# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Review of Digital Innovation, Artificial Intelligence and Automation in Wales** |
| **DATE**  | **28 March 2018**  |
| **BY** | **Ken Skates AM, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport** |

The Economic Action Plan we published in December made very clear that future proofing the Welsh economy for the challenges and opportunities facing it over the coming years should be at the heart of our work as a government. It outlined our ambition to work across departmental silos and with social partners to build a fair work nation and economy, fit for the future.

The plan identifies the pace and the scale of the changes facing Wales in the fourth industrial age, committing us to harness its potential and manage its threats through a new, whole-government approach to economic development. The Economic Action Plan identifies the close synergy between automation, artificial intelligence and other forms of digitalisation as well as the transformative effect these emerging fields are likely to have on the Welsh economy and the structure of our future labour market.

I am keen to ensure that Wales is best placed to capitalise on the next phase of digital innovation in a co-ordinated and effective way. In line with the ambition of the Economic Action Plan I want us to prepare for what’s coming by future-proofing the skills of our workforce but also going beyond and supporting new employment opportunities, underpinning grassroots innovation within businesses and examining the impact on our wider public services. I want to explore how technological change can enable shared prosperity across Wales, building inclusive communities and support our plans for regional economic development.

That is why alongside my Cabinet colleagues, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and the Leader of the House and Chief Whip as well as the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, I have agreed that Professor Phil Brown, Distinguished Research Professor at Cardiff University School of Social Sciences, should lead a review into Digital Innovation, including Artificial Intelligence and Automation in the context of the Economic Action Plan.

Given the cross-government nature of the work I will be finalising terms of reference for the review in the coming weeks that can shape the evidence gathering, analysis and final recommendations.

The review will take an international perspective of digital innovation and examine what Wales can learn from other countries and explore how, working together, we can respond positively to areas of challenge. It will work closely with the Digital and Data Group being led by my colleague the Leader of the House, Julie James, examining the opportunities of big data as well as the digital opportunities in public service delivery. Through working with the centres of excellence that exist in our higher and further education institutions I believe that we can harness the transformational power of data to improve services and our economy.

I have asked that the review reflects on the Welsh Government’s National Strategy: Prosperity for All and the our new Economic Action Plan as well as the well-being goals and ways of working referenced within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

I will work closely with social partners and expect the review to engage intelligently with stakeholders across the country and with international experts across the globe to shape a report for us here in Wales.

I will write to Assembly Members when the terms of reference have been finalised and I expect to receive an interim report later this year with a final report in the first quarter of 2019.

The review will report into the work of the new Ministerial Advisory Board which I will be establishing shortly.

*This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Assembly returns I would be happy to do so.*