

Evolving Digital Regulation for Growth and Innovation

techUK's Vision for
Pro-Growth Digital
Regulation Reform

May 2025

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Foreword

As a membership body representing over 1,100 technology companies, techUK recognises the crucial role regulation plays in creating the conditions for economic dynamism. Effective and proportionate regulation is a vital enabler of trust, innovation, and long-term investment. However, when regulation becomes overly complex, fragmented or burdensome, it can stall innovation, deter investment, and hinder growth.

The regulatory environment in the UK for companies working across the digital economy has become more complex in recent years. A recent [techUK and Public First poll](#)¹ of 250 senior tech sector decision makers revealed that they now regard the regulatory burden as one of the most significant barriers to growth. The challenge, as ever, is to get the balance right. This paper sets out some recommendations that build on the UK's strengths both as a highly innovative and well-regulated economy with the aim of accelerating economic growth.

The UK has a strong global reputation for being a well-regulated market home to independent and well-resourced regulators and a regulatory framework that facilitates consumer and business protections. The UK Government estimates that the stability and predictability created by independent regulation has driven over £450bn in investment over the past 30 years.² We have seen numerous examples where innovative regulatory tools and initiatives have supported growth, such as Open Banking, the UK's FinTech Sandbox, the creation of the Financial Services Innovation Service, and the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum (DRCF's) Digital and AI Hub. This demonstrates the right type of regulation can accelerate – not inhibit – growth, innovation and competition. These initiatives have created an attractive business environment, thereby increasing investment and providing a greater range of consumer choice and competition by delivering new products and services.

At the same time, businesses have faced mounting regulatory compliance costs, which Government estimates could potentially be as high as 3-4% of GDP, [or around £70bn](#),³ annually. This burden places a strain on company finances, making it harder to invest, innovate, and grow in the UK. That is why the Prime Minister's announcement of his Government's intention to cut administrative costs of regulation for businesses by 25% by 2029 is welcome.

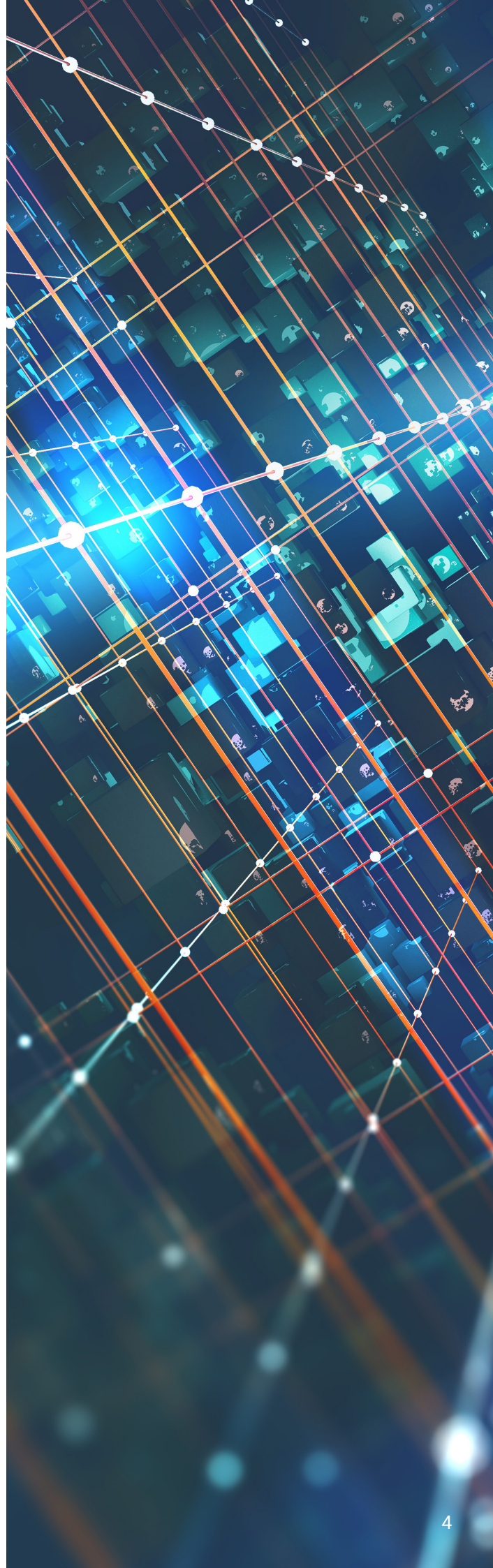
HM Treasury's recent [Regulatory Action Plan](#)⁴ and the recognition within the Industrial Strategy of the economic importance of our regulators offers an important opportunity to reset the UK's approach to regulation. By setting out the need for a clearer, more strategic approach to regulation that reduces unnecessary complexity, embraces risk, and prioritises outcomes, the UK Government has rightly placed growth and innovation at the centre of regulatory reform.

This report sets out techUK's 10 recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the UK's regulatory regime. To deliver on this ambition, we focus on four areas: **Firstly, adopting a shared growth mindset between Government and regulators; secondly, supporting innovation and market dynamism; thirdly improving coordination with industry, and finally; unlocking opportunities in key sectors.**

techUK firmly believes this 'growth mission' should be fundamental to regulatory activity. With regulators acting with the pursuit of growth in mind, this sets a foundational basis for regulation that is tied to the Government's longer term policy direction.

At a time when the regulatory complexity of operating in the digital economy is growing – and the deployment of foundational technologies like AI, quantum and digital infrastructure is accelerating – getting the regulatory environment right is critical. Regulation must not only keep pace with innovation but help shape markets in ways that deliver economic and public value.

With the Industrial Strategy as a guiding framework, and with the right focus, partnership, and strategic alignment, regulators can be instrumental in delivering the Government's Growth Mission. The tech sector stands ready to play its part.



Executive Summary

techUK and our members have a longstanding relationship with both Government and regulators; throughout this relationship, we have been able to forge a constructive dialogue.

To build on the progress already made, it is important that the Government, when introducing regulatory reforms, takes a strategic approach, given that past initiatives designed to spur growth by 'cutting red tape' have tended to result in piecemeal deregulation, rather than looking more deeply at structural changes to improve regulatory outcomes. Therefore, it is important that a holistic approach is taken.

This report sets out techUK's thinking on how effective regulation can be a crucial lever in delivering the Government's mission for growth and unlocking innovation. Our report sets out several techUK recommendations in four parts:

Part 1	advocates for a shared growth-mindset across regulators aligned with the direction set by the Industrial Strategy. This section focuses on the Government and regulators using the Industrial Strategy to clarify what growth means in different regulatory contexts, understand outcomes (intended and unintended), measure success, and strengthen accountability mechanisms. We highlight a specific need for post-implementation reviews to ensure regulators are delivering on the principles and the intended outcomes of regulation.
Part 2	is focused on supporting innovation and market dynamism . Here we consider the role of the Regulatory Innovation Office and its potential to promote innovation in the sector, through widening access to regulatory sandboxes and test beds.
Part 3	focuses on operational aspects of day-to-day regulatory activity and improving the information flow between industry and regulators to reduce the burden of unnecessary friction in the regulatory system .
Part 4	outlines 11 detailed recommendations for potential sector-specific regulatory opportunities .

Table of Recommendations

Number	Recommendations	Explanation
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Part 1: Adopting A Shared Growth Mindset between Government and Regulators

1	Clarify How Regulators Should Interpret Growth	Use the Industrial Strategy to embed a 'growth mindset' in regulation. Government should articulate what supporting growth means in different regulatory contexts and set out cross-cutting objectives.
2	Regulators Should Make their Growth Commitments Explicit	Regulators should clearly articulate and publish their commitments to supporting economic growth with tangible metrics.
3	Strengthen Mechanisms for Post-Implementation Review	Where there is merit, we recommend strengthening mechanisms for post-implementation reviews, including through expert analysis of regulatory outcomes, and assessments of the cumulative impact of regulation and its cost.

Part 2: Supporting Innovation and Market Dynamism

4	Utilise the Regulatory Innovation Office to Promote Innovation	To ensure the RIO successfully supports tech scale-ups, we propose that their work is complemented by mapping the existing regulatory landscape to identify where additional sandboxes and test beds may be needed and strengthening coordination between existing initiatives. The RIO should also help improve accountability and promote innovation in regulation across all sectors of the UK.
5	Provide Targeted Support to help SMEs Navigate Regulation	Supporting SMEs to scale-up is essential for bolstering growth and innovation. At present, whilst many SMEs experiment with new tools, a lack of skills and regulatory confidence often limits their effective use. We therefore recommend the provision of targeted support for SMEs to navigate the complex regulatory landscape.

Part 3: Improving Information Flows between Industry and Regulators

6	Adopt the Outcome Based Cooperative Regulation Model	We endorse regulators adopting the model of Outcome Based Cooperative Regulation (OBCR), focusing on how these methods can deliver better results for end-users and enhance regulatory efficiency. This model shifts the focus from prescriptive rulemaking to setting clear goals and working flexibly with industry to achieve them.
7	Ensure Regulators are Well-Resourced for Effective Industry Engagement	To ensure regulators possess the right resources and sufficient expertise to investigate across industry and to facilitate effective engagement, we recommend: 1. Promoting diversity in experience across regulator personnel, particularly on boards. 2. Ensuring the presence of well-resourced business engagement teams across all regulators.
8	Establish a Regulatory Initiatives Grid for the Digital Sector	Considering the success of the Regulatory Initiatives Grid (RIG) for the financial services industry, we recommend establishing a RIG for the digital sector. The Grid would map out regulators' key milestones over the next 24 months, identifying potential overlaps and their potential business impacts.
9	Improving Procedural Transparency	We recommend that regulators explore ways to improve the procedural approach to their investigations, transparency, speed, predictability and timely access to evidence in this process.
10	Align on International Standards Where Appropriate	Where possible and appropriate, ensure new regulation is aligned with international standards in support of outcomes-based regulation.



Part 1: Adopting a Shared Growth Mindset Across Government and Regulators

The Government's focus on growth mission set out in [HM Treasury's Regulation Action Plan](#)⁵ and the [Industrial Strategy](#)⁶ green paper creates a timely opportunity to embed greater consistency and clarity across the regulatory landscape.

The DRCF regulators are already taking a number of steps to support this mission – both collectively through [DRCF initiatives](#)⁷, such as its AI and Digital Hub, and individually, as outlined in their annual plans, reports, and recent letters to Government, which set out their activities and ambitions in this space.

However, the [National Audit Office's 2025 report](#)⁸ on the priority industrial sectors highlights the variation in interpretation of growth-related objectives and approaches across

Government departments makes it difficult for the Government to “join up” policy, leaving businesses facing an uneven and at times conflicting regulatory landscape. While the report focuses on departmental coordination, it highlights the importance of greater consistency in interpretation and advancement of growth objectives across the board.

Therefore, we recommend:

- 1. Clarify “growth”: The Government should – potentially in its Industrial Strategy –clarify what their shared vision for growth means for regulators**
- 2. Regulator-level delivery: Once that vision is outlined, the regulators should set out how they intend to deliver against it**

3. Growth oversight and co-ordination: The Government, in partnership with regulators, could assess where there is need to strengthen mechanisms for post-implementation regulatory review.

Recommendation 1: Clarify How Regulators Should Interpret Growth

The Government should articulate more clearly what achieving growth means in different regulatory contexts.

A shared 'growth mindset' across Government and regulators would support a more joined up approach and help keep growth considerations central to regulators' strategic direction and policymaking. Facilitating coherent, growth-driven regulatory policy and implementation. Growth is a broad and cross-cutting objective. The regulators are already obliged under the Growth Duty to "have regard" to growth, and many report against it using the [Growth Duty Performance Framework](#),⁹ which gives them a common structure for explaining what they have done in practice. The Performance Framework includes valuable metrics, but participation remains voluntary, and approaches, interpretation, and implementation vary.

Some flexibility is necessary, as regulators operate in different sectors and contexts. However, [recent NAO findings](#)¹⁰ demonstrate that too much variation in how the growth duties are interpreted and operationalised can make it harder to coordinate policy and create an inconsistent experience for businesses. We, therefore, urge Government to work on establishing an overarching approach to growth.

Strategic steers from Government are essential to guide regulators, but in relation to growth, these could be more regular and clearer. For example, steers could provide guidance on what is expected and potentially supported by a set of baseline metrics. The lack of a shared definition of "growth" and how to measure it continues to challenge consistency across regulatory approaches.

In her [2024 Mansion House Speech](#),¹¹ Chancellor, Rachel Reeves outlined how financial service regulators can promote growth – by supporting responsible risk-taking in pursuit of innovation and investment, attracting overseas investment, and, reciprocally, maintaining the sector's confidence to invest. **Future guidance or strategic steers could build on this thinking.**

techUK recognises the Government's ongoing work in this area, drawing attention to opportunities for this work to be built upon.

This can be done in the following ways:

- **Define 'Growth':** Government should clarify what is 'growth' in a regulatory context – including the intended consequences for innovation, productivity, investment, and development. This will provide a consistent basis for interpreting pro-growth duties across departments and regulators – specifically how regulators should prioritise growth against other statutory duties.
- **Set growth principles via Industrial Strategy:** Government should outline clear growth principles for regulators, supported by measurable metrics and developed through industry and consumer consultation. These will provide greater clarity and predictability on the regulatory trajectory.

- **Build on the 'Plan for Digital Regulation':** Government should build upon the 2021-22 Plan for Digital Regulation', which embodies the growth-oriented mindset, with clear measurable objectives. techUK welcomed the Plan as a major opportunity for “benefits to both consumers and firms operating in the UK”. The Plan committed to ensure new regulation was **evidence based, only targeted at identifiable problems, proportionate, and considered all policy/regulatory options.** The [first principle of the Plan was to “actively promote innovation”](#),¹² and commits to remove unnecessary regulatory burdens.
- **Consistent use of strategic directions:** Clear strategic guidance from Ministers would support coherence across regulatory bodies.

What is the Growth Duty?

The [Growth Duty imposes a statutory requirement on regulators](#)¹³ to promote medium- and long-term growth by ensuring that key policy decisions are informed by consideration of the 'key drivers of economic growth', which includes **innovation, infrastructure and investment, competition, skills, efficiency and productivity, trade and environmental sustainability.** Initially brought into effect in 2017, the Growth Duty applies to over 50 regulators, and in March 2024, [Ofcom, alongside Ofgem and Ofwat, was brought under its remit](#).¹⁴

The FCA also has a [secondary objective to enhance international competitiveness and the growth of the UK economy in the medium- to long-term](#).¹⁵

Recommendation 2:
Regulators Should Make their
Growth Commitments Explicit

In December 2024, the Prime Minister, Chancellor, and Business Secretary wrote to 16 major UK regulators requesting proposals to improve both business confidence and the investment climate, as well as to foster economic growth. The Government can build upon this work by:

1. Using the Industrial Strategy, to empower regulators to develop their own sector-appropriate interpretations of how their work can promote growth, informed by engagement with industry, consumers, and independent experts.
2. Instructing regulators to clearly articulate and publish their commitments to supporting economic growth. This should include how they will embed pro-growth principles into their decision-making, regulatory frameworks, and **performance metrics**.

We acknowledge where regulators have already communicated how their work supports the growth mission. Sarah Cardell, Chief Executive of the CMA, [has acknowledged the inherent relationship between effective competition and driving economic growth, investment and innovation](#).¹⁶ The [regulator's annual plan for 2025-26](#),¹⁷ emphasises this relationship, pledging to “maximise the long-term impact of growth and investment and help ensure it is diffused across the whole economy”. The plan reflects the Government’s draft strategic steer for the CMA, which emphasised the Government’s growth mission and the central role the competition regulator should play in securing this, through supporting free and fair competition.

However, there are instances where the alignment between regulators’ growth commitments and responses to Government could be more precise.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen Mechanisms for Post-Implementation Review

To ensure appropriate scrutiny, **we recommend strengthening accountability measures**. While techUK supports the UK’s model of independent regulators, effective checks and balances are essential to ensure alignment with both regulatory objectives and broader economic goals. As regulators take on greater responsibility for implementing legislation Government and Parliament must have effective oversight. We recommend the following:

- Establishing a **review mechanism** to ensure post-implementation reviews are robust and to identify the cumulative impact of the regulatory burden both areas of unnecessary overlap and policies which are now surplus to requirements. This process of review will also help to establish whether the balance is right in regulatory policy between promoting innovation and growth and meeting their corresponding primary duties and strengthening regulatory accountability.
 - Government could consider where there is merit to establish an independent, cross-economy body [similar to a Regulatory Audit Office \(RAO\) proposed by the Centre for Policy Studies](#),¹⁸ to provide expert analysis of regulatory outcomes, including scrutiny of evidence-based impact assessments, and post-implementation reviews. This should provide a holistic view of how regulation affects UK growth and innovation, with a clear mandate to support better regulation and economic growth.

We recognise the Regulatory Policy Committee conducts quality assurance for impact assessments; however, they are not tasked with analysing the consequences of the cumulative effects of regulation.

- We recognise this is a resource intensive recommendation and may be more practicable to have an existing body fulfilling this role, such HMT or DBT.
- Government should make a published assessment of the **overall net impact of regulation** across government, moving beyond individual departmental assessments to offer a holistic view of how regulation affects UK growth and innovation.
- Regulators and industry should have a clear route to seek a policy statement from the

Government in scenarios where regulatory duties conflict, a regulator's decision appears to run contrary to the Government's policy objectives or a goal for economic growth is undermined.

The Dutch competition regulator, the Authority for Consumers and Markets, starting from March 2025, [intend to publish an annual report](#)¹⁹ and a legislative letter outlining areas and advice to reduce administrative burdens. The core goal of [this work](#) is to identify where rules 'in practice leads to administrative burdens and supervisory costs that are no longer in proportion to the intended objective'. **We encourage regulators to see where similar activity can be undertaken in the UK.**





Part 2: Supporting Innovation and Market Dynamism

Innovation is a key driver of economic growth, particularly in the digital and tech sectors. To fully unlock this potential, actively supporting innovation and market dynamism is key. This includes identifying and removing regulatory barriers, streamlining processes, and engaging closely with emerging businesses and technologies.

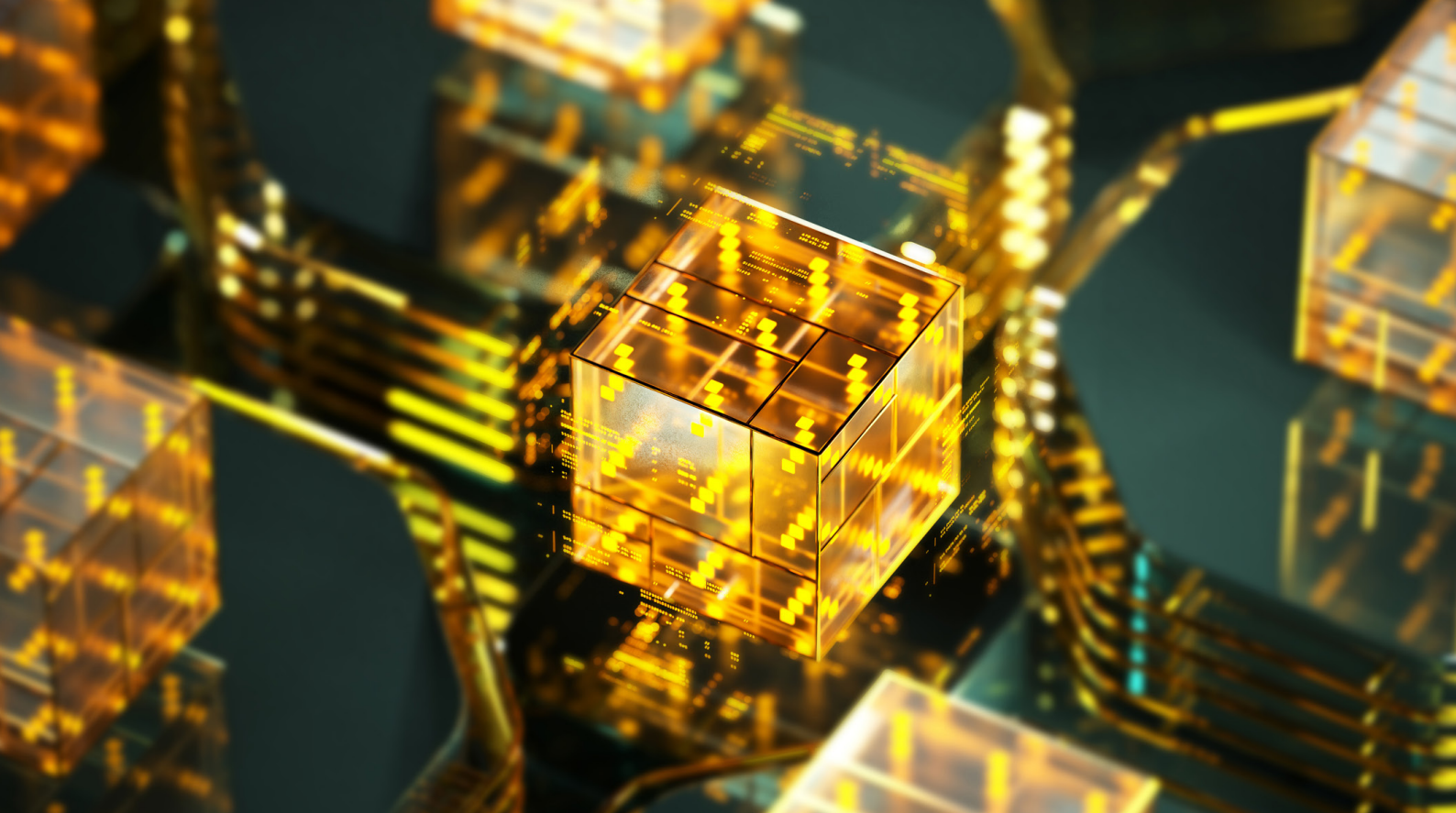
In a pro-growth regulatory system, companies should be empowered to safely experiment, scale, and bring new products to market with confidence. However, techUK members report that navigating multiple regulatory requirements can limit their ability to invest and innovate at pace, and create uncertainty.

techUK sees the [DRCF's AI and Digital Hub²⁰](#)

[pilot](#) as a strong example of how regulators can provide clarity, support, and direct engagement with industry. Initiatives like this should be encouraged and expanded, to help businesses navigate the regulatory landscape and drive forward responsible innovation in the UK.

Within this Part, we advance two core recommendations:

- **Regulatory Innovation Office (RIO) to complement their forthcoming work** by mapping the regulatory landscape, identifying gaps where new sandboxes or test beds are needed, and strengthening coordination between existing initiatives.
- **Introducing of targeted support for tech SMEs and scale-ups.**



Case Study: A Pro-Innovation Approach to Quantum Regulation

In October 2024, [DSIT](#) responded to the recommendations made by the [Regulatory Horizons Council \(RHC\) on the regulation of quantum technology applications](#).²¹ In doing so, the UK has become the first country to set out a pro-innovation approach to quantum regulation.

The Government accepted 11 of the RHC's 14 recommendations²² in full, and the remaining three in principle. This included endorsing a regulation-by-regulation approach for quantum technologies led by sectoral regulations, pledging to build on the Government's strong involvement in international standards and regulation to support international harmonisation and pro-innovation regulation, and acknowledging that it is too early to regulate quantum computing applications with legislation.

techUK welcomed the Government's response to these recommendations, alongside the aim to increase regulatory capability and enable a sector- and application-specific approach to regulating quantum technologies in the future. These measures should provide the UK's quantum sector with the confidence and support required to enact the 10-year vision set out in the [National Quantum Strategy](#).²³

Recommendation 4: Utilise the Regulatory Innovation Office to Promote Innovation

With a [stated ambition](#)²⁴ to “reduce the burden of red tape on innovation and help kickstart economic growth” **the Regulatory Innovation Office (RIO) is expected to support innovation and market dynamism.** The UK already has a strong foundation of regulatory sandboxes across sectors, from the pioneering [FCA Regulatory Sandbox](#)²⁵ to more recent initiatives such as the Engineering Biology Sandbox Fund.

To build on this, RIO could add value by mapping the existing regulatory landscape, identifying gaps where new sandboxes are needed, and enhancing coordination between existing ones. This would ensure RIO effectively supports tech scale-ups and regulators to test new products and services in controlled environments, building on the UK’s global reputation for regulatory innovation.

Additionally, we recommend **Commercialisation of Tech Taskforce** within the RIO, to run focused policy sprints and accelerate progress in emerging technologies. Priority areas could include web 3.0 mobile pay-as-you-go models, and open-source AI, facilitating growth and encouraging further investment.

More widely, the RIO should be well equipped to improve accountability and promote innovation in regulation across all sectors of the UK. Central to its role should be working across Government to ensure the UK’s regulatory system supports responsible innovation. Moreover, its functions should include (1) better mapping and consistent

delivery of reviews of the regulatory system, (2) a mechanism for Government to provide policy steers and assess resourcing, (3) support knowledge-sharing across UK regulators.

The UK’s experience with regulatory sandboxes offers a strong foundation, which should be built upon to widen access and expand the number of projects each sandbox can accommodate. The FCA is [widely considered the creator](#)²⁶ of the world’s first formal regulatory sandbox in 2016, has since [launched a permanent Digital Sandbox in 2023](#),²⁷ with over half of participating SMEs in its pilot phase reporting positive outcomes, including launching new products and securing funding and partnerships.

[In April 2025, the FCA further committed to smarter regulation that supports growth](#),²⁸ through extending the pre-application support service to all wholesale, payments, and cryptoasset firms. We note that this world-leading work, which sits within their now decade long body of work, ‘[Project Innovate](#)’²⁹, was the result of a [request from HMT to investigate the feasibility and practicalities of developing a regulatory sandbox for financial services](#).

Other regulators have followed suit. The [ICO’s sandbox](#)³⁰ supports organisations developing products which utilise personal data in innovative and safe ways. In addition, the Government announced new funding for the [Engineering Biology Sandbox](#)³¹ at techUK’s 2025 annual policy conference, which will help accelerate regulatory reform for products like lab-grown organs for transplant and cell-cultivated meat. This signals that the UK offers a pro-innovation environment where companies can scale and succeed.

To improve the efficiency of sandboxes, regulators and participants should work in

conjunction to set both KPIs and an agreed period for review. Where these are met, firms should benefit from a predictable route to market.

Recommendation 5: Provide Targeted SME Support

techUK recognises that **supporting SMEs to scale-up is essential for bolstering growth and innovation**. Equally, it is crucial for regulators to receive input from SMEs to help them to effectively shape policy that benefits the digital sector. While regulators have already taken welcome steps to engage SMEs and improve access – many SMEs still face barriers in understanding and navigating complex regulatory landscapes. These can include limited internal resources, lack of specialist policy expertise, and uncertainty around emerging rules.

Important consultations can be time consuming exercises to respond to, especially when there are lengthy corresponding documents, and many SMEs will not have dedicated policy and compliance teams. To build on what already works, we **therefore recommend systematising targeted support for SMEs**.

Ofcom's outreach on the Online Safety Act's implementation is a good case study for regulatory engagement. The regulator hosted a three-day virtual conference, [The Online Safety Act Explained](#), to clarify the new rules and outline

the tools and resources available for regulated firms. Their website also hosts a [comprehensive virtual toolkit](#),³² providing access to the timeline of implementation, a function for firms to check what applies to them, and guides summarising each of the guidance's that have been published so far.

techUK recommends embedding similar approaches more systematically across regulators, ensuring a shared minimum baseline for SME engagement. This could include – where not yet present – appointing named leads or teams responsible for SME engagement, providing clear and visible access points for feedback, and routinely offering scalable, low-cost tools – such as self-assessment checklists, explainer videos, and implementation timelines – to help SMEs navigate regulation more easily. We also encourage regulators to showcase successful initiatives for SME engagement and create an anthology of best practices to draw upon. To support this work, we equally encourage SMEs to regulators to communicate what would help them navigate the regulatory regime more easily, and for regulators to provide a clear space for them to do so. Here, crucially, input from SMEs should not only be collected but systematically factored into the design, review, and implementation of regulatory policy.

Keeping open these channels of communication is crucial for the formation of policy that is balanced, effective and reflective of the needs of industry.

Part 3: Improving Information Flows Between Regulators and Industry

A strong relationship between industry and regulators is vital for effective regulation and well-informed, growth-friendly policy. Part 3 of this report explores how to strengthen this relationship by improving information flow between the two.

Our members identified four key qualities for productive engagement: **clarity, predictability, cooperation, and accountability**. At the core of these is effective information exchange, which gives businesses confidence to innovate, and helps regulators shape policies that reflect market realities.

The key recommendations advanced in this Part are:

Recommendation 6	Adopt the Outcome Based Cooperative Regulation Model
Recommendation 7	Ensure Regulators are Well-Resourced to Ensure Effective Industry Engagement
Recommendation 8	Establish a Regulatory Initiatives Grid for the Digital Sector
Recommendation 9	Improving Procedural Transparency
Recommendation 10	Align on International Standards Where Appropriate

Recommendation 6: Adopt the Outcome Based Cooperative Regulation Model

As [proposed by Christopher Hodges OBE,
Chair of the Regulatory Horizons Council](#),³³

techUK endorses the model of Outcome Based Cooperative Regulation (OBCR). OBCR shifts the focus from prescriptive rulemaking to setting clear, outcomes-driven goals and working collaboratively with industry to deliver them.

We recommend that Government encourage regulators to adopt this model and ensure accountability for its adoption, to deliver better results for end-users and enhance regulatory efficiency.

The OBCR model is built on trust and shared responsibility and gives innovators flexibility in how they meet these goals. As the body of evidence demonstrating regulators developing flexible, pragmatic and secure regulation develops and, in turn, industry interpreting this responsibly, this will only enhance the trust between the two groups.

To enhance this, regulators should commit to post-implementation reviews and updates of guidance based on business and consumer feedback. Industry and civil society should have structured, ongoing roles in shaping regulatory outcomes and updating approaches as markets evolve.

Collaborative engagement is integral to the OBCR model. As shown by examples such as co-designed guidance, sandboxes, and iterative enforcement, collaborative engagement leads to **greater regulatory clarity, faster adaptation**

to emerging technologies, more efficient compliance for businesses, and better results for consumers.

Recommendation 7:
Ensure Regulators are Well-Resourced to Ensure Effective Industry Engagement

Members have raised **two specific recommendations** to ensure regulators are well-resourced to ensure that they possess sufficient expertise to investigate across industry and to facilitate effective engagement. **The first of these focuses on the need for diversity in experience across regulator personnel, whilst the latter emphasises the importance of well-resourced business engagement teams.**

While legal expertise is vital for effective regulation, members stress the need for regulators—especially at board level—to also reflect diverse experience across the economy. This ensures decisions are better aligned with practical realities. For example, as the ICO takes on new responsibilities under the revised data protection regime, its board should include expertise in global trade to support international data flows, as well as business, and technical knowledge of data practice like Smart Data schemes. It will be equally important to include expertise from areas such as civil liberties, and consumer rights. This is especially important considering the implementation of the UK GDPR reforms and the EU’s forthcoming Review of the UK-EU data adequacy decision. Such diversity can help support regulatory independence, oversight, and growth-focused regulation across the tech sector.

Effective industry engagement

Regulators are increasingly engaging with industry in a diverse set of formats, including roundtables, technical briefings, and deep-dive workshops, including the ICO’s roundtable on its generative AI consultation series, and DRCF’s roundtable on its Annual Plan. In increasingly complex and fast-moving regulatory environments, this has been particularly effective.

We strongly encourage regulators to continue offering flexible modes of consultation – combining formal written submissions with verbal engagement – as this often supports a richer and more practical exchange of views, particularly in areas where guidance or enforcement approaches may have wide-reaching operational or market implications.

While progress has been made, some members have reflected that further improvements could be made in ensuring predictable and timely communication. In a few cases, companies have become aware of forthcoming regulatory activity – including investigations – only through public announcements, rather than through direct prior engagement. A more collaborative and transparent approach to notification, where appropriate would provide businesses with the necessary foresight to plan, maintaining trust between regulators and industry and support regulatory effectiveness.

To ensure this is achievable, **it is key that regulators are well-resourced, with appropriate business engagement teams** for facilitating this effective and ongoing communication.



Recommendation 8: Establish a Regulatory Initiatives Grid for the Digital Sector

In light of the success of [the Regulatory Initiatives Grid \(RIG\) for the financial services industry](#),³⁴ produced by the Financial Services Regulatory Initiatives Forum (which includes the FCA, CMA, and ICO as members), **techUK recommends that digital regulators look to establish a RIG for the digital sector.** This initiative would enhance the **clarity and predictability** of regulatory interventions, giving industry a clear outline of what to expect in the coming months, as well as enhancing regulatory cooperation.

The RIG is a publication, developed jointly by the UK financial services regulators and issued twice a year. It maps out existing and planned regulatory initiatives – including parliamentary bills, consultations, reviews, and other regulatory changes – alongside their expected key milestones over the next 24 months. It also examines how these initiatives interact and identifies current regulatory overlaps and gaps,

providing stakeholders with insights into their potential business impacts. An innovative tool, first introduced in the UK, the RIG has been positively received by the financial services sector for delivering several key benefits, including:

- Enabled companies to better navigate the complex governance landscape and plan for initiatives with significant operational impacts
- Enhanced regulatory cooperation by increasing awareness of initiatives planned across different regulators
- Provided valuable insights for academics and the public on approaches to responsible innovation

techUK recognises that the financial services RIG is resource intensive, given that it is produced twice a year and, in several formats, including an in-depth report and an interactive dashboard. **If an equivalent initiative were to be developed for the digital sector, it will be important to consider how it is resourced and whether additional government funding may be required.**

We also note that some of the digital regulators already publish their regulatory roadmaps –

for example, Ofcom have produced a similar publication that sets out upcoming key dates and milestones for its implementation of the Online Safety Act, alongside a dedicated webpage. Therefore, a Digital RIG could take a different – and much lighter – form to that of the financial services RIG, however the format and frequency that would be most impactful and proportionate should be agreed in consultation with industry, given the value of this initiative, as has been demonstrated in the financial services sector.

Recommendation 9: Improving Procedural Transparency

techUK recommends that regulators improve their investigative procedures to promote transparency, speed, predictability, and timely access to evidence.

Global companies often fall under the jurisdiction of multiple competition authorities, which creates both challenges and opportunities for greater collaboration. Members note that one of the key regulatory challenges is the need for greater transparency, speed, predictability, and timely access to evidence in regulatory proceedings, specifically mergers. This is something the CMA themselves have acknowledged through the implementation of their '[4Ps' framework \(pace, predictability, proportionality and process\)](#)³⁵, which they now intend to apply to all regulatory interventions and very much reflects the ethos behind our recommendations.

Members note that limited access to case files in the UK in merger cases, unlike in the EU, creates a lack of foreseeability and the ability to respond to key evidence early on the process. Early informal feedback, as practiced by the European

Commission, would be a welcome step.

Delays in updates and progress reports increase uncertainty and costs for businesses. These issues are magnified in cross-border cases where differing conclusions between regulators—such as in Meta/Kustomer or Booking/Etraveli—create legal fragmentation and operational burdens. Regulatory divergence can lead to inconsistent consumer experiences and deter investment.

While competition frameworks differ, the global nature of the tech sector makes stronger alignment—particularly between the UK, EU, and US—essential. Although cooperation mechanisms like waivers exist, there is room for improvement, especially around early jurisdictional clarity.

The CMA could decide on jurisdiction before launching a full investigation to reduce complexity and build business confidence.

techUK welcomes the CMA's review of mergers and remedies, updating guidance for the 'material influence' and 'share of supply' thresholds, which currently provide broad jurisdictional reach. This presents a valuable opportunity for industry input and a model for how the CMA could improve clarity in cross-border cases.

Recommendation 10: Align on International Standards Where Appropriate

Most companies in the tech sector operate internationally and thus face varying compliance costs, as they have contradictory obligations in different markets. **We recommend that, where possible, regulators work to ensure new regulation is aligned with international standards and frameworks.**

The UK has an opportunity to lead globally by championing interoperable regulatory approaches that facilitate innovation, investment, and cross-border collaboration. Initiatives, such as CBPR Global (Global Cross-Border Privacy Rules Forum) offer a useful framework to help bridge differences between national privacy regimes. To support meaningful uptake, it will be important to ensure compatibility with existing legal frameworks, such as the UK GDPR, and to consider potential compliance costs for businesses. Governments participating in the Global CBPR Forum should work closely with stakeholders to make a clear business case for the practical benefits of this certification.

The UK has long led in international standards setting. Working with BSI, UKAS, and industry, the Government should adopt a more strategic approach to shaping global standards and accreditation, especially for technologies and

supply chains vital to national interests and competitiveness. Greater alignment between the UK and international frameworks would strengthen the UK's influence over global standards and unlock new opportunities for research and collaboration in advanced technologies. Where international standards already meet or exceed UK requirements, duplicative national measures should be avoided to minimise compliance burdens and reduce the need for bespoke solutions in each jurisdiction. HM Treasury's [refreshed regulatory approach](#) recognises the important role for regulators advancing international regulatory cooperation. We welcome this acknowledgement but welcome further work to strengthen international regulatory cooperation.

Separately, techUK advocates for the Government to leverage FTAs, DTAs, and other bilateral agreements promote the UK's approach to



regulatory innovation and standards-setting internationally, where appropriate. This would support regulatory alignment and level the international playing field for innovative UK firms. Priority areas include strengthening UK influence over international and European AI standards, driving global alignment on AI and cybersecurity, advancing provisions for AI safety and ethical data governance aligned with UK principles, and supporting bilateral AI investment frameworks. For example, under the UK's [Telecommunications \(Security\) Act 2021](#), international companies had to implement process solutions to meet security requirements, regardless of whether they had already adopted stronger measures based on internationally recognised standards.

When consistency, clarity and collaboration are prioritised, this supports another major ask from members, predictability. At present, members have identified a lack of long-term predictability about regulatory frameworks, which reduces the degree of certainty and stability that can be built into business cases for investment. As a result, this undermines markets' appetite for long-term investments, which inhibits the Government's pro-growth ambition for regulation.

Balancing Regulatory and Non-Regulatory Approaches

Effective regulation is key, but it is only one of several tools available to policymakers. In many cases, a blend of regulatory and non-regulatory approaches (such as voluntary standards, codes of practice, and public-private collaboration), may be used.

For example, in the education sector, the [Department for Education \(DfE\) has taken a standards-based approach](#)³⁶ to technology adoption, which has been conducive to the implementation of innovative technologies.

The Government has also [committed to creating a £3m "content store"](#)³⁷ to train AI to effectively support teachers with marking and lesson planning. The repository will pool documents, such as curriculum guidance, lesson plans, and anonymised pupil assessments, to enable AI developers to create tailored tools aligned with national education standards. As exemplified by the EdTech sector, in areas of fast-paced innovation, a standards-based framework built on trust and strong evidence can help support innovation.

Sector Specific Opportunities

After consulting techUK's diverse membership, we found 12 clear opportunities for Government and regulators to address in the existing regulatory regime to promote growth. In this section, we have identified examples of duplicative, restrictive and costly regulations across the breadth of sectors encompassed within the tech sector.

The opportunities examined by this section are:

1**Simplify Pre-Contract Information for Telecoms Operators****2****Conduct a More Comprehensive Review of Annual Licence Fees****3****Ensure Regulatory Consistency and Interoperability in the Digital ID Industry to Encourage Adoption****4****Review the Medium Combustion Plant Directive****5****Remove Data Centres from UK ETS****6****Introduce a Health and Social Care AI Strategy**

7

Improve Cross-Agency Collaboration and Industry Engagement in Health and Social Care

8

Reduce the Regulatory Burden Surrounding NHS Procurement

9

Create a Cost Recovery Model Conducive to Innovation

10

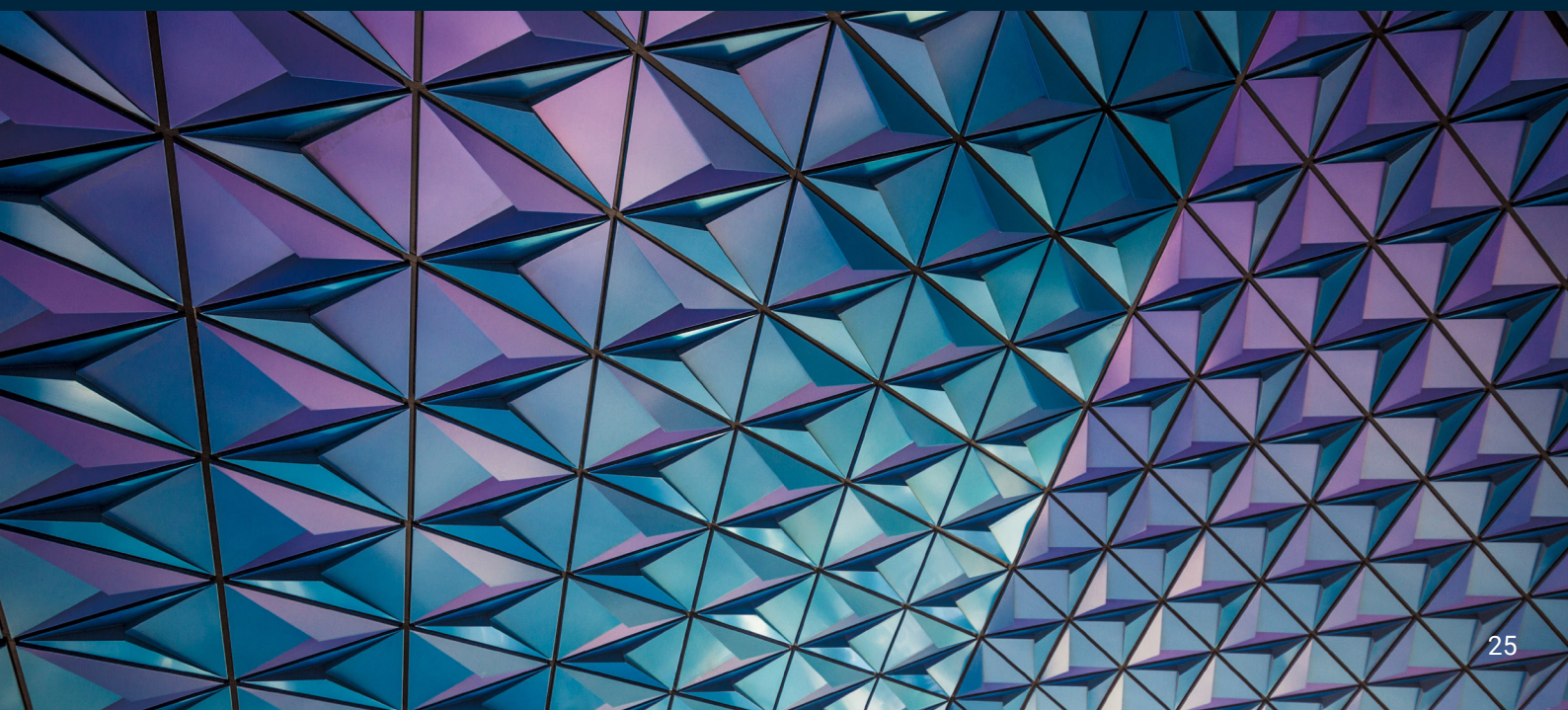
Review Extended Producer Responsibility and the Tech Industry

11

Maintain Competition in the Rail Industry

12

Priorities for an AI Regulatory Framework



Telecoms

Sector Opportunity 1: Simplify Pre-Contract Information for Telecoms Operators

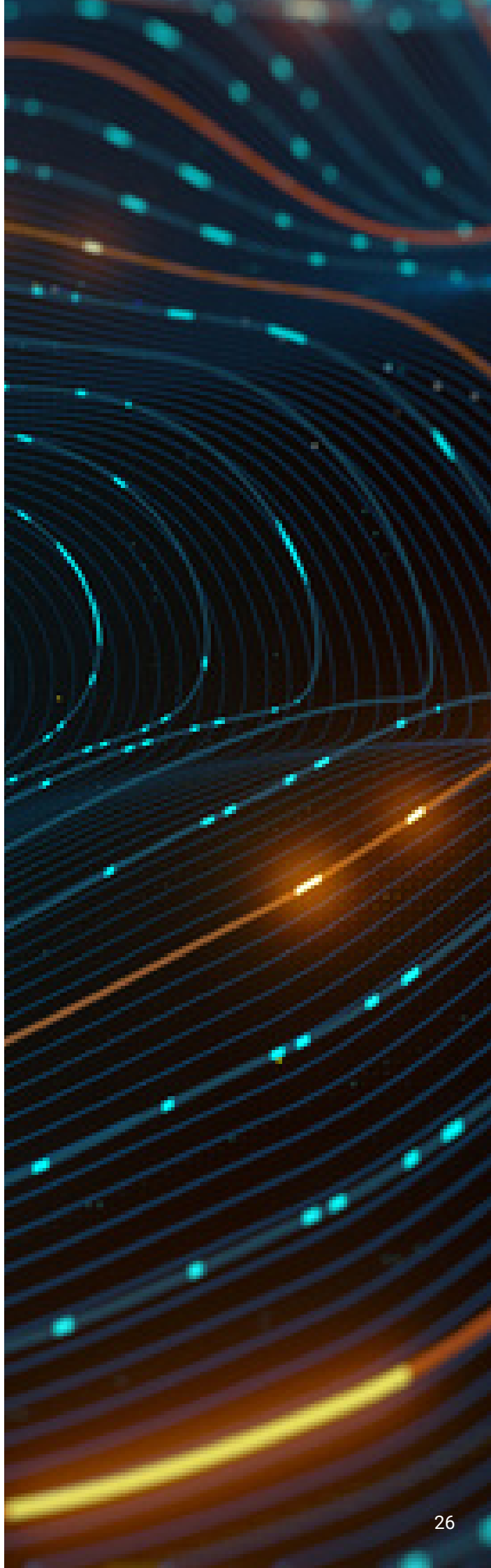
Telecoms operators are subject to pre-contract information obligations; whereby certain information must be provided to the customer at the point of sale to ensure the customer is treated fairly and can make an informed decision before entering into a contractual agreement.

At present, operators provide two pre-contract information documents for telco services (Ofcom mandated) and three additional documents when customers take a loan (mandated by the FCA and Consumer Credit Act). On top of this, from Spring 2026, there will be at least one additional pre-contract information document required covering subscriptions (CMA mandated). This outlines a total of six documents, presenting customers with information that it is time consuming and complex for them to digest, as well as imposing a considerable burden on operators to comply with these overlapping regulatory requirements.

Sector Opportunity 2: Conduct a More Comprehensive Review of Annual Licence Fees

Considering the significant cost of Annual Licence Fees (ALFs) imposed on our members, techUK recommends Ofcom build on their work to review these through conducting a comprehensive review.

At present, Vodafone estimate that they pay £80m annually in ALFs, which imposes a significant financial burden and is money that could be otherwise spent on investment in networks and next-generation services. In addition, they estimate the aggregate ALF



spend across MNOs to be over £300m; a figure which techUK and its members believe should be reassessed, as in many instances they are no longer needed to promote efficient use of spectrum. The tradability of spectrum licences undermines the justification for these fees and Ofcom have already demonstrated that it can and will recover unused spectrum (e.g. the recovery and repurposing of 2100 MHz TDD spectrum).

We welcomed the review of ALFs in three mobile spectrum bands in 2024. The proposed reductions in the 900 MHz and 1800 MHz bands are a welcome first step. More needs to be done here to have a genuine impact, otherwise ALFs will continue to be a major drag on investment into 5G standalone networks (fundamental for 5G advanced and then 6G). This needs to be combined with Ofcom's ongoing work around spectrum management and sharing which is needed to improve efficiencies.

Digital ID

Sector Opportunity 3: Ensure Regulatory Consistency and Interoperability in the Digital ID Industry to Encourage Adoption

The Digital Identity and Trust Framework (DIATF) developed by Government, is a voluntary framework that sets out standards for digital identity services, intended to provide a level of assurance and support the adoption of private sector digital IDs. Equally, as of this year, [the UK Government have announced their intention to create a government wallet that will hold government IDs](#),³⁸ including a mobile driving licence. Whilst techUK welcomes this digitisation of government services, there are concerns of a two-tier system being created in the UK, where public sector digital ID could 'crowd out' the

private sector. One Login could be viewed as the official government ID, whilst private sector digital IDs and wallets could be viewed as a secondary service, potentially leaving the UK in a position where digital ID stalls. This could cause the DIATF to become an unsustainable business opportunity, in turn causing companies to withdraw from the UK market. techUK therefore recommends the Government pursue an approach that is equally supportive of both One Login and DIATF services.

Members have emphasised the importance of interoperability in supporting this relationship. They have called for a standards-based approach for secure data sharing between One Login, the GOV.UK Wallet, and DIATF reusable ID wallets, replicating the model applied in Europe with eIDAS. The UK's private sector could harness this interoperability to accelerate the time frame to deliver the benefits of digital ID.

Within the digital ID sector, some members have advocated for the principle of '**regulatory consistency**' across government departments to encourage adoption of private sector digital IDs. Accordingly, once an approach is approved by one department, it should be recognised by other departments within a reasonable time frame. This would significantly reduce the time and effort required for businesses to navigate multiple regulatory approvals, encouraging faster innovation and reducing costs.

This case study demonstrates two key asks. Firstly, public sector innovation should complement rather than constrain private sector growth. Public and private sector initiatives should be mutually supportive and encourage new frontiers for innovation, with interoperability forming a foundational premise. Secondly, the



need for joined up thinking across government, whereby policies and regulations are consistent and coherent. This is a central principle for preserving business confidence and encouraging innovation.

Critical National Infrastructure

Sector Opportunity 4: Review the Medium Combustion Plant Directive

Another example outlining this divergence is Medium Combustion Plant Directive (MCPD), which affects data centres for telecoms and hyperscale/colocation and enterprise, is presently correctly targeted but implemented in a more complex and cumbersome way than elsewhere in the EU. The [current MCPD requirements state that](#)³⁹ *'the stack must be vertical and unimpeded by cowls or caps'*; however, the modifications required to meet this particular requirement are set to be extremely costly, with one member estimating the costs incurred will be in the millions by 2030 and the number of generators due to be brought under the regulations will increase from just over 10 to 200.

techUK therefore advises the Environment Agency (EA) to review how many generators fall within the compliance ranges for the present MCPD requirements, especially considering the January 2025 expansion to include all existing generators 5-50MWth, and the proposed January 2030 increase to include all existing generators 1-5MWth. The EA should assess how many of the generators included now or in the future have horizontal stacks and therefore would require modification, noting an estimated average cost of £10,000 for a stack modification. In addition, we note that whilst vertical stacks are recommended for the purposes of better pollutant dispersal, as

the number of emissions does not change with stack orientation, the negative environmental impact of hundreds of stack modifications will be greater than if stacks remain horizontal.

Members have also raised concern about enforcement practices that appear misaligned with legal provisions, citing early permit applications that have been refused by the EA without clear legislative justification. In addition, variations to the permit are based on detailed analysis of the site and generator, which the EA charge £6,000 per application, despite no guarantee of a variation permit being granted.

Sector Opportunity 5: Remove Data Centres from UK ETS

The Government should fully exempt data centres from the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), following Germany's example, to promote growth and reduce unnecessary burdens on the sector. The current framework fails to reflect the actual emissions profile of data centres and imposes disproportionate compliance costs, creating inefficiencies that hinder investment and growth.

Data centres are included in the UK ETS due to the capacity of their on-site backup power generation, which acts as emergency backup in the unlikely event of grid failure. These are regularly tested but rarely deployed. The energy source for data centres is electricity, not combustion of fuel. While many qualify for ultra-small emitter (USE) status, eligibility requirements mean some operators may face nearly seven years of full ETS compliance. A full exemption would support the continued growth of this essential sector while aligning with the Government's broader ambition to reduce red tape. **Removing data centres from the UK ETS is a clear and pragmatic step in that**

direction, fostering innovation and economic growth without compromising the UK's environmental commitments.

Health and Social Care

Sector Opportunity 6: Introduce a Health and Social Care AI Strategy

techUK recommends the introduction of a **central AI strategy and guidance** for the health and social care sector to provide clarity on governance roles and responsibilities for industry, the Government, regulatory bodies, health and care organisations, and staff. The [Health Foundation have called for](#)⁴⁰ such a strategy, outlining six key strategic priorities they envisage the strategy being constructed against.

A strategy would enable the sector to derive greater value from the use of AI and guide a deployment approach which is responsible and sustainable.

It is important to note that greater AI adoption across health and social care will require significant **expansion of existing central policymaking and regulatory resource and expertise**. Any changes should provide industry with as much clarity and notice as possible, and equally any approval processes should be **streamlined and proportional**. The need for improved resource and expertise within central regulatory bodies was made abundantly clear with the publication of the [MHRA's strategic approach to AI](#)⁴¹ in April 2024, which identified "approximately three full-time equivalent (FTE) employees working on AI as a Medical Device workstreams".

In addition, members have noted the need to reform the UK's currently regulatory framework for Software as a Medical Device (SaMD) to

stimulate innovation and agility in healthcare. We note that this should be undertaken through close collaboration and consultation with industry to ensure technology can be deployed with the best outcomes for patients.

Sector Opportunity 7: Improve Cross-Agency Collaboration and Industry Engagement in Health and Social Care

Within the health sector, techUK⁴² [have called for improved coordination](#), and **reduced fragmentation and duplication** between central national health and care regulatory and policymaking organisations.

Collaboration and coordination are necessary to support **greater digital transformation and innovation adoption** across the UK's health and care services. This collaborative working should be accompanied by regular dialogue and consultation with the technology industry to support the planning and delivery of innovation and digital transformation-focused initiatives across the UK.

[Launched in September 2023](#),⁴³ the [Innovative Devices Access Pathway \(IDAP\) pilot](#)⁴⁴ is a good example of cross-agency collaboration and industry engagement which should be built upon. The pathway represents a collaboration between the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Health Technology Wales (HTW), The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), NHS England (NHSE), National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), Office for Life Sciences (OLS), and the Scottish Health Technologies Group (SHTG), and is intended to support the rapid development of innovative technologies to be introduced into the NHS. In the pilot phase, eight companies were



selected for a share of £10m of funding. A key function of the pilot stage was to test the large-scale implementation of these technologies, with a view to developing tailored, intensive advice on regulatory approval, health tech assessments and access to the NHS.

Joint working practices like this should mitigate against duplicated efforts and ultimately improve the flow of innovation into the health and care system.

Sector Opportunity 8: Reduce the Regulatory Burden Surrounding NHS Procurement

techUK [have been calling on the Government](#)⁴⁵ to reduce the burden of regulatory processes and compliance requirements upon digital health and care companies, especially SMEs. The Government, NHS and regulatory bodies should clarify and standardise the evidence base required for digital health and care solutions.

At present, for companies selling to the NHS, if they wish to scale their product beyond its original pilot or implementation location, they need to approach organisations on an individual basis, expending both time and resources. Companies encounter further challenges due to the lack of clarity and standardisation regarding the evidence base required to demonstrate a product or service's effectiveness and value.

Cyber Security

Sector Opportunity 9: Create a Cost Recovery Model Conducive to Innovation

The Government should avoid creating a cost recovery model that overly limits industry's ability to continue to offer innovative and accessible services. For example, [Cloudflare](#) is a web

performance and security company that offers a suite of services to protect websites from online threats and enhance their performance, including free cyber security services that benefit SMEs. A cost recovery model that requires companies to pass regulatory costs onto customers could inhibit their ability to offer cyber security services, potentially reducing their access across the economy.

Environment

Sector Opportunity 10: Review Extended Producer Responsibility and the Tech Industry

Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging, or EPR, is due to come into force in April 2025. This scheme, initiated by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and enforced by both the Environment Agency and PackUK, entails businesses paying a fee for the packaging they either supply or import to the UK; in essence, they take responsibility for any waste they generate.

[techUK strongly encourages DEFRA to delay the implementation of the Recyclability Assessment Methodology \(RAM\)](#),⁴⁶ which will be used to determine the recyclability of packaging. At present, RAM is still yet to be finalised, and [in its current incarnation](#)⁴⁷ it imposes extensive reporting requirements on manufacturers and importers, with data points and questions reaching the hundreds for one product line.

More widely, techUK discourages the application of EPR to tech manufacturers, as tech firms are already paying into a recycling scheme for their devices, [known as WEEE](#).⁴⁸ These packaging regulations should be targeted towards food and drink/FMCG, as opposed to tech product



packaging which is not the primary cause of littering. These regulations are set to impose a disproportionate cost on the tech sector, with many members estimating that these costs will exceed those incurred from WEEE.

Transport

Sector Opportunity 11: Maintain Competition in the Rail Industry

With the forthcoming establishment of Great British Railways (GBR), members have raised the importance of corresponding work on regulatory reform in the transport sector.

Firstly, they recommend the imposition of structural separation requirements between GBR and GBR Retail to limit the potential for self-preferential treatment. All retailers, including GBR Retail, should operate on the same retailing licence. This would help to provide investor confidence that a GBR-run website and app will help, rather than hinder, a truly competitive market.

Secondly, as the Department for Transport has proposed for network access, members advocate for fair, equal and non-discriminatory requirements to also cover retail, including rules to prevent cross-subsidy which would advantage the state-run retailer. This would ensure all retailers compete on an equivalent cost and revenue regime, and parity of access to ensure all market participants have non-discriminatory access to fares, features, products, data, and services.

Lastly, members would welcome a new primary growth duty for the ORR to ensure and promote competition in the retail market.

Artificial Intelligence

Sector Opportunity 12: Priorities for an AI Regulatory Framework

Enabling a vibrant AI ecosystem is key to supporting the Government's ambitions for economic growth and investment, in turn providing nationwide benefits for all. The UK's existing approach to AI regulation – based on high-level regulatory principles applied by existing regulators within their respective sectors and supported by coordination through the DRCF – remains a flexible and workable foundation.

As the UK continues to develop its approach to regulating AI, several priority areas have emerged through techUK's engagement with members. These priorities reflect not only the need to address AI-specific risks, but also the broader enabling conditions that underpin effective and proportionate regulation.

- Fair apportionment of responsibility across the AI value chain:** A key challenge in regulating AI is determining how liability and accountability should be distributed across developers, deployers, and others involved in the AI lifecycle. Members emphasise the importance of a proportionate and practical approach, recognising the varying levels of control different actors may have. While some favour developer-led obligations, others support a more distributed model. Clear frameworks that reflect real-world roles and relationships will be essential to ensuring fairness, legal certainty, and continued innovation.
- Ensuring timely and expert institutional oversight:** To support the safe deployment of highly capable general-purpose AI systems, it will be critical that any regulatory framework is underpinned by expert institutions. The AI Security Institute (AISi) has the potential to play a key role in this space, provided it remains effective, independent, and able to collaborate internationally. Members note that the Institute's ability to assess high-risk systems in good time – supported by trusted safeguards and operational clarity – will be central to its success.
- Supporting deployment through a whole-economy lens:** Although not regulatory in nature, several enabling conditions intersect with regulatory success. These include the timely delivery of core infrastructure (such as compute capacity and data centres), access to AI-specific talent, and better support for SMEs seeking to adopt AI responsibly. While not all these fall within the remit of regulation, they are essential to ensuring that any regulatory regime is realistic, proportionate, and does not inadvertently create barriers to market entry or scale-up.

Further information



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About techUK

techUK is a membership organisation launched in 2013 to champion the technology sector and prepare and empower the UK for what comes next, delivering a better future for people, society, the economy and the planet.

It is the UK's leading technology membership organisation, with more than 1,100 members (the majority of which are SMEs) spread across the UK. We are a network that enables our members to learn from each other and grow in a way which contributes to the country both socially and economically. By working collaboratively with the government and others, we provide expert guidance and insight for our members and stakeholders about how to prepare for the future, anticipate change and realise the positive potential of technology in a fastmoving world.

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