

London Tech Bridge Breaks Down Barriers with New Collaboration Space



WESTMINSTER, London – The United Kingdom-based Tech Bridge hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony June 13 to celebrate the grand opening of its innovation hub, said Liz Mildenstein of NavalX.

The London Tech Bridge will leverage partnerships with the U.S. Office of Naval Research Global and the Royal Navy Office of the Chief Technology Officer to foster connectivity, agility and innovation. The location will sponsor dialogue, joint investment and cooperative development between the two navies.

“The opening of the London Tech Bridge’s innovation hub represents a new way for great minds to come together in a unique atmosphere, share ideas and technologies, and foster more effective research collaboration,” said Chief of Naval Research Rear Adm. Lorin Selby. “This joint U.S.-U.K. partnership is critical to advance new ideas and keep our naval forces dominant.

“We’re looking for partners with strong curiosity, a passion for action and a commitment to scientific and technological excellence.”

Initially launched at the end of 2020 during a virtual ceremony, the London Tech Bridge has already made strides in moving the innovation needle.

For example, it played a critical role in the recent APEX underwater Challenge. The London Tech Bridge coordinated and arranged sponsorship for three research grants to teams from

the University of Rhode Island in the United States, Robert Gordon University in Scotland and TNO (Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research) to execute the challenge. These teams helped unmanned underwater vessels sense objects with sonar or optical cameras and communicate what they “saw” to operators.

“The London Tech Bridge does exactly what it says on the tin,” said Rear Adm. James Parkin CBE, cutting the ribbon on behalf of the Royal Navy. “Being in London, right next to the strategic headquarters of our armed forces, and at the heart of this great global city, allows exposure not only to the latest thinking in defense innovation, but provides physical access to those varied organizations and individuals conducting some of the most exciting technological research and development anywhere in the world.

“As such, it’s all about tech – sharing our understanding of exciting developments in autonomy, materials, platforms, sensors, processing and concepts, and unlocking the Royal Navy’s connections to those world leading academic, industrial and public sector organizations in the U.K., towards achieving our common goals.

“And perhaps most importantly, it’s a figurative Bridge, one that permits the Royal Navy to reach across the Atlantic into the U.S. Navy, and vice versa, enabling our great nations to join forces in collaborating ever closer, in order to identify the opportunities, and solve the problems, that either or both of us have identified.”

The London Tech Bridge’s new location will also conduct its initial “Tea and Tech” in June, kicking off a monthly session with industry in specified technology areas. Tea and Tech will allow companies to pitch their ideas and technology to the U.S. and U.K. navies.

The Tech Bridge Network

The Tech Bridge network, powered by NavalX, spans 18 national and international locations. The network is designed to bridge the gap between the Navy and emerging entities like startups, small businesses, academia, nonprofits and private capital that aren't traditionally part of the Navy's development and acquisition process.

Although there is some commonality among them, the Tech Bridges offer unique services and focus areas within their ecosystems, based on the needs of the customers in their respective areas of responsibility. The London Tech Bridge uniquely builds upon the historic relationship between the U.S. and U.K., and seeks innovation and technology in several key focus areas, including artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, directed energy, green energy, advanced manufacturing and maintenance and sustainment.

While the Tech Bridge has defined these focus areas to guide its work, it remains open to innovative ideas and game-changing technologies; it remains agile and anticipates its focus areas evolving over time. Its U.K. co-director, Royal Navy Commander Laurence Mallinson, emphasized the need for flexibility in the Tech Bridge.

"Having started virtually a year ago, it is great to finally have a place to hold those vital face-to-face meetings and collaboration events. We are right in the heart of one of the world's most advanced tech centers and so able to bring cutting-edge tech solutions to our navies' problems," he said. "We will focus on challenging industry with solving some of the most pressing problems that our navies are trying to resolve, and bring to the attention of our sailors and marines some of the greatest new technologies in the U.K."

The addition of a physical innovation hub to the London Tech Bridge framework removes the typical meeting barriers of attending events on a military base and allows for the free flow of thoughts and innovation with limited bureaucracy.