AI Strategy Public Consultation

Terms of Consultation

- **Purpose**: To gather views on Northern Ireland's draft cross-departmental AI Strategy, which aims to establish a responsible, ethical, and coordinated framework for AI adoption across public services.
- **Scope**: Open to stakeholders across government, industry, academia, voluntary and community sectors, and members of the public.
- **Platform**: The consultation is hosted on **NI Direct** using the **Citizen Space** platform and promoted through departmental channels.
- **Engagement Approach**: Combination of online consultation and targeted stakeholder engagement. To support inclusive engagement, accessible versions of the draft Strategy, with alternative formats will be available on request.

Launch Date and Timeline

- **Launch Date: 12 August 2026**
- **Close Date: 4 November 2026**
- **Consultation Duration**: **Twelve weeks**
- **Objective of Timing**: To allow sufficient engagement and finalise the strategy within the current Programme for Government period.

Consultation Details and Period

- The consultation will run **12 August to 4 November 2026** (total twelve weeks).
- Responses will inform the final AI Strategy before submission to the Executive for approval and publication.
- Accessible versions and targeted outreach will ensure engagement with equality groups.
- Costs will be met from existing resources, and no legislative changes will arise from consultation at this stage.

Context

The Executive Office is seeking views on the draft Northern Ireland Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy. Artificial Intelligence has the potential to transform how we work, deliver services and improve outcomes for people across Northern Ireland. The draft AI Strategy has been developed through collaboration with government, business and academia, ensuring a broad range of perspectives have helped shape its direction.

At the heart of the strategy is a commitment to putting people first. It promotes the responsible and regulated use of AI to support and enhance human skills, strengthen decision-making and deliver public benefit, while upholding the principles of transparency, integrity and inclusion.

The strategy aims to build public confidence in the use of AI across the public sector, while also providing a framework to help organisations realise the opportunities AI presents. Developing the skills and knowledge needed to use AI safely and effectively is a key priority, helping to ensure that AI is used for positive outcomes for everyone.

We want to hear your views. Take part in the consultation and help shape Northern Ireland's approach to AI.

Documents:

The following documents are available as part of this consultation:

- Draft Northern Ireland Artificial Intelligence Strategy;
- Consultation Questionnaire;
- Equality Screening Report;
- Rural Needs Impact Assessment;
- Privacy Notice

Accessible versions available upon request to: ost@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

Why we are consulting

Artificial Intelligence presents significant opportunities for Northern Ireland. It has the potential to improve public service delivery, support research and innovation, enhance decision-making, create economic opportunities and increase productivity across multiple sectors. At the same time, its use raises important questions relating to governance, transparency, accountability, fairness, job security, energy usage and public trust.

The Northern Ireland Executive wishes to ensure that the future development and use of AI in the public sector reflects the views of those who live, work, study and do business here. This consultation provides an opportunity for individuals and organisations to help shape the final Strategy and contribute to the development of an approach that is responsible, ethical and inclusive.

About the draft Strategy

The draft Northern Ireland Artificial Intelligence Strategy sets out a vision for the responsible adoption and use of AI across the public sector in Northern Ireland. It examines the current AI landscape, identifies opportunities and challenges, and proposes a framework to support future AI adoption and innovation.

The Strategy is structured around a series of themes, including:

- The AI landscape in Northern Ireland;
- AI principles;
- Governance;
- Infrastructure and data;
- Skills and capability development;
- Public sector transformation; and
- Citizens, trust and engagement.

Central to the Strategy are eight principles for responsible AI:

- Human Oversight;
- Accountability and Redress;
- Data Governance;
- Technical Safety and Security;
- Fairness and Transparency;
- Sustainability;
- Societal Benefit; and
- Training and Literacy.

These principles are intended to support the safe, ethical and effective use of AI across Northern Ireland's public sector and provide a foundation for public confidence in AI technologies.

Who we would like to hear from

The Executive Office welcomes responses from:

- Members of the public;
- Businesses and employers;
- Small and medium-sized enterprises;
- Academic and research institutions;
- Trade unions and worker representatives;
- Public sector organisations;
- Local government;
- Community and voluntary organisations;
- Representative bodies; and
- Any other organisations or individuals with an interest in Artificial Intelligence and its future development in Northern Ireland.

How to respond

Responses should be submitted using the online consultation questionnaire.

Consultation responses will be considered as part of the development of the final Northern Ireland Artificial Intelligence Strategy.

Consultation period

The consultation will remain open from **12 August 2026** until **4 November 2026.**

Responses received after the closing date may not be considered.

Alternative formats

Consultation documents can be made available in alternative formats on request.

If you require documents in an alternative format, please contact the consultation team using the details provided below. Use subject reference “NI AI Strategy Consultation Query”.

Invitation to Provide Evidence

Northern Ireland's Chief Scientific and Technology Adviser, Professor McCarthy is committed to ensuring that science, research and evidence are at the heart of policy development. As part of this consultation, we welcome any additional evidence, research or insights that consultees believe may be relevant and which have not already been identified within the accompanying documentation.

In particular, we would welcome evidence relating to current or emerging trends that may affect people with characteristics protected under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in the development, deployment or use of Artificial Intelligence. The evidence provided will help strengthen the evidence base underpinning the final Strategy and support informed, evidence-led decision-making on how AI can be developed and used in ways that are fair, inclusive and beneficial to all.

Contact Details

Email: ost@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

Consultation Approach:

Have Your Say on the Draft AI Strategy for Northern Ireland

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is already changing how we live, work and access public services. Used well, it can help improve outcomes for citizens, support economic growth and make public services more efficient. Used poorly, it risks undermining trust or creating unintended harms. That is why Northern Ireland is developing a cross-departmental AI Strategy to set a clear, responsible and joined-up approach to how AI is adopted across the public sector.

The draft AI Strategy for Northern Ireland sets out a proposed vision, principles and priority actions for the safe, ethical and effective use of AI. It has been developed collaboratively with input from a range of partners, and we are now seeking views to help shape the final version.

We would welcome your views on the draft Strategy, which is available here:

https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/teo/artificial-intelligence-public-consultation/

Please take a few minutes to review the draft and share your views by responding to the consultation questions set out in the document. Your feedback will help ensure the strategy is practical, inclusive and reflects the needs and concerns of citizens, public sector staff, businesses, academia and the wider community. All responses will be analysed and will inform the final strategy.

Thank you for taking the time to contribute. Your input will play an important role in shaping how AI is used responsibly for the benefit of everyone in Northern Ireland.

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

1. Name:

2. Email Address:

3. I am responding as:

An individual	Y/N	On behalf of an organisation	Y/N
		Name of organisation:	

4. Gender:

M F Other Prefer not to say

5. Age group:

   16-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75-84 85 or over Prefer not to say

6. Sector:

   NICS, HE, FE, Industry, Voluntary & Community, Other (please specify)

   free text box for specification of what sector if 'Other' is chosen.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

The AI Principles for NI

1. To what extent do you agree with the proposed AI principles for NI?

   1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
   OR
   Do not have the expertise to respond

   free text box for further comments

2. To what extent do you agree with the overarching vision for Principle 1: Human Oversight?

   1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
   OR
   Do not have the expertise to respond

   free text box for further comments

   Specifically, what is your opinion of the following priority actions for the public sector?

   - Creation of Human Oversight Teams

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   - Framework for operation of Human Oversight Teams

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   - Human Oversight Disclosure Plans

Agree Disagree Don't know

free text box for further comments

3. To what extent do you agree with the overarching vision for Principle 2: Accountability & Redress?

   1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
   OR
   Do not have the expertise to respond

   free text box for further comments

   Specifically, what is your opinion of the following priority actions for the public sector?

   - Definition of redress mechanisms

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   - Designation of accountable officers

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   - Process for identification and disclosure of errors

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   free text box for further comments

4. To what extent do you agree with the overarching vision for Principle 3: Data Governance?

   1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
   OR
   Do not have the expertise to respond

   free text box for further comments

   Specifically, what is your opinion of the following priority actions for the public sector?

   - Amendment of DPIAs to integrate AI principles

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   - Requirement for data governance logs

Agree Disagree Don't know

- Visibility of organisational DPOs

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Document validation and verification

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Public-facing database of FAQs

  Agree Disagree Don't know

free text box for further comments

5. To what extent do you agree with the overarching vision for Principle 4: Technical Safety & Security?

   1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
   OR
   Do not have the expertise to respond

   free text box for further comments

   Specifically, what is your opinion of the following priority actions for the public sector?

   - Embedding of deep technical expertise in oversight teams

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   - Adoption of appropriate public sector standards

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   - Design and declaration of consistency testing

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   - Implementation of approaches for verification of AI systems

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   free text box for further comments

6. To what extent do you agree with the overarching vision for Principle 5: Fairness & Transparency

   1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
   OR
   Do not have the expertise to respond

   free text box for further comments

   Specifically, what is your opinion of the following priority actions for the public sector?

   - Ensuring bias detection methods are built into AI models

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   - Creation of a repository for all AI projects

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   - Design of comms materials for AI projects

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   free text box for further comments

7. To what extent do you agree with the overarching vision for Principle 6: Environmental Sustainability

   1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
   OR
   Do not have the expertise to respond

   free text box for further comments

   Specifically, what is your opinion of the following priority actions for the public sector?

   - Requirement to detail how AI projects contribute to a sustainable future

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   - Disclosure of energy source and usage for all AI projects

     Agree Disagree Don't know

- Reporting of mitigations to support environmental sustainability

  Agree Disagree Don't know

free text box for further comments

8. To what extent do you agree with the overarching vision for Principle 7: Societal Benefit?

   1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
   OR
   Do not have the expertise to respond

   free text box for further comments

   Specifically, what is your opinion of the following priority actions for the public sector?

   - Integration of a cost-benefit matrix into all AI projects

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   - Inclusion of metrics to measure efficiency, experience and outcomes for AI projects

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   - Production of impact summaries at project completion

     Agree Disagree Don't know

   free text box for further comments

9. To what extent do you agree with the overarching vision for Principle 8: Training & Literacy?

   1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
   OR
   Do not have the expertise to respond

   free text box for further comments

   Specifically, what is your opinion of the following priority actions?

   - Training for all public sector staff on AI basics

Agree Disagree Don't know

- Development of AI-specific career pathways within the public sector

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Integration of training development leads and trainees into Human Oversight Teams

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Inclusion of training assessment and development plan into all public sector AI projects

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Establishment of a Public Sector Skills Academy

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Establishment of AI Workforce Impact Observatory

  Agree Disagree Don't know

free text box for further comments

AI Governance

10. To what extent do you agree with the overarching vision for AI Governance?

1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
OR
Do not have the expertise to respond

free text box for further comments

Specifically, what is your opinion of the following priority actions?

- Development of a governance framework and tool for public sector use with AI projects

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Establishment of a cross-sectoral AI governance board for public sector projects

Agree Disagree Don't know

- Production of internal inventories of AI projects across all public sector bodies

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Delivery of bite-sized AI governance training for public & private sector leaders

  Agree Disagree Don't know

free text box for further comments

AI & Infrastructure

11. To what extent do you agree with the overarching vision for AI & Infrastructure?

    1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
    OR
    Do not have the expertise to respond

    free text box for further comments

    Specifically, what is your opinion of the following priority actions?

    - Development of an integrated data strategy for NI including data-sharing infrastructure

      Agree Disagree Don't know

    - Identification of high value datasets across sectors for open publication

      Agree Disagree Don't know

    - Legislation for sharing datasets across sectors

      Agree Disagree Don't know

    - Development of a regional data centre

      Agree Disagree Don't know

    - Provision of sufficient high-performance compute facilities

Agree Disagree Don't know

- Creation of a central unit to enhance AI capability across the public sector

  Agree Disagree Don't know

free text box for further comments

AI & Skills

12. To what extent do you agree with the overarching vision for AI & Skills?

1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
OR
Do not have the expertise to respond

free text box for further comments

Specifically, what is your opinion of the following priority actions?

- Audit of educational provision across the region

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Scoping of AI needs for community and voluntary sector

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Further integration of AI use into teacher training provision

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Development of region-wide guidance for use of AI in schools

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Roll-out of public awareness campaign promoting access to freely accessible basic skills training

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Integration of basic AI training into new staff inductions across sectors

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Creation of mechanisms for mentorship, sharing best practice, and peer advocacy for organisational leaders

  Agree Disagree Don't know

free text box for further comments

AI & Public Sector Transformation

13. To what extent do you agree with the overarching vision for AI & Public Sector Transformation?

    1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
    OR
    Do not have the expertise to respond

    free text box for further comments

    Specifically, what is your opinion of the following priority actions for the public sector?

    - Use of a Citizens' Panel for feedback and positive change

      Agree Disagree Don't know

    - Identification of potential use cases and targets for public sector AI transformation

      Agree Disagree Don't know

    - Provision of guidance on quantifiable measurements of success or failure

      Agree Disagree Don't know

    - Publication of quarterly registry of all AI projects across the public sector

      Agree Disagree Don't know

    - Establishment of CAIR establish 'CAIR' (Collaborative AI Resource) to provide training across government departments

      Agree Disagree Don't know

free text box for further comments

AI & Citizens

14. To what extent do you agree with the overarching vision for AI & Citizens?

1-10 scale with 1 as Strong Disagree and 10 as Strongly Agree
OR
Do not have the expertise to respond

free text box for further comments

Specifically, what is your opinion of the following priority actions for the public sector?

- Development of an awareness-raising campaign to showcase public sector AI projects and benefits

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Creation of a publicly available AI Register of Systems

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Establishment of an AI Citizens' Panel

  Agree Disagree Don't know

- Evaluation of benefits of an AI Charter

  Agree Disagree Don't know

free text box for further comments

15. Do you have any further comments?

free text box for further comments