics. Because it is critical that we build ethics we believe in into AI from the start.

And we do the work now to ensure that the correct ethical frameworks are in place.

Our Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation is intended to unlock the usefulness of that data, whilst protecting its value for organisations and keeping people's data secure.

And ensuring that ethics and innovation are mutually reinforcing, not mutually exclusive.

Trust underpins a strong economy, and trust in data underpins a strong digital economy.

We will do all we can to build the conditions for AI to succeed and develop here in the UK. The ethics, the data and the infrastructure.

And our doors are always open to talk about what more we need to do to make sure this happens in the UK.

The revolution is already starting.

We need to act now, and act together, and steer this to benefit everyone in the UK.

The UK can be at the heart of the AI revolution. We have some of the best minds, the best companies, the best universities in the world.

We have a Government committed to making the UK a leading power in artificial intelligence.

And from today, we have a deal that commits government and industry, working in partnership, to the tune of a billion pounds – to make sure that the UK stays in the first rank of AI economies.

Thank you.