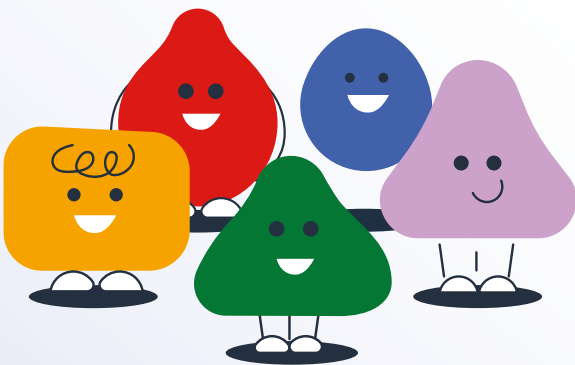


Scottish AI Alliance

Trustworthy, ethical
and inclusive

2021 – 2026



A Note on Language and Accessibility

Throughout this report we use “A.I.” rather than the more conventional “AI” as an abbreviation for “Artificial Intelligence”. This is a deliberate choice. It has come to our attention that the abbreviation “AI” is problematic for screen readers, which may be an issue for people using assistive technologies, and we are keen to make this report as accessible and inclusive as possible.

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Ministerial Foreword



The past five years have brought extraordinary shifts in the global A.I. landscape, and Scotland could not have been better positioned to navigate this change than under the leadership and dedication of the Scottish A.I. Alliance (SAIA). The Alliance consistently met people and organisations where they were, supporting our diverse SMEs and ensuring the benefits of A.I. were understood and accessible across the country.

The Alliance also took on the difficult issues that governments everywhere are wrestling with: how we protect children’s rights, how we support the arts in the age of A.I., and how we confront environmental impacts. Their work in these areas has been invaluable.

As Minister for Business and Employment, I am particularly proud of the support offered to Scottish businesses through the Scottish A.I. Playbook, the A.I. Support Ecosystem Map, and the Living with A.I. literacy programme. I am also immensely proud that during this period, with the support of the Alliance, Scotland became the first country in the world to mandate an A.I. Register for the public sector.

Thanks to this hard work and collaboration, we now have a strong foundation for the next chapter of A.I. in Scotland and the development of our new national strategy.

Richard Lochhead
Minister for Business and Employment



Opening Ministerial Address, Scottish A.I. Summit 2024, Edinburgh

Partner Forewords



When Scotland launched its national A.I. Strategy in 2021, the ambition was bold: to become a world leader in trustworthy, ethical and inclusive artificial intelligence. Five years

on, this report demonstrates the significant progress that has been made in achieving this vision, through the Scottish A.I. Alliance.

The Scottish A.I. Alliance has successfully raised awareness and understanding of A.I. across all sectors of society, reaching businesses and communities across Scotland (including in rural areas), the public and third sectors, and importantly school children, providing them with a genuine voice in

shaping Scotland's A.I. future. The Scottish A.I. Alliance has reached individuals and organisations who otherwise, may never have engaged with A.I., ensuring a balanced understanding and promoting responsible development and adoption.

The transformative programme of outreach, engagement and skills development has attracted international recognition for Scotland, and The Data Lab has been proud to act as a partner, working with Scottish Government to help turn ambition into reality, creating a legacy and a strong foundation to build on for the future.

Heather Thomson
Chief Executive Officer, The Data Lab



I am deeply proud of the partnership we built between The Data Lab and the Scottish Government, which in 2021 led to the creation of the Scottish A.I. Alliance. At the time, and

even today, it is a unique approach to shaping and delivering A.I. policy which has proved exactly right for Scotland. Working closely with experts from our universities, practitioners across diverse sectors and a community genuinely invested in the future of A.I. has been truly exceptional.

The Alliance's commitment to open engagement has strengthened Scotland's position in an area that is both complex and continuously evolving. I am especially proud of the community engagement work including the People's Panels on climate and on health and care; and the thoughtful work with children and young people. These contributions have directly influenced policy and helped ensure we heard from voices that truly matter.

Even as a career Data Scientist, I have learned so much from this community and I am grateful for everyone who played a part in this work.

Tom Wilkinson
Chief Data Officer, Scottish Government

Five Years of Change

When the Scottish Government launched Scotland's national A.I. Strategy in March 2021, few could have imagined just how dramatically the A.I. landscape would change over the next five years.

Guided by principles from the OECD¹ and UNICEF², the Strategy placed people firmly at its heart, with a clear vision – for Scotland to become a leader in trustworthy, ethical and inclusive A.I. Turning that vision into a reality was the task of the Scottish A.I. Alliance (SAIA), a strategic collaboration between The Data Lab (Scotland's Innovation Centre for Data and A.I.) and the Scottish Government.

With five years to deliver, the SAIA committed to working transparently and collaboratively, sharing knowledge across sectors and building international connections, so

Scotland could play an active role in the global A.I. conversation.

A key objective for the collaboration was to change how the people of Scotland engaged with A.I. by creating opportunities for everyone to get involved. And that really meant everyone: from children and business leaders to academia and vulnerable communities, the SAIA aimed to connect with them all and helped them understand how A.I. related to their lives.

Over five years of rapid change, accelerated by the emergence of large-scale generative models and agentic A.I., the SAIA helped move A.I. in Scotland from a niche topic to something far more widely understood and used, while staying true to the original principles of trustworthiness, ethics and inclusion.



Attendees, Scottish A.I. Summit 2024, Edinburgh

1 OECD. (2019, updated 2024). *OECD AI Principles*. <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/ai-principles.html>

2 UNICEF. (2020, updated 2025) *Guidance on AI and children*. <https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/reports/policy-guidance-ai-children>



Attendees, Scottish A.I. Summit 2023, Glasgow

Reaching Far and Wide

From the outset, the SAIA established a comprehensive online presence to disseminate content that was both informative and credible. Through consistent blog posts, newsletters, podcasts, and videos, the SAIA clarified complex A.I. concepts while incorporating insights from voices outside the traditional technology domain.

But digital outreach was just one part of the story. Raising awareness meant engaging with all corners of Scottish society, from policymakers and voluntary organisations to business and academia, in order to hear perspectives first hand. The SAIA recognised that constructive dialogue about A.I. started with meeting people where they were.

Webinars, workshops, keynotes and panel discussions all helped reach audiences as varied as Scotland itself. Whether sharing the latest A.I. governance best practices with businesses, or helping the general public explore what A.I. meant for their day to day lives, the goal was always to earn trust, inform with balance, and make A.I. feel less like something that was happening to them, and more like something they could shape.

Partnerships were key to amplify this approach. The SAIA collaborated with dozens of organisations across academia, industry, the public sector, the third sector and civil society to co-host events, reach new audiences and spark conversations. This visible presence and willingness to engage helped the SAIA become a recognised and trusted voice for those looking for clear and balanced information about A.I.



16

partner organisations



4,000+

subscribers to the Scottish AI Alliance newsletter



7,000+

followers of the Scottish AI Alliance LinkedIn account



46

podcast episodes, with an estimated

30,000+

total downloads across all episodes



Over 300

speaking engagements in Scotland and beyond

“

An amazing presentation... I felt I learned a lot. It was great that you gave such a balanced viewpoint. It was great that you showed actually how we should use it and not use it. (...) By far the most useful A.I. session I've attended!

Attendee feedback, session on A.I. at Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) conference, Edinburgh

“

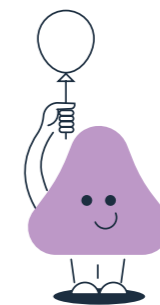
Thank you again for the training yesterday – everyone really enjoyed it. You made a complicated and often overwhelming topic really accessible to a wide audience, and we really appreciate your support.

Attendee feedback, session on A.I. with Voices of Carers Across Lothian (VOCAL)

“

I attended your talk today. It was really exciting, and I have tried taking as many notes as I can as it was really interesting to learn about A.I. from a different perspective.

Attendee feedback, Glasgow Tech Day, Glasgow



Supporting Scottish Businesses and Organisations

Supporting and engaging with Scotland's businesses and organisations about A.I. was a key pillar of activity for the SAIA. Through its early engagement, it became clear that leaders across sectors and regions consistently highlighted the need for practical, trustworthy guidance to help them navigate A.I. adoption in ways that were proportionate, ethical, and aligned with organisational capacity.

The development of the Scottish A.I. Playbook was a clear commitment in the Strategy. Initially conceived as a one-stop entry point for anyone beginning to explore A.I., it evolved through sustained user engagement into a more focused resource for businesses and organisations at the early stages of their A.I. journey.

Following several iterations, the Playbook was launched in October 2024 and went on to support organisational decision-making across strategy, procurement, and governance. Designed as an accessible starting point and working in partnership with various organisations, it provided clear, jargon-free guidance and resources (both original and curated from partners) for organisations to start their A.I. adoption in a trustworthy, ethical and inclusive manner.

Wraparound activity to the Playbook itself included an online practitioner community in partnership with The Data Lab, a series of podcasts, practical workshops, talks and a collection of real-world case studies of A.I. journeys taken by organisations of all sizes.

A key discovery from engaging with small businesses revealed that despite the range of A.I. support available, many organisations

struggled to identify where to turn for the specific help they needed. The support for funding and technical expertise existed, but it lacked visibility. To address this, the SAIA developed the A.I. Support Ecosystem Map, a central directory of A.I. support providers operating across Scotland.

But the SAIA's work supporting organisations was not just restricted to the Playbook. The team engaged with organisations all across Scotland, especially from the public and third sectors, to help them navigate through the noise and hype, and to advocate for the lenses of trust, ethics and inclusion in their exploration of A.I. technologies.

In collaboration with The Data Lab, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and South of Scotland Enterprise, the SAIA played a key role in delivering the initial events in the government's National A.I. Adoption Programme. January 2026 saw the SAIA facilitate AI adoption workshops at events in Inverness, Dundee and Gretna to representatives from Scotland's rural economy. The workshops continued the SAIA's tradition of jargon-free, beginner-friendly discourse which focused on actionable advice. The workshops were exceptionally well received and were frequently cited as the highlight of the events.



15,000+

visits to The Scottish A.I. Playbook website



40+

A.I. workshops delivered to business audiences



40+

keynotes, workshops, events and panels aimed at third sector organisations



50+

government agencies, consultancies, training providers, technical support, accelerators and academic institutions listed in the Scottish A.I. Directory



Dawn McAra-Hunter of the Scottish A.I. Alliance delivering the workshop So You're Thinking of Using A.I. as part of the Rural A.I. Roadshow, Inverness, January 2026



Working with the SAIA has had a really positive impact on our organisation. It has been fantastic to have their guidance and subject matter expertise as we develop our A.I. Strategy and associated policies. (...) Their work is valuable to the third sector's understanding of a complex topic and our ability to explore innovation, without compromising our values.

Jane Mackinnon – Digital Support Officer, Community Enterprise



The Workshop on Artificial Intelligence with the Scottish A.I. Alliance significantly challenged my thinking. Before the workshop, I viewed A.I. primarily through the lens of data analysis and potential efficiency gains. However, the session highlighted the critical ethical considerations surrounding AI, particularly regarding bias and potential social inequalities. (...) This shift in perspective has led me to think more critically about the potential unintended consequences of technological advancements and to prioritize ethical considerations in my action plan.

Attendee feedback, A.I. workshop at DigiRen, Renfrewshire



I took a trip to Falkirk on Friday for one of the Scottish AI Alliance's series of events on the possibilities and pitfalls of implementing AI in SMEs. I've been a fan ever since attending last year's Scottish AI Summit at Dundee Science Centre and, while I'd rather just hop over the bridge to an event in Inverness, they do make it worth your while travelling. "So You're Thinking of Using AI" is a great format, taking whatever your current state of knowledge and planning might be, and offering clear ways to progress. A valuable, collaborative addition to overall strategy building, it doesn't shy away from the more problematic aspects of the diverse technologies marketed as AI. Would recommend!

Attendee feedback, So You're Thinking of Using AI, Falkirk

Supporting A.I. in the Public Sector

Launched in March 2023 and declared a mandatory requirement for the Scottish Government and its core agencies a year later, the Scottish A.I. Register represented Scotland's world-leading commitment to transparency in its use of A.I.

On its public facing website, the Register set out in clear and accessible terms how A.I. systems were being used across public bodies – what they did, why they existed, the data they relied on, how decisions were made, and how potential risks and biases might arise. It also showed where human oversight came into play, and how decisions could be challenged if something went wrong.

For public sector teams working in A.I., the non-public facing area of the Register quickly became a source of information and support, with detailed resources around risk and policy and a shared space to learn from one another. And beyond Scotland's borders, the Register set an example as a working model of A.I. accountability.

Alongside this, over 250 professionals from across Scotland's public bodies came together through the Scottish Public Sector A.I. Task Force. These regular gatherings created opportunities for technical and non-technical staff at different points of their A.I. journey to share and learn from real experiences along with contributions from external A.I. leaders, researchers and ethics experts.



20+

use cases documented in the Scottish A.I. Register



8,000+

website visits to the Scottish A.I. Register website



250

members of the Scottish A.I. Task Force



Attendees, Scotland A.I. Summit 2024, Edinburgh



Participants at the People's A.I. Panel on Health and Care, 2025

Empowering the People of Scotland



Scotland's 2021 A.I. Strategy was committed to bringing the people of Scotland into the conversation about A.I. The goal was clear: decisions about A.I. had to be shaped not only by technical experts and policy makers, but also by those whose lives it would touch. But most people didn't feel equipped to meaningfully participate in the debate and, although A.I. was seeping into everyday life, many had no real understanding of what it was or how to think about its impact.

The SAIA set out to empower the people of Scotland in two ways: by listening to what they thought about A.I. and recording their thoughts while facilitating conversations, and by providing them with the tools to build their knowledge and confidence on the subject. The first part of the equation happened

through workshops, surveys and community sessions; the second one, through the *Living with A.I.* course and wraparound resources and activities.

Listening came first. The SAIA wanted to avoid making assumptions on how people wanted to engage with them. Honest discussions with communities and civil society organisations helped define how to best deliver participation and community engagement initiatives while building relationships across the board.

The SAIA's community engagement and outreach programmes spanned locations across Scotland, from community hubs to town halls. In 2024, the SAIA started planning an active participatory mechanism through a series of People's Panels, advised and guided by a Community Advisory Group.



Posters with participants' notes at the People's A.I. Panel on Health and Care, 2025

In 2025, a diverse range of members of the public through two People's Panel events, on A.I. in climate and healthcare³, in partnership with the Glasgow School of Art and the Scottish Government's Digital Health and Care Directorate respectively. Participants learnt about A.I., discussed its benefits and drawbacks, raised concerns and shared practical ideas, which were then fed directly into policy conversations and reports released to the public.

Giving everyone in Scotland the opportunity to learn about A.I. required a different approach. There were very few accessible ways for people to make sense of A.I., so the SAIA created the *Living with A.I.* online course, which gave individual learners a rigorous yet accessible entry point into understanding A.I. and its impact on their daily lives using user-friendly language and design. Through free licensing partnerships, the course went on to reach thousands more learners via public sector organisations, colleges and apprenticeship programmes.

Recognition soon followed. *Living with A.I.* was shortlisted for the 2025 DatalQ Awards in the Best A.I. Literacy Initiative category, and was acknowledged by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation as the only public A.I. literacy initiative of its kind in the UK. Development of *Living with A.I.* expanded to resource hubs based on learnings from our communities, and micro courses introducing A.I. and A.I. and climate.

The SAIA were passionate about listening to what people had to say, and empowering them with the tools and knowledge to contribute to conversations about A.I. The underlying conviction was that true A.I. literacy should enable individuals from all walks of life to understand the opportunities and limitations of such technologies and take active roles in shaping how A.I. is present and used in their professional and personal lives.

3 See Scottish AI Alliance. (2025). *People's Panel on AI and Climate: Pulse Report*. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5dc00e9e32cd095744be7634/t/6980bb70aae09400caba3ed9/1770044272549/Climate+Report+v5.pdf> and Scottish AI Alliance. (2025). *People's AI Panel on Health and Care: Guidance and Pulse Report*. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5dc00e9e32cd095744be7634/t/6929c90f7fea7834bee8b78e/1764346128005/Peoples+AI+Panel+on+Health+and+Care+-+Scottish+AI+Alliance+2025.pdf>



34%

completion rate for the *Living with A.I.* course, which is nearly 3x the industry average (13%)



17

partner public sector organisations now host the *Living with A.I.* course



17,000+

learners have access to *Living with A.I.* course through partner organisations



Participants at the People's A.I. Panel on Health and Care, 2025



What a great course. You have diverse experts talking about their work in an accessible manner and have introduced core themes allowing me to start asking questions and finding particular lines of thought to explore further.

Feedback on the *Living with A.I.* course, individual learner



[I] want to really stress how valuable I found the course as a trustworthy and neutral space to learn, especially because the media coverage is so sensationalised.

Feedback on the *Living with A.I.* course, individual learner



Grateful to have a free course available like *living with A.I.*, packed with relevant info and resources. Also appreciate the effort Scottish A.I. Alliance has gone to with public engagement, getting into the ethics and taking on feedback.

Feedback on the *Living with A.I.* course, individual learner



Really useful with up-to-date information. We learned a lot and are using it to get enough knowledge to form the base of informing our own internal policy on A.I.

Feedback on the *Living with A.I.* Course from a licensing organisation



Members of Children's Parliament at the Scottish A.I. Summit, Glasgow, March 2023

The children involved in the project presented their findings during plenary sessions at the Scottish A.I. Summit in 2023 and 2024. These sessions centred on the children, who spoke directly to large audiences of A.I. practitioners and policy makers across academia, industry and the public section.

Beyond Scotland, *Exploring Children's Rights and A.I.* also gained recognition. The project was shared at international forums such as the Paris Action Summit 2025, where it was highlighted by the Beneficial A.I. for Children Coalition as an example of meaningful, child-centred work in A.I. The Children's Parliament were invited to Australia in the summer of 2025 to present on the project. Organisations all over the world adapted the resources to their own contexts; in some cases, it even inspired change abroad.

By treating children as rights-holders with insight, agency and legitimate concerns about the way A.I. was shaping their future while providing practical, action-oriented tools, the SAIA helped to fill a global void that demanded attention.

“ I was looking for a way to work with A.I. with children (...) And then I came across this. Carefully crafted with both children and experts involved, and I'm just in awe of the whole thing. How I wish there was more of this!! I think we really need it.

Feedback on the Children & A.I. resources from a representative of the Instituto de Tecnología de Costa Rica



Exploring Children's Rights and A.I.

As the first devolved nation in the UK to incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into domestic law⁴, Scotland's A.I. Strategy contained an explicit commitment to children. When Scotland began shaping its A.I. future, the question was not whether to give children a voice, but how to do it meaningfully.

Partnering with the Children's Parliament and The Alan Turing Institute, the SAIA embarked on its groundbreaking three-year project *Exploring Children's Rights and A.I.* Through workshops, online sessions, and practical missions, over 140 children in P5-P7 in primary schools across Scotland explored real-world applications of A.I. and how they impacted their human rights.

In the three years of the project, the children learnt about A.I. and examined the issues that concerned them most: fairness and bias, safety and security, A.I. in education, and how young people should learn about these technologies. These ideas crystallised in twelve Calls to Action to decision makers on how A.I. should be developed and used in Scotland to preserve children's rights. In the final phase of the project, the children produced explanatory videos for their peers; for adults, the team created resources for A.I. professionals and a teaching pack for educators aimed at fostering curiosity and critical thinking among primary schoolers⁵.

4 United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2024/1/contents>

5 See Children's Parliament. (2026). *Exploring Children's Rights and A.I.* Available at: <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/exploring-childrens-rights-and-ai/>



Members of Children's Parliament at the Scottish A.I. Summit, Edinburgh, March 2024



1,200+

children shared their views on A.I. and education through our first national survey



2,500+

adults learnt about the children's views and were charged with their calls to action through presentations, discussions and workshops at 28 different events



800+

times the Why Children's Rights Matter in A.I. resource has been accessed in its first six months from June to December 2025



120,000+

children have benefited from resources from the Children's Rights and A.I. Teaching Pack



6,000+

views of videos created by children for children on children's rights



5,000+

views of videos showcasing the process, key messages and calls to action

“

Working with the Scottish A.I. Alliance has been invaluable to the success of the project 'Exploring Children's Rights and A.I.'. Through our partnership, we have been able to introduce children's human rights and our children's rights approach to a wide range of individuals and organisations in the public, private and third sectors who we would have otherwise struggled to reach. Through joint planning with the SAIA, we have also been able to approach our engagement work with children secure in the knowledge that our exploration of Artificial Intelligence is grounded in fact, that the technical explanations we have provided are accurate, and that the issues we have investigated relate to real-world application of the technology – both now and in a realistic future. The staff at the Scottish A.I. Alliance have been hands-on throughout, always happy to lend support with all areas of the work whilst respecting our organisation's specific expertise.

Gregory Metcalfe – Project Lead for National Programmes, Children's Parliament



A member of Children's Parliament giving Head of the SAIA Steph Wright a guided tour of the Children & AI exhibition at the Scottish A.I. Summit, Edinburgh, March 2024



Members of Children's Parliament at the Scottish A.I. Summit, Edinburgh, March 2024



Children's Rights and A.I. session at the Scottish A.I. Summit, Glasgow, March 2023

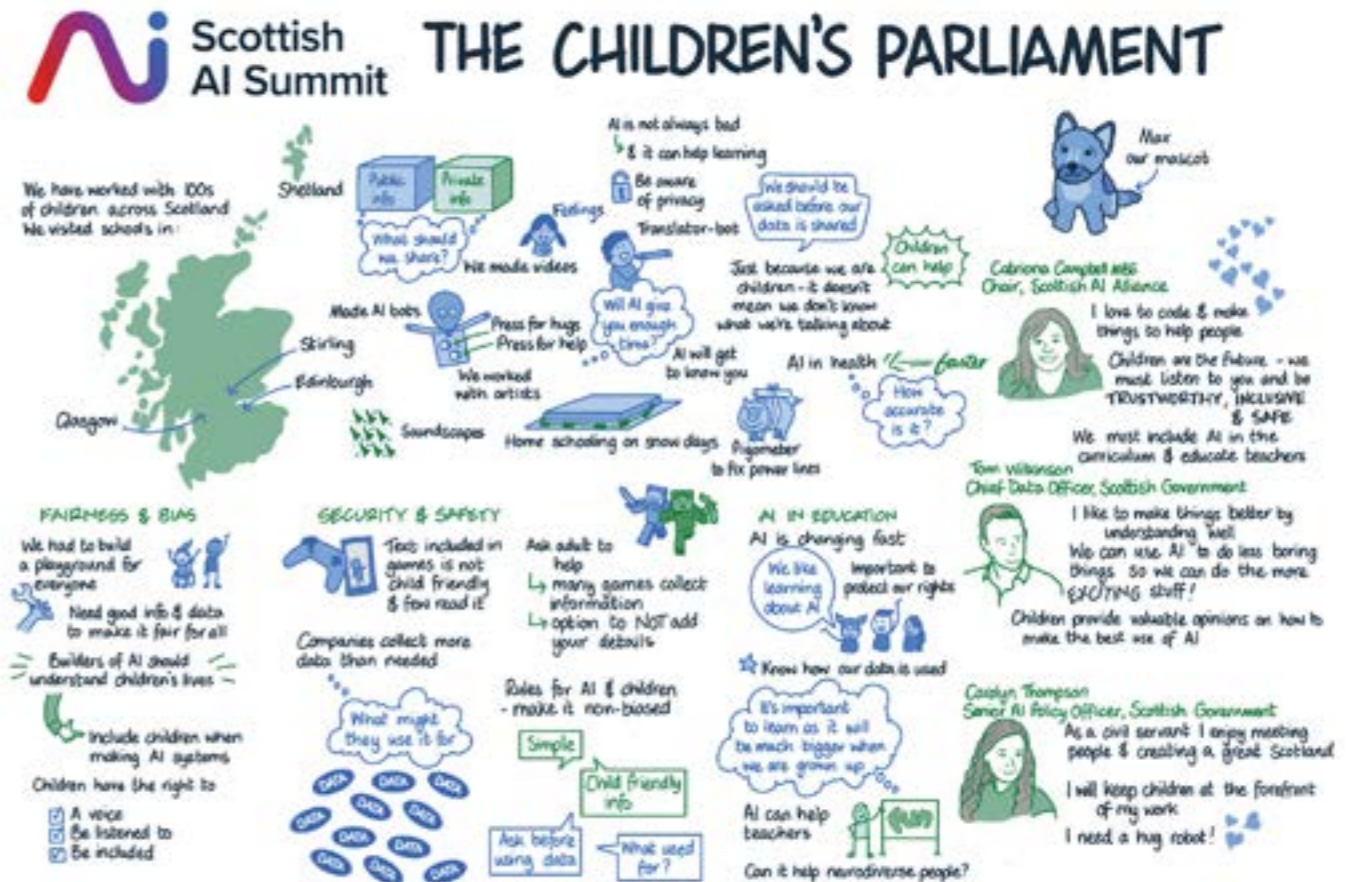


Illustration by www.listenthinkdraw.co.uk



Jemima Goodall's *Death of the A(l)uthor*, part of the AICWSaNCY exhibition, Glasgow, June 2025

Art and Creativity in the Age of A.I.



The last five years have seen a growing tension between A.I. and the creative community. Keen to acknowledge this, the SAIA set out to engage artists and the arts to explore the challenging questions, making them visible and providing a forum to discuss possible answers. The approach was to create a space for robust, creative inquiry into what was happening in the A.I. space.

The *Uncanny Machines* art commission emerged from a collaboration with The New Real at the University of Edinburgh. Additional partners included The Alan Turing Institute and the British Library. The brief was to explore the communicative impact of A.I. through the arts, and seventy-nine artists from around the world applied. Five projects received development

awards and exhibition support, and one of them, Kasia Molga's *How to Find the Soul of a Sailor*, was chosen for full commission in May 2023. Molga's work was a deeply personal examination of grief, legacy and the future of our oceans. Exhibiting in Edinburgh at the end of 2024/beginning of 2025, visitors were invited, through works on different physical and digital media, to explore the role of technology in remembering what we love and leave behind.

The Scottish A.I. Alliance supported the Creative Informatics programme at the University of Edinburgh for the final showcase of their Creative A.I. Demonstrator projects at the Creative A.I. Forum in Glasgow in June 2024⁶. The event brought together a diverse

6 This work was supported by Creative Informatics, AHRC grant number AH/S002782/1 as part of the Creative AI Demonstrator project, co-funded by the AHRC and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

mix of creatives with different perspectives on A.I. and its role in creativity with some participants being enthusiastic A.I. champions while others used the project to expose A.I.'s limitations.

The provocatively titled *A.I. Can't Write Symphonies and Neither Can You (AICWSaNCY)* event in Glasgow in June 2025 invited artists to respond to the provocation and explore the intersection of A.I. and human creativity in the arts⁷.

The SAIA's work with the creative sector supported the debate and discussion around A.I. out in the open and provided space for the community to interact with, critique, refuse or embrace A.I. from a position of knowledge and first-hand experience, rather than hype or speculation.



What a fantastic, creative and imaginative afternoon we had last Thursday at the Creative A.I. Forum. The projects presented by artists were so thoughtful, brilliantly mixing cutting-edge technologies with all kinds of disciplines... I just feel Scotland is extremely lucky to have the Scottish A.I. Alliance working for a trustworthy, ethical and inclusive adaptation of A.I.

Xabier I. Villares – *The Worker's Observatory*



I am not aware of any other event like this in Scotland or elsewhere in the UK. (...) While the global discussions around artists rights and copyright is huge, it was great that the Scottish A.I. Alliance showed a wider perspective in how art and A.I. is coming together.

Manesh Mistry – *Empathy Over Creativity*, AICWSaNCY participant

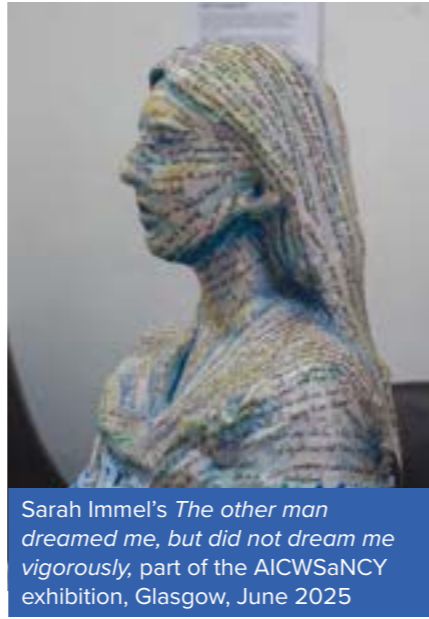


How to Find the Soul of a Sailor Exhibition, Edinburgh, December 2024

7 Scottish AI Alliance. (2025). *AI Can't Write Symphonies and Neither Can You*. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5dc00e9e32cd095744be7634/t/691d99bccdd7cd954d63a3380/1763547580412/AICWSaNCY+Report.pdf>



Nathan Smith's *The other man dreamed me, but did not dream me vigorously*, part of the AICWSaNCY exhibition, Glasgow, June 2025



Sarah Immel's *The other man dreamed me, but did not dream me vigorously*, part of the AICWSaNCY exhibition, Glasgow, June 2025



How to Find the Soul of a Sailor Exhibition, Edinburgh, December 2024



Agnė Balandžiūnaitė's *Fictosaurus*, part of the AICWSaNCY exhibition, Glasgow, June 2025



How to Find the Soul of a Sailor Exhibition, Edinburgh, December 2024



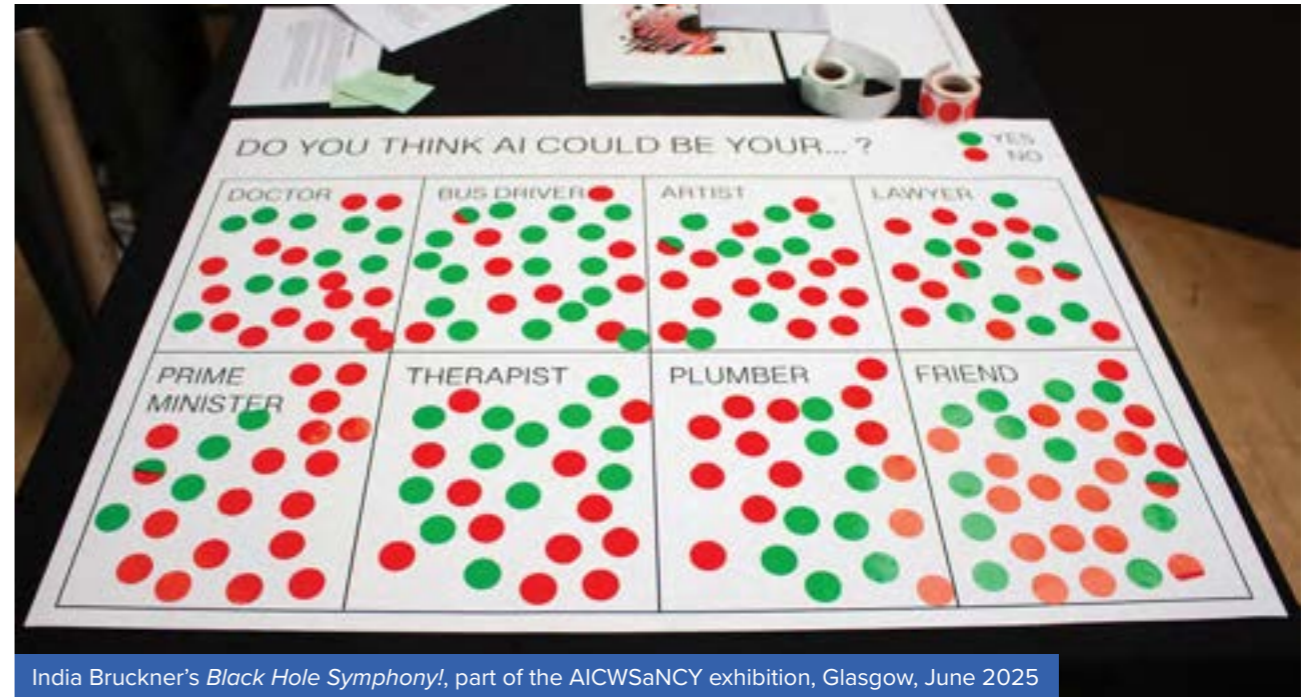
Pip Thornton and Evan Morgan's *Machine Whispers*, part of the AICWSaNCY exhibition, Glasgow, June 2025



Visitor at the AICWSaNCY exhibition, Glasgow, June 2025



Visitor at the AICWSaNCY exhibition, Glasgow, June 2025



India Bruckner's *Black Hole Symphony!*, part of the AICWSaNCY exhibition, Glasgow, June 2025

A.I. and the Climate

It is increasingly clear that A.I. technologies have a twofold impact on our climate: they can act as an accelerator of the current crisis, while also emerging as a potential part of the solution. The rapid global adoption of AI is driving a massive expansion of data centres, which consumes vast and largely unaccounted-for amounts of energy and water. At the same time, AI technologies are already being put to work across Scotland in ways that could help address the crisis, optimising renewable energy grids, modelling climate scenarios, and accelerating materials research for carbon capture.

In order to explore this topic, the People's A.I. Panel on Climate invited a diverse mix of people from across Scotland to voice their opinions on the subject. Participants were

asked to weigh trade-offs grounded on real-world dilemmas, using interactive displays and 'knowledge artefacts' designed by Glasgow School of Art students to turn abstract ideas on the impact of A.I. on climate into specific scenarios.

The conclusions of the Panel⁸ were shared publicly, providing insight into the public's hopes and concerns for a sustainable A.I. future in Scotland. One key recommendation was the need for a whole systems approach when looking at A.I.'s impact on the climate. The findings from the People's A.I. Panel on the Climate and the subsequent report fed into the development of a micro-learning course on *A.I. and the Climate* and in the *Climate* hub resources on the *Living with A.I.* website.

Questions about the environmental impact of A.I. were embedded in the SAIA's initiatives in the creative industries, and they were tackled head-on during the Scottish A.I. Summits and at the Glasgow regional A.I. Summit.

Whether the use of resource-intensive A.I. technology could be a valid path to address the climate emergency remains an unanswered question; what the SAIA managed to do was shift the quality of the conversation from speculation to practical judgement, enabling different views and concerns to be debated in public, informed by evidence, and shaped by those directly affected.



Artefact created by GSA students at the People's Panel on A.I., 2025



Panelists at the Scottish A.I. Summit, Edinburgh, March 2022

A Trusted Voice on A.I. – in Scotland and Beyond

The Scottish A.I. Alliance became a trusted voice in the A.I. ecosystem by applying the same standards to its work as it expected of A.I. – being trustworthy, ethical and inclusive. From academics and policymakers to community groups and businesses, the SAIA's ethics-based approach to the A.I. discourse in Scotland allowed it to cut through the noise and develop a meaningful and influential relationship with a wide variety of stakeholders.

Team members past and present have delivered keynotes, talks, seminars, workshops and participated in panels all across Scotland

and beyond. But the SAIA's flagship event was its annual Scottish A.I. Summit, which took place in Edinburgh and Glasgow between 2022 and 2024⁹. The aim of the Summit was for people from across sectors and industries to come together to join in meaningful conversations about A.I. centred on the Strategy's vision around trust, ethics and inclusion. Leading voices in A.I., such as Gary Marcus and Virginia Dignum, joined speakers, panellists and workshop facilitators from across the A.I. ecosystem in Scotland and beyond to discuss the topics shaping the A.I. landscape while bringing to life the SAIA spirit, blending technology, creativity and humanity.

8 Scottish AI Alliance. (2025). *People's Panel on AI and Climate: Pulse Report*. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5dc00e9e32cd095744be7634/t/6980bb70aae09400caba3ed9/1770044272549/Climate+Report+v5.pdf>

9 See <https://www.scottishai.com/scottish-ai-summit-2022>, <https://www.scottishai.com/scottish-ai-summit-2023> and <https://www.scottishai.com/scottish-ai-summit-2024>

Impact wasn't limited to the Central Belt of Scotland – the SAIA held regional A.I. Summits in Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Inverness in 2024. For these events, the SAIA collaborated with local organisations embedded within communities all over Scotland to bring location-relevant discussions of A.I. to different parts of the country.

Internationally, the SAIA's approach to A.I. didn't go unnoticed. The public engagement initiatives, the children's rights project, the collaborations across industries and the focus on value-based A.I. gave Scotland a credible voice in the global A.I. dialogue. The SAIA became a permanent node in a wider network, with invitations to contribute to discussions at international forums, from Brussels to Paris to Tokyo.

The SAIA team also received recognition for their work with Steph Wright, Head of the Scottish A.I. Alliance, receiving the DataIQ 2024 Award for Data and A.I. for Good Champion, and both Steph and Dawn McAra-Hunter, Programme Manager, being recognised in the Digital Leaders top 100 voices in A.I. in the UK in 2025.



Scottish A.I. Alliance team members and the 2025 John Smith Trust Fellows from Wider Europe and Central Asia, February 2025

“

The Scottish AI Summit was a fantastic event held in stunning Dynamic Earth building spaces. AI is having an ever-increasing effect on our lives. I'm not surprised that Scotland is a leader in artificial intelligence strategy for improving people's lives.

Attendee, Scottish A.I. Summit, Edinburgh, March 2022

“

Attending the AI Summit was a valuable experience that broadened my perspective on the potential of AI and data science.

Attendee, Scottish A.I. Summit, Glasgow, March 2023

“

I've participated in numerous conferences on AI, but this was the first time I encountered such a diverse array of voices and discussions, which was both excellent and thought-provoking.

Attendee Scottish A.I. Summit, Edinburgh, March 2024



Annual

Scottish AI Summits, in 2022, 2023 and 2024



4

Regional Scottish AI Summits in 2024/2025



1,000+

attendees to the three Scottish AI Summits in 2022, 2023 and 2024

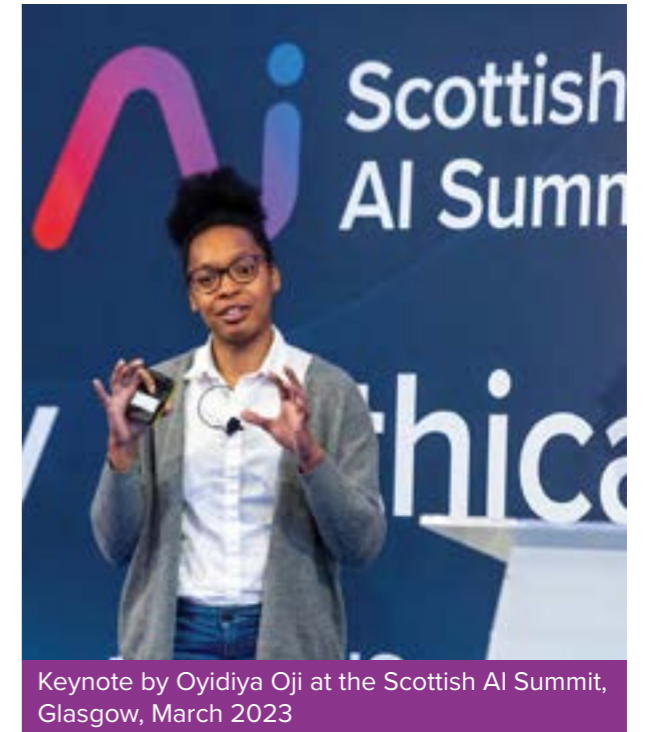
400+

attendees to the 4 Regional Scottish AI Summits in 2024



15+

locations in Scotland have hosted Scottish A.I. Alliance workshops and events



Keynote by Oyidiya Oji at the Scottish AI Summit, Glasgow, March 2023

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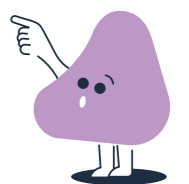
It was a deeply inspiring experience. It reinforced the urgent need for collaboration to ensure AI is developed in ways that are trustworthy, ethical, and inclusive, particularly for society's most vulnerable.

Attendee, Regional Scottish AI Summit Glasgow, December 2024

“

Really interesting discussions and panel sessions focusing on the risks and rewards of AI in some of the most important sectors in our region.

Attendee, Regional Scottish AI Summit, Inverness, March 2025



Illustrated summaries of several sessions at the Scottish A.I. Summits, 2022-2024

Scottish AI Summit

PUTTING THE WORTHY IN TRUSTWORTHY

KEY QUESTIONS:

- Is it really me I responsible for the system, AI, or system?
- Is it really me I responsible for the system, AI, or system?
- Is it really me I responsible for the system, AI, or system?

SCENARIO 1: MORTUARY

Play patients at risk of rapid decline, however they have been given a 14-day window to be treated. A pharmacist is asked to collect a prescription for a patient who has been given a 14-day window to be treated. A pharmacist is asked to collect a prescription for a patient who has been given a 14-day window to be treated.

CONCERN: People trust people - to trust back there must be transparency.

Algorithmic decision: How do we make AI to do things & human? How do we make AI to do things & human? How do we make AI to do things & human?

Scottish AI Summit

30TH MARCH 2022

PANEL 6: ETHICS, RISK & REGULATION IN AI

Chair: Exploring the issues associated with regulating AI & emerging risks.

Dr. Angus Keene: AI does not need regulation in the same way.

Callum Sinclair: AI is not software code - does it use the same principles?

Deborah Zamora: AI is not software code - does it use the same principles?

Scottish AI Summit

TUESDAY 28 MARCH 2023

SCOTTISH AI SUMMIT DAY 1

PUTTING SCOTLAND AT THE HEART OF THE AI REVOLUTION

Catharine Campbell: What will the future bring?

Gary Marsden: You have the opportunity to shape the future.

Building Responsibly in an AI-Driven World: How do we assess? How do we assess? How do we assess?

Scottish AI Summit

ETHICS IN AI PROCUREMENT BEYOND THE CHECKLIST

Signa Stern & Scottish Government: AI has been a buzzword for some time.

How does human decision? How does human decision? How does human decision?

Transparency: Transparency is key to building trust.

Ethical: Ethical procurement is essential for AI.

Scottish AI Summit

TUESDAY 28 MARCH 2023

STANDARDISATION FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS IN AI: A DELIVERABLE TRUSTWORTHY AI

Sehor Senesch: AI is not a technology, it's a system.

James Sachdev: AI is not a technology, it's a system.

Michelle McKeown: AI is not a technology, it's a system.

Andrew Shroff: AI is not a technology, it's a system.

Scottish AI Summit

SHIFTING AI WITH ANTI-RACIST NARRATIVES

Along areas of work: Focus on lived experience & other lived experience.

you can make positive change: you can make positive change.

How do people feel when they interact with technology? How do people feel when they interact with technology?

Scottish AI Summit

YOUTH VOICES & AI

Young people growing up with technology: Young people growing up with technology.

AI is not a technology, it's a system: AI is not a technology, it's a system.

AI is not a technology, it's a system: AI is not a technology, it's a system.

Scottish AI Summit

WEDNESDAY 29 MARCH 2023

YOUR CARE YOUR FUTURE: THE ROLE OF AI IN HEALTHCARE

Can AI help people living with multimorbidity? Can AI help people living with multimorbidity?

AI is not a technology, it's a system: AI is not a technology, it's a system.

AI is not a technology, it's a system: AI is not a technology, it's a system.

Reflecting Back and Looking Forward

Reflecting on the past five years of the Scottish A.I. Alliance, we feel a deep sense of gratitude and pride, not just for the work we did, but for the values we have stood by. When the SAIA began, our work was rooted in a simple but enduring vision that Scotland's A.I. future must be trustworthy, ethical, and inclusive - not as add-ons but as its foundation.

Over time, national conversations about A.I. evolved in step with the changing technological and geopolitical landscape. What began as a broad, values-led mission evolved into a programme of work focused on adoption, scale, and economic potential. This was not a rejection of ethics, but a reordering of priorities shaped by global pressures, political cycles, and the urgency to position Scotland and the UK competitively.

The SAIA tried to navigate this evolution. We remained anchored in our principles, not by opposing progress, but by demonstrating how ethical and inclusive practice could strengthen it. Together we facilitated conversations, built collaborations, and translated complex ideas into practical guidance to ensure that the human dimension was never lost from the conversation.

None of this would have been possible without the incredible team who held these values to their core. We were all passionate in our belief that ethics is not a checkbox, it is a culture; that inclusion is not a policy, it is a practice; and that trust is not a slogan, it is earned through transparency and dialogue. We weren't always successful, but we were consistent.

As this chapter closes, and national A.I. narratives are dominated by ideas of global competition and growth, we would gently offer this: when we speak of growth, benefits, and opportunity, we must always ask, "for whom?" Growth that excludes, that deepens inequities, or that erodes public trust may deliver short-term goals, but it is not sustainable. The most resilient A.I. ecosystems are not those that move fastest, but those that move with purpose and with people at their heart.

We strongly believe that there is no contradiction between ambition and ethics. In fact, they are mutually reinforcing. A system that is fair, accountable, and inclusive is not slower, it is more robust. The next phase of this journey will be stronger if it remembers the lessons we learned: that ethics is a bridge, and that inclusion is a catalyst for a world of possibilities.

We leave the Scottish A.I. Alliance with thanks - to the team, to the partners, and to the communities who engaged with us. And we hope that the values we championed - trust, ethics and inclusion - remain as they are the building blocks of a future where technologies like AI can, and should, benefit everyone.



Steph Wright
Head of Scottish A.I. Alliance
The Data Lab



Jeremy Darot
Head of A.I. and Data Science
Scottish Government

The Little Things

When it comes to living by our values there is no such thing as a small gesture – even the most minute actions can have lasting influence. The SAIA looked beyond the opinions usually heard at A.I. events and sought out new, unique, and underrepresented voices, as well as going against the grain of tech events and eschewing the customary plastic swag. Prioritising inclusivity ensured that the conversations around A.I. were opened up to as many people as possible.

The Blobs

How do you make artificial intelligence more accessible? **The Blobs**, voiced by team members and named by children, were the friendly faces of the Scottish A.I. Alliance and made stellar appearances on videos and at events.



The Trees

A **grove of 221 trees**¹⁰ were planted as part of a rewilding project (Trees for Life) in the Cairngorms as a sustainable thank you gift to every speaker, panellist and facilitator who took part in the Scottish A.I. Summit conferences.

¹⁰ See Trees for Life website, <https://treesforlife.org.uk/groves/scottishaisummit/>

Thank You

The individuals and organisations that have contributed to the work of the Scottish A.I. Alliance are too many to mention. None of this would have been possible without your trust and support, so to each of you, our sincerest thanks.

Members of the Scottish A.I. Alliance team at The Data Lab, past and present

Elena Connarty
Katie Crawford
Maggie Dziezyc
Gordon Johnstone
Killian McAleese
Dawn McAra-Hunter

Calum McDonald
Will Millership
Steph Wright

Members of the Scottish A.I. Alliance team at the Scottish Government, past and present

Jeremy Darot
John Fotheringham
Scott Nowbaveh

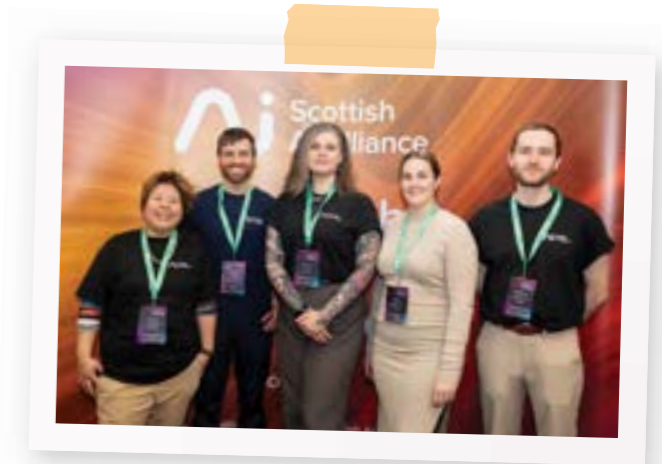
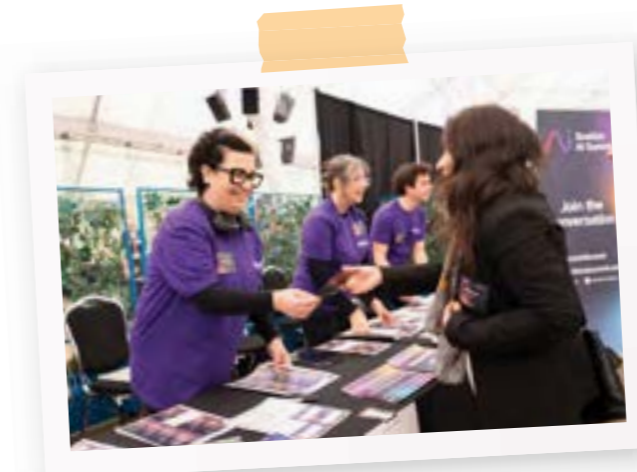
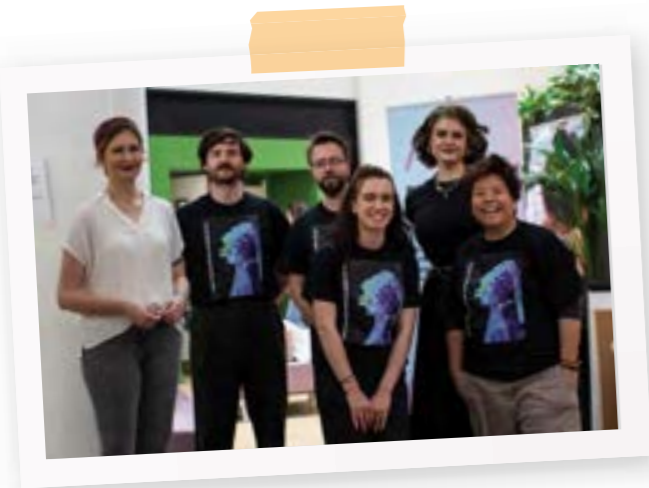
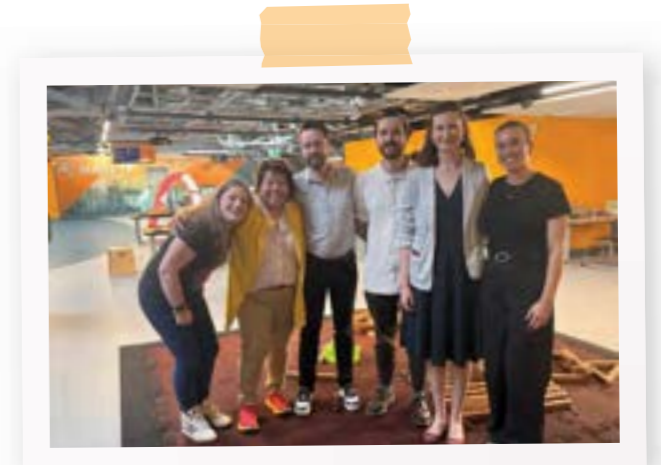
Carolyne Thomson
Corine van der Schans

Members of the Leadership Circle, Leadership Group, Governance Group, and Community Advisory Group past and present

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Angus Allan
Christopher Austin
Michael Boniface
Lauren Browne
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Joanna Campbell
Ewan Carmichael
Richard Davis
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Michael Rovatsos
Julie Sart
Marian Scott
Callum Sinclair
Dilraj Sokhi-Watson
Kirsten Urquhart
Anne Widdop
Lingsay Wong





The Scottish AI Alliance delivered Scotland's first AI Strategy, running from March 2021 to March 2026. A new AI Strategy has been announced.

For more information, visit www.aiscotland.scot

