

FORWARD,  
TOGETHER

Our Plan for a  
Stronger Britain and a  
Prosperous Future

THE CONSERVATIVE AND UNIONIST PARTY  
MANIFESTO 2017

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## 5. PROSPERITY AND SECURITY IN A DIGITAL AGE

## **Theresa May's Conservatives will deliver**

- The world's most dynamic digital economy, giving digital businesses access to the investment, skills and talent they need to succeed.
- Protections for people's data online, backed by a new data protection law.
- Safety for children online, and new rights to require social media companies to delete information about young people as they turn eighteen.
- Digital government and public services, using data and digital technology to transform school choice, local services and issues like planning and social care.
- New rules for the digital economy, underpinned by domestic regulation and international partnership.
- Security online, with unprecedented investment in cyber security and stronger cyber standards for government and public services.

**T**he opportunities and threats arising from the advance of digital technology pose significant practical and philosophical challenges to people, communities and governments around the world. These new technologies provide us with new and faster ways to communicate, learn, travel, have fun and do business. They accelerate the pace of change – ushering in new norms in the space of years rather than decades; challenging our laws and regulations to keep pace.

The UK has always been at the forefront of such changes, from the earliest days of computing to the development of the World Wide Web. Today, we continue that tradition with our world-leading digital economy, boasting particular expertise in artificial intelligence, cyber security, gaming, FinTech, GovTech, and virtual reality. We are optimistic about the opportunities on offer in the digital age, but we understand these opportunities come with new challenges and threats – to our security, privacy, emotional wellbeing, mental health and the safety of our children. A Conservative government will respond to these challenges, to assure the British people of security and fairness in the new digital age, and to strengthen the UK's position as one of the world's leading digital economies.

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## A DIGITAL CHARTER

**For hundreds of years, the United Kingdom has determined the rules and formed the environment where new ideas and new technologies prosper – from financial markets to the steam train to human embryology and the code of life itself. Our wealth and security as a nation is founded on our ability to shape the future not just for ourselves but for the world. Now we must do it again, to create the rules-based framework in which the new technologies can create prosperity and growth.**

A Conservative government will develop a digital charter, working with industry and charities to establish a new framework that balances freedom with protection for users, and offers opportunities alongside obligations for businesses and platforms. This charter has two fundamental aims: that we will make Britain the best place to start and run a digital business; and that we will make Britain the safest place in the world to be online.

### **The best place for digital business**

Britain's future prosperity will be built on our technical capability and creative flair. Through our modern industrial strategy and digital strategy, we will help digital companies at every stage of their growth. We will help innovators and startups, by

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encouraging early stage investment and considering further incentives under our world-leading Enterprise Investment Scheme and Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme. We will help digital businesses to scale up and grow, with an ambition for many more to list here in the UK, and open new offices of the British Business Bank in Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Manchester and Newport, specialising in the local sector. As we set out in chapter one, we will ensure digital businesses have access to the best talent from overseas to compete with anywhere in the world. This will be complemented by at least one new institute of technology in the UK, dedicated to world-leading digital skills and developed and run in partnership with the tech industry. When we leave the European Union, we will fund the British Business Bank with the repatriated funds from the European Investment Fund.

We will ensure there is a sustainable business model for high-quality media online, to create a level playing field for our media and creative industries. We will help provide the skills and digital infrastructure that creative companies need and will seek to build upon the favourable tax arrangements that have helped them, including the highly successful creative industries tax credits scheme. We will ensure there is a robust system for protection of intellectual property when the UK has left the EU, with strong protections against infringement.

We will make doing business online easier for companies and consumers. We will give businesses the right to insist on a digital signature and the right to digital cancellation of contracts. We will oblige all digital companies to provide digital receipts, clearer terms and conditions when selling goods and services online and support new digital proofs of identification. We will give consumers the same protections in online markets as they have on the high street. For broadband customers, we will make broadband switching easier and pricing more transparent.

We will ensure that consumers and businesses have access to the digital infrastructure they need to succeed. By the end of this year, 19 out of 20 premises will have access to superfast broadband and our Universal Service Obligation will ensure that by 2020 every home and every business in Britain has access to high speed broadband. We will work to provide gigaspeed connectivity to as many businesses and homes as possible. We will introduce a full fibre connection voucher for companies across the country by 2018 and by 2022 we will have major fibre spines in over a hundred towns and cities, with ten million premises connected to full fibre and a clear path to national coverage over the next decade.

We have similar ambitions for mobile phone coverage. By 2022 we will extend mobile coverage further to 95 per cent geographic coverage of the UK. By the same date, all major roads and main line trains will enjoy full and uninterrupted mobile phone signal, alongside guaranteed WiFi internet service on all such trains. We will continue to release

more spectrum from public sector use to allow greater private sector access and begin the roll-out of a new 5G network, providing gigaspeed connection to your smart phone. We plan to have the majority of the population covered by a 5G signal by 2027.

## **The safest place to be online**

In harnessing the digital revolution, we must take steps to protect the vulnerable and give people confidence to use the internet without fear of abuse, criminality or exposure to horrific content. Our starting point is that online rules should reflect those that govern our lives offline. It should be as unacceptable to bully online as it is in the playground, as difficult to groom a young child on the internet as it is in a community, as hard for children to access violent and degrading pornography online as it is in the high street, and as difficult to commit a crime digitally as it is physically.

Where technology can find a solution, we will pursue it. We will work with industry to introduce new protections for minors, from images of pornography, violence, and other age-inappropriate content not just on social media but in app stores and content sites as well. We will put a responsibility on industry not to direct users – even unintentionally – to hate speech, pornography, or other sources of harm. We will make clear the responsibility of platforms to enable the reporting of inappropriate, bullying, harmful or illegal content, with take-down on a comply-or-explain basis.

We will continue to push the internet companies to deliver on their commitments to develop technical tools to identify and remove terrorist propaganda, to help smaller companies build their capabilities and to provide support for civil society organisations to promote alternative and counter-narratives. In addition, we do not believe that there should be a safe space for terrorists to be able to communicate online and will work to prevent them from having this capability.

We will educate today's young people in the harms of the internet and how best to combat them, introducing comprehensive Relationships and Sex Education in all primary and secondary schools to ensure that children learn about the risks of the internet, including cyberbullying and online grooming.

Where we believe people need more protections to keep them safe, we will act to protect them. We will give people new rights to ensure they are in control of their own data, including the ability to require major social media platforms to delete information held about them at the age of 18, the ability to access and export personal data, and an expectation that personal data held should be stored in a secure way. To create a sound ethical framework for how data is used, we will institute an expert Data Use and Ethics Commission to advise regulators and parliament on the nature of data use and how best to prevent its abuse. The Commission will help us to develop the principles and rules that will give people confidence that their data is being handled properly. Alongside

this commission, we will bring forward a new data protection law, fit for our new data age, to ensure the very best standards for the safe, flexible and dynamic use of data and enshrining our global leadership in the ethical and proportionate regulation of data. We will put the National Data Guardian for Health and Social Care on a statutory footing to ensure data security standards are properly enforced.

We will continue with our £1.9 billion investment in cyber security and build on the successful establishment of the National Cyber Security Centre through our world-leading cyber security strategy. We will make sure that our public services, businesses, charities and individual users are protected from cyber risks. We will further strengthen cyber security standards for government and public services, requiring all public services to follow the most up to date cyber security techniques appropriate.

## **A free media**

At a time when the internet is changing the way people obtain their news, we also need to take steps to protect the reliability and objectivity of information that is essential to our democracy and a free and independent press. We will ensure content creators are appropriately rewarded for the content they make available online. We will be consistent in our approach to regulation of online and offline media. Given the comprehensive nature of the first stage of the Leveson Inquiry and given the lengthy investigations by the police and Crown Prosecution Service into alleged wrongdoing, we will not proceed with the second stage of the Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press. We will repeal Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2014, which, if enacted, would force media organisations to become members of a flawed regulatory system or risk having to pay the legal costs of both sides in libel and privacy cases, even if they win.

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# **DIGITAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES**

**We believe government should not only be exceptional in dealing digitally with the people it serves but should also at the forefront of using digital technology in all its systems so that it can deliver better public services.**

We will therefore create a new presumption of digital government services by default and an expectation that all government services are fully accessible online, with assisted digital support available for all public sector websites. We will publish far more information about public services online, including relevant information about local issues and public transport so that every person can find out up to date information about roadworks, planning applications and bus routes online, without the hassle and

delay that currently exists. We will create new 'schools maps' to help parents choose the school that is right for their child, giving them key information about quality of teaching, attainment and the curriculum of local schools as they choose their school preferences to support their decisions.

We will publish operational performance data of all public-facing services for open comparison as a matter of course—helping the public to hold their local services to account, or choose other better services if they prefer. In doing so, central and local government will be required to release information regularly and in an open format, and data will be aggregated and anonymised where it is important to do so. We will incubate more digital services within government and introduce digital transformation fellowships, so that hundreds of leaders from the world of tech can come into government to help deliver better public services. We will continue the drive for open data, maintaining our position as the world leader.

If we are to make full use of this opportunity, we must use common platforms across government and the wider public sector. That must start with the way we identify ourselves online, so that people have one single, common and safe way of verifying themselves to all parts of government. That is why we shall roll out Verify, so that people can identify themselves on all government online services by 2020, using their own secure data that is not held by government. We will also make this platform more widely available, so that people can safely verify their identity to access non-government services such as banking. We will set out a strategy to rationalise the use of personal data within government, reducing data duplication across all systems, so that we automatically comply with the 'Once-Only' principle in central government services by 2022 and wider public services by 2025.

We also want to use digital innovation to help tackle the great challenge of an ageing population, in conjunction with our social care reforms set out in chapter four. We will support new providers seeking to use digital technology to monitor long-term conditions better, deploy carers to patients or support better domiciliary care away from hospitals.

## **Digital infrastructure**

Digital technology will also transform the management of our national infrastructure. We are leading the world in preparing for autonomous vehicles and will press ahead with our plans to use digital technology to improve our railways, so that our roads and tracks can carry more people, faster, more safely and more efficiently. Smart grids will make the most efficient use of our electricity infrastructure and electric vehicles, and we will use technology to manage our airspace better to reduce noise pollution and improve capacity. We will step up our programme of support for businesses developing these new technologies, creating a better environment for them to be tested in the UK.

## Digital land

And we will use digital technology to release massive value from our land that currently is simply not realised, introducing greater specialisation in the property development industry and far greater transparency for buyers. To make this happen, we will combine the relevant parts of HM Land Registry, Ordnance Survey, the Valuation Office Agency, the Hydrographic Office and Geological Survey to create a comprehensive geospatial data body within government, the largest repository of open land data in the world. This new body will set the standards to digitise the planning process and help create the most comprehensive digital map of Britain to date. In doing so, it will support a vibrant and innovative digital economy, ranging from innovative tools to help people and developers build to virtual mapping of Britain for use in video games and virtual reality.

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# A FRAMEWORK FOR DATA AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

**Some people say that it is not for government to regulate when it comes to technology and the internet.** We disagree. While we cannot create this framework alone, it is for government, not private companies, to protect the security of people and ensure the fairness of the rules by which people and businesses abide. Nor do we agree that the risks of such an approach outweigh the potential benefits. It is in the interests of stable markets that consumers are protected from abusive behaviour, that money is able to flow freely and securely, and that competition between businesses takes place on a level playing field. It is in no-one's interest for the foundations of strong societies and stable democracies – the rule of law, privacy and security – to be undermined.

So we will establish a regulatory framework in law to underpin our digital charter and to ensure that digital companies, social media platforms and content providers abide by these principles. We will introduce a sanctions regime to ensure compliance, giving regulators the ability to fine or prosecute those companies that fail in their legal duties, and to order the removal of content where it clearly breaches UK law. We will also create a power in law for government to introduce an industry-wide levy from social media companies and communication service providers to support awareness and preventative activity to counter internet harms, just as is already the case with the gambling industry.

Just as we led the world in regulating embryology thirty years ago, we know that if we create the right system of governance for the digital economy and use of data, we will attract the right businesses who want to become the global centre for data use and research.

## **An international settlement**

These are questions with which every nation is grappling. The internet is a global network and it is only by concerted global action that we can make true progress.

We believe that the United Kingdom can lead the world in providing answers. So we will open discussions with the leading tech companies and other like-minded democracies about the global rules of the digital economy, to develop an international legal framework that we have for so long benefited from in other areas like banking and trade. We recognise the complexity of this task and that this will be the beginning of a process, but it is a task which we believe is necessary and which we intend to lead.

By doing these things – a digital charter, a framework for data ethics, and a new international agreement – we will put our great country at the head of this new revolution; we will choose how technology forms our future; and we will demonstrate, even in the face of unprecedented change, the good that government can do.

# CONCLUSION

**T**his is our plan for a stronger Britain and a prosperous future. This is our vision of a nation united, of shared opportunity, of safe, vibrant and sustainable communities and of a Great Meritocracy, where everyone, in every part of our country, is given the chance to go wherever their talents will take them. In this period of profound national change, we will only achieve our ambitions if we have the strong and stable leadership our national interest demands. With Theresa May and her team, we will secure the best possible deal with the European Union and chart a course to a new global future. Now is the time that we must show, once again, our strength as a nation and the character of our united people. We shall succeed, if we go forward, together.