



Department
for Culture
Media & Sport

Baroness Morgan of Huyton
Chairman, Digital Skills Committee
House of Lords
London
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Dear Baroness Morgan,

DIGITAL SKILLS REPORT

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for your comprehensive report on digital skills, which I read with great interest. I welcome both the wide range of evidence presented in the report and its contribution to raising the profile of digital skills as being vitally important to the UK. The Government will issue its response in due course.

There is one specific area where I would like to provide some clarification at this point. The report states that the Committee was not reassured that there was sufficient coordination across Government, quoting the amount of governmental activity and referring to the Digital Taskforce, a Committee and the Digital Economy Unit. There are in fact three key mechanisms in place to ensure effective coordination – my role, the Digital Economy Unit and the Digital Taskforce. I think it helpful to set out how these fit together.

Referencing Nick Boles' point on the "everythingness of digital", it will always be necessary to engage and involve a wide range of ministers on the digital agenda. In my role as Digital Minister, I ensure we are working closely together and considering cross-governmental implications. In this work, I am supported at an official level by the joint BIS-DCMS Digital Economy Unit. This Unit has been exercising its clear mandate to make sure that digital policy is designed and delivered in a coordinated way with both government and industry. The Digital Taskforce, of which I am the Deputy Chair and Francis Maude is the Chair, brings together all ministerial portfolios that can help support our efforts to drive the digital agenda, including on infrastructure, skills, open data and entrepreneurship. I should clarify that there is no separate 'Committee' and when I referred to this in my oral evidence, I was referring to the Digital Taskforce.

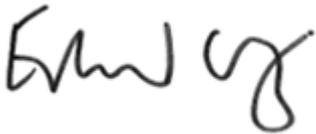
Overall, I was pleased to see that a number of your Committee's findings resonate with the Government's assessment of the key challenges that the UK needs to embrace. For example, I agree that it is essential that Government continues to work with industry to deliver apprenticeships that meet current workforce shortages. You may be aware that, in

November, we announced an innovative Degree Apprenticeship which aims to do just that. It will be co-designed with universities and industry to provide young people with an honours degree alongside up-to-date on the job training. We also announced a pilot of short-courses in high demand digital skills areas, which will be accredited by industry to ensure relevance and quality.

You may also have noted that in December we announced, through the Science and Innovation Strategy, an independent review of Computer Science degree accreditation. This review will have a key role in making sure that degree design is informed by the needs of industry and that universities are delivering graduates with the right skills for current and future jobs.

I also agree that the rollout of our Superfast Broadband Network is a key enabler for developing digital skills and the digital economy. That's precisely why more than £1bn has already been invested in our superfast rollout and city voucher scheme and why Virgin's recent announcement of a further £3bn investment in urban areas on top of the earlier £50m being invested by BT is also to be welcomed. This will add to the already extensive coverage of broadband, which already offers speeds of up to 152Mbps in urban locations, including substantial parts of London.

I wanted to draw your attention to these recent announcements and activities as further examples of the coordinated breadth of activity underway, and the commitment by Government to ensure all aspects of the digital skills pipeline deliver the skills the UK needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Vaizey', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Ed Vaizey MP

Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy