

£213 million UK Government funding to help UK scientists

- Scottish science facilities to share £213 million UK Government investment
- The funding will enable researchers to respond to global challenges such as Covid-19 and climate change
- Part of the UK Government's flagship R&D Roadmap which committed to making the UK the best place in the world for scientists and researchers to live and work

The UK Government has today (Wednesday 6 Jan) announced a major £213 million government investment to upgrade the UK's scientific infrastructure, with Scottish facilities to benefit.

The investment will equip the UK's leading scientists, universities and research institutes with new state of the art equipment to drive forward exceptional research that will help the UK respond to major challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic and achieving net zero carbon emissions.

The £213 million pot includes £27 million for upgrading and purchasing core equipment for the use of researchers across the UK.

The Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) will receive a £20 million investment to upgrade campus infrastructure at its sites in Edinburgh, Oxford, Liverpool City Region and North Yorkshire. This will enable the Council to continue developing flagship projects covering a range of topics, from pre-launch satellite testing to the search for dark matter.

The STFC will receive a further £10 million for laboratory upgrades to support the scientific programmes across laboratories in Edinburgh, Oxfordshire, Liverpool, and North Yorkshire. Investments will enable projects including quantum physics with ultra-cold atoms, artificial intelligence and pre-launch satellite testing.

Medical Research Centre units in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee will share £2.8 million to buy high spec equipment such as microscopes and key computational resources to support Covid-19 research, and long-term programmes in cell biology, human genomics, and wider virology.

This will enable researchers to detect and model disease in more detail than ever before, helping the UK respond to Covid-19 and boosting resilience for future pandemics, as well as other global diseases, such as cancer and dementia.

£34 million will go to upgrading the UK's digital research capabilities, enabling some of the country's brightest minds to conduct pioneering analytical research that will help inform long term policy decisions. Urban data centres in Glasgow, Liverpool and Oxford will share more than £1 million for new hardware to pursue research that will show how Covid-19 has affected

social and economic activity in different parts of the UK.

Meanwhile, the University of Essex will be backed to conduct a large-scale household survey to understand how the pandemic has affected issues such as home schooling and family relationships.

The funding package also allocates £15 million for the Capability for Collections Fund (CapCo) to renew and upgrade the most vulnerable research facilities across the UK within galleries, libraries, archives and museums. It will focus on conservation and heritage, modernising these spaces which will help serve local communities for generations.

The investment will ensure the UK is the best place in the world for scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs to live and work, while continuing to attract scientific talent from across the globe.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

The response from UK scientists and researchers to coronavirus has been nothing short of phenomenal. We need to match this excellence by ensuring scientific facilities are truly world class, so scientists can continue carrying out life-changing research for years to come.

From the world's most detailed microscopes tracking disease to super computers supporting COVID-19 research, our investment will enhance the tools available to our most ambitious innovators across Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. By doing so, scientists and researchers will be able to drive forward extraordinary research that will enable the UK to respond to global challenges as we build back better from the pandemic.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

The UK Government is committed to supporting Scotland's world-leading scientists and researchers so their hard work can continue to improve lives in the years ahead.

The strength of our Union and the role of the UK Treasury is driving forward pioneering research that will deliver for the whole of the United Kingdom, helping us to respond to huge challenges, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change.

The £213 million investment, delivered through the government's World Class Labs funding scheme and made through seven of UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) research councils, covers investments in all disciplines from physical sciences to arts and humanities.

Professor Ottoline Leyser, Chief Executive of UKRI said:

Research and innovation infrastructure is key to delivering the Government's R&D Roadmap, with some of the most innovative ideas with transformative R&D potential requiring people to have access to world-leading infrastructure, including national research facilities, equipment and instrumentation, networks of technologies and digital infrastructures, and knowledge-based resources such as collections and museums.

World-leading infrastructure will help to bring together talent from the public and private sectors and across disciplines to tackle society's most complex challenges. It will act as a magnet for international talent and users, contribute to local and national economies, and generate knowledge and capability critical to UK policy, security and wellbeing. It will also ensure the UK is the world's most innovative economy by promoting investment in science, research and innovation.

The funding forms part of a £300 million commitment to upgrade scientific infrastructure across the UK, made by Business Secretary Alok Sharma, as part of the government's ambitious R&D Roadmap published in July 2020.