

TOMORROW'S TECH From fitness tracking sleepwear to dog bark translators we reveal what tech will soon rule your life

Boss of London firm The Next Best Thing, William Higham, says one day we will be talking to our pets like Dr Dolittle, eating insects instead of meat and wearing 'smart pyjamas'

By Mike Ridley

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COMMENT NOW

MANY of us fear the future – but not William Higham. It is his business.

Some of the world's biggest companies turn to him to find out how we will be living our lives in years to come.



William Higham, boss of London firm The Next Best Thing, predicts the future will see us talking to our pets just like in Dr Dolittle

William, 53, boss of London firm Next Big Thing, is the joint author of a mind-blowing new report for Amazon looking at products of the future.

He predicts that we will be talking to pets like Dr Dolittle, eating insects instead of meat and wearing “smart pyjamas”.

Here, he reveals just some of the things we will ALL be doing soon... and how the innovations will make our lives easier.



Smart Walls

WE are living longer and our homes are smaller, so a housing solution could be to make them adaptable.

University labs are already creating a thick wall covering with the consistency similar to Play-Doh.

This new material is so soft you can put your hands into the wall and pull it down to create a table or even a bed.

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The material will go hard but then you can put it back into the wall.

And say goodbye to weekends spent painting. Your walls could soon be made up of thousands of LED lights that can be controlled via a computer to change the colour of your room at the press of a button.

And “smart walls” may even help your love life. In the past, you used to invite a partner round to your flat and impress them with your record or book collection. Now those collections are all on your laptop or phone.

But I can see a time coming soon when you will put them all on a large LCD computer screen on the wall for others to browse your iTunes or Kindle.

And don't despair if you smash your favourite vase. With the cost of 3D printers predicted to drop, every home will have one to repair any object that gets broken.

Insects for Food

YOU are more likely to find insects on your plate than steak in the near future.

The planet has more mouths to feed – 9billion by 2050 – but we can't raise more cattle because we don't have enough land.

If people do not want to live on a veg-only diet, we will have to look elsewhere for our protein.



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Large companies including Pepsico are already researching insect-based snacks, which taste a bit like whitebait. There are even granola bars made from creepy crawlies.

And Japanese designers have developed new cutlery to help with - preparing and eating insects.

The five-piece Bugbug range, currently in the prototype phase, includes two sets of spear-ended chopsticks of different lengths, a paddle for crushing and scooping, and a short-tined fork.

There is also a set of beak pincers that fit over the diner's thumb and middle finger, so you can pick your food up.

END OF CASH



HARD currency will no longer be king.

Companies such as Visa will win and cash will vanish, just like cheques.

PayPal will become the leading payment system.

Smart Sleepwear

QUALITY of sleep is much more important now because we are kipping for less time.

Soon we will be wearing “smart sleepwear” pyjamas with inbuilt monitors that can improve our slumber.



5

The future will see us wearing ‘smart sleepwear’ pyjamas with inbuilt monitors that can improve our slumber

Fitness trackers will be smaller so they can be implanted into our bodies to monitor our health.

Our diets will be based on our blood samples and DNA, meaning the tradition of eating the same family meal at the dinner table could become a thing of the past.

INTELLIGENT TOYS



FORGET teddy bears and plastic cars.

Soon, dolls with artificial intelligence will be on every kid's shopping list.

These toys will have an almost unlimited vocabulary so they can behave like a human friend – or even a teacher.

Animal Translator

WE will all become a nation of animal whisperers in the future.

The technology is already here for us to translate English into foreign languages, but in five to ten years there will be an electronic device that can translate your dog's barks.

Con Slobodchikoff, a professor at North Arizona University, has been doing research on how prairie dogs communicate.



5

One day soon you may be communicating with your dog via a collar similar to the one in Disney Pixar's film *Up*

Using artificial intelligence to analyse their barks, he has discovered they can create complicated messages like "there's a tall human coming over the hill wearing yellow".

We are not far away from creating an electronic gadget for our own pets.

Just like Dug in Disney Pixar's film *Up*, whose collar translates his thoughts, a pet will be able to tell owners if it doesn't want to go out or would prefer chicken for dinner.

The device would translate their barks into English and you could reply by speaking into the translator and your words would come out as barks.

The technology is there, and it will happen.

[Amazon.co.uk/shopthefuture](https://www.amazon.co.uk/shopthefuture)