

Open:UK



The Open Manifesto 2024

“We actively need to go out of our way to find talent from underrepresented communities. And then, it is not only about attracting talent but also about retaining talent. It’s about making sure that the culture of the company is inclusive and open. And that we empower employees to create and run employee resource groups, so that they feel comfortable and find a safe place to be.”

Nicolas Vibert, Senior Technical Marketing Engineer at Isovalent

3. Problems with the status quo

Public sector failing to deliver digitalisation to its potential

Unprecedented open source adoption in the last decade means that open source is the foundation of our national digital infrastructure and critical infrastructure. The unprecedented trajectory of open source software adoption over the last decade has outpaced understanding. Policies and practices are no longer fit for purpose. The UK public sector has done open source and infrastructure badly. This issue is widespread and not specific to the UK but the UK is uniquely positioned to rectify this.

The UK is not taking advantage of its status and potential in open technology

- Due to the global focus of open source software, the companies and people working in it are overlooked within their home country, the UK - despite their status.
- Because companies are generally US funded as they scale, and shift to US corporations, making them invisible locally, even if flourishing globally. A great example is the unicorn Snyk.
- The UK’s large, globally employed workforce of leadership in open source is internationally employed and views itself as part of the global tech sector. Individuals frequently have little engagement with the geographically local tech sector.
- With over 3.2 m GitHub accounts - the traditional way to measure open source developers and 4.5% of the UK population holding these accounts is more per capita than any country in the world.
- Leaders and Founders leave to work and build businesses in the US, primarily the Bay Area.
- Brexit, delays in policy, and lack of understanding has left the UK with a decade old world-first policy while other countries like the US and Japan have leapt ahead.

4. Three asks of a new UK Government

Build from the existing global centre of excellence as number 1 in Europe and 5 in the world to make the UK **the** recognisable global force in open source, with leading public sector implementation and AI leadership.

Ask One: Develop Open Source Skills

What must be done:

Support an increase in developing open source skills across the UK to build the missing skills of the future UK tech sector; stem talent flight; and boost the UK economy.

Develop a skilled workforce who understand open source through supporting contributions to open source thereby building on our existing talent and attracting more talent with those skills - opening global job opportunities to UK-wide workers.

Open standards, open source and an open economy for technology and digital service skills is vital if the UK wants to move away from the legacy of Big IT failures”

Mike Bracken, Founder Public Digital and Former Executive Director, Digital, The cabinet Office

Here’s how:

- Contributing to open source software projects allows individuals to develop hands-on experience building skills missing today in the UK economy. This could be done at scale with investment in appropriate programmes.
- Individuals’ hands-on experience builds a living CV of community contribution on GitHub etc which can be seen by employers across the globe.
- This visibility will enable more individuals across the UK, whether in urban and rural areas, to obtain home-based, international jobs. They can remain in the UK and bring high tech salaries into rural economies, boosting those economies.

“Open Sourcing also helps with hiring. If people already use your frameworks prior to joining your company, the training time required to is reduced drastically. Not to mention, you get access to a great pool of pre-screened potential hires.”

Mark Zuckerberg, CEO Meta, 3rd February 2024³

Ask Two: Enable better public sector digitalisation

What must be done:

Whilst many countries have built dedicated open source program offices, the UK has not followed this pathway. The advantage of hindsight allows insight into the failings of these functions in other countries where these offices have not achieved their goals. Building a well managed digital infrastructure on open source software requires something more.

Here’s how:

- Learn from the actions of other countries to learn and facilitate “curation” - the good technical hygiene and governance of the inevitable open source software.
- Build a world-leading policy with associated procedures and technical understanding
- Invest in the infrastructure and resources to back this.
- Create a global exemplar that may be replicated.

³ <https://machine-learning-made-simple.medium.com/mark-zuckerberg-open-source-is-good-business-c62828f24bf1>



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