# UK backs SMEs to lead in AI revolution



The UK is intensifying efforts to become a global AI leader, placing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) at the heart of its strategy. With more than £2 billion committed to the AI Opportunities Action Plan, the government is investing in infrastructure, skills and trust to ensure that AI delivers benefits across all sectors. The scale of change is clear. According to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, 10 million jobs will involve AI within a decade, with nearly 4 million people working directly in the field. For SMEs—who make up 99% of UK businesses—unlocking AI’s potential could be transformative, but only if the tools and knowledge are accessible. Many small firms face the dual challenge of adopting AI while managing daily operations. From family-run restaurants to high street retailers, business owners need confidence and practical support. Government-backed skills training aims to close this gap, especially for startups and scaleups seeking room to experiment and grow. Professions often seen as routine are also being reshaped. In accountancy, for example, AI is automating tasks like expense processing and anomaly detection, freeing professionals to focus on real-time analysis and advisory work. This shift could help attract younger talent by reframing the profession as more strategic and tech-forward. The AI Opportunities Action Plan sets out a bold roadmap to 2030. It includes a 20-fold expansion of sovereign AI compute capacity, new AI Growth Zones to foster regional innovation, and an AI Energy Council to oversee sustainable infrastructure. The plan also promotes open public data, supports the AI Safety Institute and boosts talent pipelines through training and development. Crucially, this is not just a high-level vision. AI Growth Zones will offer real-world testbeds for innovation, while the AI Opportunities Unit will monitor progress and ensure delivery. By combining long-term ambition with near-term action, the government aims to embed AI into the everyday economy. Industry response has been positive. Tech companies have pledged billions to build UK-based data centres and create jobs, bolstering the public-private partnership driving this agenda forward. Challenges remain. Many entrepreneurs still view AI as complex or intimidating. Building trust—especially among time-poor business owners—will be key. That means showing how AI can simplify tasks, cut costs and open up new growth paths. Taken together, the UK’s strategy reflects a commitment to inclusive, responsible AI leadership. For businesses and workers alike, it signals a future where AI supports—not replaces—human potential. The next step is making sure that ambition translates into everyday realities across Britain’s economy.

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## Bibliography

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3. <https://www.burges-salmon.com/articles/102jtpd/uk-ai-opportunities-action-plan-and-government-response-published/> - Burges Salmon provides an analysis of the UK's AI Opportunities Action Plan and the government's response. The article discusses the plan's focus on building AI infrastructure, including a long-term investment commitment and the creation of AI Growth Zones. It also highlights the government's endorsement of the plan's recommendations, such as increasing sovereign AI compute capacity and supporting the AI Safety Institute. The response outlines specific actions and timelines for implementation within the next 12 months.
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7. <https://em360tech.com/tech-article/ai-opportunities-action-plan-uk> - Enterprise Tech News EM360Tech reports on the UK's AI Opportunities Action Plan and the associated £14 billion investment from tech companies. The article details the commitments from Vantage Data Centres, Nscale, and Kyndryl to build AI infrastructure in the UK, including data centres and AI-related jobs. It discusses the establishment of AI Growth Zones and the plan's focus on enhancing the UK's AI capabilities to drive economic growth and innovation.