

Blog: Digital and technology clusters and skills in the Midlands discussed in the latest Quarterly Economic Briefing

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‘Our greatest opportunity is also our greatest challenge in the sense that, as a region, we’ve got that broad range of applications [of AI], but that means that we’re not going to be known for just one thing, which is often a much easier narrative to sell’ – Sarah Windrum, Future Mobility Cluster Lead at HORIBA MIRA

Digital technology innovations, such as AI, have huge potential to boost productivity in a wide variety of sectors- but only if infrastructure, skills, and the legislative framework can keep up, according to panellists at the most recent Midlands Engine Quarterly Economic Briefing on 20th March, which delved into the opportunities and challenges of digitisation and new technologies.

The virtual event opened with presentations from Pim van Baarsen, CEO of Silverstone Technology Cluster and Sarah Windrum, Future Mobility Cluster Lead at HORIBA MIRA, who painted a picture of the state-of-the-art technological developments unfolding in their clusters, and the role their organisations play in facilitating innovation.

They were then joined by Malcolm Barnes, Director of Hollywood Gaming Ltd. and Professor Samir Dani from Keele Business School for a panel discussion, which touched upon the digital skills agenda, the infrastructure challenges of transport technology and the strengths and challenges of working in clusters and, finally, highlighted the greatest opportunities for the Midlands in the digital and technology sector.

Sir John Peace, Midlands Engine Chairman said:

‘It was a pleasure to hear our speakers, and I thank them all for their time. Our QEBs continue to bring partners together and to hear such a discussion on how the Midlands’ global reputation for its technology and innovation, thanks to its globally recognised Universities and leading businesses, is hugely insightful.

Our region has the fastest growing technology cluster in the UK. Now it is up to the Midlands, as the centre of industry, to spearhead the digital revolution.

This means committing to innovation and strategic exploration; exporting our expertise, such as that of our emerging technologies like future telecommunications, Quantum, and AI. And, as the panellists discussed, this also means continuing to work *collaboratively* with cross-sector partners across the region.'