Open Menu ⌄

OpenUK launches "The Open Manifesto - Report"

Highlighting how the new government can boost the UK through open source.

📅 5 days ago   Posted in

OpenUK, the non-profit organisation representing the UK's Open Technology sector, has launched its new report, State of Open: The UK in 2024, Phase 2: "The Open Manifesto".The report has '3 asks' for the new government on how to best support open technology to enable it to supercharge the UK economy.

Skills development – build open source skills across the UK to create jobs that will fill the skills gap, bring jobs to the rural economy and stem migration

Enable the public sector to do open source – build the next generation of public sector open source engagement, using the UK's late mover advantage to leapfrog the Open Source Program Office of other countries

AI Openness – open and share AI's algorithms, and scientific insights to enable innovation, to bring trust through transparency and enable the economy through innovation using AI to its full potential.

On Skills: Working with data mined from GitHub on a quarterly basis, OpenUK is able to chart the open source contributions in the UK - with 3.6m GitHub account holders, 5% of the UK's population - the UK remains the highest per capita number of any country in the world. The UK retains its position as #1 in Europe in open source, but France is now the fastest growing open source country thanks to Macron's pro-open source approach. The new government must look to support our open source community to ensure that the UK's digital economy does not lose its position of strength.

On the public Sector: The report includes thought leadership from journalist Will Hutton, Mike Bracken, founder of Public Digital and former UK Government Digital Director

"The values of the 'We economy and society' closely align with the values of openness - open innovation, open data, and open source software – that is driving the digital economy. They will enable a digital future which is intentionally collaborative and which thus democratises technology. 'Fellowship is the hope of the world' declared the nineteenth century artist, champion of guilds and political thinker William Morris. There is no fellowship without openness: it is collaboration harnessed to individual energy that is the ultimate source of wealth creation. Opening up tech thus enables innovation, increases competition and many new market entrants.

To meet the needs of a 'We economy' the UK's innovation strategy must be true to our long term open source-first policy and deliver usage of technology and the technology in which our public sector invests to be well managed open source. Public money for public code. This will enable greater interoperability and competition, allowing new entrants into the market and enabling greater choice of provider." Will Hutton, journalist

The UK public sector must hone its skills and use its late-mover advantage in structuring its curation - the good practices in management - of open source. Public sector funding could also create a massive advantage if funding practices are matured with an evolved understanding of open source and how ecosystems and businesses are built around it. Public bodies can learn to properly utilise the country's existing advantages in open source, with the potential to revolutionise government efficiency and fly the flag for the UK's open source community on the world stage

"Opening up starts with policy. For too long we tailor ever more detailed policy 'solutions' and then procure their delivery from closed technology supply chains. This has to stop immediately, but starting with clear policy intent and giving teams inside and outside the public sector the opportunities to rapidly scale answers to policy questions." "The UK has a solid body of open source in operation and a talented, committed set of professionals curating it. What is lacking, is the open governance, with a central standards body capable

of driving adoption and control across the public estate. As a result, our pace of adoption has not matched our pace of understanding and as the world's first open source first policy holder". Mike Bracken Founder Public Digital

On opening AI: The most recent thinking on the meaning of openness/ open source in AI focuses on the risk of exemptions in the forthcoming AI Act and the possibility of "open washing" - the abuse of this term to take advantage of the exemptions. This focuses on the disaggregation of the components of Gen AI to understand their openness and was released by the University of Radboud. Co-author Assistant Professor Andreas Liesenfeld who has written for the report and who will also deliver a keynote before joining fellow keynote speaker Neil Lawrence, DeepMind Professor of Machine Learning in a panel exploring what openness means in AI.

The UK's data gap in AI will be discussed by Sonia Cooper, Assistant General Counsel at Microsoft, Professor Elena Simperl, Professor of Computer Science at King's College London and Lee Fulmer, former committee Chair at the Bank of England and Chair of OpenUK's new Finance Advisory Board. They will tackle the data scraping question deemed "too difficult" by the UK Intellectual Property Office. The issue around AI's use of data is critical to the UK, yet the "political heft" requested by the House of Lords has not been thrown behind this issue and AI in the UK is detrimentally impacted.

"Last year, I talked about the UK's open source business folk and contributors as a submarine powering our digital economy. That submarine is beginning to surface and the new Government heralds an opportunity for the UK's policymakers to leverage the UK's open source and open data skills to enable them to power the future of the UK's tech industries.

"The Open Manifesto is a rallying cry to develop skills that will enable jobs in our left-behind rural communities. It's also a call to seize our late-mover advantage in the public sector, to build the next generation of open source skills and management across the UK public sector. Only by doing this will the digital infrastructure we all rely on today be allowed to flourish. This will both revolutionise the UK's public services and bolster our already strong homegrown community. Finally, The Open Manifesto report is a reminder that there is no AI future in the UK without it having an open heart. The UK could be the next 'Silicon Valley' – if our new leaders unlock this potential." said Amanda Brock, CEO, OpenUK.

Share this article:

LINKEDIN   TWITTER   FACEBOOK   EMAIL