

Economy and Fair Work Committee
Wednesday 12 November 2025
31st Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

The economic potential of artificial intelligence

Background

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is evolving rapidly. [A recent survey by the Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) found that 17.6% of Scottish businesses now use AI in their daily operations.
2. In March 2021, the Scottish Government published a high-level [AI strategy](#) to guide the development of AI in Scotland. Its vision was for Scotland to “become a leader in the development and use of trustworthy, ethical and inclusive AI”.
3. To support this goal, the Scottish Government has committed to launching AI Scotland, a national programme in partnership with business, academia, agencies, and government. A key part of this will be a national AI adoption programme for SMEs.
4. The first phase of AI Scotland was [announced in September 2025](#) with £1 million in funding for support and grants to help SMEs expand their use of AI. This programme will be delivered by The Data Lab and Scotland’s three enterprise agencies.
5. The Scottish Government has said it will publish an AI Action Plan to guide future developments and ensure AI is used responsibly and effectively across the Scottish economy.

Scope

6. The Committee will hear from business leaders, innovators, and academics over three weeks to explore how Scotland can harness the benefits and manage the risks of AI in relation to the economy and labour market.
7. The outcome of this work will help inform the Scottish Government’s upcoming AI Action Plan and rollout of AI Scotland.
8. Evidence sessions will focus on—
 - How AI is currently being used, or could be used, to add economic value in Scotland.
 - Infrastructure needs and their implications.
 - AI’s potential to boost public sector productivity.
 - Managing the opportunities and risks for the workforce.
 - Governance, accountability and transparency of AI systems.

Evidence session

9. The Committee will hear from—

- Steven Grier, Industry Advisor;
- Heather Thomson, CEO, The Data Lab; and
- Professor Mark Schaffer, Heriot Watt University, and Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Clerks to the Committee
November 2025