BUILDING TOMORROW'S AI

HOW THE UK WILL BECOME THE GLOBAL ARCHITECT OF TRUSTWORTHY INTELLIGENCE

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The artificial intelligence (AI) industry is moving so much faster than it has ever done before. For researchers, industry leaders and investors, understanding the landscape of AI and how it will evolve over the coming years is becoming increasingly important as AI plays a bigger role in every aspect of our professional and personal lives.

AI is no longer "just another tech wave or bubble." Unlike previous AI winters, AI technologies are working at scale across many different applications and use-cases, delivering valuable insights and productivity gains. It is rewiring energy demand, compute economics, and national competitiveness. It is fair to say that it is reshaping the focus in academia, industry, economic and political domains.

From a national perspective, the UK has a deep and long-standing reputation in the field of AI innovation, which it is desperate to continue in this new era of AI, wanting to position itself as an AI Superpower, alongside the US and China. The UK has significant research and innovation talent, which, if supported and nurtured properly, could allow the UK to define the next generation of AI capability, leading the world in responsible and trustworthy AI.

The newly signed US–UK Technology Prosperity Deal provides a political umbrella for that acceleration, alongside a headline £150bn of US investment pledges into UK projects spanning AI infrastructure, energy and advanced tech. However, the mix includes staged and indicative capital; so, operational discipline now matters more than fanfare. We also need to be cautious regarding what strings are attached with such major investment.

The UK has some unique strengths and advantages. It combines a top-tier research base with a world-leading, responsible, trustworthy and safety ecosystem, early access to frontier models via deep US relationships, and unique deployment testbeds in healthcare and finance. It has the foundations from the UK-US AI safety partnership (2024) and the AI safety institute that was setup to support it. The UK needs to concentrate where it can lead: responsible and trustworthy AI with the ability to set evaluation standards; bridge compliance regimes, and deploy AI safely; and in applied AI that delivers clear, valuable outcomes.

The next five years

With a deep heritage of AI innovation, this momentum can and should continue.

The UK AI start-up community is one of the strongest in the world and sets the foundation for huge potential over the coming years. Probably, the best previous example of this is Deepmind, spun out of UCL, bought by Google, and now its founder, Demis Hassabis, is leading the entire AI effort at Google.

First, the UK must secure compute and power quickly. This is for the UK government to ensure we have more local datacentres and the required power capacity to support them. They have investment aligned to regional infrastructure projects, so this is happening, but there might be a short-term bottleneck; this can be overcome, however, by using European or US datacentres in the short term.

Next, we need to go deep in sectors where the UK has an edge. In healthcare (NHS), focus on documentation automation, decision support, trial design and real-world evidence, paired with evaluation artefacts acceptable to clinicians and regulators. In financial services, prioritise fincrime agents, model governance and explainability, and supervisory reporting. In defence and security, advance mission planning, wargaming and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance fusion aligned with UK command doctrine. And in the public sector, scale productivity through casework automation with verified traces and well-designed fallbacks. These, plus many other applications and industries, offer UK AI start-ups great opportunities to establish themselves as innovation leaders.

If the last decade was about proving AI could work, the next will be about proving it can be trusted, scaled and governed. The UK's edge is not to outspend America or out-centralise China but to become the global architect of trustworthy, applied intelligence – where the world comes to build, prove and deploy high-stakes AI.

We have all the ingredients already: world-class research, early access to frontier models, the NHS and City as demanding testbeds for health and finance applications, and a credibility lead in evaluation and safety. The £150bn Atlantic investment wave and the Technology Prosperity Deal are accelerants, not outcomes. If we convert them into UK-owned capability – clean, firm power for compute; open evaluation standards; sovereign-friendly data and model portability; and deep deployment in healthcare, finance and defence – we lock in durable advantage rather than dependency. At the same time, we can become an outsized influence on how AI is safely adopted.

History rewards countries that match vision with build discipline. If we execute the roadmap of building the capacity, proving the safety, and deploying at scale, the UK will not just participate in the AI century; it will help set the AI standards, share in its benefits and truly be an AI Superpower alongside and supporting the US and China.

About the author

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Professor of AI and Chair of the Deep Tech Innovation Centre at the University of Warwick, Andy has 30+ years of IT, business and management experience across multiple industries, including Financial Services, Retail and Products, Media, Telecoms & Technology and Health & Public Services. He consults with CEOs and their boards on AI strategy, delivery, governance, operating model, responsible AI, ethics, innovation, change and scaling AI.

An AI influencer, thought leader, international keynote speaker, author, and community leader on AI, having an extensive network within the AI community globally. He is co-founder of AI SEIS Fund, AI VentureFlows.

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