

Press release: Brazil and South Africa tech hubs launched to drive international growth

New tech hubs to connect businesses in the UK with those in emerging digital markets will be launched in Brazil and South Africa, DCMS Secretary of State Matt Hancock announced during London Tech Week.

The Brazil and South African tech hubs will be formed of locally-engaged teams based in the respective British Embassy and High Commission. They will facilitate the sharing of UK expertise and best practice for digital tech with those countries, supporting local entrepreneurs, start-ups and established tech companies through training and mentoring. The hubs will help to develop digital skills in Brazil and South Africa as well as strengthening partnerships on research and innovation and trade. They will also act as a link for businesses looking to scale up in or export to the UK.

The hub model is based on a successful world first tech partnership between the UK and Israel which has already led to 175 business partnerships, with a potential impact of over £800 million for the UK economy since 2011. It has also supported jobs growth by building a better skilled digital workforce in Israel. The model will be taken to the each country and tailored to the local market.

The announcement comes a week after new statistics published by DCMS showed that UK tech and digital firms have seen their international trade grow by more than 20 per cent. The UK digital and tech sectors exported more than £39 billion in services in 2016, up from £32 billion in 2015.

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Matt Hancock said:

Britain is a nation of digital dynamos and we want the UK to be the best place in the world to start and grow a digital business, but we can go further. We are spearheading the global digital transformation and our network of tech hubs will connect us with some of the best emerging technology hotspots across the world.

International Tech Hubs will create positive change locally by supporting job creation, improving skills and boosting innovation partnerships, whilst strengthening our own booming digital economy even further.

Nigel Casey, British High Commissioner in South Africa said:

We're delighted to be launching a tech hub in South Africa. South Africa is cementing itself as one of the world's most exciting destinations for technology. The tech hub will help to position the UK as the go-to destination for South African tech startups looking to expand abroad. The skills training and other support that the hub will provide will also help to ensure that more people are able to benefit from South Africa's surging tech scene.

This will broaden our already strong economic partnership with Africa's most sophisticated and developed economy, and help South Africa ensure growth in the tech sector is more inclusive. The UK is invested in South Africa for the long term, and this new tech hub is one of the many ways that we are demonstrating that.

South Africa has one of the largest technology sectors in Africa and over a quarter of new startups in South Africa now list themselves as being in the technology sector. It has received the highest amount of investment in technology of any African country.

Brazil is the biggest economy in Latin America and accounts for over half of spend in the region on tech. The Department for International Trade has identified significant opportunities for UK companies in areas such as smart cities and Agritech. The Brazilian IT market is the 7th biggest in the world and the country has the 5th largest number of mobile phone and internet users in the world.

The two new tech hubs will join a global network which DCMS is rolling out. This includes the existing Israel tech hub and new UK-India tech hub announced earlier this year. They will work closely with DfID and FCO to realise the opportunities for Brazil and South Africa, and with DIT's network of Trade Commissioners, to ensure the full range of opportunities are realised for UK companies.

Over the next three years DCMS aims to expand the network of international tech hubs to more countries.

Notes to editors

The initiative is funded by the Prosperity Fund, aimed at removing barriers to sustainable and inclusive growth in middle income countries, where 70% of the world's poor live. The Fund will also help to harness the potential of developing markets, boosting prosperity internationally, including for the UK through increased trade and investment.

The hubs will focus on three key areas; skills and capability development, digital ecosystem building, and facilitating links with UK businesses. This will help to build skilled, entrepreneurial and networked populations which will create jobs and address digital inequality.

The Hub model is based on the highly successful UK-Israel Tech Hub, which has

generated £85 million worth of deals over the past five years, with a potential impact of over £800 million for the UK economy. The Israel Tech Hub was not ODA-funded but its model will be taken to the each country and tailored to the local market in these developing countries. Originally part-funded by DIT, the UK-Israel Tech Hub is now part-funded by DCMS.

For more information please call Dan Palmer in the DCMS Press Office on 02072112210

Speech: Artificial Intelligence from Alan Turing to the Industrial Strategy

Thank you, Stephen [Carter], for the introduction. Your work as a board member at BEIS has been of huge value, as has your contribution to this industry and many other spheres of public life.

It is fantastic to be here at the world's largest AI Summit for businesses, which now in its third year is going from strength to strength. Quite apart from the range and reputation of our sponsors, the 10,000 visitors expected over the two days is testament to just how engaged and passionate the AI community is.

Almost 70 years ago to this day, in July 1948, just 15 miles upriver from here, a document (I have a facsimile here to show you) landed on the desk of the National Physical Laboratory – then, as today, the UK government's leading research lab – that would be my nomination for the greatest research report ever written. The title: "Intelligent Machinery". The author: Alan Turing.

It is breath-taking in its vision, confidence, intellectual fizz and prescience. I recommend all of you interested in AI to read it.

Alan Turing had discovered brilliant theoretical results in logic at Cambridge. Then, during the war, in pursuit of an overwhelmingly important national mission, he had become the most brilliant and innovative code-breaker, not only building machines, but also a team that continues to be legendary. At Bletchley Park, high theory merged with wires, transistors and solder to crack urgent real-world problems.

Then after the war the National Physical Laboratory recognised the extraordinary winning combination of practical, theoretical and human intelligence in the person of Turing and set him on his future path of building machine intelligence.

And here we are today, in direct descent, with a renewed understanding that the momentous potential of the AI and data revolution will bear full fruit

when all of us – brilliant scientists, businesses as setters and solvers of real-world problems, investors as risk-takers, and government, as enabler, coordinator and partner, all come together.

That is why I have developed our country's [Industrial Strategy](#), and I am very pleased that many of the companies and institutions in the room today have come together to define an AI Sector Deal with government – it is just the start of a deep and rich relationship, and already it has committed over £1 billion in investment.

The changes that AI is bringing are epochal.

There aren't many moments in human history when a technology turns up that changes everything. Agriculture ... the wheel ... the printing press ... then steam, chemicals, oil, electricity; then the micro-processor. And we are living through one of those moments now. In 2017, when the London-based DeepMind beat Ke Jie, humanity's best Go player, a symbolic date entered the history books.

So why is AI quite so revolutionary?

Because previous technological revolutions discovered specific ways to improve human lives; this revolution has discovered automatic ways of discovering more. Thus the power to improve the lot of humanity is unprecedented.

No wonder there are "Singularity-mystics" in California who believe this is taking us rapidly towards Starship Enterprise. Well ... I'm certainly all for the "Enterprise" bit, even the starships of our space program, but I'm not sure about the singularity. An instance, perhaps, of the British pragmatism, empiricism and understatement that has proved its worth in science and business.

The extraordinary transformations this implies are not pie in the sky, they're not "flying cars tomorrow". They are happening, as attested by so many of the amazing ways that the businesses in this room are already using AI.

Whether it is Professor Rose Luckin making a robotic teaching assistant that takes the drudgery out of routine marking and administration ...

or Rolls Royce – I look forward to hearing from Neil Crockett their Chief Digital Officer – building autonomous ships Whether it's Improbable – our latest UK -bred unicorn (\$500m raised from Softbank. congratulations!) – building the most sophisticated general purpose simulations of reality ever seen ...

Memrise, a language learning app who I heard just yesterday had raised £11.5 million ... or indeed Quantaxa, harnessing the value of huge databases to combat financial fraud

Whether it's RAVN automating the duller aspects of document control in a complex corporate legal process – no offence taken, I hope, from any lawyers

in the room for the suggestion that not every aspect of the job is scintillating ...

or a composer automating the orchestration of their latest symphony ...

Whether it's Babylon – the UK-developed health triage robot revolutionising front line access to health in Rwanda ... or Darktrace, the AI-powered security company that is already used by 5000 global businesses to keep their networks secure ...

I am genuinely in awe of the range, the creativity, the power, of what you in this room are doing and building.

And the more I find out about how this technology works – how reinforcement learning in complex networks rewards one parameter or downgrades another – the more I am struck by the parallels between the economy – that somewhat complex system whose long-term health my department has much of the responsibility for – and an AI system.

Indeed, at the same time as Turing was writing in Teddington, Hayek, the Nobel prize winning economist who made London his home for many years was in his office at the LSE, just 6 miles away from where we stand, working on his theory of the economy as a massively parallel social computer; individuals, companies and entrepreneurs were nodes that were endlessly locally optimising and feeding information to neighbouring nodes.

So in a sense, we are all involved in an enormously complex large-scale network optimisation. Our Industrial Strategy is a crucial piece of that optimisation. We need to upgrade our economy – version 4.0 – for the great transformation that is coming, and we approach this task in the spirit of intelligent designers.

We have set ourselves the grand challenge of putting the UK at the forefront of the AI and data revolutions. The Prime Minister has announced our “moonshot” mission of using AI-powered early diagnostics to revolutionise cancer treatment in this country, with 20,000 more 5-year survivors by 2030. I hope that many of you in this room will be involved in reaching our ambition to increase survival probabilities for common cancers.

But the opportunities of AI run deep throughout our Industrial Strategy.

Taking each of the 5 foundations in the Strategy:

Ideas

- We are spending an additional £7 billion in public R&D over five years – the greatest real-terms increase of any UK government ever

Skills

- We are investing in the deep skills that are needed, supporting our world-class universities throughout the country to build on their strengths – London and Edinburgh for pure AI and computing; Queen's

University Belfast in cryptography, Birmingham and Liverpool in medtech – to name just a handful. And thanks to our new funding, 1000 more researchers every year will be studying for an AI-related PhD

People

- I'm very pleased to be able to announce today that our AI Masters Programme, a central plank of the AI Sector Deal, has brought together the British Computer Society and the Turing Institute with leading universities, and businesses like Ocado, Amazon and Rolls Royce, and will start work in July

Infrastructure

- Anywhere access to top quality digital networks is vital to support the development of the AI and data driven economy that we are committed to. Currently superfast broadband is available to 91% of UK premises, and by 2025 15 million premises will have full-fibre

Business Environment

- I have asked the regulators of the sectors that many of you here are busy disrupting to build on the sandbox concept to find imaginative ways to be innovator-friendly

Places

- our densely connected network of global top 100 university cities and towns creates thriving places in which workers find the jobs of the future and firms find the skilled, creative and confident workforce to build it
- indeed, TechNation's 2018 report published just last month, described a network of more than 3,500 tech meeting up groups throughout the UK, with over 1.6 million individual members. And to underline the fact that tech doesn't just live in London – these groups meet up in 283 locations across the country

AI is at the centre of a thriving digital tech sector now worth £184 billion to the UK economy. Tech-related investments in Britain surged nearly 90% last year, more than in France, Germany and Sweden combined.

This investment and growth is a tribute to the intellectual creativity which is such a key part of what we offer to the world. When it comes to Nobel prizes in the Sciences, we come second only to the USA. But we have 50% more Nobel prizes per head of population than the USA. When it comes to universities in the global top 100, we come second only to the USA. But we have a whopping 2200% more of them per square mile than the USA.

Why does this matter so much? Because innovation, creativity, thriving lives and thriving places all go with dense networks and connections. In many ways, innovation is like a chemical reaction: the concentration of inputs matters. And indeed, the facts bear this out – with less than 1% of the world's population, our universities account for 16% of the world's most-cited

academic articles. That excellence leans on geography and language and the warm welcome we have always and will always extend to talent from all over the world. But it also rests on the key organisational foundations for good research: openness, curiosity, independence, and strict academic meritocracy.

A change as momentous as this needs not just Sectors, Industries, Universities and Localities to work together – as if that were not already a huge task. Government needs to ensure that the whole country understands and supports the great changes ahead.

Remember for a moment the Luddites. They often come up as the group that was on the wrong side of history, dinosaurs. They were that, but they were also skilled artisans, ordinary people frightened for their future place in society. Today we know their fears were unjustified – that we have never had more demand for good, skilled jobs than when the machines have taken the grunt out of human work. And it will be the same again: AI and automation will raise the demand for the most human work; and the government, with business and educational bodies, will deliver the institutions that allow everyone to develop their skills.

It is not only as workers that some are fearful. Take our lives as consumers, for example: personalised pricing, technology designed to be addictive, our data being used against our interests.

Let me give an example that might appeal to those of you who have flown in for this event on an economy airline. If you travelled with a family member, bearing the same surname, did that airline's booking system automatically place you together? Or did it automatically place you in non-adjointing seats, to try to extract from you a premium payment for the 'privilege' of travelling together? On such questions will the trust of customers be won or lost. Once again, government's role is to bring forth an environment in which companies treat customers with the respect they deserve, not use data and digital technology to exploit them. Our [Consumer Green Paper](#), published in April, has started this conversation.

Shifting social understandings and practices – we have done this well before. Think of the way that we've been able to build popular support for stem-cell research. We are doing the same thing around the use of data and algorithms by establishing the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, with the goal of developing a new national consensus around data and AI. I am delighted that Roger Taylor was this morning announced as chair of the Centre. Roger founded Dr Foster and understands how innovative use of data can deliver huge benefits for service users.

Take just one example of what I mean. We have our mission to massively improve diagnostics with AI. Our side of the deal to achieve this is to provide funding, for sure. But even more valuable, it is to allow secure access to the resource that is our NHS data. For this, we need the public to trust that the power this unleashes will be well used to help us live longer, healthier lives.

Our democracy and institutions have the pragmatism, legitimacy and

flexibility to rise to the challenge of bringing the whole country behind these momentous transformations.

And this, of course, is a sense in which our task in creating this better future is in fact different from the task of optimising an algorithm: the ultimate object and purpose is always enhancing human capabilities.

Let me come back to Alan Turing's extraordinary research proposal. When describing social intelligence, a form he does not think he can automate, he writes: "the search for new techniques must be regarded as carried out by the human community as a whole".

The power of the AI transformation for good is immense. We, here today, bring together all the skills and functions to succeed in this most important of tasks – to search these new landscapes for the good, to echo Turing's words, of "the human community as a whole".

Together, we will build the talent, invent the tools, solve the big problems of humanity, and align all this with the public good.

To work, colleagues!

Press release: Huge boost to UK's data capability as big business backs world-first AI talent scheme and chair of data ethics and innovation centre is confirmed

The plans are part of a package to boost the UK's data capability being unveiled by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, which also includes:

- Confirmation that Roger Taylor will chair the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation;
- The launch of a [consultation](#) on the Centre's remit and a search for the team to run it;
- New plans to develop a National Data Strategy to unlock the power of data in the UK;

- Measures to increase the UK's leading role in the ethical use of data in the public sector;
- £350,000 to help Internet of Things (IoT) innovators and the emerging technology sector;
- The South West being selected as one of two areas designated as a [Digital Skills Pilot Area](#), with the establishment of a new Digital Skills Partnership to build a thriving digital economy in the region.

The work follows the Government's £1 billion artificial intelligence sector deal, announcement of its modern Industrial Strategy, and new figures published this week by Dealroom and Tech Nation showing the UK's track record of producing successful tech companies. Forty per cent of Europe's unicorns – \$1 billion-plus tech companies – are based here.

Digital Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We're already recognised as the number one country in the developed world in readiness for AI and we are working flat out to keep hold of that crown.

With Roger Taylor at the helm of our new Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, plans to train the top-tier tech experts of tomorrow and a commitment to develop a new National Data Strategy, we will continue to be Europe's digital dynamo and the place to start and grow a digital business.

Julian David, CEO of techUK, said:

Today's announcement is more evidence of the Government's commitment to keep the UK at the forefront of innovation in AI. In building a world-leading framework for digital and data governance, the UK can be a pioneer in the development of responsible AI.

We are pleased to see the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation start to take shape. Industry stands ready to support Roger Taylor in his new role and the consultation process announced today. The Centre has a crucial role to play in creating the right environment for industry, academia, civil society, regulators and policy makers to consider how best to ensure ethical decision making is at the core of all implementations of AI.

techUK also welcomes the investment and commitment made by industry and Government in the new industrial masters programme. Building the next generation of UK AI talent is vital to securing the UK's AI future.

These announcements come as the Government also confirms:

- A new Start-Up Visa for entrepreneurs to launch in Spring 2019. This will replace a visa route which was exclusively for graduates, opening it up to all business people.
- A new £2.5 billion Patient Capital Fund to open for business to support UK companies with high growth potential to access long-term investment to grow and go global.
- Two new Tech Hubs launched in Brazil and South Africa. UK companies will be paired with overseas innovation through these hubs, to develop skills, capability and business networks in these markets, and facilitate partnerships.
- The opening up of the Ordnance Survey's valuable geospatial data to small businesses for free to boost competition in the digital economy.

Further Information:

AI masters programme

The new industrial masters programme for artificial intelligence will see the British Computer Society and Alan Turing Institute partner with universities and major corporations to boost the numbers of highly qualified experts and help give the UK's tech industry the talent it needs to thrive in the future.

The scheme responds to recommendations made by Professor Dame Wendy Hall and Jérôme Pesenti in their independent review into growing the UK's AI industry as part of the Government's Digital Strategy.

Hall and Pesenti called for top-tier programmes developed with industry to meet the needs of employers and conversion masters degrees for students not studying computing or data science.

Work to develop the programme will begin in July with an ambition for it to launch in 2019.

Doug Gurr, UK Country Manager, Amazon, said:

For 20 years, we have been in the UK thanks to the great talent and strong culture of innovation across the country. So we welcome the new AI Masters Programme as an important commitment to developing and enhancing the skills needed to boost productivity and maintain the UK's competitiveness on the global stage.

Nicolaus Henke, senior partner and head of McKinsey Analytics and Chairman of

QuantumBlack, said:

We depend on a diverse, global talent pool to power our ability to deliver impact to our clients. We grow where we can find the best talent, and we are committed to helping develop talent in the markets where we operate.

We're excited to support the AI Masters Programme in their efforts to enable distinctive candidates in the fields of medicine, business, law, and social sciences to develop and apply the critical skills needed to bring AI to their fields. We believe strongly that by developing a cadre of "translators" we will enable these fields to harness the full potential of analytics and artificial intelligence in the pursuit of their missions.

Thomas Lee-Warren, chief technology officer, R2 Data Labs, Rolls-Royce, said:

The opportunities and developments in Artificial Intelligence are moving ultra-fast. At Rolls-Royce we believe that collaborating with the UK Govt, leading universities & the Alan Turing Institute, to establish an AI Masters Programme that drives diversity and inclusiveness, will further strengthen our reputation as a world-leading adopter of AI technologies and the UK as a global centre of excellence for data science and AI.

Paul Clarke, Chief Technology Officer, Ocado, said:

When it comes to disruptive technologies, AI really is the "one to rule them all". That's why the government's AI Sector Deal is so important for the UK's future competitiveness, productivity and prosperity.

Realising this opportunity means feeding and maintaining the digital literacy and skills pipeline that stretches from primary school, through tertiary education and on to lifelong learning; the new AI Masters programme is an important new section of this pipeline.

Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation

Roger Taylor will lead the new Centre, which is core to the Government's Digital Charter and desire for the UK to lead the world in innovation-friendly regulation that boosts the tech sector and provides stability for businesses.

The centre will promote safe, ethical and innovative use of data. It will put the UK at the forefront of global efforts to seize the opportunities of

artificial intelligence.

A [consultation](#) on the Centre's role, objectives and activities has been launched today alongside a search for the team with the skills and expertise to run it.

Roger Taylor, new chair of the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, said:

I am delighted to be appointed as the first Chair of the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation. I'm looking forward to setting up the Centre and working with the board to ensure that powerful data-driven technologies are deployed in the interests of society. The Centre has an ambitious and important role to play in making sure we harness the full benefits of data and artificial intelligence and I am pleased to play a central role in shaping its work during this early and critical phase.

National Data Strategy

The Prime Minister has also today asked the Digital Secretary Matt Hancock to produce a National Data Strategy to unlock the power of data in the UK economy and government, while building public confidence in its use.

The UK has a strong record on data and this move will build on the UK Digital Strategy, Digital Charter, Industrial Strategy and Grand Challenges to break new ground on data.

Data Ethics Framework

Government work in this area includes leading the global debate on how data should be used in the public sector. Following the recent expansion of data policy in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, a new Data Ethics Framework has been launched to make sure the UK Government sets the highest global standards for how public servants should use data appropriately and provide first-rate evidence for policy and service design.

The scheme is the only effort by a national government to discuss the considerations public servants should make when using data to inform policy and service design.

Luciano Floridi, professor of Philosophy and Ethics of Information at the Oxford Internet Institute, said:

The Data Ethics Framework is a timely and very helpful step forward in how government and the public sector can use data in ways that are ethically preferable. It is grounded in actual practices and in the core values of the Civil Service Code: integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. And it provides clear advice about how to deliver data-based solutions for social good. DCMS should be commended for such an excellent initiative.

Michael Veale, researcher in responsible public sector machine learning at University College London, said:

Aligning advanced government data science with public values can't be done with a simple recipe or static "best practice". It needs a creative, inclusive and rigorous process. To my knowledge, the UK Government Data Ethics Framework is the first document in the world which places this at its heart, drawing together design principles, core questions and caveats, and the key social, legal and technical dimensions—all within the realistic contexts of those designing, maintaining and overseeing systems on-the-ground.

Data science needs and priorities within the public sector are so different than other domains that knowledge of how to do this well has to be invented in-house, not imported. The framework connects issues ranging from procurement and reproducibility to algorithmic fairness and accountability, and is the document all government data scientists should be given on day one.

Digital Catapult

DCMS is also providing £350,000 funding to the Digital Catapult's work to help Internet of Things (IoT) innovators and the emerging sector. The investment will link up IoT projects in the UK, helping people benefit from connected devices and technology safely. It will showcase the UK as an international leader in these fields.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- The Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries Margot James will also today (Wednesday 13th June) host the annual UK-Korea Creative Industries Forum with Korea's Vice-Minister of Culture, Sport and Tourism, Roh Taekang, at the British Library to discuss future collaboration in AI, immersive tech and gaming. An agreement between the UK and Korean governments will be signed setting out how the two nations will work together on innovation to support jobs and growth.
- The British Computer Society is the recognised institute for IT professionals and the key accreditor for computer science degrees. Working with a range of other institutes and accreditors, the BCS will consult widely on the requirements and opportunities for delivering a Masters Programme to provide industry the skills and qualifications it needs.

- Roger Taylor was the co-founder of Dr Foster, a provider of healthcare data management and analysis, and helped grow the organisation from a start-up to an international business.
- He was also founder and former Chair of the Open Public Services Network at the Royal Society of Arts, producing a series of publications on transparency and user engagement in public services.
- He has extensive experience leading advisory bodies, including Ofqual.
- He was also founder and former Chair of the Open Public Services Network at the Royal Society of Arts, producing a series of publications on transparency and user engagement in public services.
- He is well placed to establish the Centre as a credible and authoritative source of advice on the governance of data and AI.
- Expression of interest for the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation board will be published [here](#).

Press release: Change of Her Majesty's High Commissioner to the Federal Republic of Nigeria

2014 to present Harare, Her Majesty's Ambassador 2013 to 2014 FCO, various specialised projects including in Crisis Management Department, and as additional Deputy Head of Mission in Moscow 2012 to 2013 Helmand, Head of Mission and NATO and UK senior civilian representative 2009 to 2012 Ministry of Justice, Director, Human Rights and International 2006 to 2009 Khartoum, Head, Department for International Development (DFID) 2005 to 2006 DFID, Head, International Division Advisory Department 2001 to 2005 Cabinet Office, Deputy Director, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit 2000 DFID, Globalisation White paper team 1999 to 2000 DFID, Head, Eastern Europe, Western Hemisphere Policy Department 1996 to 1998 DFID, Team Leader, European Union and International Economics Policy Department 1995 to 1996 Cranfield University, MBA Course 1994 to 1995 DFID, Economic Adviser, Latin America, Caribbean and Atlantic Department 1993 to 1994 UN Mission in Somalia, Head, UN Development Office 1992 to 1993 Overseas Development Administration (ODA), Economic Adviser, Aid Policy Department 1990 to 1991 ODA, Assistant Economist, British Development Division East Africa 1989 to 1990 ODA, Assistant Economist, West Africa Department 1986 to 1989 Botswana, Planning Office in Ministry of

Press release: School children flood in for new defences tour

Engineers went back to school to give youngsters in Teesside a tour of new multi-million pound flood defences which protect their community from flooding.

Pupils at High Clarence Primary School were shown around the state-of-the-art £4.5million flood defences at Port Clarence which reduce the risk of flooding from the River Tees.

And they saw first-hand the £11million scheme, currently under construction, which reduces the risk of flooding from Greatham Creek and will create 30 hectares of new habitat for wildlife to thrive.

Together the projects protect 350 homes and 32 businesses at Port Clarence from flooding.

Pupils travelled on the Transporter Bridge across the River Tees to get a bird's eye view of the flood defences, while at Greatham they got to see workers in action building new flood embankments – and even got to see the popular seals!

The event, which took place last week (Friday, 8 June), also gave local residents the opportunity to find out more about the scheme, while MP Alex Cunningham was also given an insight into how the defences work to protect his constituency.



Great project with innovative features

Phil Marshall, the Environment Agency's Senior Advisor on the project, said:

It's really important the community understands how the flood defences at Port Clarence work together with the scheme at Greatham Creek to reduce their risk of flooding.

It's a great project with lots of innovative features and the added benefit of creating extra habitat for wildlife in a vital conservation area.

Our future generations will play an important role in ensuring our communities are resilient as we deal with the impacts of climate change and it was great to show the school pupils this great engineering and habitat creation project. Hopefully it will inspire them to want to make a difference!

The first phase of the project was completed in December 2015 and saw new flood defences built in Port Clarence, consisting of a mixture of earth embankments, flood walls, and a raised section of the road on the approach to the Transporter Bridge.

In addition, the Environment Agency worked together with local business Wilton Engineering to install removable steel flood defences along the River Tees. This improves flood protection while still allowing Wilton to operate

from the river.

Work started on the second phase in summer 2017 and involves raising existing flood embankments along Greatham Creek.



Managed realignment

There is also a managed realignment of part of the current flood defences. This means a new embankment to the north of the RSPB Saltholme Nature Reserve has been built around a larger area of land, and then the existing flood embankment will be breached later this year.

This results in the creation of around 30 hectares of intertidal habitat to the north of the nature reserve. It's a popular area frequented by seals, and a variety of bird species including shelduck, knot and redshank.

The Environment Agency is working with local businesses in the area, with SABIC UK providing funding towards the scheme and INOVYN ChlorVinyls providing some of their land for the additional habitat creation. Phil added:

Work is progressing well and is expected to be completed this autumn. The local businesses in the area know only too well how devastating it is to be flooded having been affected by the tidal surge in December 2013.

By working together with industry we're vastly improving existing defences to protect residents and businesses and reduce the risk of

flooding now and into the future as sea levels start to rise. This has been quite a unique partnership and I can't emphasise enough the benefits this will bring for the area.



The Environment Agency has also been working closely with partners at RSPB and Natural England to design and build a scheme which maximises benefits for the internationally designated habitat, and to ensure disruption to wildlife and visitors to the local area is kept to a minimum.

Contractors BAM Nuttall and Mott MacDonald Joint Venture (BMMJV), are carrying out the work on behalf of the Environment Agency.

If you would like to know more about your risk of flooding and how to be prepared call Floodline on 0345 988 1188, or visit [the Floods Destroy website](#)