

News story: Damian Hinds sets out plans to help tackle teacher workload

Education Secretary Damian Hinds has pledged to strip away workload that doesn't add value in the classroom and give teachers the time to focus on teaching in his first speech to the profession.

Speaking to more than 1,000 heads and teachers at the Association of School and College Leaders' (ASCL) annual conference in Birmingham, the Secretary of State has said that his "top priority" is making sure teaching continues to be regarded as "one of the most rewarding jobs you can do". Improving workload will be at the heart of this.

Mr Hinds spoke alongside the Chief Inspector for Schools, Amanda Spielman and ASCL general secretary Geoff Barton in a show of their shared responsibility and joint commitment to tackling the workload burden on schools.

Thanks to a hardworking and incredibly talented generation of teachers, alongside the government's bold reforms, there are now 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010, our pupils are now amongst the best readers in Europe and GCSEs have been reformed to match the best education systems in the world.

During his speech, the Education Secretary outlined his plans to support teachers and work with the profession to continue to build on this record.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

There can be no great schools without great teachers to motivate children and inspire curiosity. Teaching is still a top destination for graduates and there are more teachers in our schools than ever. But I recognise that recruitment and retention is difficult for schools and that one of the biggest threats to this is workload.

Above all else, the key to education is the person standing at the front of the class. I believe we need to get back to the heart of successful teaching – to strip away the workload that doesn't add value and give teachers the time to focus on what actually matters. Together with Ofsted and the Association of School and College Leaders, we will take collective responsibility for this issue and tackle the workload burden on our schools.

The Education Secretary announced:

- a strategy to drive recruitment and boost retention of teachers working with teaching unions and professional bodies to devise ways of attracting, and keeping, the brightest and best graduates

- a commitment to work with Ofsted, regional schools commissioners, the Education and Skills Funding Agency and multi-academy trusts – to clarify their roles and ensure teachers and school leaders have a clear understanding of who they are accountable to, and for what
- that there will be no new tests or assessment for primary schools and no changes to the national curriculum, GCSE or A levels for the remainder of this parliament, beyond those already announced

Addressing the gathering of headteachers, Chief Inspector of Schools Amanda Spielman said:

I want to look at how Ofsted can play its part in reducing workload, so that you're able to focus on the things that matter to you and to your pupils.

It really doesn't matter what an inspectorate thinks if we can't attract good people into teaching. The record number of good and outstanding schools won't be sustained if the people, who make them run so well, are burning out and leaving the profession.

When I see NQTs brimming with passion to change young lives for the better, I think it an utter travesty that so many end up losing their early enthusiasm, because of the pressures of the job. Especially when so many of those pressures are entirely unnecessary.

Because that's what endless data cuts, triple marking, 10 page lesson plans, and, worst of all, Mocksteds are: a distraction from the core purpose of education. And a costly distraction at that.

We must do all we can to support removing unnecessary workload for teachers and school leaders and direct the focus back to what matters.

General secretary of ASCL Geoff Barton said:

Teacher workload is one of the key issues of our time in education. It deters would-be teachers and makes it harder to retain good teachers.

Only coordinated action by school leaders, Ofsted and the government will solve this problem, and we are pleased to be working together to find solutions. We must extinguish unnecessary workload and free up our teachers to do what they do best – teach.

In a further sign of their joint commitment to tackling teacher workload, a myth buster video featuring the Secretary of State and Amanda Spielman will

be previewed at the conference, alongside leading figures from the world of education.

The Secretary of State's speech coincides with the publication of a number of research reports, commissioned by the Department for Education, to analyse teachers' workload. The findings will help build on the government's reforms since 2010, which were necessary and right, and have helped raise academic standards across the country and seen a record 15,500 more teachers now working in our classrooms.

Today's announcement will build on measures already helping to support teachers' development and attract the best, brightest recruits into the profession, including:

- the consultation to strengthen Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and improve career progression for teachers by ensuring the right structures are in place at the beginning of teachers' careers and improving access to high-quality professional development
- a Flexible Working Summit with business and education leaders to explore how the profession can be more flexible – including through part time roles – which resulted in a number of pledges
- developing a free website for schools to publish vacancies to help reduce costs and make it easier for aspiring and current teachers to find new posts

Press release: Visit of Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia concludes

The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, HRH Mohammed bin Salman, concluded his three day visit to the UK yesterday with bilateral meetings with the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson.

During the visit, the Crown Prince's first official overseas trip, he had engagements with the Queen, the Prince of Wales and Duke of Cambridge, and meetings with the Prime Minister. He also met the Archbishop of Canterbury, reiterating his vision of Saudi Arabia as a home of moderate Islam open to the world and all religions.

During the visit the Prime Minister and Crown Prince launched the UK-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council, where they committed to a long-term partnership supporting the Crown Prince's reform programme 'Vision 2030' and

further strengthening political and security cooperation.

Cooperation on Vision 2030 will involve Saudi trade and investment in UK sectors such as education, financial services, culture, healthcare, life sciences, technology, clean energy and defence. This investment will be aided by newly Special Representatives for Education and Health and the establishment of 'Private Sector Groups', led by UK experts in their fields, who will advise on delivery and Saudi reforms. The opportunities discussed this week are expected to bring over £65bn to the UK economy over a 10 year period, a recognition of the UK's global leadership in these industries.

The conflict and humanitarian crisis in Yemen was an important focus of talks. The UK and Saudi Arabia agreed on the importance of reaching a political solution to the crisis in Yemen and resolved to work closely together and with partners, including the newly appointed UN Special Envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths, to achieve this. The UK and Saudi Arabia will continue to address the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, where the UK is the third largest humanitarian donor.

The two countries agreed to work together with the UN on a mechanism for payment of public sector salaries, protecting livelihoods and Yemeni institutions. The UK and Saudi Arabia will continue to strengthen the UN verification and inspection mechanism to ensure that all Yemeni ports can remain fully open to commercial and humanitarian supplies.

Speaking on Friday, the Foreign Secretary said:

The Crown Prince's sweeping reform programme is bringing positive economic and social changes to the country. These reforms are hugely beneficial to Saudi Arabia and, as we have seen this week with Saudi Arabia's pledge to bring £65bn to the UK over the next 10 years, to the UK too.

This landmark visit has been an opportunity to strengthen and broaden our relationship into new areas. Education, healthcare, clean energy, culture, sports and tech are all sectors where we have world-leading expertise and which are fundamental to the successful realisation of Saudi plans.

On foreign policy we look forward to building on the important and productive discussions during this visit on Yemen as we seek to find a political solution to conflict.

Of course, there are areas where we do not agree with our Saudi colleagues. But working closely together allows us to have constructive discussions on these issues, and we have used this week as an opportunity to do that.

Notes to Editors

- The United Kingdom-Saudi Arabia Joint Communiqué regarding the visit is available [here](#)
 - The newly announced Private Sector Groups will be convened by Catherine McGuinness (Asset management and Financial Services), Lord Ajar Kakkar (Life Sciences), Melanie Leech (Real Estate and Regeneration), Mike Lynch (Technology and Innovation) and Sir Gerry Grimstone (Privatisation and Corporatisation). Saudi Arabia is expected to appoint co-convenors for these groups in due course.
 - Following this week's visit the UK Government has also announced new Special Representatives to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 on education (Sir Anthony Seldon) and healthcare (Sir Mike Richards).
 - A number of agreements have been signed between the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia during the visit.
1. Department for Education/Saudi Ministry of Education Memorandum of Understanding.
 2. Ministry of Culture/Department for Culture, Media and Sport Executive Programme of Cooperation on culture and the creative industries.
 3. General Entertainment Authority/ Department for Culture, Media and Sport Memorandum of Understanding on Entertainment cooperation.
 4. Ministry of Labour/Department for Work and Pensions Memorandum of Understanding on labour cooperation.
 5. Department for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy/Saudi Ministry of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources Memorandum of Understanding on clean energy.
 6. Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority/ Department of International Trade Framework Cooperation Programme.
 7. Framework Agreement on Cyber Security between the UK and the National Cybersecurity Authority.
 8. Memorandum of Intent to purchase 48 Typhoon swing role aircraft.
 9. General Authority for Military Industries/Ministry of Defence Memorandum

of Understanding on research and development.

10. King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre/DFID Joint Cooperation Memorandum.

11. Saudi Fund for Development/DFID Letter of Intent on financing of development projects in Africa.

12. Saudi Fund for Development/DFID Joint Cooperation Arrangement.

13. Memorandum of Understanding on Visa Co-operation

Press release: United Kingdom-Saudi Arabia Joint Communiqué

From 6th to 9th March 2018, during the visit to the United Kingdom of His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, at the invitation of the Government of Queen Elizabeth II. Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom confirmed and reinforced the relations between the two countries, and committed to developing a deeper and more strategic partnership to enhance mutual interests.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II welcomed his Royal Highness the Crown Prince at the beginning of his visit and invited him to lunch at Buckingham Palace. His Royal Highness extended to Her Majesty the regards of the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

1. Strategic Partnership and support for Vision 2030

1.1 The United Kingdom confirmed its strong support for Vision 2030 and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's programme for economic diversity and social reform. The Kingdom will transform into a pioneering investment power and a strategic partner for the Middle East, serving as a focal point for dialogue with the rest of the world. The skills and potential of the Kingdom's human capital will also be improved, releasing the capabilities and possibilities of all citizens of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The United Kingdom is committed to delivering expertise to support the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in these vital reforms. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is confirming that the United Kingdom is a strategic partner in Vision 2030, acknowledging the advanced expertise and capabilities of the public, private, and non-profit sectors of the United Kingdom, in key sectors including: education, healthcare, culture,

entertainment, financial services, technology, life sciences, innovation, energy, security, and defence.

1.2 The Crown Prince and the Prime Minister launched on the 7th of March 2018 the annual UK-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council as a key mechanism for discussing and developing all aspects of the bilateral relationship, including UK support for Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030; on security, defence and international humanitarian assistance; and on regional and international issues. Both countries committed to a detailed plan to deliver this agenda with further meetings in 2018.

1.3 The UK and Saudi Arabia committed to a long-term partnership to support delivery of Vision 2030 covering a range of fields including evaluating mutual investment opportunities in and through the UK by the Public Investment Fund, bilateral trade, and public procurement with UK companies in Vision 2030 priority areas, including on: education, training and skills; financial and investment services; culture and entertainment; healthcare services and life sciences; technology and renewable energy; and the defence industry. Taken together these opportunities are expected to amount up to \$100bn over a ten-year period, from which PIF will aim to target direct investments amounting to \$30bn.

2 Education, health, culture and entertainment

2.1 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has paid tribute to the expertise and experience of the United Kingdom in different education sectors, from kindergarten to primary and secondary education, all the way through to higher education, as well as technical vocation training. An agreement was concluded on shared cooperation in the different fields of education, including bringing the benefit of British skills and expertise in supporting early years development. A Memorandum of Understanding that will enable a partnership in developing educational curricula and capacity building was also signed between the two countries and the United Kingdom appointed Sir Anthony Seldon as its Education Special Representative to support Vision 2030.

2.2 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia acknowledged the extent of British expertise in healthcare and the two countries agreed to reinforce cooperation in this field through a Memoranda of Understanding. This will reinforce cooperation in the fields of training, primary health care, health investment, digital healthcare, and others that the two nations agreed. The United Kingdom appointed Sir Mike Richards as its Special Representative on Healthcare to support Vision 2030.

2.3 The United Kingdom has shown its interest in becoming involved with the large opportunities which have resulted recently from positive changes in the fields of culture and entertainment. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia confirmed its confidence in the leading role and deep-rooted experience that distinguishes the United Kingdom in the creative, cultural, and entertainment industries. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two sides for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport in the United Kingdom. The two sides signed an agreement on cultural cooperation, which will work to preserve

tradition and expand cooperation in developing and protecting cultural content. The United Kingdom undertook to support Saudi Arabia's investment in new cultural and entertainment projects across the country.

2.4 The United Kingdom welcomed Saudi Arabia's goal, under Vision 2030, of promoting and reinvigorating social development to build a vibrant society, including strengthening families and providing proper education for all children. The United Kingdom welcomed and agreed to support Saudi Arabia's goal of increasing the number of women and young people participating in the workforce – including in science, technology, engineering, maths, and digital sectors. The United Kingdom reaffirmed its support to the recent reforms and announcements empowering women.

3 Trade, investment and the private sector

3.1 The United Kingdom recognised the substantial potential for Saudi Arabia as a global investment powerhouse and committed to work with Saudi Arabia to meet Saudi objectives on industrialisation and human capital development. The Public Investment Fund recognised the United Kingdom as a highly attractive investment location and a gateway to the world, with London as a global city unrivalled in its international reach. The Public Investment Fund agreed to work closely with the British side to identify mutually beneficial inward investment opportunities in the United Kingdom and beyond, consistent with Saudi Vision 2030 and the United Kingdom's own investment priorities. The United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia further agreed to establish co-chaired Private Sector Groups to support the expansion of the key sectors identified in Vision 2030, including on privatisation and corporatisation, asset management, real estate, life sciences and technology.

3.2 The United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia recognised the importance of a successful listing of Saudi Aramco as part of the Kingdom's economic reform agenda. The United Kingdom underlined its support for the development of Saudi Arabia's financial services industry and Saudi Arabia praised the United Kingdom's support for plans to increase the size, depth and development of the Kingdom's capital markets, affording the Saudi stock exchange, Tadawul, the international status it deserved. Saudi Arabia endorsed the status of London as the premier global financial centre, providing unparalleled access to the global investors and expertise in financial and related professional services. The London Stock Exchange Group agreed with Tadawul on a programme of capacity-building and training measures to assist in developing the exchange.

3.3 The United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia launched the first Ministerial United Kingdom-Saudi Arabia Energy and Industry Dialogue. A Memorandum of Understanding on clean energy was signed, with Saudi Arabia recognising United Kingdom's experience and expertise in clean growth. The United Kingdom expressed strong interest in Saudi Arabia's giga-project NEOM, and Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom agreed to work together to identify ways to use British expertise and innovation, including from the private sector, to develop NEOM and build in-country skills, capacity and expertise in Saudi Arabia. The United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia agreed to share British expertise on growth hubs and business accelerators, with Saudi Arabia recognising the

investment potential and opportunities from entrepreneurs and innovators in both countries, as well as the opportunities offered by investment in Saudi Arabia.

3.4 The United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia welcomed the significant number of major new commercial deals that were agreed during the visit expected to total over \$2 billion, creating and securing jobs and prosperity both in Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom.

4 Security and defence

4.1 The United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia reiterated the importance of the defence and security relationship for mutual security and regional stability. They celebrated a defence partnership of over half a century of cooperation on issues such as countering terrorism, developing joint capabilities and strengthening regional security. Both countries stressed the importance of continuous strong collaboration in defending their national security and fighting terrorism and its funding as well as on areas of defence. They affirmed that this cooperation was decisive in saving lives in the two countries, as well as in other areas of the world, and they pledged to deepen their cooperation and broaden their partnership in facing new challenges. This would include strategic cooperation in areas of cyber security, where a framework agreement on strategic cooperation in cyber security between the two countries was signed.

4.2 The two countries expressed their resolve to intensify their efforts to combat terrorism and extremism until its roots were eradicated and its funding exhausted, especially by exchanging information and understanding the different methods that extremists and terrorists use to influence vulnerable people, and working together to protect people from negative terrorist campaigns that terrorists use to spread extremism and conduct recruitment online. The United Kingdom expressed its support for Saudi Arabia's efforts and leadership in promoting tolerance and inter-faith dialogue, including the development of initiatives related to fighting extremism, including the establishment of "Etidal", which represents a global center of excellence for countering extremist narrative. The two nations committed to sharing best practices and identify opportunities for joint projects to counter terrorist propaganda, including in the English language.

4.3 The United Kingdom has expressed their appreciation to the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in countering terrorism and terrorist financing by announcing the establishment of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition with Riyadh as a centre consisting of 41 Islamic countries. The United Kingdom also expressed pleasure to be the first supporting country signing an agreement of collaboration with the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition in its initiative to combat threats from terrorism and violent extremism in four working sectors: Media, Counter-terrorism, Military and Ideology. The United Kingdom also welcomed the establishment of the International Centre for Targeting Terrorism Funding in Riyadh.

4.4 The two nations have signed a number of MoU's to deepen and broaden cooperation between them and enhance the Kingdom's industrial defence

capabilities, noting that this was being achieved through technology transfer and capability development, training, and building a partnership in research and development on a national and industrial level, and providing technical advisory to the development program of the Ministry of Defence in Saudi Arabia. As a central part of this, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom signed a letter of intent to finalize discussions for the purchase of 48 Typhoon aircrafts.

4.5 The two countries agreed to increase cooperation on aviation security. The United Kingdom expressed its appreciation of Saudi Arabia's partnership in aviation security and in countering the continuing terrorist threat, fulfilling commitments under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2309. The United Kingdom underlined the importance of the recently signed Department for General Authority of Civil Aviation Priority Action Plan to work together to further develop aviation security standards.

5 International issues

5.1 The two countries agreed to continue to co-operate closely on international security, national development, and humanitarian issues. The United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed cooperation agreements to enable the strengthening of responses to regional and global humanitarian and development challenges. As part of this partnership, the two sides pledged £100 million of joint funding to support livelihoods and economic prosperity in the Horn of Africa and East Africa.

5.2 The two countries stressed the importance of Iran's adherence to the principles of good neighboring behaviors, and not interfering in the internal affairs of countries in accordance with international norms and the United Nations Charter.

5.3 The two countries discussed Yemen:

- The two countries confirmed the importance of reaching a political solution to the crisis in Yemen on the basis of the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcome of the Yemen National Dialogue and UN Security Council Resolution 2216, so as to ensure Yemen's security and territorial integrity. They expressed their strong support for the recently appointed UN Special Envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths. The two nations agreed to stay in regular contact, and conduct intensive discussions around this.
- The two countries agreed that any political settlement must result in an end to security threats to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, other regional states, and to Red Sea shipping, as well as see an end to the Iranian support for militias and a withdrawal of Iranian elements and Hizbollah from Yemen.
- The two countries agreed to continue to work together to address the humanitarian crisis, building on Saudi Arabia's efforts, including Saudi

Arabia's recently announced Comprehensive Humanitarian Operations plan. Saudi Arabia reaffirmed its commitment to disburse its pledge to the UN Appeal. Both countries reaffirmed their commitment since November to work together to strengthen the inspection mechanism of the UNVIM to ensure that all Yemeni ports can remain fully open to commercial and humanitarian supplies, according to relevant United Nations' resolutions. They agreed on the importance of the international community to pressure the Houthi militias to allow unimpeded humanitarian access in areas they control, whilst taking all appropriate measures to implement the arms embargo pursuant to paragraph 14 of UNSCR 2216 (2015). They agreed to work together with international partners including the UN to agree on a mechanism for paying public sector salaries across the country. The United Kingdom welcomed Saudi Arabia's recent establishment of an office for Yemen reconstruction in Riyadh to develop reconstruction plans to be implemented following a political settlement. The United Kingdom sees this as an important expression of Saudi Arabia's commitment to the long-term development of all of Yemen.

- The United Kingdom welcomed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's continuing commitment to ensuring that the Coalition's military campaign is conducted in accordance with international humanitarian law.

5.4 On other Middle East issues the two sides affirmed the following.

- Middle East Peace Process: The two countries reaffirmed their commitment to a two state solution based on the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant UN Resolutions.
- Iraq: The United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia congratulated the Iraqi government on their progress and success against ISIS. The UK strongly supports the improvement in relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Government of Iraq, including the reopening of border crossings and trade routes, the resumption of direct flights and its support to rebuild Iraq.
- Syria: The two countries reiterated their support for the UN led Geneva Process and for a political solution based on Geneva I declaration and UN Security Council resolution 2254. They agreed on the need to implement urgently a ceasefire, as called for UN Security Council Resolution 2401, in order to allow the delivery of life-saving humanitarian aid and medical evacuations.
- Lebanon: The two countries agreed to work together to support the Lebanese Government and to work together to counter Hizbollah's destabilising role.

- Libya: The two countries expressed strong support for the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy to establish peace in Libya.

5.5 The two countries reaffirmed their commitment to enhanced co-operation between the UK and Gulf Cooperation Council; and the implementation of the joint communique agreed between the UK and GCC States in December 2016.

[Press release: Monmouthshire chosen as 5G Testbed site to improve rural connectivity](#)

- UK-wide testbeds to spearhead efforts to make the UK a world leader in 5G
- Public and private sector cooperation will explore the benefits of 5G for rural communities, tourism and healthcare
- Government highlights progress to date on its strategy to create a digital economy fit for the future
- 5GRIT will build a 5G Testbed for rural use cases in Monmouthshire, Cumbria, Northumberland, North Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Invernesshire and Perthshire.

On the first anniversary of its Digital Strategy, the government has today announced the winners of a £25 million competition to pave the way for a future rollout of 5G technology in the UK.

From the Orkney Islands to the West of England, the six projects led by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), universities and local authorities represent the best of UK innovation, resources and expertise.

They will test 5G across a range of applications, including smart farming with drones, using the 'Internet of Things' (IoT) to improve healthcare in the home, increasing manufacturing productivity and maximising the future benefits of self-driving cars.

They are part of a £1 billion commitment through the Digital Strategy to keep Britain at the forefront of connectivity by accelerating the deployment of next generation digital infrastructure and driving forward new 5G business opportunities.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

Today's announcement is another example of how the UK Government's Digital Strategy is delivering for every corner of Wales.

These tailor-made projects will transform our most rural communities, exploring innovative ways to use 5G to develop the tourism and agriculture industries, which are vitally important to the Welsh economy.

The UK Government recognises the importance of investing in quality communication infrastructure to boost the productivity and capacity of our local businesses, and so that all residents can keep pace with the UK's digital transformation.

Margot James, Minister of State for Digital and the Creative Industries, said:

One year on from the Digital Strategy, we are delivering on our commitments to create a Britain fit for the future, with a thriving digital economy that works for everyone.

"The ground-breaking projects announced today will help to unlock 5G and ensure the benefits of this new technology are felt across the economy and wider society."

Each testbed will receive between £2 million and £5 million in government grants, as part of a total investment of £41m from private sector and other public sector funding, to explore new 'fifth generation' mobile communications technologies that use high frequency spectrum to deliver internet speeds of over a gigabit per second.

Professor Rahim Tafazolli, Founder and Director of 5GIC and Leader of 5GUK Networks said:

The 5G Innovation Centre is extremely pleased and proud to have been able to play a leading part in supporting the DCMS UK 5G testbeds and trials programme. 5G represents a fundamental transformation of the role that mobile technology plays in society, delivering rich new services in sectors such as finance, transport, retail and health. It will drive trillions of dollars of additional activity through the world digital economy and the DCMS programme will ensure that the UK stays at the forefront of this exciting global race.

The Digital Strategy launched in March 2017 to continually drive the UK's connectivity, telecommunications and digital sectors, and invest in industries, infrastructure and skills. Infrastructure is also one of the key foundations of our modern Industrial Strategy, and both seek to create the conditions for the UK's digital economy to thrive; through overcoming barriers to growth and promoting more high-skilled, high-paid jobs of the future.

A year later, there are nearly 60,000 tech businesses in the UK, we remain the number one location for tech investment in Europe and have cemented our position as a leader in some of the most innovative and strategically important digital sectors.

In particular, the UK's fintech sector is larger than New York's or the combined fintech workforce of Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia. Healthtech, accelerated by needs of the NHS, is also now a thriving digital sector in the UK.

Delivering on its commitments to future-proof the economy through the Digital Strategy, in the last twelve months alone the Government has:

- Delivered more than 2.5 million free digital skills training opportunities with industry as part of the Digital Skills Partnership, with almost half a million new pledges made;
- Reached its target for 95% of premises to have access to superfast broadband by the end of 2017;
- Committed £75 million investment to take forward key recommendations in the independent review of AI, including a new Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation;
- Announced the creation of new AI fellowships and funding for 450 PhD researchers to secure the UK's leading position in the global AI market;
- Confirmed a £21m investment in Tech Nation to establish regional hubs throughout the country, widening access to Tech City's training, mentoring and development programmes;
- Announced £84m to boost the skills of 8,000 computer science teachers to make sure every secondary school has a qualified computer science teacher by 2022.
- Announced a plan to unlock over £20 billion of patient capital investment in innovative firms by doubling the annual allowance of the Enterprise Investment Scheme and the Venture Capital Trust scheme;
- Supported and funded the Tech Talent Charter, an industry-led initiative committing over 170 industry signatories to diversity in tech;
- Supported the creation of a fantastic environment for early stage tech businesses – there are more than 200 incubators and 160 accelerator programmes located across the UK offering a mix of funding, mentoring and training;
- Introduced and updated the 5G strategy to deliver high quality coverage where people live, work and travel including setting out actions to ensure that mainline rail routes, major roads and connectivity 'hotspots' are 5G-ready.

The Digital Strategy also focuses on building and maintaining public confidence in the use of data by businesses, while ensuring the power of data can be unlocked for innovation.

Many organisations still need to act to make sure the personal data they hold is secure and they are prepared for the Data Protection Bill, which will become law on 25 May. It will give UK citizens more control over use of their data, and provide new rights to move or delete personal data.

A new campaign, led by the Information Commissioner's Office, will prepare SMEs to be compliant with these updated laws for the digital age. It will encourage businesses to access the wealth of free help and guidance available from the ICO.

The Strategy also reflects the Government's ambition to make the internet safer for children by requiring age verification for access to commercial pornographic websites in the UK. In February, the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) was formally designated as the age verification regulator.

Our priority is to make the internet safer for children and we believe this is best achieved by taking time to get the implementation of the policy right. We will therefore allow time for the BBFC as regulator to undertake a public consultation on its draft guidance which will be launched later this month.

For the public and the industry to prepare for and comply with age verification, the Government will also ensure a period of up to three months after the BBFC guidance has been cleared by Parliament before the law comes into force. It is anticipated age verification will be enforceable by the end of the year.

Notes to Editors:

The Monmouthshire project will make up the following 5G Trials and Testbeds scheme:

5G Rural Integrated Testbed (5GRIT)

- Lead organisation: Quickline Communications
- Grant: £2.1m

5GRIT will be trialling innovative use of 5G technology across a range of rural applications, such as smart agriculture, tourism and connecting poorly-served communities, using shared spectrum in the TV bands and a mix of local ISPs and self-provision.

The aim is to ultimately make high quality connectivity available across Cumbria, Northumberland, North Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Inverness-shire, Perthshire and Monmouthshire. Here the consortium will develop 5G-ready AR apps for tourists and investigate how high-bandwidth wireless connectivity can increase food production in farming, including through use of AR and an unmanned aerial system.

Steve Jagger, Managing Director of Quickline Communications said:

We feel that 5G can unlock the potential of rural areas through better connections for residents, businesses, farmers and visitors. Our consortium brings together innovative businesses and leading Universities to make the 5G dream a rural reality. * Ofcom has

today published a discussion document Enabling 5G in the UK which details how it will support the rollout of 5G.

- Ofcom's 2017 Connected Nations Report found that: 1. In 2017, 91% of UK premises can get superfast speeds, up from 89% last year; 2. 840,000 UK premises can now get full fibre services compared to 498,000 in 2016 3. 4G coverage continues to increase with 58% of UK premises obtaining 4G indoor coverage from all four MNOs (compared to 40% in 2016) and 43% of outdoor geographic areas obtaining 4G coverage also from all four (compared to 21% in 2016); 4. Telephone calls coverage on motorways has increased by 4% to 97% from all four MNOs since 2016 and data coverage on motorways has increased by 8% to 91% also from all four MNOs; 5. And noted the requirement in the Government's agreement with mobile operators in 2014 , that all mobile operators should cover 90% of the UK's geography(for voice calls) by end 2017.
- The 2017 ONS internet users survey found that: 1. In 2017, just 9% of adults in the UK had never used the internet, down from 10% in 2016; 2. Virtually all adults aged 16 to 34 years were recent internet users (99%), in contrast with 41% of adults aged 75 years and over; 3. 90% of men and 88% of women were recent internet users, up from 89% and 86% respectively in 2016; 4. Recent internet use among women aged 75 and over had almost trebled from 2011.
- The Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index 2017 indicates that over the past year, 1.1 million more UK adults have gained Basic Digital Skills.
- According to the Nominet Digital Futures Index 42% of adults are classed as digitally savvy and there are 58,945 tech businesses with employees in the UK in 2017.
- The UK came first in the rankings of the Oxford Insights Global Government AI Readiness Index 2017, reflecting its world-leading centres for AI research and strong technology industry.
- The seven strands of the Government's Digital Strategy are: 1. Building world-class digital infrastructure for the UK 2. Giving everyone access to the digital skills they need 3. Making the UK the best place to start and grow a digital business 4. Helping every British business become a digital business 5. Making the UK the safest place in the world to live and work online 6. Maintaining the UK government as a world leader in serving its citizens online 7. Unlocking the power of data in the UK economy and improving public confidence in its use

[Press release: HMRC slays tax-avoiding Cyclops](#)

HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC) legal victory over Cyclops Electronics and Graceland Fixing proved that a multi-million pound tax avoidance scheme used by over a hundred other businesses was a ruse to avoid paying tax.

The businesses used loan notes to pay company directors' bonuses in an attempt to get around paying tax and National Insurance on their awards.

Specially created companies issued loan notes in £10 denominations that matched the bonus amount exactly. Special conditions were included to dodge the tax and National Insurance due when the loan notes were given to the director.

The scheme was designed to take advantage of legislation that provides tax relief for genuine commercial transactions, which has now been amended to prevent any further attempts to exploit the rules.

Penny Ciniewicz, HMRC's Director General for the Customer Compliance Group, said:

We cannot allow tax avoidance schemes like these to deprive the UK of vital revenue. The money we've protected in this case alone would be enough to pay the annual salaries of around 2,400 newly qualified teachers.

The honest majority of people who pay their taxes shouldn't have to carry the burden of paying for the public services we need.

The win at the Upper Tribunal adds to HMRCs' excellent tally, winning 9 out of 10 tax avoidance cases taken to court in the last 2 years, with many more settling before reaching that stage.

The win over Cyclops Electronics, a supplier of electrical components, and Graceland Fixing, a building company, was worth £350,000, with £55.2m in related cases.

Read the decisions of the:

This scheme was devised to work around the anti-avoidance legislation introduced to the employment income share schemes legislation at part 7 ITEPA 2003 by schedule 22 FA 2003. The legislation has been amended to prevent any further attempts exploit the rules.□

This scheme was formulated and implemented in the 2003 to 2004 and 2004 to 2005 tax years.

The scheme was initially designed and promoted by Haines Watts

A loan note is a financial instrument that creates or acknowledges indebtedness.

An [image of Penny Ciniewicz, Director General of HMRC's Customer Compliance Group](#) is available on Flickr.