HOUSE OF LORDS
DIGITAL SKILLS COMMITTEE

DIGITAL SKILLS IN THE UK

CALL FOR EVIDENCE

The Digital Skills Committee of the House of Lords, chaired by Baroness Morgan of Huyton, is conducting an inquiry into digital skills in the UK. The Committee invites interested individuals and organisations to submit evidence to this inquiry.

Written evidence is sought by 5 September 2014. The submissions we receive will guide the Committee's deliberations in oral evidence sessions later this year, and also inform the Committee's final conclusions and recommendations. Public hearings began in early July and will continue until late November. The Committee aims to report to the House with recommendations in late January 2015. The report will receive a response from the Government, and will be debated in the House.

Background

The terms of reference for the inquiry are "to consider information and communications technology, competitiveness and skills in the United Kingdom" and to report by 5 March 2015.

The Committee has decided to set the inquiry within the policy framework of rapidly changing technology and to examine what this means for the labour market. Recent and future developments in technology are changing the world in a number of ways, both positive and negative. In one study of US occupations by the University of Oxford, for example, it was found that 47% of total employment is at risk of "computerisation".[1]

The inquiry will therefore focus on the changes to the system which are likely to occur as a consequence, and whether the UK's workforce has the necessary digital skills to deal with this change.

The Committee will examine how prepared the workforce is for these changes. The digital industries currently predict a significant skills shortage. High-tech education is increasingly becoming key in many industries. The need for digital skills can be divided into two groups: the need for a general workforce able to work in an increasingly digital environment (skills for digital competitiveness); and the need for more specialists to build and maintain that environment (high-level digital skills). Conversely, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated in 2012 that seven million people in the UK had never used the Internet.[2] The

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[1] *The Future of Employment: How Susceptible are Jobs to Computerisations*, University of Oxford (2013), http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/academic/The_Future_of_Employment.pdf
[2] *Summary of Internet Access*, ONS (2013), http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rdit2/internet-access-quarterly-update/2012-q4/sty-internet-access.html

Confederation of British Industry (CBI) surveys show that since 2008 at least half of employers have expressed concerns about IT skills in their workforce.[3]

We are keen to examine where the changing digital landscape leaves the UK in terms of global economic competitiveness. Questions in this area include:

- Are schools, further and higher education, businesses and other sectors ready for the implications of the changing digital landscape?
- What will be the implications for the Government? Are the Government prepared for these changes?
- Does the UK have the infrastructure to remain competitive with these new technologies when compared to other countries?

The Committee is keen to take evidence from a wide range of stakeholders working in a variety of sectors. This includes, but is not limited to: businesses, and their representative organisations (including small and medium enterprises); academics; local government/authorities; consultancies; sector skills councils; technology membership bodies; technology companies; telecoms companies; digital literacy groups; civil society and non-governmental organisations; European bodies; apprenticeship schemes; careers guidance bodies; education in schools; lifelong learning organisation; and organisations working with hard to reach groups.

The Committee does not intend to inquire into the content of the new computing curriculum, due to be delivered in schools from September 2014. Nor does the Committee intend to inquire into specific digital technologies.

<u>Issues</u>

The Committee seeks evidence on any aspect of this topic, and particularly on the following questions:

The changing technological landscape

1. What is the pace and change of the future digital technology landscape over the next five, 10 and 15 years? What are the leading innovations?
2. What are the main challenges for economic growth as the UK transitions to a knowledge-driven economy?
3. What is the employment impact on the UK's labour market? What are the regional differences?

Future workforce

4. What skills do future workers need in order for the UK to be globally competitive? How do the digital skills required for technical roles compare to those needed by the wider workforce to operate in a digitally competitive environment? Can the current supply chain deliver this?
5. How are we teaching students in a way that inspires and prepares them for careers in the future workforce in occupations that may not yet exist, rather than the current one? How can this be improved?

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[3] *Changing the pace*, CBI (2013), http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/2119176/education_and_skills_survey_2013.pdf

6. How are schools preparing to deliver the new computing curriculum in an innovative way?
7. How can the education system develop creativity and social skills more effectively?
8. How does the current post-16 system inspire and equip students to pursue careers in the future workforce in occupations that may not yet exist? How can this be improved?

Short- and medium-term support to the digital sector

9. How can the digital sector be supported in the short- and medium-term? What is the role for higher and vocational education, national colleges, industry, and industrial policy?
10. Is there a need for increased high skills immigration in the short-term? What are the implications of this?
11. Is there an inclusion agenda in relation to digital skills in the workplace? How are groups with protected characteristics such as older people, those with disabilities, and women, being engaged? How can this be improved?
12. What do the best local skills delivery models look like? What is the role for local Government, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and the third sector?

Industry

13. What are the barriers for businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs) preparing to operate in a knowledge-driven economy? How are these best overcome?
14. How can businesses help equip the workforce with new skills in a rapidly changing environment?

Infrastructure

15. Does the UK have a competitive infrastructure to support a knowledge-driven economy? How does the UK compare to other countries?

You need not address all these questions in your response.

Instructions for submitting written evidence

Written evidence should be submitted online using the written submission form available at http://www.parliament.uk/digital-skills-written-evidence-form. This page also provides guidance on submitting evidence. If you have difficulty submitting evidence online, please contact the Committee staff by email at digitalskillscttee@parliament.uk or by telephoning 020 7219 6612.

The deadline for written evidence is 5 September 2014.

Short submissions are preferred. A submission longer than six pages should include a one-page summary.

Paragraphs should be numbered. All submissions made through the written submission form will be acknowledged automatically by email.

Evidence should be dated, with a note of the author's name and status, and of whether the evidence is submitted on an individual or corporate basis. Where acronyms are used, such as for organisations, these should be spelt out in full when first used.

Evidence which is accepted by the Committee may be published online at any stage; when it is so published it becomes subject to parliamentary copyright and is protected by parliamentary privilege. Submissions which have been previously published will not be accepted as evidence. Once you have received acknowledgement that the evidence has been accepted you will receive a further email, and at this point you may publicise or publish your evidence yourself. In doing so you must indicate that it was prepared for the Committee, and you should be aware that your publication or re-publication of your evidence may not be protected by parliamentary privilege.

Personal contact details will be removed from evidence before publication, but will be retained by the Committee Office and used for specific purposes relating to the Committee's work, for instance to seek additional information.

Persons who submit written evidence, and others, may be invited to give oral evidence. Oral evidence is usually given in public at Westminster and broadcast online; transcripts are also taken and published online. Persons invited to give oral evidence will be notified separately of the procedure to be followed and the topics likely to be discussed.

Substantive communications to the Committee about the inquiry should be addressed through the Clerk of the Committee, whether or not they are intended to constitute formal evidence to the Committee.

This is a public call for evidence. Please bring it to the attention of other groups and individuals who may not have receive a copy directly.

You may follow the progress of the inquiry at http://www.parliament.uk/digital-skills-committee.