

## Speech for techUK's Scottish Parliamentary Reception 2026

**Good evening, everyone.**

It's a pleasure to join you here at Holyrood, in my home city, for techUK's Scottish Parliamentary Reception. Let me begin by extending particular thanks to our MSPs, **Ministers <delete as needed>**, and the many leaders from Scotland's public sector, industry, academia, and the digital community who are with us tonight. Your presence reflects the importance of the conversations we are here to have, and the strength and vibrancy of the Tech Sector in Scotland.

Events like this – bringing together policymakers, delivery organisations, and technology partners – are vital. They give us the space to reflect on where Scotland is today, where we need to go next, and how we can collaborate to deliver a digital public sector that is truly fit for the future.

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### **Setting the context: Scotland's reform moment**

Scotland is entering one of the most significant periods of public service reform in a generation. Rising demand, financial pressure, and shifting public expectations are reshaping how services must be designed and delivered. This is not simply about modernisation; it's about ensuring long term sustainability and delivering better outcomes for people and communities.

Across government and Parliament, there is clear recognition that digitisation sits at the heart of public service reform. It's not an optional extra or a parallel workstream – it is the foundation on which sustainable, user centred public services will be built.

Tonight's theme – Scotland's digital ambition – speaks directly to that challenge. The ambition is strong. The question now is how we unlock it.

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### **Focusing on services built around people**

In every corner of the public sector, we are seeing the same shift: away from designing services around organisational boundaries and legacy systems, and toward designing them around people – their needs, their journeys, and their lived experience of interacting with government.

Organisations supporting this shift, including Leidos, are working closely with public bodies to pair modern digital tools with the organisational change required to use them effectively. Because technology alone doesn't transform services – people do.

When we redesign services around users, we improve accessibility, clarity, and trust. But we also improve efficiency. We reduce duplication. We create consistency. And we free up capacity for staff to focus on what matters most.

This alignment of improved outcomes and improved value has never been more important.

## **Simplifying complexity through shared systems**

One of the biggest challenges Scotland faces – and one of its biggest opportunities – is simplifying the complexity that has built up across government over many years.

Different organisations, operating different systems, on different data models, using different processes. It makes reform harder, slows innovation, and ultimately affects service quality.

But Scotland is also well placed to lead the way in shared platforms and common components – reusable building blocks that reduce duplication and improve consistency.

Shared services and shared digital infrastructure are key enablers of the wider reform agenda. They allow organisations to focus their resources on front-line value, not back-end maintenance. They improve resilience. And they create a foundation that future innovation can build on.

This approach has been central to successful digital government worldwide and Scotland has the ambition and capability to make it its own.

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## **Replacing legacy systems and unlocking better use of data**

Reform also requires modernisation of legacy systems that limit agility, scalability, and integration. Many of Scotland's public bodies are already on this journey – replacing ageing platforms, strengthening security, and adopting cloud first models that support more flexible delivery -first models that support more flexible delivery.

But transforming technology is only half the story. The real power lies in transforming data.

Access to timely, trusted, and well governed data enables better decision making, stronger accountability, and more personalised services. It helps public bodies anticipate need rather than react to it. And it underpins the integration that Scotland's reform agenda depends on.

Data – used safely and ethically – is one of the most important drivers of public value we have. Supporting public bodies to unlock that value is a priority, not just for organisations like Leidos, but for the entire tech community represented in this room tonight.

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## **The importance of collaboration across the ecosystem**

One message comes through consistently across Scotland's digital policy landscape: no one organisation can deliver this alone.

Reform requires:

- government leadership
- public sector commitment
- and industry expertise – working in partnership, with shared purpose.

Tonight's reception is a powerful example of that partnership in action. The collaboration between Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament, techUK, and industry partners represents one of Scotland's greatest strengths: a digitally engaged ecosystem that is ready and willing to work together.

For our part, organisations like Leidos are committed to supporting Scotland's public services by combining digital expertise with a deep understanding of operational delivery. But we are also here to listen – to understand the evolving priorities of government, the needs of citizens, and the system-wide challenges that must be addressed.

Because meaningful transformation is never delivered in isolation. It's delivered through shared insight, shared ambition, and shared effort.

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### Looking ahead with confidence

As we look forward, Scotland has an enormous opportunity:

- to build on the innovation already happening across government, to scale what works
- And to create a public service landscape that is resilient, sustainable, and genuinely user centred

By bringing together decision-makers, innovators, practitioners, and partners, tonight gives us the space to work together and to start turning Scotland's digital ambition into practical, meaningful improvements for communities across our country, and to grow our economy.

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### Closing

Thank you again to techUK for hosting this important event, to our Ministers and MSPs for their leadership and engagement, and to everyone here for your commitment to Scotland's digital future.

I look forward to the conversations ahead – and to the collaboration that will continue long after tonight.

Thank you.