



**Image:** Amanda Brock at launch of "Skills or Bust" report

## Contribution and importance of open source to digital economy needs greater visibility - and it starts here

OpenUK, the not-for-profit organisation representing the UK's Open Technology sector, yesterday launched its latest report *State of Open: The UK in 2023 Phase Three "Skills or Bust"*. The report assesses and analyses the breadth and depth of open source skills in the UK and how they can be harnessed to drive growth in the UK economy.

Speaking at the launch event at the BFI, Amanda Brock, CEO OpenUK, emphasised the extent to which open source is the submarine under the digital economy. It underlies all technology ecosystems whether that be the internet, cloud, AI and ML or blockchain.

Brock commented: "76% of the average code base is open source, and we contribute 27% to the overall UK tech sector Gross Value Added (GVA) yet nobody knows we exist."

Earlier reports focused on the economics of open source whereas this latest report turns to those who crew the submarine - the UK's open source software contributors and maintainers.

Dr Jennifer Barth, Founder and CEO of Symmetry Research OpenUK's Chief Research officer presented some of the key findings of the *"Skills or Bust"* research.

Some highlights include the fact that there are 3.2 million GitHub accounts, and that there have been 31,800 UK contributors (defined here as those who have had one or more commits accepted) to open source projects in the UK, 8200 in the last 12 months. 1700 of these contributors were new. A heat map presented at the launch showed that many top contributors are based in Scotland.

The report also reveals a great deal on the pattern of demand for tech and open source skills in the UK. 77% companies are seeking programming skills in the UK with backend developers are the most sought-after by UK employers, along with cloud and DevOps engineers. These areas all remain the top priority for recruitment in the year ahead.

## Policy challenges

In addition to looking at open source skills, *"Skills or Bust"* also identifies policy areas where government can influence and inform positive outcomes.

The report identifies three key areas of policy essential in supporting UK tech sector growth. The first is the need for business skills to commercialise UK innovation ability. At present, UK universities are producing the highest quality engineers but starts-ups struggle to scale, and are acquired, usually by US investors, relatively early on. The tendency for selling up early contributes to the second policy challenge which is the need to retain and develop UK nurtured talent.

The final policy challenge is that of training more people in the right engineering and development skills and helping them build practical experience. Amanda Brock spoke of a plan to meet these challenges head on.

"The skills gap can only be partly filled by training and teaching people," she said. What we're hoping to do is at OpenUK is to start to build more experience for them.

"We are identifying people who've been taught to code and working with the code schools that a lot of people from underprivileged backgrounds go to learn to code instead of going to university. We hope to help populate a more diverse UK coding community by going to those people and

bringing a broader range of backgrounds and diversity into the people contributing. We're going to take them, we're going to work with specific projects who are willing to have a bunch of people throwing code at them and we're looking at the code projects where companies use them. As the projects evolve, there's going to be jobs at the end of it for some contributors. And we're getting engagement around specific languages. The financial sector for example likes JavaScript.

"Then we're looking to the 800 people or so who've done 10,000 or more commits to be mentors."

This is how diverse individuals can gain hands-on experience in bleeding-edge tech and these contributions can build a living, public CV on showcasing their practical capabilities to potential employers.



**Alex Davies-Jones MP and Shadow Minister (Tech and Digital Economy)**

Alex Davies-Jones, Labour MP for PontyPridd and Shadow Tech and Digital Economy Minister was present at the launch and provided a political perspective.

"I want to give the phrase 'levelling up' some meaning," Davies-Jones commented. "This is how we do it. When we talk about levelling up places like Scotland or South Wales I want them to have these opportunities. But that means change, and the pace of change in government policy is

incredibly slow. That can't work for this sector. Open source allows us to move more quickly and catch up. But we need to widen access and that's where government can help.

"We want to grow jobs in the UK and we want to keep jobs in the UK, grow the digital economy and achieve levelling up - well this is how we do it.

"I don't want to see our fantastic UK tech sector having to sell out to the US or EU to reach the next step. We have a great start-up culture in the UK but that's where it stops. My job is to help remove those barriers and work with the open source community to figure out how we do just that."

Amanda Brock agreed:

"It's time to surface the submarine and show that with the right focus and investment, we can build this sector out and use the contribution to open source projects to develop more skilled workers whilst keeping that talent here in the UK, across our cities and rural areas. This has the potential to stem the historic talent flight to the US which has stunted the UK's success. Collaboratively we can deliver the dream of being the next Silicon Valley."

SHARE



**Related Topics**

[Open Source](#) | [Careers and Skills](#) | [open-source software](#) | [open source](#) | [Open UK](#) | [openuk](#) | [skills](#)

**PREVIOUS ARTICLE**

**Rhysida threatens dark web auction of British Library data**

**NEXT ARTICLE**

**Interview: Anita Patel, First Derivative, Women in Tech Excellence Awards finalist**

## You may also like



It's time to surface the open source submarine

#### GOVERNMENT

### IT Essentials: Making a Statement

Skills investment has to go beyond the foundational level

🕒 27 November 2023 • 2 min read



#### OPEN SOURCE

### 'I had an epiphany!': OpenUK's Amanda Brock on her open source journey

Amanda Brock certainly didn't set out to be one of the most recognised faces in UK open source, rubbing shoulders with government ministers and delivering keynotes to packed halls.

🕒 08 November 2023 • 3 min read



#### CAREERS AND SKILLS

### IT Essentials: The haunting gap

The state of UK tech is spookier than any ghoul or goblin

🕒 06 November 2023 • 2 min read



AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

## Penny Horwood

Associate Editor focusing on diversity in tech and sustainability content.

[View profile](#)

### More from Penny Horwood

**Preparing for cybersecurity in the quantum age**

**Adobe plus Figma could saddle UK design firms with higher prices and worse product, says regulator**

## Most read

**01** Hackers demand £300,000 to not leak royal family's medical records

04 December 2023 • 3 min read

**02** Legal challenge launched against NHS-Palantir data deal

01 December 2023 • 2 min read

**03** Law firm service provider CTS hit by major cyberattack

**04** Microsoft warns of new ransomware campaign by

12/4/23, 12:42 PM

27 November 2023 • 2 min read

It's time to surface the open source submarine

## Twisted Spider group

01 December 2023 • 2 min read

## 05 Home Office inks £450m cloud deal with AWS amidst growing scrutiny

04 December 2023 • 2 min read

# Upcoming events

## 06 Dec

03:00PM

### WEBSITE

**Beyond the 9 to 5: How to protect yourself from “after hours” cyber attacks**

[Register now](#)

## 14 Mar

06:00PM

### AWARD

**DevOps Excellence Awards 2024**

[Register now](#)

# 02 May

06:00PM

**AWARD**

## **Security Excellence Awards 2024**

[Register now](#)



## **Sign up to our newsletter**

The best news, stories, features and photos from the day in one perfectly formed email.

[Get the newsletter](#)

## **More on Open Source**





**OPEN SOURCE**

## 'I had an epiphany': OpenUK's Amanda Brock on her open source journey

Amanda Brock certainly didn't set out to be one of the most recognised faces in UK open source, rubbing shoulders with government ministers and delivering keynotes to packed halls.



**John Leonard**

🕒 08 November 2023 • 3 min read



**OPEN SOURCE**

## **Open source can't win: Complacency has its price**

Companies are pulling the rug out from under the communities that helped them gain popularity

**Joe Brockmeier**

🕒 12 September 2023 • 5 min read



**OPEN SOURCE**

## Open source underpins business competitiveness. Are you making the most of it?

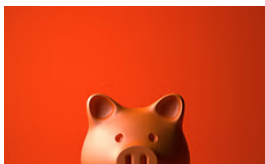
It's time to gain a deeper understanding of the world of open source and how to harness it

**Joanna Hodgson**

🕒 15 August 2023 • 6 min read

## Delta

[VIEW ALL](#)



**Cyber, cloud and automation: UK IT leaders reveal**



**Microsoft Azure V Google Cloud Platform: Which is the most**



**DevOps tool consolidation: Where**



**AWS V Microsoft Azure: Which is the most sustainable cloud platform?**

**their spending  
priorities**

**sustainable cloud  
platform?**

**rationalisation is  
happening**

---

Contact us

Marketing Solutions

About The Channel Company

Privacy Settings

Terms & Conditions

Policies

Careers

**FOLLOW US**

---

THE **CHANNEL**CO<sup>®</sup>

© The Channel Company EMEA

180 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LB. Registered in England and Wales with  
company registration number 14078896