

Tech Secretary launches Sovereign AI

16.4.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Secretary of State for Science, Innovation, and Technology, Liz Kendall, spoke at Wayve, launching the Sovereign AI Fund on Thursday 16 April 2026.

It is wonderful to be here tonight to launch Sovereign AI.

I want to start by thanking Alex and the team at Wayve for putting on a such a fantastic event – and for being such a fantastic British company.

You are the global leader in embodied AI for autonomous driving.

Supported by Mercedes-Benz, Nissan, and Stellantis.

And by all 4 of the world's leading semiconductor companies.

Cementing your place as a world AI leader, and cementing Britain's place as one of the top 3 countries for AI too.

And that is what today's launch is all about.

Helping more British AI companies start up, scale up and compete and succeed globally.

And ensuring our country has greater sovereign capability in this crucial technology.

My first message to you tonight is this.

I believe Sovereign AI is going to be one of the most important things this government does to build a better future for our country.

A bold claim, I know. But I believe: go big or go home.

But AI is the most powerful technology of our lifetime, with the potential to transform every aspect of our lives.

It is critical to our economic prosperity and non-negotiable for our national security.

That is why we must be an AI maker, not just an AI taker.

So we have greater control over – and reap greater benefits from – this vital technology for all of our people.

I don't need to tell you about Britain's world leading strengths.

Our amazing talent.

The best universities.

A vibrant AI ecosystem.

The most venture capital in Europe.

A pragmatic not dogmatic approach to regulation.

And pioneering institutions, not least the AI Security Institute.

That's alongside all our other long-held strengths.

The world's language, the rule of law, our stability, and unwavering belief in Parliamentary democracy.

But what's different now is that these strengths are backed by a government which believes in an active state and is prepared to do things differently in order to deliver for Britain.

And that's my second message tonight.

Sovereign AI is different from what's gone before.

Because it will combine the speed of venture with the strength of the nation state.

This is so important.

I've seen throughout my time in politics and government just how slow things can be to change.

It can take a year to pass a law. It took about 8 for the Online Safety Act.

Not for a lack of good people, with good intentions.

But because there are too many barriers in the way.

Too many decisions being shunted between too many departments, by people who just may not have the right experience.

Not so with Sovereign AI.

It's run by the best people – who really know what they are doing.

Starting with our fantastic Chair, James Wise. And the Head of Ventures, Josephine Kant.

With the new managing partner to be announced very soon.

It is independent. With an investment committee making its own decisions free from political interference about who to back and why.

And it will operate at the speed of VC, not the traditional pace of government.

Because that is what this incredibly fast moving world demands.

SovAI has already made 2 direct investments.

The first in Callosum: a brilliant team building the AI infrastructure of the future.

With a second very exciting investment to be announced soon.

And they've signed 5 'right of first refusal' deals when companies raise their next round – including with companies using AI to help tackle Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, companies in the defence and security sector, and those developing AI agents that learn and improve continuously from real world

use – one of the most important frontiers in AI research.

James told me his team has done in weeks what some VC funds would be proud to do in a year.

And the key to Sovereign AI isn't just about access to money, crucial though this is.

It's about mobilising the power of the state to help the best of Britain succeed.

Sovereign AI is providing fully funded access to the UK's largest supercomputers.

It is fast tracking global talent – with super priority visa decisions within one working day, and up to 10 visas for R&D talent completely cost free.

Unlocking the full power of government, where it can make a difference.

The speed of venture, backed by the weight of a nation.

So my third and final message tonight to you, our brilliant founders based in Britain.

Is that my mission is to make sure you never have to choose between your ambition and your home.

And to anyone working in AI, wherever you live.

In a world marked by such geopolitical uncertainty.

If you want to shape an ambitious and responsible future for AI: come and build your company here.

I want to finish by saying this.

I know, right now, the world feels like a risky, uncertain, and often deeply frightening place.

That there's concern and pessimism about what the future holds, with many people doubting we can ever make tomorrow better than today.

But I know change is possible. I studied history at university – not computer science or engineering – so I know nothing is permanent. We have done it before and we can do it again.

I believe that with the talent in this room – and a government that has a cause to make technology work for all, that believes in an active state, and that is prepared to do things differently – we can and we will lead our country to a better future.

That is the promise of tonight. That is the promise of Sovereign AI.

To bet on Britain because we believe in Britain.

So let's get on with the job.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/tech-secretary-launches-sovereign-ai>