



Public Accounts Committee

**Catherine Little CB
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Permanent Secretary
Cabinet Office**

By email to PSCatherineLittle@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

05 March 2026

AI efficiencies

Dear Permanent Secretary,

Thank you for your letter of 23 January 2025 setting out further details on the potential of AI to improve the productivity of the public sector workforce. It was useful to understand some of the research underpinning your assumptions about what is, in theory, possible. The information you presented does however raise further questions, not least, how was the curiously specific '26 minutes saved per person per day' calculated?

Given well understood limitations in the government's information systems these data are presumably self-reported, and an average figure based on the distribution in the sample. They may therefore not be representative of the actual time saved, or likely to be saved. We would be grateful for further detail on the methodology and conclusions, including clearer information over which tasks were analysed and whether any groups or tasks were excluded.

But leaving aside the specifics of these estimates, there are bigger questions about how any projected time savings might be translated into benefits to the public sector, and whether these benefits would outweigh the associated costs of implementation, such as new roles or infrastructure associated with cyber security and maintenance, licences and subscription fees, training time and so on. How have you taken into account projected associated costs?

In April 2025, 5.5% of civil servants had expertise in digital. We know that GDS is working to increase the proportion of digital, data and cyber professionals to 10%. I'd be grateful if you could let the Committee know what plans you have to achieve this.

As the Committee has explored countless times, government has a poor track record of implementing digital change successfully, and must overcome some enduring and



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fundamental barriers such as poor data, a lack of skills and legacy IT systems. I would welcome a response that explains how you will address these barriers to securing the potential benefits of AI to the public sector through an integrated implementation plan. You may wish to refer back to our eighteenth report of this session on the Use of AI in Government. The recent roadmap for modern digital government describes a number of initiatives, but is short on detail as to precisely how and by when these will deliver the expected productivity gains.

I would be grateful for a response by 23 March 2026.

I am copying this letter to the Treasury Officer of Accounts and to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Yours Sincerely

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts