# UK's AI Opportunities Action Plan faces scepticism from experts



Prime Minister Keir Starmer unveiled the UK AI Opportunities Action Plan earlier this month, a strategic framework that aims to bolster the nation’s position in the rapidly evolving artificial intelligence sector. However, experts are expressing scepticism, suggesting that the plan may reflect a broader trend of the UK lagging behind its global counterparts in AI development.

The announcement, which took place amidst a backdrop of economic uncertainty, was initially met with optimism. Alexandra Mousavizadeh, co-founder and co-CEO of Evident Insights, articulated her concerns in a recent article for City A.M., stating that the plan is "really a big missed opportunity." Mousavizadeh argues that it arrives five years late and lacks sufficient funding, while also failing to adequately address the structural challenges that have hindered the UK’s competitive edge in AI.

One significant issue highlighted is the UK’s struggle to attract and retain top talent in technology. The AI policy does not seem to effectively tackle these challenges, which Mousavizadeh suggests is critical for the nation's strategy moving forward. “Having an AI strategy is certainly better than nothing,” she wrote, “but unless these structural shortcomings are remedied, there’s no hope of Britain becoming an AI superpower.”

She also pointed out the existing discrepancies between the UK’s approach and that of other countries, particularly the United States, which has demonstrated a robust framework for AI innovation driven by substantial investment in research and development. The US has seen the emergence of influential AI firms such as OpenAI and Anthropic, demonstrating momentum the UK has not matched. Mousavizadeh elaborates that the US government has established more than 1,600 AI use cases across federal agencies, whereas the UK reported only 74 actively deployed cases as of autumn 2023.

The challenge extends beyond talent retention and investment. Britain’s energy policies also appear to fail in supporting the infrastructure necessary for AI growth, especially as energy prices in the UK remain significantly higher than those in the US and France. The AI Opportunities Action Plan does propose developments in energy infrastructure, particularly within designated AI Growth Zones, yet experts caution that the national grid may not be equipped to handle the anticipated demand, which could rival that of a large nuclear facility.

The plan includes establishing a National Data Laboratory, aimed at enhancing access to data for research purposes. However, the timeline for the first deliverables, targeted for summer 2025, suggests the UK is trailing countries like France, which has had dedicated systems for open data access since 2018 and has earmarked €2.5 billion for AI initiatives under its France 2030 plan.

The AI framework outlined by the UK government includes 50 recommendations focused more on exploring potential impacts rather than actionable steps. While the concept of appointing sectoral AI Champions to identify opportunities is a small advancement, the overall sentiment appears to reflect a broader inability to implement significant changes effectively.

Mousavizadeh's observations illustrate the urgent need for the UK to engage more seriously with fundamental issues surrounding talent, energy, and financial backing to foster a healthier AI ecosystem. The competition with nations that have been consistently outspending the UK in the AI domain underscores the time-sensitive nature of these developments as the global AI landscape continues to progress rapidly.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.smb.london/insights/pioneering-the-future-how-the-uks-ai-opportunities-action-plan-aims-to-harness-the-power-of-artificial-intelligence/> - This article provides details about the UK's AI Opportunities Action Plan, including its focus areas and strategies to enhance AI innovation and investment.
* <https://www.cityam.com/> - This is the platform where Alexandra Mousavizadeh, co-founder and co-CEO of Evident Insights, expressed her concerns about the UK's AI strategy in an article.
* <https://www.openai.com/> - OpenAI is one of the influential AI firms in the US, highlighting the country's robust AI innovation framework.
* <https://www.anthropic.com/> - Anthropic is another prominent AI company in the US, demonstrating the nation's momentum in AI development.
* <https://www.data.gouv.fr/en/> - France's open data portal, which has been operational since 2018, contrasts with the UK's proposed National Data Laboratory timeline.
* <https://www.gouvernement.fr/en/france-2030> - France's France 2030 plan includes significant investments in AI, highlighting the UK's lag in AI funding and initiatives.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-opportunities-action-plan> - This link would provide official details about the UK's AI Opportunities Action Plan, though it is not specified in the search results.
* <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/> - OFGEM's website provides information on UK energy policies, which are criticized for not supporting AI infrastructure adequately.
* <https://www.energy.gov/> - The US Department of Energy's website highlights the country's energy policies and investments, contrasting with the UK's higher energy costs.