Hackathon: Is it possible to use AI to support the Government to deliver its legislative agenda?

Parliamentary Business and Legislation Secretariat, July 2023

What do we do?

- The Parliamentary Business and Legislation (PBL) Secretariat is a small team of civil servants based in the Cabinet Office.
- We sit at the very centre of Government, working with departments, No.10 and Parliament on a day to day basis.
- Our goals are to:
    - Co-ordinate and deliver the Government's legislative agenda
    - Identify issues and resolve them
    - Bring departments together to broker agreement on difficult decisions or situations

What is the problem?

- **Trends emerge** across bills or over time, and groups of parliamentarians will join forces to put pressure on Government. All of these impact the Government's ability to deliver legislation and reactive responses.
- There is little to **no experience or institutional memory** in Whitehall for managing Government legislation.
- There is **pressure** on a small group of civil servants and ministers to know whether issues have emerged in the past, who the pressure came from, whether Government needed to respond, and how.
- There is **significant information** in the public domain that Government could use in order to **strategically manage** its legislative agenda.

How can you help?

- Whitehall has to **manually check** what parties MPs and Peers belong to - are the Government, Opposition etc.
- They also have to **research** whether those MPs/Peers have garnered support in the past, and what happened.
- Trends are **not tracked on a systematic basis**. But we know that they are there e.g. China (organ donation procurement, human rights, students) has come up on three bills this session but we know it can come up again.
- By tracking trends, as well as which MPs/Peers have tabled amendments and whether or not they have been successful, Government will be able to **proactively respond** and therefore **better manage** its legislative programme in Parliament.

Background

- Parliament tends to last up to 5 years with parliamentarians often serving for multiple terms. Each Parliament is typically broken down into 5 one-year sessions.
- Government will have 20-40 bills in any given session, and their subject matter will widely vary.
- MPs and Peers are clever in getting areas they care about into legislation.
- There is a high turnover of staff working on legislation, with teams typically working on 1-2 bills only
- Strategic management relies on a small team identifying trends they see. That team does not have institutional memory and has to rely on another small team who has anecdotal evidence. The response is therefore sporadic.
- Parliamentarians will table amendments to bills; some will regularly table and gather support, others will rarely table but still garner support e.g. Lord Dubs will always table amendments regarding child refugees which leads to a Government response.