

Press release: UK and France to strengthen links in tech sector and artificial intelligence

The UK tops the list in Europe for global tech investors, with its tech firms attracting more venture capital funding than any other European country in 2017. In December it was named by Oxford Insights as the best prepared country in the world for artificial intelligence (AI) implementation.

France has made big strides in creating new tech businesses and encouraging entrepreneurs, with Paris's newly built Station F, a former railway station hosting startups, multinationals and investors, symbolising the country's ambition

Mr Hancock met his French counterpart, Françoise Nyssen, at the UK France Summit hosted by the Prime Minister and the French President, Emmanuel Macron, at Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst. He said the digital conference will take place this year and foster cross-Channel collaboration between academics, industry and government.

Its aim is to help both countries seize the economic and social benefits of fast-developing tech such as AI, and the conference will bring together experts on data, cyber security, digital government and digital skills to share their knowledge.

The countries also reaffirmed their commitment and support for the principle of net neutrality, which promotes a free and open internet. They agreed a joint statement to make sure users can access websites without internet service providers favouring or blocking particular sites.

This follows the launch this week of an Anglo-French alliance linking Imperial College London and the French National Centre for Scientific Research to strengthen relations in academic subjects underpinning AI, and the Franco-British AI Conference at the Alan Turing Institute on Tuesday.

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The UK and France are strengthening ties in technology and innovation. I'm looking forward to leading a cutting-edge digital conference this year which will see our world-leading experts in cyber security, digital skills, artificial intelligence, data and digital government share their talent and knowledge.

Both countries benefit when our digital economies are strong and the event will deepen our bonds and foster cross-Channel collaboration between those at the forefront of modern technology.

Julian David, CEO of techUK, said:

This event is a significant step towards greater collaboration between the British and French tech sectors. Both countries share similar opportunities and challenges as we build our leading digital economies through technologies like artificial intelligence, Internet of Things and cyber security.

International platforms for collaboration, such as the one announced by Matt Hancock today, provide valuable cross-border perspectives on many of the social, legal and ethical questions that will be raised as we continue to innovate.

Adrian Gregory, CEO of Atos UK&I said:

As a company that is proud of its European heritage, Atos welcomes the closer collaboration of British and French technologists.

And as a global digital leader with a long and rich association with the UK and with ten thousand UK-based people focused on transforming our customers' business through the best use of digital technology across the private and public sectors, we strongly believe in the mutual benefits that a closer working relationship will bring, particularly in the areas of AI, cyber security and data analytics, to forward-thinking organisations in both countries together with consumers. This will only serve to also strengthen the economies of both countries.

Stephen Kelly, CEO, Sage, said:

We welcome this deeper collaboration between two leading tech nations, France and the UK. For today's digital entrepreneurs the world has no borders, only opportunities to grow their business.

We have much to learn from each other as we bring advanced technologies like AI and collective intelligence into the everyday lives of small and growing businesses to improve productivity and growth.

[**News story: Top apprentices and**](#)

apprenticeship employers are recognised at National Apprenticeship Awards 2017 ceremony

Held in London on 18 January 2018, the 'Bright Future' themed ceremony showcased individual and employer success stories, with businesses and apprentices beating off tough competition in regional heats to win in the national finale.

This year's national apprentice winners are:

- The Unilever Award for Intermediate Apprentice of the Year: Shannon Green, Althams Travel Services Ltd
- The PeoplePlus Award for Advanced Apprentice of the Year: Heeran Basi, Severn Trent Water
- The Nuclear Decommissioning Site Licence Companies Award for Higher or Degree Apprentice of the Year: Charlotte Hughes, GlaxoSmithKline

And 2 highly commended in each category:

- The Unilever Award for Intermediate Apprentice of the Year: Ross Jasper, DCH and Matthew Gustard, Nottingham City Homes
- The PeoplePlus Award for Advanced Apprentice of the Year: Hannah Magowan, Dale Power Solutions and Megan Whitbread, Troup Bywaters + Anders
- The Nuclear Decommissioning Site Licence Companies Award for Higher or Degree Apprentice of the Year: Christopher Achiampong, IBM and Thomas Sherlock, IBM

Sarah Barley from South Hunsley School won the Santander Award for Apprenticeship Champion of the Year. She was recognised for the employer led programme she developed, recruiting 50 local employers to support and inspire young people about their next steps, whilst also planning open events to recruit employers interested in offering apprenticeships. Lois McLure from the Co-op and Julie Honour-Jones from Sir John Lawes School were both highly commended in this category.

This year's national employer winners are:

- The Troup Bywater + Anders Award for Small Employer of the Year: Beauty Oasis Spa
- The Royal Navy Award for Medium Employer of the Year: Superior Seals Limited
- The British Army Award for Large Employer of the Year: Dale Power Solutions
- The Open University Award for Macro Employer of the Year: Royal Air Force
- The BAE Systems Award for Newcomer SME of the Year: Lander Automotive

Ltd

- The Rolls-Royce Award for Newcomer Large Employer of the Year: YBS Group (Yorkshire Building Society)

And 2 highly commended in each category:

- The Troup Bywater + Anders Award for Small Employer of the Year: Ginger Nut Media and McCarrick Construction
- The Royal Navy Medium Employer of the Year: Invotra Limited and Maycast-Nokes Precision Engineering Ltd
- The British Army Award for Large Employer of the Year: Volvo Group UK and Eire and Home Group
- The Open University Award for Macro Employer of the Year: BBC and Lloyds Banking Group
- The BAE Systems Award for Newcomer SME of the Year: Blue Logic and Bury St Edmunds Canine Creche
- The Rolls-Royce Award for Newcomer Large Employer of the Year: Magnet and NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT)

Skills and Apprenticeships Minister Anne Milton said:

The National Apprenticeship Awards ceremony is a great opportunity to celebrate the work so many individuals and employers have done to champion apprenticeships.

I want to congratulate everyone that was a part of these awards for their contribution to apprenticeships in England. They are all fantastic advocates of hard work and ambition, and they highlight how apprenticeships are a great route into skilled employment for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Winner of the Rolls-Royce Award for Newcomer Large Employer of the Year was Yorkshire Building Society Group. Andy Tupman, Emerging Talent Manager at Yorkshire Building Society, said:

I'm delighted our apprenticeships programme has been recognised in the National Apprenticeship Awards 2017. Our apprentices are a credit not only to themselves but the whole organisation here at Yorkshire Building Society.

We're committed to providing great career pathways across a number of business areas whether in one of our head offices or throughout the UK in one of our branches. I'm proud of the culture that we have created and display on a daily basis.

For us, there's no such thing as a typical apprentice. You could be just out of school, looking to change your career, newly graduated and looking for something different or just out of retirement. There's no average age, no average background and no experience required – we are much more interested in finding applicants with

the right values and passion for exceeding customer expectations.

Centrica Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers 2017

Also announced was the Centrica Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers list 2017, featuring the most exceptional apprenticeship employers from all of the National Apprenticeship Awards employer categories. The list includes Lloyds Banking Group, EDF Energy and IBM, and shows the breadth of employers offering fantastic apprenticeship opportunities.

PDF, 52.5KB, 4 pages

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Sue Husband, Director of the National Apprenticeship Service added:

The National Apprenticeship Awards showcase the breadth of apprenticeships on offer in a range of dynamic industries across the country. Apprenticeships are for everyone and I thank every employer and apprentice celebrated for their passion for, and commitment to, apprenticeships.

This year's winners are all shining examples of how apprenticeships develop outstanding talent whilst enhancing the incredible work of employers. I am certain all of our winners have a bright future thanks to the enriching benefits that apprenticeships bring.

Exciting changes to the future format of the National Apprenticeship Awards was also announced. More information about the awards will be released in March.

[Speech: PM speech at V&A reception: 18 January 2018](#)

I am delighted to welcome you to the world-famous V&A this evening – a jewel in the crown of Britain's culture. And now, like so much of Britain, further enriched by a French contribution – with Alice Dietsch as Project Director for the development of the stunning Exhibition Road Quarter which opened last

Summer. And I am very pleased that Alice joins us here this evening, together with British architect Amanda Levete, whose practice delivered the whole project.

This evening marks the culmination of the 35th Franco-British Summit.

Traditionally this Summit has focused on our security and defence partnership. And it is right that today we have deepened that partnership further.

And of course we meet in the year that marks a century since the end of the First World War, when our troops fought side-by-side in defence of our shared belief in freedom and resistance against aggression.

And today we stand together against new threats to that same shared belief in freedom. And as I said in my very first speech as Prime Minister in the British Parliament – in the aftermath of the appalling terrorist attack in Nice – “the values of liberté, égalité and fraternité will prevail.”

But tonight is about even more than the defence of our shared values. It is about celebrating those values and the extraordinary depth of the people to people links between our countries.

Here in this Gallery tonight we have partners in business that make up just some of the £71 billion of trade between our countries every year.

Partners in science – from joint space programmes to joint working on genomics in the fight against cancer.

Partners in culture – for example, with your wonderful offer to bring the Bayeux Tapestry to our shores. The first time in almost a thousand years that people right here in Britain will have the opportunity to see a piece of French art that is so important to both our national stories.

Partners in sport – sharing ideas and expertise about major sporting events ahead of the 2023 Rugby World Cup and the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Innovative charity partners like Street League and Sport Dans La Ville – working together to use the power of sport to help young people into jobs and training.

Local partners – with mayors and school leaders who have built links across the Channel, like the new twinnings between Guildford and Versailles, and Tetbury and Chatillon.

And the leaders of the next generation – including representatives from the young leaders’ programme of the Franco-British Council which launched last year and which I know is looking for new candidates for its second cohort – so please help them find the very best of British and French talent.

All of us are here because we believe in the profound importance of the historic friendship between our countries – and because we want to strengthen it further for the future.

Now as the United Kingdom leaves the European Union, I know there has been some uncertainty about that future and what it might mean for French people living here in Britain.

So let me say this:

En tant que Première Ministre du Royaume-Uni, je suis fière que plus de trois millions de citoyens européens y compris des centaines de milliers de nos amis français aient choisi de faire leur vie et de construire leur foyer ici, dans notre pays. J'attache une grande valeur à votre contribution à notre pays – vous enrichissez tous les secteurs de notre économie, de notre société, de notre culture, de nos vies. Je sais que notre pays serait plus pauvre si vous le quittiez, et je souhaite que vous restiez.

[Translation: As Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, I am proud that more than three million EU citizens [including hundreds of thousands of our French friends] have chosen to make your homes and livelihoods here in our country. I greatly value the depth of the contributions you make – enriching every part of our economy, our society, our culture and our national life. I know our country would be poorer if you left and I want you to stay.]

I know that Emmanuel feels the same about the British community in France.

And we are proud that the agreement we secured at last month's EU council means that French people living here and Brits living in France can carry on living their lives as before.

But the ambition that we share for the future relationship between the UK and France is so much greater.

So today, more than a century on from the "entente cordiale" let us celebrate our own "entente chaleureuse".

And let us show just how much this friendship matters to us all – today and for the generations to come.

Press release: Business Secretary chairs taskforce to support small businesses and workers affected by Carillion insolvency

A taskforce set up to monitor and advise on mitigating the impacts of Carillion's liquidation on construction firms, particularly SMEs and those working in the sector, has met for the first time today (18 January 2018).

Building on a series of meetings held by the Business Secretary this week with trade associations, unions and banks.

Chaired by Greg Clark, with support from the Small Business Minister Andrew Griffiths, the taskforce's attendees included representatives from leading business bodies, the construction trade sector, unions, banks and government.

The taskforce will act as a means to work together to ensure the impact of the Carillion insolvency on the firm's employees in the private, as well as public, sector is minimised and to help them recover.

In a constructive meeting, members of the Government's Taskforce on Carillion spoke about a range of issues, ranging from support by banks, the [support on offer from HMRC for businesses](#), the [offer from the Construction Industry Training Board for apprentices](#), and identified how relevant information can be shared to keep people in work and training.

Greg Clark, welcoming the input of all the members, said:

Today's meeting is the next step in a series I have held this week. It got key people round the table to drive forward steps that we believe can give confidence to workers and the supply chain; support from banks, the ability to link workers with employment and support for apprentices.

I am determined that collectively we will take the steps necessary to give workers and businesses the information they need at this difficult time.

Issues to be covered in the next meeting will include job matching and contract matching.

Today (18 January 2018), the Business Secretary has [praised several banks](#) who following his request have committed to providing support to small businesses affected by Carillion's insolvency. This follows a meeting he held with them yesterday, where he asked them to [commit to supporting SMEs affected](#).

HMRC's announcement highlighted several ways that the Business Payment Support Service can help those affected, including:

- *agree instalment arrangements if you're unable to pay your tax on time following the Carillion collapse
- *suspend any debt collection proceedings
- *review penalties for missing statutory deadlines
- *reduce any payments on account
- *agree to defer payments due to short-term cash flow difficulties

Today's taskforce meeting follows [action outlined by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy](#) to address concerns set out earlier this week.

[Press release: Business Secretary welcomes action by banks to support small businesses affected by Carillion](#)

The Business Secretary Greg Clark has today (18 January 2018) welcomed the decision by several banks to set up funds to support small businesses affected by [Carillion's insolvency](#).

Today, Lloyds Banking Group has launched a £50 million fund, HSBC a £100 million fund and RBS has made £75 million of assistance available.

It follows a meeting held by Greg Clark yesterday with banks where he discussed further support and advice that could be provided by the banks for small businesses affected by Carillion's liquidation.

Greg Clark said:

I welcome this quick and positive move by banks including Lloyds, HSBC and RBS. This follows my meeting with the banks yesterday where I challenged them to see what further support they could provide for SMEs affected by Carillion's insolvency.

It is essential that small businesses exposed are given the support they need by their lenders, and I look forward to other banks following suit.

HMRC has also outlined the [support being offered to those businesses contracted to Carillion](#) that may be concerned about their ability to pay tax. HMRC are providing practical advice and guidance to those affected through its Business Payment Support Service (BPSS).

This follows [action outlined](#) by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to address concerns set out earlier this week.