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Open letter sent to:

The Conservative Party
The Labour Party
The Liberal Democrats Party
The Scottish National Party

Trade bodies and business leaders call on the next Government to recommit to moving forward with Digital Verification in the UK

We are writing as industry representatives and leading associations to express our disappointment at the loss of key proposals to support Digital Verification as a result of the dissolution of Parliament and the falling of the Data Protection and Digital Information (DPDI) (No. 2) Bill.

We call on political parties to recommit to introducing measures to implement legislation that supports the Digital Identity and Attributes Trust Framework (DIATF) and move forward with Digital Verification in the UK as a matter of urgency.

As we approach the General Election on 4 July 2024, there is an understanding amongst the public and the business community that the next government will face a series of fundamental challenges. The digital economy has already proven to be an important lever of growth and innovation for a modern economy such as the UK. However, its continued development is impeded by the difficulty of transacting with trust and by the growth in fraud, money laundering and misinformation through digital channels.

There is a mature and market-ready technology that is already offering real solutions to these challenges. Digital Identity technology provides a secure method for individuals to verify their identity and authenticate themselves both in the physical and online worlds. The adoption and use of Digital ID could provide an additional £800 million to the UK economy every year[1] and with the global market for Digital ID estimated to be worth $48.44 billion by 2027[2] supporting and driving forward the UK's Digital ID industry is key to encourage inward investment into the UK in this innovative, cutting-edge technology.

The public views verifiable identity as crucial for maintaining control over their lives and destinies, according to DSIT's 2024 public attitudes survey. The survey also revealed that accountability and transparency are viewed as central to trustworthy digital identity services. The DPDI Bill sought to establish digital identity services aligned with these criteria by providing clarity in law on the definition of a 'digital identity' and enabling mechanisms for secure sharing of consumer and business data needed to scale growth across the economy.

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation/digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation
[2] https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5451239/global-digital-identity-market-2021-2027-by

The Bill provided the legal basis for the creation of a government-defined Digital Identity and Attributes Trust Framework that would form a cornerstone of the data infrastructure for a more secure digital economy based on technical and operational open standards. It also enabled the formal establishment of a Digital Verification Services (DVS) register, that enables anyone to check companies are compliant with the Trust Framework and a 'trust mark' that certified parties could use to demonstrate compliance and engender trust in the Digital ID ecosystem.

The Bill also importantly enabled the use of trusted government sources of data but avoided the development or delivery of new operational identity services by government - which can be slow, costly, controversial and ineffective. The measures contained in the Bill are also crucial for the delivery of Smart Data schemes in the UK such as Open Finance.

The Digital Identity and Attributes Trust Framework presents a unique approach to a global challenge. The planned governance model and requirements for certification recognise the plurality of business models and roles involved in the already developed UK's Digital Identity ecosystem and market. As a result, the Trust Framework if retained can prohibit market dominance by a small number of organisations - as can be seen in some other technology markets - as well as allow for a vibrant ecosystem to develop. This approach also importantly supports the avoidance of data silos forming, ensuring that both citizens and consumers were protected, and that the market remained one driven by effective competition and innovation.

Many organisations have invested time and resources over many years working in collaboration with the government on the design and development of the Trust Framework and its associated standards. Companies have also already invested in becoming certified against the Trust Framework and are already delivering identify verification products and services to individuals and businesses.

However, as a result of the dissolution of Parliament and the falling of the DPDI Bill the future of the Trust Framework is now unclear. The progress that has been made and the future of Digital Identity in the UK is now at risk.

The call from signatories of this letter is for the next Government to put in place an actionable plan to implement legislation to introduce the Digital Identity and Attributes Trust Framework and the proposals that were contained in the DPDI Bill related to Digital Verification as a matter of urgency. It will also be important for the next government to ensure that digital ID services are regulated by an independent and accountable regulator with clearly defined functions, duties, and powers to effectively oversee the Digital ID framework, to foster trust and innovation in the digital identity ecosystem.

With the Trust Framework we have a clear way forward that must be maintained and pushed forward. It needs the next government to implement a policy approach that has been developed through wide consultation with many organisations over a number of years.

The UK also needs to keep apace internationally as EU, India and Australia moves forwards in their investments in this regard in order to realise the economic growth potential of Digital ID. In doing so it will provide the continuity of policy and clarity in law that the Digital Identity industry needs to flourish in the UK delivering its potential for the economy and society as well as supporting wider adoption of Digital Identity technologies.
We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Julian David, CEO, techUK

Dr Ruth Wandhöfer, Author and Global Fintech 50 Influencer

David Crack, Chairperson, Association of Document Validation Professionals (ADVP)

Chris Hayward, Policy Chairman, City of London Corporation

Steve Pannifer, Managing Director, Consult Hyperion

Liz Brandt, CEO, Ctrl-Shift

David Rennie, Director, IDEMIA Smart Identity

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Robin Tombs, CEO, Yoti