

Press release: Prime Minister and Chancellor technology roundtable at Downing Street

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

“The Prime Minister and Chancellor co-hosted a roundtable this afternoon with leading figures from the UK tech industry, ahead of a reception at Downing Street attended by entrepreneurs and innovators from across the country.

“The Prime Minister began by welcoming the huge contribution that the tech sector makes to the whole of the UK. She promised to listen to the industry’s views on what more Government can do to help it go from strength to strength.

“The Chancellor said Government would be ambitious as it works to make the most of the incredible potential of the tech sector, to break down the barriers facing entrepreneurs and to drive future growth.

“On Brexit, the Prime Minister said she had no doubt that the UK will remain a brilliant place to build a tech business after we have left the EU, and reiterated that she is determined to get the best deal for our country. There was agreement during the discussion on the need for Britain to take advantage of the opportunity of Brexit to be bold and ambitious in the action we’re taking to boost the tech sector.

“There was also consensus on the need to make sure we’re attracting the brightest and best talent to the UK. Eileen Burbidge, Chair of Tech City UK, welcomed the PM’s announcement of an increase in visas for tech talent as being exactly what the sector needs.

“There was a discussion on skills, and the need to ensure people of all ages and backgrounds have the digital skills to get ahead and take up the good, high-quality jobs on offer in the tech industry. And there was agreement on the importance of continued investment in infrastructure, including superfast broadband.

“Nick Sturge, CEO of Engine Shed, welcomed the new investment to expand Tech City UK into a nationwide network, which he said has the potential to raise the profile of regional tech hubs and entrepreneurs outside of London.

“Culture Secretary Karen Bradley closed the roundtable by reaffirming the Government’s ongoing commitment to supporting the sector and to maintaining this engagement through future meetings, to ensure the UK remains at the forefront of innovation and technology in the years ahead.”

News story: UK EXTENDS SUPPORT TO PEACEKEEPING IN SOUTH SUDAN

Defence Minister Lord Howe made the announcement at the 2017 United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in Vancouver.

At the event, co-hosted by the UK and partners, which comes one year on from the meeting held in London, Lord Howe announced that the UK is extending its deployment of some 300 British Army engineers to the UN Mission in South Sudan for an additional year, until April 2020.

Defence Minister, Lord Howe, said:

We remain unwaveringly committed to international peace and security and this extension is a demonstration of that.

It's all part of the UK's efforts to deliver stability worldwide, which will help tackle issues like terrorism and mass migration, keeping us safe at home as well as improving lives internationally.

The UK is also cooperating closely with Vietnam's first UN troop deployment, as they prepare to take over the running of a field hospital in South Sudan from the UK next year.

The announcements came at the ministerial where representatives from around 80 countries and five international organisations met with the aim of improving the conduct of peacekeeping, including training, equipment, leadership and rapid response capability.

The defence ministerial built on the momentum of the 2016 conference in London, where the '3Ps of peacekeeping reform' agenda was launched, focusing on planning, pledges and performance.

Reflecting this year's additional focus on partnerships, Lord Howe also signed a statement of intent with Bangladesh to sell two RAF C130J transport aircraft to the Bangladeshi Air Force, with the revenue being reinvested back into UK defence. The C130Js will help Bangladesh play a leading role in UN Peacekeeping Missions in the coming years.

The Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Gordon Messenger, also joined with representatives from Canada and Bangladesh to launch the Women, Peace and Security Chiefs of Defence Network, to promote the integration of gender perspectives into armed forces and peacekeeping.

Speech: PM tech reception: “We all have our part to play – let’s work together to achieve it.”

Thank you very much for coming here and it’s a great pleasure to welcome you all to No 10 Downing Street this evening to celebrate the tech sector – and the huge contribution you make to our economy, our society and our country.

You are creating and developing the new technologies which are changing the world and improving lives and what you achieve is truly remarkable and inspiring.

Just some raw numbers speak for themselves: £6.8 billion of inward investment last year alone, and £4.6 billion raised in funding outside London.

In Britain, we have a long history of achievement in technology – and our country has been the home of the great innovators in this field.

Charles Babbage – who designed the first general purpose computer in the 1830s.

Ada Lovelace – whose portrait hangs in this very room, and whose ground-breaking work on algorithms made her the world’s first computer programmer.

And of course, Alan Turing, the visionary mathematician who contributed so much to the development of artificial intelligence.

What defines the tech sector today – your energy, your dynamism and your creativity – are in the finest traditions of those illustrious figures of the past.

Your continuing success will be essential to our country’s success in the future.

The people gathered in this room amply demonstrate the tremendous achievement and potential to be found in the tech sector today, right across the country.

We have with us successful businesses from Belfast and Bristol, Cardiff and Cambridge, Manchester and Leeds. And next year, when Liverpool hosts the UK’s third International Business Festival, firms from across the UK will showcase their innovations to the world.

The great city of Liverpool, which has always been a gateway for global trade and which today is integral to our vision of a thriving Northern Powerhouse, will play host to hundreds of delegations from right around the globe. I am delighted that Max Steinburg who I met earlier and Ian McCarthy have joined us today.

There is so much to be proud of – and so much success to celebrate.

Here today we have Oxbotica, who are developing systems to power the autonomous vehicles of the future and change the way we travel.

We have Babylon, who are working with the NHS to deliver 21st century digital healthcare and help people live healthier lives.

And we have Raspberry Pi, who are helping thousands of children learn to code and develop the skills to succeed in the economy of the future.

But as we celebrate this success, we cannot take anything for granted. I know that Government has an important role to play in supporting you. And our industrial strategy is based on the belief that our economy does best when government and industry work together as partners.

And that's why we committed in our election manifesto to developing a Digital Charter – with a vision to make Britain the very best place in the world to start and run a digital business.

I'm pleased that we have colleagues here tonight from across Government – Greg Clark who is responsible for the Industrial Strategy at BEIS, Liz Truss from the Treasury, Karen Bradley and Matthew Hancock from our department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and others – who share my determination to make that vision a reality.

We're already investing in infrastructure and skills, with £1 billion of investment in next-generation broadband and mobile networks, new digital apprenticeship standards, and new technical education qualifications in digital. And the announcements we've made today build on that: more visas for the best and brightest, more investment to support digital clusters outside London, and a new approach to getting innovative technology into the public sector.

But this is just the start.

The economy fit for the future which we will build as we leave the European Union, and forge a new role for ourselves in the world, must be one which leads the world in innovation and emerging technologies. We have all the ingredients of success: immense human talent, world-leading universities, and a thriving ecosystem of start-ups.

We have serious, experienced investors. We have regulators who understand how to work with innovative companies. And the world's largest technology companies are putting their faith in Britain: investing here, experimenting here, opening new offices, hiring more staff.

So, we are going from strength to strength. Let's build on that success together in the years ahead. Let's work as partners – businesses, educators, innovators and government – to do all we can to make Britain the best place in the world to start and grow a digital business.

Let's make sure that when people look back on this time of great innovation and change, they see in Britain a country which seized the opportunities that were within its grasp.

A country which, inspired by its illustrious past, resolved to achieve even greater things in the future.

We all have our part to play – let's work together to achieve it.

News story: Driving examiner strike: December 2017

Some driving examiners who are members of the Public and Commercial Service (PCS) union are planning to take strike action on Monday 4 December and Tuesday 5 December 2017.

You can either:

- change your test appointment to a later date
- turn up for your test as planned, but your examiner might be unavailable

Not all driving examiners are union members, and even if they are, they might choose not to go on strike.

If your driving test is cancelled

You won't have to contact the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) to rebook your appointment if you can't take your test because of strike action.

DVSA will contact you with a new test appointment within 5 to 10 working days.

Out of pocket expenses

You can claim out of pocket expenses if your test is cancelled, but you must have turned up for your test to be able to do this. If you don't turn up, you'll have to rebook your own test and won't be able to claim expenses.

Theory tests

Theory tests aren't affected by the strike action and will be taking place as planned.

What the strike is about

The strike action is about a new standard employment contract that DVSA staff signed up to in 2014. In return for changes to their terms and conditions, they received a buy-out and a 3-year pay deal.

This contract was negotiated with the unions and agreed by staff in a ballot.

Since then, PCS has opposed some aspects of the contract

PCS is now trying to link the dispute with health and safety risks of changes to the driving test. The new driving test has been designed to make sure drivers are better prepared for a lifetime of safe driving.

The changes have been developed and trialled extensively with input from DVSA staff, learner drivers, their instructors and other road safety professionals.

DVSA carried out [risk assessments](#) and commissioned the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) to carry out an independent assessment. These show that the new test manoeuvres were low risk.

Helping you through a lifetime of safe driving

Gareth Llewellyn, DVSA Chief Executive, said:

The fact PCS is trying to undermine the launch of the new test by calling for strike action shows a shameful disregard for both road safety and learner drivers who have worked so hard to be ready to take their test.

The new driving test has been designed to make sure new drivers have the skills they need to help them through a lifetime of safe driving. It is one step in helping reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on Britain's roads.

During the last 3 years the changes – which are welcomed by most examiners, road safety experts, disability groups and instructors – have been developed and trialled extensively with a wide range of our staff, learners and other organisations. Over 4,000 candidates were involved in the trial.

I met with PCS on 2 November 2017 and they turned down my offer of mediation, although our offer still stands. This means that we cannot move forward together to resolve this dispute, for the sake of our staff and customers.

[Press release: Landscape protection confirmed for Cornwall's rare species](#)

Rare species like the marsh fritillary butterfly and willow tit bird have been given a conservation boost today, with Natural England officially recognising the Mid Cornwall Moors as one of the country's most important

wildlife sites.

Following a four-month public consultation, Natural England has confirmed the designation of the Mid Cornwall Moors as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), giving the area legal protection for its important wildlife and habitats.

This brings certainty and purpose to conservation work in Mid Cornwall, where the rich mix of heathland, woodland, and wildflower meadows provides a vital sanctuary for wildlife.

Wesley Smyth, manager of Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly team in Natural England, said:

This rich and diverse landscape of Mid Cornwall is home to an array of rare plants and insects, alongside one of the highest densities of willow tit breeding pairs in England.

That's why we've designated this area as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, recognising its vital contribution to our natural heritage and helping its precious wildlife thrive for generations to come.

Natural England is working with landowners and local organisations, such as the Cornwall Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation, to create the perfect conditions for the rare marsh fritillary butterfly. With further help from the Eden Project and Highways England, swathes of devil's-bit scabious – the main food plant for the marsh fritillary caterpillars – have been grown and planted alongside the A30 road corridor.

Philip Hambly, Chairman of Cornwall Butterfly Conservation (CBC), said:

CBC have been working with Natural England in order to help protect the rare Marsh Fritillary butterfly in Mid Cornwall, and this confirmation of SSSI protection will help future conservation efforts. If we want to protect our rare species such as this, we must manage their habitats carefully and make sure that we are doing so on a landscape scale.

As part of the area's newly-designated status, another project seeks to protect the habitat of the willow tit, which has virtually disappeared from large parts of the UK and whose national population has declined by an estimated 81% since the mid-1990s.

The Mid Cornwall Moors SSSI merges six former SSSIs that previously dotted the landscape around the A30 and east of Indian Queens. The new designation has extended those boundaries and protects around 50% more countryside, connecting important habitats and helping wildlife to withstand pressures from climate change.