Internet Society United Kingdom Chair's Report for 2025

Introduction

The Internet Society United Kingdom Chapter had an impactful and dynamic year in 2024.

Our policy activities have focussed on advocating for digital rights, contributing to critical legislative processes, and enhancing online child safety. This report provides a detailed overview of five significant events and initiatives undertaken by our chapter, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to promoting an open, secure, and inclusive internet.

Policy

The Chapter continued to build on the previous year's work by engaging actively in UK policy and legislative processes affecting the Internet's core characteristics. It advocated for the protection of end-to-end encryption and closely monitored legislative proposals that could adversely affect not only the use of the Internet within the UK, but also its development, resilience, and security.

Regrettably, the change of Government in 2025 resulted in a marked but somehow unexpected shift in parliamentary positions. Members of Parliament who had previously opposed certain legislative approaches now expressed support for them, while those whose party had been in power the previous year, having attempted unsuccessfully to advance similar measures, now positioned themselves in opposition. This dynamic contributed to a political environment in which rational, evidence-based debate was frequently overshadowed by emotive narratives. These narratives repeatedly asserted that UK Internet users, and citizens more broadly, must accept diminished privacy as the price for living in a country claiming to offer "the safest Internet in the world."

As a result, support or opposition in the House of Commons largely fell along party lines. Those who had endorsed similar proposals the previous year now opposed them, while those who had previously resisted such measures became their most vocal proponents - at times even congratulating themselves for advancing legislation that their predecessors had failed to enact.

Deliberations in the House of Lords provided a more measured and principled forum. Peers engaged in substantive discussion, questioning whether the proposed measures would ultimately serve the public interest or risk causing greater harm to the nation.

The Chapter will of course continue to monitor the development of legislation including the ongoing debate about the Digital ID and its ramifications for the Internet including the .gov.uk service.

Key Focus Areas in 2025

1. Joint Letter on the UK Government's use of Investigatory Powers Act to attack End-to-End Encryption
2. Global Statement on the Role of Encryption in Securing Trust and Enabling the Digital Economy
3. Briefing for Parliamentary Hearing – "Repeal the Online Safety Act"
4. Webinar: Interoperability in AI Safety Governance

1.   Joint Letter on the UK Government's use of Investigatory Powers Act to attack End-to-End Encryption

On Thursday 13 February 2025, the UK Chapter of the Internet Society joined a group of over 100 civil society organizations, companies, and cybersecurity experts – as part of an effort led by the Global Encryption Coalition (GEC) – submitted a letter to British Home Secretary Yvette Cooper calling on the UK Home Office to rescind its demand that Apple create a backdoor into its end-to-end encrypted services.

For more information: https://internetsociety.uk/joint-letter-uk-governments-use-of-investigatory-powers-act/

Executive Summary

A broad coalition of civil society organisations, security researchers, and industry stakeholders issued a joint statement addressing the UK Home Office's use of the Investigatory Powers Act. The coalition expressed significant concern regarding a Technical Capability Notice served to Apple, which would require the company to weaken or bypass end-to-end encryption across its services.

The coalition highlighted that strong encryption remains a foundational component of the UK's digital resilience, underpinning national security, economic competitiveness, and the protection of fundamental rights. The proposed measures were assessed as posing material risks to public safety, the integrity of digital infrastructure, and the trustworthiness of UK-based technology markets.

The statement concluded with a recommendation that the UK government withdraw the notice and reaffirm its commitment to maintaining robust, uncompromised encryption standards.

Key Contributions

Strengthening the Security Narrative

The coalition provided a clear, evidence-based explanation of why mandated access to encrypted services introduces systemic vulnerabilities. This contribution reinforced the broader strategic message that cybersecurity and public safety are best served by maintaining strong encryption.

Advancing National Security Priorities

The letter underscored the essential role encryption plays in safeguarding government operations, critical infrastructure, and public-sector systems. By framing encryption as a national security asset, the coalition aligned its position with the UK's broader digital-defence objectives.

Embedding Human Rights Considerations

The coalition integrated relevant legal precedents, including European Court of Human Rights rulings, to demonstrate the importance of secure communication for freedom of expression, journalistic integrity, and the protection of at-risk individuals.

Highlighting Societal Impact

The statement drew attention to the disproportionate risks faced by vulnerable communities should encryption be weakened. This perspective broadened the policy discussion beyond technical considerations to include real-world safety implications.

Protecting Economic and Innovation Capacity

The coalition articulated the potential economic consequences of undermining encryption, including reduced investor confidence, diminished global competitiveness, and the possibility of technology providers withdrawing services from the UK market.

Promoting International Leadership
By emphasising the global precedent that UK policy could set, the coalition contributed to the international dialogue on encryption standards and digital rights. This reinforced the UK's responsibility to uphold practices that strengthen—not weaken—global cybersecurity.

Providing Clear Policy Direction
The letter concluded with a direct and actionable recommendation: the withdrawal of the Technical Capability Notice and a renewed commitment to protecting strong encryption across all digital services.

2. Global Statement on the Role of Encryption in Securing Trust and Enabling the Digital Economy

Encryption is a cornerstone of the global digital economy. Without strong technical safeguards such as encryption, users cannot rely on online services to keep their most sensitive information, including financial and health data, secure from malicious actors.

Yet, despite overwhelming evidence that backdoors weaken security, policymakers around the world continue to propose measures that would mandate such vulnerabilities. The Salt Typhoon attacks in late 2024 serve as a stark reminder: backdoors always compromise protection and expose users to greater risk.

We stand firm in our commitment to strong encryption. Trust in digital services depends on it, and weakening encryption is not an option.

On 11 November 2025, the UK Chapter therefore joined 60+ other organisations in co-signing a [Global Statement on the Role of Encryption in Securing Trust and Enabling the Digital Economy](#).

The statement called on all parts of the digital ecosystem to stand together to ensure that strong encryption can continue to facilitate the digital economy.

3. Parliamentary Hearing – "Repeal the Online Safety Act"

On Monday 15 December 2025, took place a Parliamentary Hearing discussing the e-petition 722903 called "Repeal the Online Safety Act" which reached in excess of 500 000 signatures.

A Westminster Hall debate was scheduled for 4:30pm on 15 December 2025 on an e-petition relating to relating to the Online Safety Act. The debate was opened by Lewis Atkinson https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2025-0224/

The Internet Society and the UK Chapter of the Internet Society drafted an Online Brief, shared with the Petitioner Alex Baynham as well as news outlets, MPs and other organisations involved in this discussion.

Our analysis highlighted two high-impact areas where the Act, as implemented, introduces significant systemic risk:

- Age-verification requirements that lack adequate privacy safeguards and have driven a measurable shift in user behaviour, including a sharp rise in VPN adoption.
- Content-scanning mandates for encrypted services, which would require weakening end-to-end encryption or deploying intrusive on-device scanning technologies, creating new vulnerabilities across the digital ecosystem.

By situating these issues within broader national security, economic, and international policy contexts, the briefing helped shape parliamentary understanding of the long-term implications of the

Act. It reinforced the need for rights-respecting, technically sound approaches to online safety and contributed to growing cross-sector recognition that strong encryption is essential to the UK's digital resilience.

This engagement strengthened our strategic influence with policymakers, advanced our mission to protect secure and open communications, and positioned the organisation as a key contributor to the national conversation on responsible digital regulation.

Through our Chair Olivier Crépin-Leblond, attending the Parliamentary Hearing, further contact was established with Parliamentarians and a follow-up is in order.

Full details of the Briefing can be found on our "Parliamentary Hearing – Repeal the Online Safety Act" page.

4. Interoperability in AI Safety Governance

In this talk, taking place on 28 November 2025, Dr. Yik Chan Chin, Associate Professor from Beijing Normal University and David Raho, PhD researcher at Sheffield Hallam University, presented the policy report they collaborated with researchers across four jurisdictions (UK, China, South Korea, Singapore) on "Interoperability in AI Safety Governance," focusing specifically on the case of United Kingdom.

The Webinar focussed on a report developed by the United Nations University Institute in Macau, offering a comparative analysis of the ethical, legal, and technical dimensions of AI safety governance in the United Kingdom, China, South Korea, and Singapore. It emphasized the pivotal role of interoperability in reducing risks, supporting innovation, and strengthening public trust across three key sectors: education, cross-border data flows, and autonomous vehicles. During the session, speakers outlined the report's principal findings, showcasing both effective and proposed mechanisms for ethical, legal, and technical interoperability drawn from the four country studies. The discussion also examined the UK's principles-based approach to AI safety governance and its efforts toward international alignment, while acknowledging ongoing challenges in achieving cohesive global standards. The event concluded with actionable policy recommendations aimed at advancing interoperability in line with emerging global frameworks, including the United Nations' Global Digital Compact.

We had an excellent turn-out online for this Webinar, which can be watched from our page "Interoperability in AI Safety Governance".

Other Activities: IPv6 Matrix

The IPv6 Matrix has been measuring the use of IPv6 in the world's 1 Million most popular Web Sites since 2010. The project has collected over 720Gb of data relating to the spread of IPv6 worldwide. Following the work done a few years ago to re-write the crawler and port the Seb server to Its two virtual servers (one crawler and one web server) have been running smoothly – and show a slow growth of IPv6 enabled information suppliers worldwide. https://ipv6matrix.org/

On 18 November 2025, Dr. Tim Chown presented an update on the IPv6 Matrix, with a short slide deck, to the UK IPv6 Council Annual General Meeting in London.
The deck is available at: https://internetsociety.uk/ipv6-matrix-at-ipv6-council-2025/

UK Internet Governance Forum- https://ukigf.org.uk/events/uk-igf-2025/

Executive Summary

The **UK IGF 2025**, held on 11 December 2025 as a hybrid event in London, convened 139 participants from government, civil society, industry, academia, and the technical community to explore the theme **"Building Digital Governance Together."** The forum followed the global IGF in Norway and continued the UK's commitment to a multistakeholder approach to shaping digital policy.

The event emphasised diversity, inclusion, and active participation, with 70% women speakers, mixed-gender panels, strong ethnic representation, and youth involvement. Discussions focused on major governance challenges including AI ethics, digital fragmentation, power asymmetries in technology, digital identity, children's rights online, and the WSIS+20 review process.

Across sessions, a consistent message emerged: effective digital governance requires transparency, human rights protections, equitable infrastructure, and collaborative policymaking. The report highlights the need for resilient digital ecosystems, ethical AI development, balanced digital ID frameworks, and meaningful inclusion of children and marginalised groups in policy decisions.

Key Points

1. Event Purpose and Participation

- 139 participants across sectors engaged in interactive sessions, workshops, and lightning talks.
- Strong emphasis on diversity: 70% women speakers, 40% ethnic minority representation, and youth speakers included.
- Sponsored by Nominet and Verisign, with Nominet providing the Secretariat.

2. Keynote Themes

- The UK government highlighted priorities including digital inclusion, AI regulation, online safety, and cyber resilience.
- Emphasis on global cooperation, multistakeholder governance, and maintaining an open, secure Internet.

3. Digital Fragmentation from a User Perspective

- Users experience fragmentation through uneven access, platform restrictions, and policy interventions.
- Calls for:
  - human-rights-based impact assessments,
  - pluralistic and resilient digital infrastructure,
  - education-based approaches (e.g., gaming) rather than restrictive bans.

4. Ethics of AI Workshop

- AI ethics spans energy use, supply chains, datasets, and societal impacts.
- Key concerns:
  - lack of alignment between ethics, law, and practice,
  - need for granular consent and clearer definitions of "public data,"
  - importance of transparency (e.g., watermarking, model disclosure),
  - urgency of AI literacy for all age groups.

5. Power Asymmetries in Technology

- Cloud giants exert disproportionate influence over AI development ("epistemic totalitarianism").

- Growing dependency on cloud ecosystems raises sovereignty concerns.
- Discussion of public, democratically governed technological alternatives.

6. WSIS+20 Review
- Negotiations occurred amid polarised global politics.
- Innovations such as the **Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board** were praised.
- Future work will focus on IGF funding, development financing, and updated WSIS Action Line roadmaps.

7. Digital ID: Balancing Citizen and State
- Digital ID systems could improve services and reduce fraud but raise privacy and exclusion risks.
- Biometric systems often misidentify marginalised groups.
- Effective digital ID must prioritise dignity, equality, and strong legal safeguards.

8. Children's Rights Online
- Children's rights extend beyond safety to include expression, privacy, and access to information.
- Children's experiences differ significantly from adults' perceptions.
- Policymaking often "cherry-picks" children's experiences; genuine consultation is needed.

Other News

Election Committee Report

The Internet Society UK England Chapter Election Committee concluded its work for the year with the successful completion of the Chapter's annual elections in August 2025. Following the close of the nomination and voting period, the Committee formally declared the election of the following members:

- **David Lake**
- **Steve Karmeinsky**
- **Wale Bakare**
- **Yik-Chan Chin**

Their election strengthens the Chapter's governance and supports its ongoing contribution to the wider Internet Society community and the global Internet ecosystem.

The Committee extends its appreciation to all candidates for their engagement and to the membership for its participation in the electoral process.

Acknowledgements

The Chapter expresses its sincere thanks to the members of the Election Committee for their diligence, impartiality, and commitment in organising and overseeing the election:

- **Sébastien Bachollet** (ISOC France)
- **Chileshe Chambaila** (ISOC UK)
- **Kevin Meynell** (ISOC UK)
- **John Paschoud** (ISOC UK)

- **Berna Alp** (ISOC Switzerland)

- **Dave Burstein** (ISOC New York)

- **Luis Martinez** (ISOC Mexico)

- **Al Ghaff** (ISOC Staff) – *Observer*

Their contributions ensured a transparent, well-managed, and credible electoral process, reflecting the Chapter's commitment to strong governance and community participation.

Chapter Evolution

The Chapter was originally established in London as ISOC London, later transitioning to ISOC England in 1998/99. It has served as the United Kingdom's Internet Society chapter since the dissolution of the Scottish Chapter in the early 2000s. For many years, the Chapter operated primarily under the domain isoc-e.org.

Over time, the designation "ISOC UK England" created some confusion, as the Chapter's remit covered the entirety of the United Kingdom. In response, the Chapter initiated discussions with the Internet Society headquarters to formalise an evolution toward a unified national identity as the Internet Society UK Chapter. This transition has now been completed with the signing of an updated MoU with the Internet Society, supported by the efforts of Ruben Martin, the Internet Society's Chapter Support representative for Europe.

The Chapter now operates under the name **Internet Society United Kingdom Chapter**, with the primary domain internetsociety.uk. The Leadership Team can be contacted at contact@internetsociety.uk.

Get involved!

Are you passionate about making the Internet a better place for everyone? The UK Chapter of the Internet Society is looking for volunteers to help us advance our mission! We focus on educational events, community programs, public policy advocacy, and networking events. Whether you're interested in Internet security, broadband access, child safety, or network neutrality, we need your skills and enthusiasm. Be an active part of a community dedicated to promoting an open, secure, and trustworthy Internet for all. Get involved today and help us make a difference. Our current project areas are listed on: https://internetsociety.uk/projects/

Contact us on: contact@internetsociety.uk

Membership

As you know, Global Membership of the Internet Society and membership of the UK Chapter are open and free. From last year's total of 1923 members, the Chapter has now reached 2028 members, a 5% increase year on year which we expect to increase further given the Chapter's interests in future activities – based on your input.

Mailing Lists

It is also time to remind you of our discussion mailing lists which are open to all - as a prime channel for you to interact with the Chapter, but also with other members in the UK.

They can be accessed on: http://lists.isoc-e.org/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo

● **UK Policy Mailing list**: Internet Policy especially UK Internet Policy. This includes discussions on Government Inquiries, but also any Internet policy topic that is likely to affect UK Internet users and businesses. This mailing list has been the primary means of announcement of campaigns, petitions, open letters for the UK Chapter of the Internet Society to engage and is the most active mailing at the Internet Society UK Chapter.

● **Open-Trust**: a discussion forum focussing on Internet Trust issues, from the Trust Issues covered globally by the Internet Society (See: https://www.internetsociety.org/issues/trust/), to the work undertaken about Trusting Platforms and Algorithms, in a world dominated by increasing Surveillance, Tracking, and, at the other end of the spectrum, Fake news.

This mailing list and group probably requires a shepherd if it is to grow, as most announcements relating to policy issues that the chapter has engaged in were made on the UK Policy Mailing list.

● **ISOC-UK-Universities**: a forum focussing on University and student activities. Many UK Universities now offer courses about Internet Governance, sometimes as a standalone item, sometimes as part of a wider media course, but often as a research topic. This group, still looking for a person to lead it, is a channel for interaction on issues that young members might face. Plus – how do we reach students, researchers and academic experts so they actively engage in the Multistakeholder consultations and activities that are offered both on a national and international basis? This mailing list is acting pending a better way to engage – and during the 2022 AGM it was suggested that rather than using a mailing list to engage students, an instant messaging chat like **Discord** should be used. To-date, nobody has volunteered to take on this task.

AMS – "membership" system

We invite you all to log into your account from https://portal.isoc.org/ and check on various mailing lists and fora which can be joined, from the Chapter's own discussion forum, to other fora about AI, Interplanetary Internet etc.

Taking stock of 2025, focussing on 2026

In 2026, with your help, the Chapter is planning the following activities:

Continued Governance Improvement

Our elections process has shown that our Bylaws could benefit from a review and the Election process formalised into a governance document to be used in the future. Kevin Meynell has kindly volunteered to steer a working group starting its work in January 2026 – if you wish to volunteer, email contact@internetsociety.uk and you'll be added to the group.

Continued Engagement with other UK based associations

- Engage with UK operators (through the **NetUK** Group) and sounding out their policy concerns relevant for ISOC to engage on further such as over Online Safety Bill. In 2025, we were too late to propose a paper for presentation at NetUK. We plan to do so in 2026.

- Continued engagement with TechUK when the latter is ready to ramp up activity. In 2025, Tech UK policy and our UK Chapter of ISOC did not find the opportunity to work on a common topic. We hope that this can be achieved in 2026.

- Continued engagement with BCS when the latter is ready to ramp up activity. Here too, the BCS has taken more time than anticipated to actively work on Policy matters, but our UK Chapter of ISOC is ready to collaborate.

UK IGF

- Participate in preparation of 2026 UK IGF - in the same capacity as in previous years.
Whilst in 2025 the Chapter did not financially support the UK IGF, it will apply for a grant from the Internet Society Foundation in 2026, as rules for local IGF support have been optimised.

Engaging with DSIT (UK Government)

- ISOC United Kingdom board members liaising in to return MAGIG UK as a chapter remit on:
   - ICANN matters
    - ITU/UN engagement – in a new group renamed "MIGG-UK (Multistakeholder Internet Governance Group"
Both of which are part of the Chapter Agenda.

UK Policy Consultations

- continue advocacy in the UK Parliament, both directly but also in coordination with other UK-based civil and professional society organisations. This is one of the Chapter's leading activities.

Direct Engagement on Global Internet Governance

- Organise event (in person or online) on the swathe of UN initiatives of relevance to Internet governance and the MSM from the GDC to the WSIS+20 (including the "multilateral effectiveness" initiative).
Questions could include: explore the relative importance and potential threat to the MSM model of these initiatives; where/how can stakeholders most effectively engage and on what issues, processes; potential outcomes - negative/positive to the MSM model of governance; how should the IGF evolve sufficiently to not necessitate a GDC Forum, etc.
This is an internal process that we will launch with our members – and it was not undertaken in 2024.

- Liaise with ISOC chapters particularly in Europe over EU and other policy spheres impact on the Internet

- Continue the Chapter involvement in the Global Encryption Coalition including signing up to Open Letters and Campaigns and relaying these campaigns to our UK audience

Emerging Issues

- Continue developing the activity that investigates and informs on impacts for Internet of AI - looking at the number of academics, pundits and commentators that have suddenly added AI to their "expertise" in the last few months – especially as a follow-up to our successful "Interoperability in AI Safety Governance" Webinar.

- potential for a regular newsletter/channel that might also be an opportunity to gain subscribers and

an independent revenue flow

The more volunteers get involved, the more we can expand on Chapter activities. We would like to hear from you if you would be interested in becoming a Convenor on any topic that fall within the mission values of the Internet Society.

As a reminder, the key topics for the Internet Society are based around the concept of Advocating to Defend the Internet:

- Countering Internet Threats
- Defending the Internet in the United Nations
- Extending Encryption
- Guiding Constructive Internet Policy
- Helping Shapre Internet Legal Precedent
- Sharing Cutting Edge knowledge
- Securing Global Routing

Conclusion

As in the previous year, the Chapter's work has centred on promoting online safety, advocating for digital rights, and contributing to key legislative processes. Through formal submissions to consultations, collaborative initiatives, and public awareness efforts, the Chapter has continued to advance its mission to support an open, secure, and trustworthy Internet for all.

Our ongoing work on IPv6 adoption has produced further valuable insights, indicating a continued, gradual increase in IPv6 deployment both within the United Kingdom and internationally, reinforcing the importance of sustained engagement in this area.

Looking ahead, the Chapter remains committed to building on this progress in the coming year. We encourage members of our mailing lists and wider community to take a more active role in the Chapter's activities, including volunteering as convenors for specific projects. Additional details on our work can be found through the links provided at the beginning of this report.

Acknowledgements

The Chapter extends its appreciation to the ISOC UK Leadership Team—Christian de Larrinaga, David Lake, Desiree Miloshevic, Matthew Shears, Steve Karmeinsky, Wale Bakare, and Yik-Chan Chin—for their dedicated service on the Executive Council throughout the year.
We also express our sincere thanks to Louise Marie Hurel and Ruofei Wang, who concluded their terms on the Executive Council this year. Their contributions over several years have been invaluable, and it has been a privilege to work alongside them in support of the public interest.
Stay involved and let us know what YOU want to focus on this year, as it is YOUR local chapter of the Internet Society.

Warmest regards,
Olivier MJ Crépin-Leblond, PhD
For the Internet Society United Kingdom Leadership Team, January 2026