

Red Hat feedback to request from [MP Dan Aldridge](#) re AI inquiry

London, 1 May 2026

Thank you for your request today for Red Hat to provide some *initial* perspectives into the UK government Inquiry on Artificial Intelligence, business and the future of the workforce:

1. **The Risk of Lock-in:** We are concerned by the possibility that the UK is on the verge of spending billions on inflexible, proprietary AI infrastructure. Without immediate policy intervention, the UK risks a quasi-repeat of its cloud journey and thus locking much of its AI future into a small number of closed architectures. The government is committing up to £250 million on AI compute through the AIRR programme and has secured up to £30 billion in private investment. We urge policy makers to ensure the inclusion of open interoperability standards before these contracts are finalised so as to avoid a multi-year vendor lock-in thanks to genuine choice to use a wider range of technology solutions.
2. **Widespread "Shadow AI" and fragmentation:** Despite 83% of UK organisations believing the UK can become an AI powerhouse, 89% report they are not currently delivering customer value from AI, and 83% are experiencing "shadow AI" (i.e. unapproved tool usage). Approximately 467 government organisations are independently building AI infrastructure and solving the same problems in parallel, leading to massive fragmentation. While 87% of UK organisations report using agentic AI systems, only 25% have strong governance frameworks in place. Furthermore, 45% report only partial visibility over where their data is actually processed. Current government procurement frameworks risk locking out open source AI companies and thereby dramatically restricting genuine IT choice and access to cutting-edge technologies.
3. **Task Reshaping, Not Job Elimination:** AI will fundamentally reshape structured knowledge work (e.g. civil service, healthcare administration, finance). Relying solely on closed, proprietary AI transfers professional accountability to "black-box" systems. This risks deskilling workers who cannot audit, explain, or defend the AI-generated decisions they rely on - especially in the context of providing government services to its citizens. Moreover, a resilient economy requires explicitly funding new high-skill jobs, such as model evaluators, fine-tuning specialists, and AI governance practitioners.
4. **A Three-Part Strategy:** although still part of our initial assessment, we currently feel that the following approach could significantly address these aforementioned concerns:

1. **A UK Sovereign AI Platform:** Establish a single, open interoperability standard ensuring AI can run across any UK compute environment (including hyperscalers, high-performance computing, and UK neocloud providers, which are growing at 69% per year). Create a British Model Library (for validated, shared models) and a National AI Asset Register (to audit deployed AI systems);
 2. **A UK AI Innovation Hub:** Evolve the government's i.AI into a permanent Open Source AI Lab to build reusable tools. Launch a UK Open Source AI Accelerator which could be co-designed with Red Hat to connect startups with enterprise clients. Fund specific sovereign AI engineering roles to distribute high-skill tech employment regionally.
 3. **Systemic and Procurement Fixes:** Create a Government Open Source Programme Office (OSPO) to coordinate reuse across departments and end duplication. Reform procurement frameworks to factor in the total cost of ownership (including vendor lock-in costs) so open-source companies can compete fairly. Mandate explainability and transparency for AI systems used in consequential decision-making.
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5. **A Middle Powers Coalition:** The UK cannot outspend the US or China on frontier models but it can lead in AI ecosystem governance. Moreover, as the UK's AI minister recently pledged, the UK should become "the home of global open source AI talent". To help cement this leadership, there's an opportunity for the UK to host another global AI summit (similar to [Bletchley Park](#) in 2023) by hosting a global open-source AI summit. The UK can co-develop its standards for trusted, interoperable AI with allied nations. This initiative could be prepared over the coming months with other likeminded countries like France and India and then announced at the upcoming AI summit taking place in Switzerland (June 2027).

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to better understand how we can provide open source thought leadership into this process and thereby support the Government's AI Opportunities Action Plan and the expected twentyfold expansion of public AI hardware by 2030.
