



**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DIGITAL CATAPULT
ROLE SPECIFICATION**



Digital Catapult - Snapshot

Digital Catapult is a deep tech and advanced digital technologies organisation.

It has a critical role to play in co-ordinating and catalysing the UK's world-class science, research, technology and innovation infrastructure, helping to deliver the UK's industrial strategy and supporting economic growth.

Digital Catapult supports the growth of new ventures by helping them understand, develop and deploy a wide range of frontier technologies.

It bridges the gap between the research sector, start-ups, industry, government and investors to support innovation and unlock commercial opportunities.

Digital Catapult is part of the [Innovate UK Catapult Network](#). Funded by [UK Research & Innovation](#), the Catapults work together to provide cutting-edge R&D facilities and technical expertise to support UK business innovation.

2,604

Company engagements since 2020

£596m

Investment raised by startups since 2018

400+

Creative deep tech companies supported since 2018

66

New industrial collaborations in FY24/25

Accelerating the practical application of deep tech innovation to equip the UK to be future ready

Digital Catapult was established in 2013, with a registered office in London and an expanding network of offices and labs currently located in Belfast, Bristol and Gateshead.

Visit www.digicatapult.org.uk for more information.

Sectors & Services

Digital Catapult's current focus lies in the following sectors, though the potential exists to expand into other high-growth parts of the economy:

Aerospace Defence &
Security

Creative
Industries

Digital
Infrastructure

Energy &
Utilities

Digital Catapult provides the following services:

- **Research & Development**

Advising on policy and conducting research on emerging technology trends, or helping companies benefit from the cutting edge of technology through research and development activities with a focus on technology integration and application in new areas.

- **Testbed Facilities**

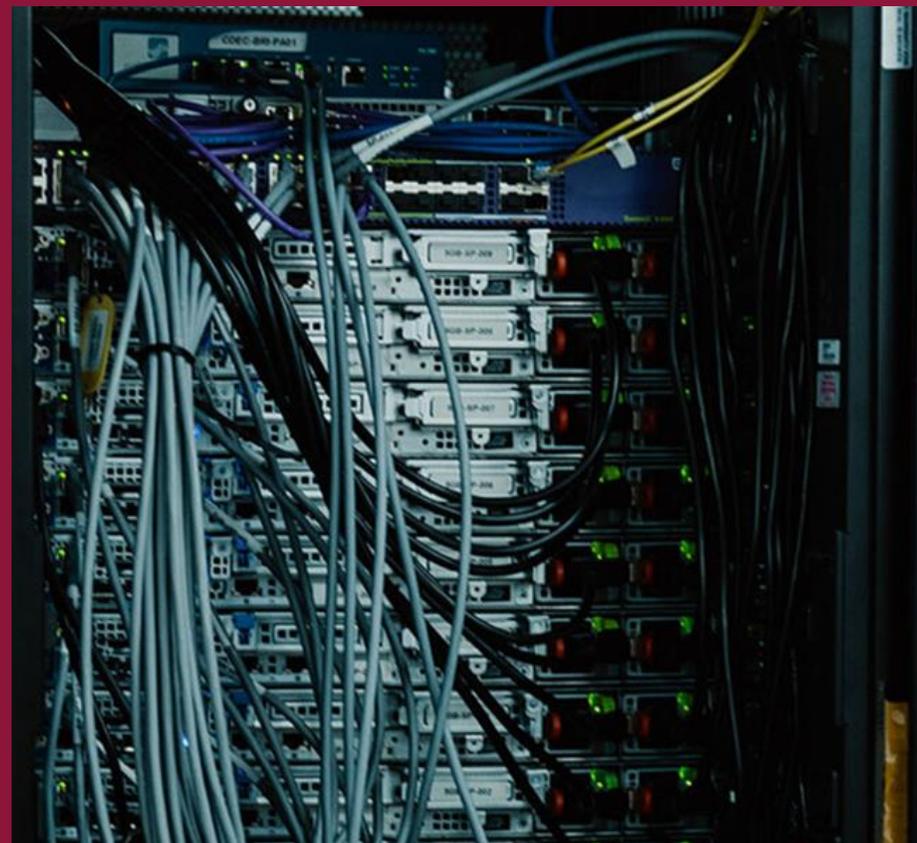
Operating physical and digital facilities, providing access for companies to explore deep tech.

- **Innovation & Acceleration**

Addressing real-world needs by aligning programmes to industry challenges and themes and delivering impact for startups and scaleups through thematic and cross-technology innovation and acceleration activities, including ecosystem mapping and field labs.

- **Consultancy & Strategy**

Providing support in areas such as market research and capability mapping, programme and technology design services, product management, product and technology roadmap development, new business model development, and the preparation of regional, national and international innovation insights and market considerations.



"The gains from AI innovation alone could add up to £47 billion a year for the UK in productivity gains over the next decade."

- The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, November 2025

Deep Tech Innovation Ecosystem

Digital Catapult helps new ventures, [startups](#) and scaleups connect with [investors](#), [large businesses](#) and [government](#) to drive developments in deep tech and advanced digital technologies.

Digital Catapult helps build a productive innovation ecosystem by:

- Working directly with the UK's world-class [research institutions and universities](#) to develop and fund their research and commercialise frontier technologies.
- Collaborating across the Catapult Network to optimise outcomes for current and future research programmes and scale-up initiatives.
- Connecting promising start-ups to potential funders, including UK and EU grant givers, the [British Business Bank](#) and commercial investors.
- Enabling interested investors to scout the most promising startups, as well as to meet like-minded investors focused on the same technologies.
- Deploying its market and technology insights via regular [publications](#), including research reports, case studies and guides that enable real-world adoption.
- Hosting regular in-person and online [events](#) on specific topics and technologies of interest.

"By improving access to data for innovators, researchers and businesses across the UK, we can transform lives through better public services and cutting-edge innovation."

- The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, November 2025

The Position

Digital Catapult seeks a commercially-minded and entrepreneurial CEO who will drive the organisation into its next phase and further cement Digital Catapult as a leader in advanced digital technology innovation and applied research.

This is a rare and exciting opportunity to evolve and add value to a significant national asset.

The CEO will be responsible for leading a team that works with a broad range of stakeholders – research institutions, universities, new ventures, scale-ups, established businesses, investors, government and public sector bodies – to accelerate industry adoption of cutting-edge technology for the benefit of the UK as a whole.

In partnership with the board of directors, the CEO will be responsible for building and leading an agile and dynamic organisation that can identify and seize the economic opportunities offered by digital innovation.

The CEO will be an influential ambassador and passionate advocate for the UK tech sector and its potential to deliver transformational economic and social opportunities for the country.

By working with innovators, investors and other stakeholders, the CEO will further enhance Digital Catapult's profile as the 'go to' organisation in deep tech and advanced digital technologies.

Time Commitment

The role requires a full-time commitment, which includes being a visible presence in the London office. The CEO will also be expected to visit offices across the UK on a regular basis to maintain visibility and foster collegiality across the organisation and with key regional stakeholders.

Remuneration

A competitive salary, bonus and benefits package is offered.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Statement

In addition to complying with all current UK employment legislation, Digital Catapult applies established good practice in equal opportunities, diversity and inclusion in order to gain the benefits of building a diverse workforce. All applicants will be treated in a fair and consistent manner and in particular to avoid any form of discrimination.

Role Responsibilities

- Developing a long-term strategic vision, anticipating and responding to emerging technology trends where Digital Catapult can be a key enabler and force multiplier.
- Leading and developing an executive team and the wider organisation to ensure Digital Catapult maximises its influence and impact.
- Developing a trusted relationship with the Chair, Board of Directors and other critical external stakeholders, including Innovate UK, wider government, academia, industry and commercial investors.
- Serving as the public face of Digital Catapult; be an available and effective ambassador and campaigner on behalf of the organisation and the sector.
- Ensuring that Digital Catapult continues successfully to compete for UK and EU research and innovation grant funding.
- Building and delivering a commercial strategy that strengthens and diversifies Digital Catapult's independent revenue streams.
- Identifying and building on existing strengths across Digital Catapult while leading the organisation through a rapidly-changing external environment with agility and responsiveness.



“The UK will be one of the top three places in the world to create, invest in, and scale-up a fast-growing Digital and Technology business. We will aim to secure the UK’s first trillion-dollar technology business.”

- The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy, November 2025

The Person

The ideal candidate will have senior management level, P&L leadership experience at relevant scale. They will be knowledgeable about deep tech and advanced digital technologies, preferably with experience in one of Digital Catapult's current focus sectors.

They will have a proven track record of working effectively across a complex, multi-disciplinary stakeholder environment. Experience of operating at board level will be an advantage.

Person Specification & Experience

- The CEO will have the leadership skills to take charge of a key national asset operating across the private and public sectors.
- An entrepreneurial and growth-minded individual capable of maximising available research grant funding alongside growing commercial revenue.
- Skilled in stakeholder management, they will be an influential leader with the flexibility to navigate Digital Catapult's complex and diverse stakeholder landscape.
- They will be capable of further building Digital Catapult's relationship and reputation with investors in frontier technologies.
- An authentic and inspirational leader who is a talent magnet and able to motivate, retain, inspire and guide a high-performing team.
- Intellectually curious, with sound business judgement and ambition.
- High EQ and culturally aligned with Digital Catapult's values.



The Person *(cont'd)*

Skills and Characteristics

Leadership

- A dynamic leader with exceptional people skills who can lead from the front while ensuring buy-in from across the business and represent Digital Catapult nationally across a complex stakeholder ecosystem.

Technology Understanding

- Bringing a solid understanding of cutting-edge technology in order to be a persuasive collaborator and partner with business leaders, entrepreneurs and investors.

Commercial Acumen

- Experience in guiding and leading commercial growth and delivering a strategic plan, combined with the agility and dynamism to respond to a changing external landscape and seizing emerging opportunities.

Visionary

- Strong communication skills, capable of creating a purpose and clear narrative for Digital Catapult as a first-class national asset.

Collaborative Style

- An inspirational and compelling leader who inspires trust and confidence and role-models the values of Digital Catapult. They will have the appetite and energy to drive the company forward to its next phase by collaborating effectively across a variety of ecosystems.



Digital Catapult's Values

Solve What Matters

Partner for Progress

Challenge Purposefully

“The UK is well placed to be a global leader in the data economy, building on our existing position as the leading data economy in Europe.”

- The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy, November 2025

The Innovate UK Catapult Network



The Innovate UK Catapult Network brings together nine leading technology and innovation centres spanning over 65 locations across the UK. They are independent not-for-profit private organisations transforming the UK’s capability for innovation in sectors of strength.

Catapults are physical centres with cutting-edge R&D infrastructures including hubs, laboratories, testbeds, factories and offices, as well as technical experts that prove and adopt breakthrough products, processes, services and technologies.

Catapults work with thousands of innovative businesses across a wide range of sectors, such as manufacturing, space, health, digital, energy, transport, telecoms, the urban environment and many others.

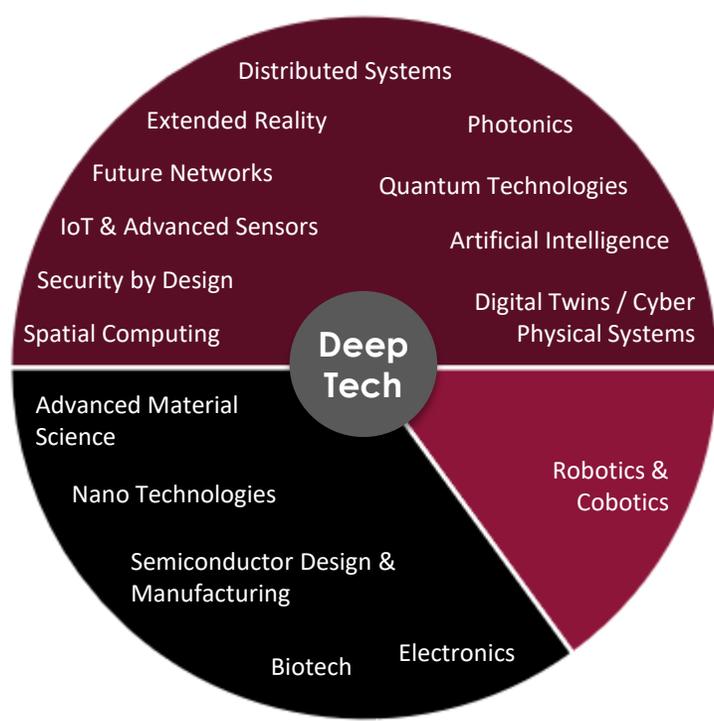
The Catapult Network enables the best of the UK’s businesses, scientists, technical specialists and engineers to work collaboratively on late-stage research and development, helping industry get high potential ideas to market, fuelling business growth, and increasing productivity.

By bridging the gap between research and industry, the Catapults help tackle the biggest challenges that society and industries face today. Through their knowledge, infrastructure and collaborations, Catapults make today’s industries more productive and create the markets of tomorrow.



What Does Deep Tech Mean for Digital Catapult?

Examples of deep tech focus areas for Digital Catapult



● Current capabilities



Within Scope: Active development and convergence of these technologies

● Possible future capabilities



Exploratory Scope: Interaction with and exploration of these technologies

● No capabilities at present - potential for future collaboration



Outside Scope: Technologies Digital Catapult may work on in collaboration with others, but doesn't develop alone

People & Culture

Digital Catapult prides itself on its team of skilled and talented people from a wide variety of backgrounds.

The organisation is continuing to explore new initiatives that it can champion within communities local to its office locations to support social mobility.

In 2024, Digital Catapult was certified as a Great Place to Work for the second year running and listed amongst the Best Places to Work in Tech and in the Charity and Not-for-Profit Sector as well as a Best Workplace for Wellbeing.

Digital Catapult Values & Behavioural Framework:

Solve What Matters

Prioritise tasks and projects based on their potential to create practical and positive impact.

Communicate clearly about priorities, progress, and decisions and **follow through on commitments**.

Actively look for new ways of solving problems and be the first one to **try them out**.

Establish clear metrics and measures to track progress and results.

Partner for Progress

Create safe and supportive environments, make sure everyone feels heard, respected and cared for.

Bring the right people together for purposeful innovation so that decisions are made with the appropriate expertise and input.

Ask for and provide specific and actionable feedback that helps others develop.

Celebrate successes and lessons learned, constantly search for and applying new learnings to develop best practice.

Challenge Purposefully

Anticipate the future, regularly explore emerging trends and potential scenarios.

Consider the potential impact your solutions can have on others and make responsible decisions.

Present well-reasoned, diverse perspectives on future directions, even when they differ from the majority.

Ask questions that encourage others to re-evaluate assumptions and consider broader consequences of actions.



Executive Board Members



Susan Bowen

Chief Executive Officer (*outgoing*)

As CEO of Digital Catapult, Susan is focused on bringing together her 25+ years of experience in the technology sector to guiding and co-creating an ethical approach to advances in technology across multiple industries with an aim to effectively balance our Digital Catapult initiatives from Research and Development through to commercialisation.

Starting her career as a coder, Susan stands out among senior executives due to her demonstrated expertise in successfully leading and expanding corporate and listed divisions, as well as mid-market and SMB private equity organisations.

With a vast geographical scope encompassing the USA, Canada, Europe, and the UK, Susan possesses remarkable transformative abilities and extensive operational knowledge in mergers and acquisitions, making her a seasoned change catalyst dedicated to enhancing shareholder value, with an aptitude for creating innovative business models and fostering collaborations within complex organisations and diverse industries.



David Bletso

Chief Financial Officer

A dynamic Chartered Accountant with a proven track record for enabling growth, David is Chief Financial Officer for Digital Catapult.

David brings financial expertise from a career in several sectors including marketing & communications, publishing, retail & leisure and the charity sector; working collaboratively with organisations to create successful growth strategies. He takes pride in developing best in class teams that provide deep insight to drive performance monitoring and effective decision making, whilst ensuring a robust control environment.

Non-Executive Board Members



Benjamin Story

Chair

Ben has transformed businesses across the industrial technology, energy, transportation and infrastructure sectors. He was a member of Rolls-Royce's ExCo, leading its strategic transformation and digitalisation across the group.



Priya Guha MBE

Senior Independent Director

Priya is a Venture Partner at Merian Ventures, Advisor to Kheiron Medical Technologies, Gallos Technologies, a member of the Investment Governance Board at Future Planet Capital, a NED at Reach PLC, UKRI & GB Badminton.



Perdita Fraser

Non-Executive Director

Perdita is Chair of National Numeracy and Trustee of the Campaign for Science and Engineering. Perdita is an experienced director, adviser and angel investor in innovative companies in the UK and the US.



Valerie Todd CBE

Non-Executive Director

Valerie is the former People and Organisation Director for Siemens UK and Ireland and supported the business through 5 years of transformation and growth to establish it as one of the largest technology companies in the world.



Belinda Howell

Non-Executive Director

Belinda brings extensive experience at board level across sectors from digital and energy infrastructure, natural resources, agri-commodities marine and fisheries through the supply chain to utilities, consumer goods and retail.



Dr Damien Buie

Non-Executive Director

Damien is the Industry Lead for renewables, electrical networks and energy services within AWS for Energy, globally responsible for supporting its customers to accelerate the energy transition.



Yvonne Rogers FRS

Non-Executive Director

Yvonne is the director of the Interaction Centre at UCL (UCLIC), deputy head of department for Computer Science and a Professor of Interaction Design.



William Priest

Non-Executive Director

William is currently on the Major Programmes and 5G Boards at DCMS within central government. He has invested in, and mentors a number tech startups, and is the Chair of Connexin.



Jessica Cecil

Non-Executive Director

Jessica is a leading media industry figure and an expert in the field of disinformation, currently working as a consultant to media and tech companies. She founded the Trusted News Initiative.



Keith Underwood

Non-Executive Director

Keith has worked in the media industry for over 20 years and has successfully managed a broad range of business functions; strategy, digital, technology and finance.

Additional Information (links)



**COMPANY
WEBSITE**



**CATAPULT
NETWORK**



**LEADERSHIP &
BOARD**



**PRESS
RELEASES**



**INSIGHTS &
PUBLICATIONS**

Contact Information

Please submit your CV and cover letter by email to:

digicatapult@heidrick.com

The closing date for applications is 23:59 on 6 March 2026.

Heidrick & Struggles

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Heidrick & Struggles serves the executive leadership needs of the world's top organisations as a trusted advisor for leadership consulting, culture shaping and senior-level executive search services. Our data driven solutions empower senior executives and boards of directors to transform their organisations by leveraging top talent and accelerating performance across all layers of the business.

