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UK Eyes £2 bn ChatGPT Plus Access

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In a recent meeting in San Francisco, OpenAI co-founder Sam Altman discussed a tentative £2 billion proposal with the UK's Technology Secretary, Peter Kyle, that would extend premium ChatGPT Plus access to all UK residents. While the plan remains non-binding and reportedly wasn't taken seriously due to its high cost, it underscores the government's eagerness to embrace artificial intelligence across public services.

Sources familiar with the talks say the proposal formed part of a broader dialogue around collaborating on AI initiatives. Although the deal did not advance further, it reflects the government's growing engagement with the AI sector at a time when OpenAI recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to explore AI use in education, defence, security, and other public sectors.

This strategic MoU complements other efforts, including partnerships with Google and Anthropic, as the UK government ramps up investment in AI infrastructure and governance to position the UK as a global AI hub.

AI still faces scepticism. Critics, including voices from the creative industries raises concerns about accuracy, copyright risks, and the possibility of overreliance on large US firms, especially given the non-binding nature of such agreements.

In response, the government emphasises its commitment to safeguarding data protection, maintaining oversight, and fostering innovation rooted in democratic values. The MoU envisions supporting AI "Growth Zones" across the UK and involves working with the UK AI Security Institute to strengthen model safety.

The UK's bold AI strategy also aims to expand public compute capacity twenty-fold within five years, part of a broader £1 billion public commitment to power AI-driven transformation. Long-term economic modelling suggests AI advancements could raise productivity, yielding up to £47 billion annually for the UK economy.

Although the £2 billion ChatGPT Plus proposal appears to be more of an exploratory pitch than a formal negotiation, it signals the growing intersection of government services and AI tools. As the UK charts its position in the global AI race, balancing innovation, public accountability, and regulatory safeguards will remain central.