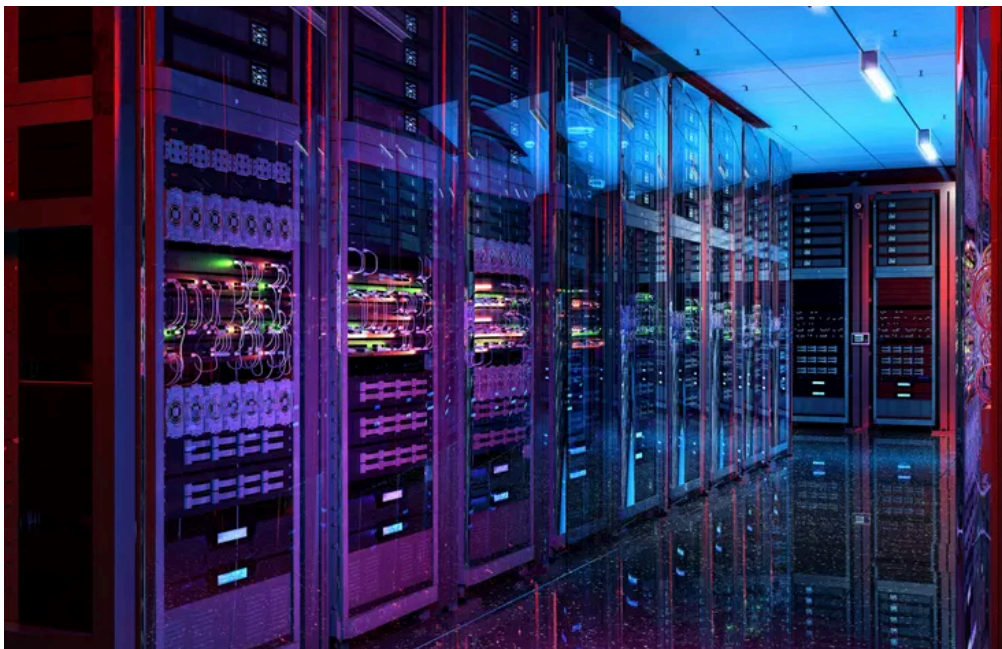# Labour Party Conference: UK risks being left behind in AI

Ability to excel in AI depend on our infrastructure

Amanda Brock

🕐 25 September 2024 • 4 min read

SHARE

Instead of worrying about AI taking jobs, we should be more concerned that the UK's infrastructure can't support it, says OpenUK CEO Amanda Brock.

OpenUK had the opportunity two host two of the first tech events taking place at the Labour Party conference on Sunday, its first day. In light of recent actions by the new government to lift certain restraints on datacentre planning, and DSIT's re

categorisation of datacentres as critical national infrastructure, it was surprising that the OpenUK panel was the only scheduled tech event focusing on datacentres when they are so critical to the conversation.

As digital services require proce_____our AI future - the volume of AI across Europe - sees a fraction of AI in the UK. The UK has slipped on the T_____ve see France and Germany nipping at our heels generally. France has in fact pushed ahead of the UK in s_____, thanks to Macron's policies.
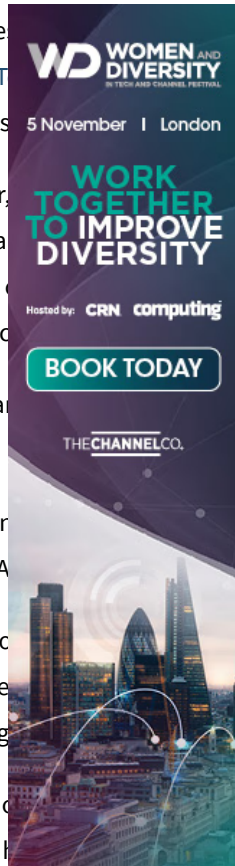
The UK wants to be an AI leader_____el and lead in this space will depend on our infrastructure and datacentres. This moves the dia_____gic level, considering the overall platform and data landscape focused on both sustainability - not just _____stainable development goals and longevity – and the conversation around energy availability and c_____

The questions around this are a_____ right energy to the right place at the right price, according to panellist Emma Fryer of Cyrus One.

The panellists also included Dan_____ked to the government position, while Dan Scarbrough, of network provider Steila, explained that A_____or accelerated compute, with others to follow.

The future, panellists said, is mo_____smaller datacentres. With the internet turning 40, our information superhighways need a fundame_____an energy-efficient datacentre is actually the easy bit; what we need to look at are the broader challeng_____

We are worried about AI taking d_____we should be more concerned that the UK doesn't have the competitive infrastructure to enable that to h_____

Opening AI

In a week where several sessions are billed as "open source AI" with no open source expertise, OpenUK's second event (carefully named "Opening AI") was equally important as the datacentre discussion.

Both Sara Edwards MP and Lisa Jones MP joined the panel, which took the time to delve into the meaning of open source AI – which, despite its inclusion in the EU AI Act, currently has no definition - and how it might be defined.

Certainly, it is clear that open source AI does not have a clear and accepted meaning today. Those claiming their AI is open source are not meeting the free flow standards of the definition of open source software, but often include the restrictions on users or usage that have led to claims of open washing.

Sarah Edwards' hope - that we make few mistakes and take the time to be clear on the meaning of terms used as we move to an AI bill - was well received and gave hope that the new government will take time to listen and understand. Lisa Jones rightly pushed the skills agenda and highlighted the need for a skilled workforce.

What came across clearly in both sessions is that, post-Brexit, the UK has a tech sector opportunity to leap ahead of Europe. That isn't happening in AI or even in storage, as Stewart Laing at Asanti pointed out: there are a number of procurement exercises that require cloud-first only.

If we want to meet this future challenge, then our policies must be right. This must be true not only of legislation, but the various ways in which a market is going to be shaped: from building adequate skills across a large enough workforce, to ensuring procurement processes and terms are fit for purpose. Access to compute and GPUs must be at the top of our Government's agenda.

As Dan Aldridge pointed out, "the same old voices" will not be the right ones to change that. A fresh government needs to "hear from fresh voices," and we believe this includes those working globally in deep tech in both AI and open source.

OpenUK certainly started the La_____ e off with the right people's voices in the room, but as always the concern of the small players is t_____ drowned out and overlooked.

SHARE

Related Topics
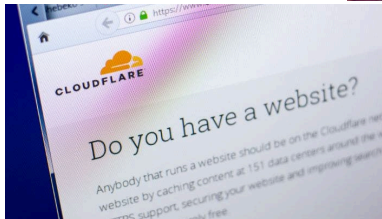
Datacentre | Artificial Intelligence | D_____ | Open Data | openuk | UK government

You may also lik___

AI

Cloudflare launches toolset to empower small publishers against AI scraper bots 🔒

Cloudflare announced yesterday the launch of a series of tools to stop AI bots scraping websites without consent. It's the first part of a larger plan.

🕐 24 September 2024 • 3 min read

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
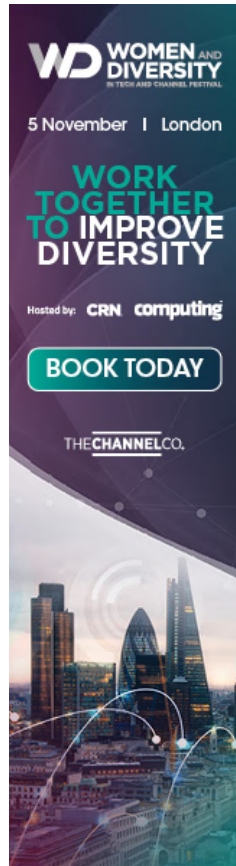
AI adoption begins with regulation 🔒

Panellists at Computing's IT Leaders Summit argued that managing risk is the key to innovation.

🕐 24 September 2024 • 3 min read

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

UK to bring AI developers together in San Francisco 🔒

🕐 19 September 2024 • 2 min read

Most read

01   **CrowdStrike apologises for global IT outage**

26 September 2024 • 4 min read

02   **Amazon employees 'strongly dissatisfied' with mandatory return-to-office policy**

26 September 2024 • 4 min read

03   **Wi-fi hacked at railway stations to show anti-Islam message**

26 September 2024 • 2 min read

04   **NHS announces extra £1b to accelerate digital transition** 🔒

25 September 2024 • 3 min read

05   **Post Office IT's rush for discount led to mistakes and delays** 🔒

25 September 2024 • 3 min read