[Speech: Matt Hancock speaking at the Change Makers Summit](#)

I'm delighted to be here at this day to celebrate the changemakers.

I came here on the Tube. I was unable to get past Parliament Square, because a statue was being unveiled to Millicent Fawcett, herself a great changemaker.

And I have the pleasure of meeting and working with changemakers every single day. In the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport we think of ourselves as the department of the future.

Changemakers in the world of culture, and of course digital transformation, are having a phenomenal impact. And this is a pace of change that the world has never seen before.

I like to think of it this way.

The pace of change that we are living through now is in fact the slowest pace of change that we will experience for the rest of our lifetimes.

So as new technologies, like artificial intelligence and others, get exponentially faster, these changes will only accelerate.

But the flipside of this is that the impact on our lives is getting greater and greater.

And I just wanted to address the impact this has from the point of view of somebody in Government.

I came to Government having started life in the tech sector, and understanding the impact of these changes on businesses.

Governments have an opportunity now to create an environment that supports businesses — and tech businesses in particular — and create appropriate norms and rules for the online world.

This balance between the two is critical in a way that it wasn't even a few years ago.

Making sure that the ethics, the norms and the rules are in place, to ensure the positive development of technology for mankind, whilst also supporting mission critical innovation.

And today I want to go into three areas where I think that our focus needs to be laserlike to make this happen, and to give changemakers the help that they need.

Firstly, the right business environment. Secondly, the right talent. And

thirdly, the right ethics. And I think we need all three if we're going to get it right.

Business environment

First, governments around the world need to set the conditions not just for a thriving digital economy but also one that generates positive social change.

Now, I am a deep believer that business is a force for good in the world. Successful businesses are those which solve other people's problems, and in fact solve other people's problems so well that they're paid to do so. Ensuring that we have a positive business environment is critical.

And I think increasingly more and more businesses — in the UK and beyond — are thinking deeply about their social purpose and integrating that into their core strategy.

We have seen an acceleration in recent years of digital social enterprises doing brilliant work.

Take one example, Zinc VC — it's an incubator, building new companies to solve the developed world's toughest social issues, like mental health and loneliness, through the application of new technology.

There are new companies connecting volunteers with people in their area who aren't always able to cook for themselves, commercial financial platforms that help people to become debt free, and apps that allow tuition and healthcare to be given to people in remote areas of the world.

This Tech for Good sector is a critical part of the development of new technology in a way that is both commercially and socially good — and it is growing fast.

Government clearly has a role here.

Big Society Capital, the world's first wholesale social investor fund was set up five years ago by the Government. And it has already committed a billion to social sector organisations.

We are continuing to look at how we can expand this throughout the economy.

And what I find interesting is, having been a minister now for five years, starting in the Business Department, is that the conversation around the inclusive economy, and the need to rise to major social challenges, is now higher on the agenda than it ever has been. And I think that the UK is leading the world.

But it isn't just about the businesses that are explicitly about solving social problems as well, but also about making sure that we're at the cutting edge of the development of new technologies, including clean growth, and Artificial Intelligence.

In these areas we face a grand challenge, to make sure that Britain is

leading the world and making sure that the development of new technologies happens here.

That allows us to have influence over the unlocking of this technology.

And that brings me to talent and ethics.

Talent

If we want to create the right business environment, we've got to get the talent right too.

Because technology and automation will have a radical impact on the workplace. There is no point in trying to hold back the tide.

We understand the big debate around the impact of technology but I think that there is a growing consensus on this.

The challenge we have is to ensure that we embrace the new jobs that are created by that technology, and that we give people the skills they need; and crucially support those who need to retrain.

And here I think that Britain, in many ways, leads the world.

From making coding in the curriculum compulsory at school age, through to supporting a more flexible labour market and to expanding digital training for adults, we have a far-reaching programme to support people whose jobs are being disrupted by technology.

And part of this is the need to embed these digital skills far and wide.

It is, in a way, easy, especially here in the centre of London, to focus on the need for high-end tech skills, and of course this is mission critical.

But we need to have a full-spectrum approach to getting the talent that we need, to make sure that everybody can participate, and, right up at the top, that we can continue to be the most advanced nation in the world.

And part of doing that is making sure that our tech industry itself is more representative of the country as a whole.

To address this, we are working with industry to support the Tech Talent Charter.

There is a lack of gender diversity in our tech industry. That brings with it two problems.

The first is that if you're only fishing in half the pond you're only going catch half the fish, and the shortage of digital skills that our country needs means that we need to expand the net and fish in the whole pond.

But the second reason that this is important is that I have never seen a decision made where the quality of decision making hasn't been improved by diversity of thought in the room.

So both to improve the diversity of thought and the quality of decisions, and to ensure that we can fulfill the challenge of filling the skills gap, we need to ensure that we get better diversity in this industry.

Over two hundred companies, from international giants like Microsoft and BT, right through to start-ups, have signed up for this, as have Government departments too.

This means filling digital, data and technology roles across the economy, and indeed across Government, so we can be more reflective of the country we serve.

We can't be a truly digital nation until we have a skilled, hi-tech workforce that makes use of all of the available talent.

Ethics

And that brings me onto the third and the final principle that I wanted to touch on. And that's the importance of answering the deep and searching ethical questions posed by new technology.

Let's take AI as an example. It presents some incredible opportunities. The faster and more accurate diagnosis of illnesses, smarter energy use to protect the planet and technology to detect terrorist videos as soon as they are uploaded and before they are viewed.

But while the digital revolution promises these vast benefits, it also raises challenging questions.

Is it right, for example, for companies to predict our sexuality and ethnicity and tailor their services as a result?

Is it right to have an algorithm to dictate who should be saved in a car crash?

And what do we do if coding starts to reflect and replicate the unconscious biases that exist in society today?

These are not questions that we can write off as philosophical puzzles. They are now real policy questions, being discussed in Parliament and in courtrooms in years to come.

We've recently embarked on a world first, setting up a Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation. This is an independent advisory body with a bold and ambitious remit to look far and wide to identify the measures we need to make sure we have ethical and innovative use of data and to make sure that AI flourishes.

Critically, it will advise on what we need to do in law and on our statute book.

But the frameworks and the standards that it will produce on a non-statutory basis will be just as important.

And getting the ethics right around AI is mission critical to its success because it soon will be an integral part of the way we live and work and study. So it is vital that we get this right.

Conclusion

So the message I want to leave you with today is this.

Whenever people try to hold back the changemakers they will lose, and this is especially true when it comes to technology.

Whether it's the Luddites smashing up the early textile machinery, or the horse and cart drivers who protested the Victorian railways or those who rallied against commercial TV in the UK, history tells us that we can't fight new technology, but we can shape it.

So I'm on the side of the disruptors. There isn't a single business model out there that can't be improved over time through the transforming power of technology.

Because the marketplace of ideas is the best thing for customers.

It means a race to the top in how we make services better and products easier, faster and more efficient. And ultimately benefit our fellow man. And it creates wider benefits for society as a whole.

So blessed are the changemakers.

And it is the role of governments across the world to give them what they need to succeed. And that's what we plan to do.