The Science, Tech and Digital sectors are major parts of the UK’s culture and economy. The coming six months are, unsurprisingly, heavily focused on Brexit, with this industry in particular being heavily reliant on EU-born workers and international funding. The upcoming negotiations are crucial for areas ranging from the Erasmus exchange programme to the future of the British nuclear industry, with major regulatory changes across the digital and tech sectors.

As the digital sector develops, online regulation has become an increasingly prominent issue and the implementation of GDPR towards the end of May is followed by a string of investigations and publications surrounding topics are varied as fake news, cyber security and connectivity.

The comms sector is seeing some seismic changes, with a potential merger between industry giants 21st Century Fox and Sky up for review by the Competition & Markets Authority, with a potential rival bid from Comcast also looming for both.

With Britain committed to reducing its carbon output in the coming years, energy usage and efficiency are set to become hot topics. As a result, the Government is committed to creating an environment that encourages the necessary technological advancements to take place – notably through bills like the Automated and Electric Vehicles Bill, which seeks to encourage the purchase and use of electric vehicles. This particular bill focuses on developing EV charging points across the country, and such large-scale infrastructure projects are a common feature of long-term planning within the Government.

Telecoms infrastructure is one sector in particular that is due to receive a major infrastructure funding boost from Government, and Matt Hancock, the DCMS Secretary, will set out a strategy to deliver on ambitious targets in the Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review at some point over the Summer.

Across the coming 6 months, there is evidence of widespread consultation on the topic of connectivity, with the Government and private sector both laying the groundwork for a roll-out of both 5G and full-fibre in the medium-term future, as well as the further digitisation of the economy more generally.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be seen as one of the most cutting-edge examples of technological innovation and, as Theresa May signalled in her May speech in Macclesfield, it will become a centre-piece of British scientific investment. Whilst there is little formally scheduled in the field of AI, it will likely become a hot topic both inside and outside Westminster over coming months.

Please find below a timeline of key dates in final half of the year.
June 2018

13th: BP Statistical Review of World Energy
14th: Expected CMA ruling on 21st Century Fox takeover of Sky
14th: Official statistics published on UK government expenditure on science, engineering and technology in 2016
16th: Labour Live – Jeremy Corbyn speaks
19-20th: Connect Britain conference for telecoms industry, focusing on connectivity
26th: Public consultation ends on accessibility of public sector websites
27th: Connected Conference, Edinburgh (http://www.holyrood.com/events)
28th - 29th: European Council – leaders’ summit
TBC: Government White Paper on customs and Brexit
TBC: Cairncross review into the sustainability of journalism, with a focus on the role and impact of digital search engines, content and data
TBC: European Union (Withdrawal) Bill returns to the Commons for consideration of Lords amendments
TBC: QS World University Rankings 2019
TBC: Energy Technology Perspectives 2018 – International Environment Agency report

July 2018

3rd: End of the Government consultation on regulation of nuclear sites in the final stages of decommissioning
5th: Cyber Security Conference in London (http://www.cybersecurityconference.co.uk)
6th – 13th: London Fintech Week
19th: Statistics published on the level of scientific procedures involving animals in 2017
24th: Parliament rises for summer recess
30th: World Renewable Energy Congress takes place
TBC: The Cryptosets Taskforce (made up of the Treasury, the Bank of England, and the Financial Conduct Authority) will publish their final report on cryptocurrency.
TBC: Ofcom’s Public Service Broadcasting Annual Report 2018
TBC: NHS Digital publishes experimental statistics on compliance with selected NICE appraisals in England
TBC: Immigration White Paper from Government
TBC: Secretary of State for Digital, Media, Culture & Sport Matt Hancock publishes the “Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review” detailing ambitious plans for the sector.

August 2018

7th: Annual statistical release detailing what the internet is used for in the UK

22nd: The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport produces the results of the public consultation on the Civil Society Strategy

September 2018

4th: Parliament returns from Recess

14th: Parliament rises for Conference Recess

15th - 18th: Lib Dem Conference

23rd – 26th: Labour Party Conference

29th: Article 50 process - 6 months until UK leaves EU

30th – 3rd Oct: Conservative Conference

TBC: Migration Advisory Committee report on post-Brexit immigration system

October 2018

TBC: SNP Conference

30th Sept – 3rd Oct: Conservative Conference

9th: Parliament returns from Conference recess

13th – 14th: Welsh Lib Dem Conference

18th – 19th: European Council leaders’ summit – target date to agree a withdrawal treaty. Accompanied by transition deal, a separate “political declaration”

TBC: Draft Immigration Bill

TBC: Trade and Customs Bills return to the Commons for Report stage