

Speech: Matt Hancock speaking at the opening of the Cyber Innovation Centre

The transforming power of technology is once again, changing our world.

Today I want to talk about how seizing this new technology can be the basis of our nation's success after Brexit, for the rest of the 21st century.

And what we need to do now to make that vision a reality.

Because I profoundly believe that cutting edge technology, coupled with creative and artistic genius, is the fulcrum upon which our country will be built.

Faster than ever before, the world we live in is being changed. How we earn our way around the world and how we build jobs and prosperity here at home.

And we now have the chance to build on what we have done over the past decade and truly capitalise on this opportunity.

Cutting-edge technology ultimately is the future of our economy.

We're in a good place.

Investment in the tech sector doubled in the last year, and is growing at three times the pace of the rest of the economy.

We have created more jobs than ever before and employment rates are at record highs.

But there are understandable concerns that these technologies will undermine jobs and prosperity.

In my view, the risk is not that we adopt new technologies that will change jobs.

The risk is that we don't adopt new technologies and that we fail to create the jobs of the future.

And the cyber security industry is a case in point.

We are in a prime position to do this.

We have the third highest global investment in tech after the giants of the USA and China.

And this year London has once again ranked as the leading tech hub in Europe.

It's not just London of course. Nearly 70 percent of investment in the UK tech industry last year was outside the capital.

This spark of creativity and innovation is fuelling remarkable economic growth.

Unemployment is at a 40-year low, we are seeing the first sustained fall in debt in a generation and over the economy has grown every single quarter for over twenty quarters.

Income inequality is falling and real wages are beginning to rise. Our National Living Wage has led to the fastest rise in incomes among the lowest paid on record.

And these advances are only happening if we seize the opportunities that new technologies give us.

And we support the development of the Internet of Things, distributed ledger technologies and quantum computing.

But today I want to focus on artificial intelligence.

What makes AI so revolutionary is that it learns itself and gets better every single day.

Just as AI itself is adapting every day, our economy and society is adapting too, and must adapt so we can make the most of this seismic change.

All of the great advances in the human condition have been led by improvements in knowledge and collective intelligence.

This one is no different except in that the intelligence is not just in the connection of human minds.

Whether it's improving travel, making banking easier or helping people live longer, AI is already integral to our economy and our society.

We are known across the world as a place where AI can thrive.

Because we are a nation with firm ethical principles, a mature regime for data protection and privacy, and the confidence offered by strong cyber security.

And partnership between government, businesses and academia.

We have already started the debate on the big ethical questions through the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation. I'm delighted that Roger Taylor will chair this new Centre.

We have legislated to give citizens control of their data through the Data Protection Act.

And building on the world leading National Cyber Security Centre, this Cyber Innovation Centre will do vital work in fostering the new products that keep us more secure online.

I'm thrilled to be here opening the Centre today and I can't wait to see what

you develop.

Our role is creating the environment for you to thrive.

It's only through government, academia, start-ups and established industry working together that we will ensure our cyber defences stay ahead of our adversaries.

And the Cyber Innovation Centre, like its sister centre in Cheltenham, will help us to do just that.

Because this work is vital if we are to retain our place as a world-leading tech nation.

For the great power of artificial intelligence relies on data and the security of our data is mission critical to its effective use.

Grand Challenge and missions

Britain is already an authority in AI. We have the world's best AI company, Deepmind, and we are recognised by the OECD for leading in the use of AI in Government.

But we need to keep looking forward.

And we can only say that we've truly succeeded if we use this exciting technology to tackle the long-term issues that are shaping our world today.

This was the driving force behind the four Grand Challenges, set out by the Prime Minister as part of our Industrial Strategy, to call on the whole nation to fulfill areas where there is enormous potential for Britain.

Through the Grand Challenges, we will work with businesses and academics across the country to make the UK world-leaders in the development of new technologies.

The four Grand Challenges of clean growth, an ageing society, the future of mobility, and of course, AI and data.

The Grand Challenges ask us, and I ask you, to rise to the challenge of how we unlock the potential of the data-driven economy and place the UK at its forefront.

The first Mission, as part of this AI Grand Challenge, set out by the Prime Minister, is to transform the prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of a number of diseases.

And making sure that the data is both secure and held in a way that enhances privacy is mission critical to enhancing the use of health data.

As AI and data becomes more sophisticated and more accurate, there are huge opportunities to make the impossible possible and save lives.

Take cancer, just one example. Our ambition is that within 15 years we will

be able to diagnose at a much earlier stage the lung, bowel, prostate or ovarian cancer of at least 50,000 more people a year.

Combined with the great treatment and care provided by our NHS, that will mean every year 22,000 fewer people will die within five years of their diagnosis, compared to today.

Since this announcement, we have opened our competition to help us develop the pathology and radiology services of the future.

We want to use digitisation and Cloud based solutions to help data scientists to develop new algorithms to fight disease.

Critical to that mission, we will be opening up NHS data sets, properly safeguarded, to train the intelligence, both artificial and medical, in how to solve these problems.

And to make this happen, we will need the nation's greatest tech talent and most pioneering businesses to get on board too.

There is 50 million pounds of Government funding available so join us in working on this Mission.

Ultimately, AI will transform our lives like never before. And we want it to transform society for the better and for it to be designed and developed right here in the UK.

Because as we leave the EU, what better way to show that we are an open and outward looking nation than becoming the natural habitat for the world's most cutting edge technology.

AI leadership

And to do this, I know that Government alone cannot solve all of today's problems.

We need the best possible AI leadership, working together, to steer a course through technologies that, by their very nature, are complex and changing every single day.

Your work here at the Cyber Innovation Centre will be vital.

And I am thrilled that three inspirational tech leaders will be working with us to lend their expertise and their vision.

First, world renowned AI expert Demis Hassabis will be working as an adviser to our Office for AI.

Demis is the co-founder of DeepMind, founded right here in London.

DeepMind is the envy of the world and Demis, I am so thrilled that you are flying the flag for UK tech, working with us to keep us at the front of this race.

When it comes to using data to save lives, nobody knows about the opportunities and the challenges more than you.

Your guidance will be vital in shaping our work.

Second, Professor Dame Wendy Hall, the co-author of the AI Review, will be working with us as our Skills Champion.

The review that she co-authored last year was extremely well received, both in the UK and around the world, and led to the development of the billion pound AI Sector Deal.

I'm thrilled that Dame Wendy will continue to work with us.

And finally, Tabitha Goldstaub will be heading up the AI Council.

Tabitha, I have always been blown away by your passion for this and your commitment to making sure that it works for everyone.

You are one of the most eloquent and profound voices in this debate, with an instinctive ability to explain the benefits of technology.

And how innovation, supported by ethical values, diversity and security, will be such a force for good.

The Council, chaired by Tabitha, will help coordinate industry, universities and Government activity to get the best possible value from AI.

Demis, Tabitha and Dame Wendy.

A world leading entrepreneur.

A world leading communicator.

And a world leading academic.

They have the expertise and vision to help us make sure the huge benefits of this powerful new technology can be harnessed for the good of humanity.

Conclusion

And this is the critical mission for us all. Because the economies that flourish in this age of technology will be those that bring everyone together.

Governments to put in place the right rules, funding and frameworks.

Researchers to create those historic breakthroughs to push the boundaries of what is possible.

And businesses, the digital dynamos, to help us solve the problems that face the world.

This new Centre will do that.

Everyone has their part to play so that we can be world leaders.

So we can have the skills, the security and the innovation to go from strength to strength.

And we in Government are determined to support you to make that happen.

Thank you very much.