# Brunel University partners with Salesforce to lead responsible AI revolution in the UK



Brunel University’s Centre for Artificial Intelligence has recently entered a partnership with Salesforce, aiming to advance leadership in both technical AI development and responsible AI implementation. This collaboration comes amid growing efforts within the UK to address the critical skills gap needed to support the nation’s AI ambitions, highlighted during London Tech Week and reinforced by a Salesforce survey showing that 78% of UK organisations currently deploy agentic AI technology, with 84% planning to train their workforce in AI.

Professor Ashley Braganza, Dean of Brunel Business School, draws a parallel between the university’s namesake, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, a pioneering engineer of the Industrial Revolution, and the present-day need to shape the AI revolution responsibly. When founded in 2018, the Centre for AI started with just a modest budget of £3,000 and three members; today it comprises around 30 members actively engaged in research and practical collaboration with industry. Braganza emphasises the transformative potential of AI while cautioning that, like past technologies, it will create both opportunities and challenges with winners and losers across sectors. The partnership with Salesforce is seen as pivotal, combining innovation with a strong ethical framework grounded in trust.

Trust plays a central role in the partnership’s vision. Braganza stresses the importance of deploying AI responsibly, ensuring transparency and security when handling data, in line with Salesforce’s core values. He advocates reframing the debate around AI policies: rather than viewing innovation and regulation as opposing forces, they should be seen as complementary. This balanced approach aims to provide companies with a clear regulatory environment that nurtures investment and innovation safely, avoiding costly disruptions from reactionary measures.

Addressing widespread concerns about AI’s impact on employment, Braganza argues that AI will not solely be a job taker but a creator of new roles, many of which are yet to be imagined. Preparing students today for careers that could span 50 or 60 years requires forward-thinking education strategies and robust research into future skills needs. Additionally, support must be extended to individuals displaced by technological change, ensuring accessible pathways back into employment.

From a broader perspective, Braganza is confident in the UK’s strengths in research and knowledge but acknowledges the need for more mature mechanisms to support companies transitioning from innovative ideas to market growth, an area where the US is currently more advanced. Initiatives such as Salesforce’s AI Centre in London — which has attracted over 12,500 visitors and trained more than 1,000 AI-focused professionals since its 2022 opening — exemplify ongoing investment in this ecosystem. Salesforce has also committed $4 billion in the UK over five years and is actively funding UK organisations working on digital and AI literacy, including STEM career pathways.

The symbolic selection of Brunel University, rather than more globally renowned institutions like MIT or Stanford, highlights a deliberate focus on grounding AI development within a context that values both technical excellence and societal responsibility. The university’s namesake, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, is remembered for his engineering marvels, including the Clifton Suspension Bridge and revolutionary steamships, as well as a visionary approach that often anticipated future technical advancements. His legacy inspires the current mission to lead Britain’s AI revolution with similar foresight and impact.

In sum, the partnership between Salesforce and Brunel University represents an important step in building the UK’s AI economy foundation, blending innovation, education, and regulatory clarity underpinned by trust. While government policy continues to evolve, industry-led initiatives like this are crucial in bridging the digital skills gap and ensuring a responsible, inclusive AI-driven future.

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* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://diginomica.com/how-brunel-university-hopes-square-ai-circles-salesforce-partnership)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://diginomica.com/how-brunel-university-hopes-square-ai-circles-salesforce-partnership), [[2]](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Isambard-Kingdom-Brunel), [[3]](https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/who-was-isambard-kingdom-brunel), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/brunel_kingdom_isambard.shtml), [[6]](https://www.bristol.org.uk/bristolians/brunel/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://diginomica.com/how-brunel-university-hopes-square-ai-circles-salesforce-partnership)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://diginomica.com/how-brunel-university-hopes-square-ai-circles-salesforce-partnership)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://diginomica.com/how-brunel-university-hopes-square-ai-circles-salesforce-partnership)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://diginomica.com/how-brunel-university-hopes-square-ai-circles-salesforce-partnership)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://diginomica.com/how-brunel-university-hopes-square-ai-circles-salesforce-partnership)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://diginomica.com/how-brunel-university-hopes-square-ai-circles-salesforce-partnership), [[2]](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Isambard-Kingdom-Brunel), [[3]](https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/who-was-isambard-kingdom-brunel), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/brunel_kingdom_isambard.shtml), [[6]](https://www.bristol.org.uk/bristolians/brunel/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://diginomica.com/how-brunel-university-hopes-square-ai-circles-salesforce-partnership> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Isambard-Kingdom-Brunel> - This article provides a comprehensive biography of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, detailing his early life, significant engineering achievements, and lasting impact on civil and mechanical engineering. It covers his work on the Thames Tunnel, the Great Western Railway, and his innovative ship designs, including the Great Eastern. The piece also discusses his education, personal life, and the legacy he left in the field of engineering.
3. <https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/who-was-isambard-kingdom-brunel> - An overview of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's life and work, highlighting his major engineering feats such as the Thames Tunnel, Clifton Suspension Bridge, and the Great Western Railway. The article also touches upon his ship designs, including the Great Western and Great Britain, and his contributions during the Crimean War with the design of prefabricated hospitals. It concludes with a discussion of his death and enduring legacy.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/brunel_kingdom_isambard.shtml> - A concise biography of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, focusing on his key engineering projects like the Thames Tunnel, Great Western Railway, and notable ships such as the Great Western and Great Britain. The article also mentions his work on bridges and docks, and provides a brief account of his death and the recognition he received posthumously.
5. <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/isambard-kingdom-brunel/> - This page details the memorial window dedicated to Isambard Kingdom Brunel in Westminster Abbey, including its design, location, and the inscription commemorating his life and work. It also provides background information on Brunel's contributions to engineering and his connection to the Abbey.
6. <https://www.bristol.org.uk/bristolians/brunel/> - An article highlighting Isambard Kingdom Brunel's association with Bristol, detailing his design of the Clifton Suspension Bridge, his role in the Great Western Railway, and the construction of the Great Western steamship. It also mentions the Brunel 200 weekend celebrating his 200th anniversary.
7. <https://www.asce.org/about-civil-engineering/history-and-heritage/notable-civil-engineers/isambard-kingdom-brunel/> - A profile of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, emphasizing his prolific engineering career, including the construction of 25 railway lines, numerous bridges, piers, docks, ships, and a prefabricated hospital. The article also touches upon his education and early life.