MINUTES

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL

10:00 - 13:00, Thursday 11th March 2021
Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Ministerial attendance:

Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP [Item 8]	Secretary of State for DCMS

Council members:

Alice Bentinck	Entrepreneur First
Professor Pete Burnap	Cardiff University
Ann Cairns	Mastercard
Dr Claire Craig	The Queen's College, Oxford
Paul Clarke	Formerly Ocado
Rachel Dunscombe	NHS Digital Academy
Tabitha Goldstaub	AI Council Chair
Professor Dame Wendy Hall	UK AI Skills Champion
Dame Patricia Hodgson	Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation
Lila Ibrahim	Deepmind
Professor Nick Jennings	Imperial College London
Adrian Joseph	BT Group
Priya Lakhani	CENTURY Tech
Professor David Lane	Edinburgh Centre for Robotics
Professor Neil Lawrence	University of Cambridge
Professor Máire O'Neill	Queen's University Belfast
Martin Tisné	Luminate
Professor Sir Mark Walport	Formerly UKRI and Government CSA
Marc Warner	Faculty

Observers:

Ottoline Leyser [Items 6 onwards]	Chief Executive, UKRI
Paul Monks [Items 1-6]	Chief Scientific Adviser, BEIS
Tom Rodden	Chief Scientific Adviser, DCMS

Officials:

Anna Angus-Smyth [For Item 7]	UKRI
Abraham Baldry [For Item 7]	Office for AI
Blake Bower	DCMS
Tom Child [For Items 1-4]	BEIS
Tim Cook	Office for AI
Dylan Evans	Office for AI
Logan Graham	10DS (10 Data Science)
Sam Hainsworth [For Item 5]	Office for AI
Sana Khareghani	Office for AI
Iarla Kilbane-Dawe [For Items 1-4]	Office for AI
Daniel Okubo [For Item 6]	DCMS
David Prodger [For Item 7]	DCMS
Nick Swanson	Office for AI
Geoffrey Thornton	Office for AI

Apologies

Professor Chris Bishop	Microsoft Research Lab
Professor Sir Adrian Smith	The Alan Turing Institute

Item 1: Chair's Welcome

- The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Apologies for absence had been received from Professor Chris Bishop and Professor Sir Adrian Smith.

- Two newly appointed members, Adrian Joseph and Lila Ibrahim, were formally welcomed and introduced to the Council.

- The Chair confirmed that Kriti Sharma had stepped down from the Council by mutual consent owing to other commitments.

- The Chair gave an update on activity occurring since the last meeting of the Council, which had included the Government's commitment to publish a National AI Strategy. Other recent outputs of the Council had included a joint publication with the Ada Lovelace Institute exploring three legal mechanisms that could help facilitate responsible data stewardship.

Item 2: Office for AI Update

- The Head of the Office for AI (OAI) thanked members for their ongoing engagement and advice to the Government. It would be important to continue gathering high-quality evidence from the wider ecosystem to inform the development of the National AI Strategy, drawing on the Council's expertise and that of their extended networks.

Item 3: Directors' Update

- The Acting Director for Business Growth and Office for AI (BEIS) and Director for Digital and Technology Policy (DCMS) provided updates on recent activity occurring across BEIS and DCMS respectively.

- Recent announcements had included the publication of the Government's 'Plan for Growth' and commitment to bring forward an Innovation Strategy in Summer 2021; the introduction of a new Bill to create an Advanced Research & Invention Agency; the creation of a new £375m fund to encourage investment in high-growth, innovative businesses (known as the 'Future Fund: Breakthrough'); the establishment of a new 'Help to Grow' programme; and the announcement of '10 Tech Priorities' for DCMS.

- In addition, work was continuing on the new National Security and Investment regime; the development of a new Digital Strategy; and the implementation of the National Data Strategy.

Item 4: AI Strategy: Introduction and Overview

- The Deputy Head (Strategy) of the OAI outlined the scope and purpose of the National AI Strategy before sharing its emerging vision and priorities.

- A discussion followed during which members shared their ambitions for the strategy and the key elements they considered would contribute to its successful development.

Item 5: Metrics & Benchmarking in AI Policy

- The Economic Adviser to the OAI gave a presentation on the challenges and opportunities for measuring the UK's strength in AI, both domestically and internationally.

- Effective monitoring and evaluation were seen as essential for ensuring that future policy interventions were having their intended impacts.

- A discussion followed during which members put forward suggestions for a range of metrics that could be used to benchmark the UK's current strengths and future performance across a range of AI fields.

Item 6: Technical Standards for AI

- The Deputy Director for Digital Standards & Internet Governance (DCMS) gave an update on the development of digital technical standards and the UK's engagement with global standards development organisations.

- Members discussed the role of government in promoting AI technical standards; the opportunities for growing participation in standards development across government, industry and academia; and the role of technical standards in building business and consumer confidence and public trust in AI technologies.

Item 7: International Update

UK G7 Presidency

- The Deputy Director for International Strategy (DCMS) highlighted the aims of the UK's G7 Presidency, which included bringing together leading democracies - including India, South Korea and Australia - to help lead the global recovery from coronavirus and strengthen resilience against future pandemics.

- The Digital and Technology Track, led by DCMS, would seek to demonstrate the G7's ambition to place the needs of open, democratic societies at the heart of the technology debate. Discussions would focus on six policy priorities: internet safety; telecoms diversification; data free flow with trust; digital facilitation of trade; digital technical standards; and digital competition.

UK-US Cooperation in AI Research and Development

- The Head of Strategy and International (OAI) and Head of Artificial Intelligence & Robotics (UKRI) gave an oral update on the shared UK-US vision for driving technological breakthroughs in AI.

- The recently passed US National Artificial Intelligence Initiative Act had expanded many existing AI policies and initiatives. As part of the announcement the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy had established a new National Artificial Intelligence Initiative Office, intended to serve as a central hub for Federal coordination and collaboration in AI research and policy making.

Item 8: Update from Secretary of State for DCMS

- The Secretary of State thanked the Council for their ongoing advice to the Government and high-level leadership of the AI ecosystem.

- New figures had shown a surge in the number of tech companies being created, with hiring levels back to pre-pandemic levels. It was clear that the tech sector, including AI, was leading the way in helping the UK to recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic and 'build back better'.

- The Secretary of State highlighted the Government's commitment to publish a National AI Strategy for the UK in 2021, announced as one of its '10 Tech Priorities' earlier that day. The Council would play a leading role in informing the development of the Strategy.

- The Chair thanked the Secretary of State attending and looked forward to working closely with the Office for AI and other officials over the coming months to support the delivery of government priorities.

- The Chair thanked Council members for their continued engagement and closed the meeting.

AI Council Secretariat