

# Rishi bides his time on AI

by [Vincent Manancourt](#) · 9 HOURS AGO · 10 MINUTES READ

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## MORNING TECHNOLOGY UK

By VINCENT MANANCOURT

with TOM BRISTOW and LAURIE CLARKE

SNEAK PEEK

- The UK's AI white paper response is (finally) here.
- Ministers cool on proposals for a new review of social media harms.
- The AI Safety Institute loses two of its most high-profile hires.

Good morning and welcome to Tuesday,

This is Vince, readying myself for my first footy kick about since I became a dad. Don't tell me to "break a leg."

You can get in touch with your news, tips and views by emailing [Vincent Manancourt](#), [Tom Bristow](#) and [Laurie Clarke](#). You can also follow us on Twitter, [@vmanancourt](#), [@TomSBristow](#) and [@laurieclarke](#).

DRIVING THE DAY

**BIDING ITS TIME:** The U.K. government will today set out its [vision for regulating artificial intelligence](#) almost a year after it promised a light-touch "pro innovation" approach in its AI whitepaper. What's changed? Not that much actually.

**Binding rules:** While London has inched closer to considering hard rules on the tech — or at least "targeted binding measures" on the most advanced forms of general purpose AI — they've caveated it all so much that, in reality, we're pretty much where we were 10 months ago: with the government promising to think hard about possible rules.

**Questions, questions:** What the government has done is set out a series of questions (we gave you [a taster](#) yesterday) that it intends to grapple with first, before even considering any new binding measures. What it hasn't done is set tests or thresholds that would trigger legislation, and while it's careful not to call this a consultation, it says it needs to, err, consult experts on what the answers to those questions might be.

**Delay, delay:** The cautious response, coming a matter of days after the European Union reached a deal on the world's first AI rulebook and while the Biden administration is forging ahead with its executive order, doesn't exactly scream decisiveness. Europe's rulebook bans certain types of AI, and places more transparency and reporting obligations on the developers of advanced AI.

**Not happy:** Michael Birtwistle, associate director at the Ada Lovelace Institute, said there is real risk that the further delay on legislation could leave the U.K. "powerless"

to prevent AI risks. "It will take a year or longer for a government to pass legislation on AI. In a similar period we have seen general-purpose systems like ChatGPT go from a niche research area to the most quickly adopted digital product in history."

**But but but:** A wait and see approach for a technology as fast-developing as AI might not be the worst approach at this stage. The EU faces the very real challenge of now implementing a law that is the first of its kind, and the jury is out that it does a very good job at enforcing the laws that it already has ([GDPR anybody?](#)). Britain might do well to keep an eye on how the 27-member bloc fares with its own rulebook before setting out its own.

**Regulatory gaps:** Of note too is that regulators have been given until April 30 to publish their approach to managing the technology. Their response should inform a regulatory gap analysis, which has been welcomed by Greg Clark, chair of the parliamentary science and tech committee, who has previously been critical of government heel-dragging on AI.

**Backing regulators:** As part of the announcement today, the government has said it will make a £10 million fund available to help regulators ready themselves for enforcing existing rules to AI. But there's a catch: as many as 90 different regulators will have to bid for this funding, so it may look like pocket money by the time it lands in regulators' coffers.

**Steering committee:** The government is also to set up a steering committee to help coordinate regulators, which will be "complementary" to the existing Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum. It's understood a different mechanism is needed to include a greater number of affected regulators: the DRCF currently only includes the data, competition, media and financial regulators.

**Funding:** Meanwhile, nearly £90 million of UKRI funding will go to nine research hubs and a partnership with the U.S. on developing "responsible AI."

**The text:** A DSIT spokesperson said the full response will be published later today once it has been laid in the House of Commons.

**IN PARLIAMENT:** Technology Secretary Michelle Donelan will be in the Lords from 2.30 p.m. to bat off accusations the government is over-indexing on AI safety at the expense of innovation — an accusation the Lords committee made in a report last week.

**SAFETY UPDATE:** One body that sure is getting its fair share of government moolah — the newly-established AI Safety Institute — published its [third progress report](#) yesterday. It said it had started pre-deployment testing of advanced systems. (More on AISI staffing changes below.)

## AGENDA

**DONELAN QUIZZED:** The Lords' communications and digital committee get to quiz Tech Sec Michelle Donelan and DSIT director general Emran Mian [from 2:30 p.m.](#) on the day DSIT responded to its white paper consultation with... another consultation. The committee published its own report urging the government to refocus its energy on the potential benefits of AI last week.

**LORDS:** The [Automated Vehicles Bill](#) reaches report stage in the [Lords this evening](#).

**COMMONS:** The APPG on Online Safety hosts an event in parliament to mark Safer Internet Day (more below).

**STATE OF OPEN:** Officials from DSIT and the Home Office will be attending the State of Open Con in "listening mode" as it [kicks off in London today](#). Speakers include figures from the Alan Turing Institute, China Open-Source Alliance, GitHub, Amazon,

Google and hosts OpenUK. Labour's Chi Onwurah MP is delivering a plenary talk at 9:15 a.m.

**ACROSS THE POND:** Labour's shadow tech chief Peter Kyle continues his U.S. tour today after visiting officials from the National Security Council, Department of Commerce and National AI Advisory Committee in Washington yesterday.

#### AROUND THE WORLD

**CHIP WARS:** Huawei is slowing production of its flagship smartphone amid an AI chip shortage driven, at least in part, by U.S. export curbs, Reuters [reports](#).

**AI IN NEWS:** American news org Semafor is partnering with Microsoft and OpenAI to explore how it can harness generative AI to develop content. More [here](#).

**LAYOFFS:** Snap is the latest American tech firm to announce redundancies, with [plans to cut](#) 10 percent of its workforce. It comes after nearly 170,000 tech jobs were lost to layoffs last year.

**MOB RULES:** Meta's Oversight Board (MOB) has laid into the social media giant's "incoherent" policies on manipulated content, after upholding a decision not to remove a doctored video of Joe Biden. The Washington Post has [more](#).

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#### ONLINE SAFETY

**GEN ALPHA RISE UP:** Banning phones and/or social media for under-16s — a sure-fire way to radicalize Gen Alpha — was touted again over the weekend, this time by the mother of teenage murder victim Brianna Ghey in [conversation with the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg](#).

**Time for another review?** The remarks reignited interest in the proposition — one that seemed to intrigue the government itself before Christmas, when rumors swirled of an upcoming consultation on the harms of social media for children.

**Jump aboard:** Labour MP Charlotte Nichols expressed support for the idea [on BBC radio yesterday](#), while long-time online safety crusader, Tory MP Miriam Cates, championed the idea in parliament last month. But PM Rishi Sunak declined to say whether the government would consider the proposal.

**As for the under-16s social media review:** We've heard whispers that it's not currently being progressed. Recent government statements also seem to hint at this. Asked about it in parliament last month, Sunak reiterated the importance of the Online Safety Act in the government's approach, as did Education Secretary Gillian Keegan on the Sunday broadcast round. And DSIT has always called the reporting "speculative." Looks like Gen Alpha can heave a sigh of relief, for now.

**LABOUR SPEAKS:** Following Shadow Tech Sec Peter Kyle's demands for the putative Instagram-to-dark-web pipeline [to be examined more closely](#), Labour is now urging the government to ban "ninja swords" and make tech execs legally liable for failing to prevent their online marketplaces, such as Amazon Marketplace, eBay, and Instagram, being used to facilitate illegal knife sales.

#### MOVERS & SHAKERS

**AISI:** As we reported yesterday, the AI Safety Institute has appointed two new research directors in Geoffrey Irving and Chris Summerfield. But yesterday it [confirmed](#) that two

of its most senior researchers are leaving after less than six months.

**Returning to other projects:** David Krueger is “returning to his work in academia and advocacy around AI safety” and Rumman Chowdhury, who was named as a new research director in October, is departing “in part so that she can continue to focus on her other projects in this field.”

**DSIT JOBS:** DSIT is advertising for two important sounding roles: a [head of access to finance and skills policy](#) and a [head of data governance and strategy](#).

**PA OPENING:** Hill & Knowlton is looking for a senior associate for its technology, entertainment and commerce practice. Apply [here](#).

**WORK IN CYBER:** Cybersecurity firm Darktrace is after a London-based public policy manager. Apply [here](#).

**BUSY IN TRAY:** With Vodafone’s planned merger with Three UK coming under scrutiny from regulators and MPs, it is looking for a government affairs manager. Apply [here](#).

## BEFORE YOU GO

**CHIP IN:** As we reported yesterday, we’re expecting a chips announcement later this week. But before that, Tech Minister Saqib Bhatti has told British chip firms to “spread the word” about existing funding opportunities that they are not currently using, [according to City A.M.](#)

**THAT’S A FAIR BIT OF DOSH:** DSIT and UKRI are [inviting bids](#) from providers to “host and operate large-scale compute systems for artificial intelligence.” The host site or sites will be expected to host 2,000 GPUs “or equivalent AI-optimised compute architecture” by 2026 at the latest. It’s part of a £500 million expansion of the AI Research Resource announced in the autumn statement.

**FAB FIVE:** The [University of Cambridge’s AI program](#) has chosen five projects to fund which will use AI to tackle challenges in fertility, mental health, climate change, language and local government.

**COMMUNITY FIRST:** A [new report from Careful Trouble](#) argues that “Britain is stuck in a place where existing technologies are not delivering essential benefits,” due to an unbalanced focus on moonshots and little attention to the “everyday reality of technology rollout and adoption.” It calls for the next government to “engage with the power of community innovation” built on top of affordable connectivity.

**DONE DEAL:** News publisher Reach has signed a deal with Amazon to sell customer data for [online advertising](#).

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