

Speech: Science Minister speaks of the potential young people have in addressing the opportunities of the future

Good afternoon everyone. I'm delighted to be here with you all, and as the Science Minister and I'm really pleased to see so many passionate, thoughtful and ambitious young people in the room today, particularly given it's British Science Week.

This is a generation that I think will change the world – because you have shown that you want to.

Seeing your projects today, it's obvious that you care about the future, and I'm delighted to see so many of you turning your enthusiasm towards solutions today.

We've got some big challenges ahead of us, and they've been the focus of the projects we've seen today, and of a lot of the work we do in government as part of our Industrial Strategy.

We now know some of what the future will – or should – look like:

- robots and artificial intelligence in our homes, schools and businesses;
- a waste-free world, tackling the plastics in our seas and the fumes in our air;
- self-driving cars taking us from A to B in low-carbon comfort while drones deliver our packages;
- and people living longer than ever before.

It's going to take a lot of effort to make this exciting vision a reality. So we need you and your ideas.

I've already seen what you're capable of, and I'm honestly blown away by the ideas I've seen today.

But I know that there are more people out there like you – young people with great potential – but who think that the STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering and maths – just aren't for them.

And I want to tell you all – that's never the case.

Take me as an example – I always loved history: reading about 16th century kings, shadowy plots, assassinations and great battles.

But today I am the Science Minister, and I am lucky enough to spend my days naming the latest Mars Rover after Rosalind Franklin with astronaut Tim Peake and talking to scientists like Jim Al-Khalili.

Better yet, look at Jim's example – what was football's loss was physics' gain.

But he knew what he wanted to do and worked hard. And today he's one of the country's most admired and inspiring physicists.

So I never want you to think that you can't do it – I know you can.

STEM subjects are for everyone. And if you take them on, they can give you the tools you'll need to design the programmes, build the machines and find the cures of tomorrow.

And they will set you up for life too.

In this room today, we have people from some of the most interesting organisations in the world, from scientific bodies to international companies – and they all value STEM skills.

These organisations will be focusing on building that same future, and I'm sure they'll be eager to get bright minds like yours onto their teams.

But, of course, that future is yours. Which is why we want you to shape it.

These fourteen projects in the room today have shown how much creativity and talent there is in the younger generation. So we're opening a new competition to get even more of you involved with these ideas.

The [Youth Industrial Strategy Competition](#) is open for entries from now until November 2019. Finalists will be announced in the new year, and will be invited to a special finalist event in March.

You have the ideas and the determination that we need to build a safer, healthier, better planet. And STEM subjects can help you to turn those ideas into reality.

The future is yours – all you need to do is decide what you want it to be. And I am absolutely sure you'll do brilliantly.

Thank you.