

Gove tours Edinburgh's National Robotarium to see levelling up and scientific innovation in action

Secretary of State for Levelling Up Michael Gove today (24 February 2022) toured a state-of-the-art research facility for robotics and artificial intelligence in Edinburgh, which is backed by £21 million in UK government funding.

Mr Gove saw some of the innovative research projects being developed at the National Robotarium including a demonstration from the facility's resident robot dogs. These four-legged robots will be used to support people working in hazardous environments like energy inspection and disaster recovery as well as making the construction process safer, more efficient, and sustainable.

The funding, which is provided through the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal with an additional £1.4 million from the Scottish Government, is supporting the National Robotarium to create cutting-edge solutions to many of the challenges we face in everyday life.

Examples of projects include the development of a train cleaning robot that can complement existing staff while reducing health risks, a robotic coach to aid the process of long-term rehabilitation after stroke, and underwater robots to support safer inspection and repair of offshore wind turbines. Mr Gove also heard more about the facility's growing partnerships with industry, healthcare organisations and its support for entrepreneurship.

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Michael Gove MP said:

Levelling up is a shared endeavour across the United Kingdom. To succeed, we have to work together. We can see here in Edinburgh what we can achieve when governments, local authorities, partners from academia and private sector come together to deliver real results.

The National Robotarium is the perfect example of what is possible when we work together, and it has been fantastic to see some of the innovative projects being developed here that genuinely have the potential to change people's lives for the better.

Based at Heriot-Watt University's Edinburgh campus, the new facility is due to be completed this year, bringing with it jobs and prosperity to the region.

The Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal draws on a combined total of £600 million in funding from both Scottish and UK governments to

invest in projects over a 15 year period focussing on research, employability and skills, transport, culture and housing.

Heriot-Watt University Vice Principal, Professor Mark Biggs said:

Backed by the combined experience of Heriot-Watt and the University of Edinburgh, we're demonstrating how Scotland and the UK can lead global developments in robotics and AI, pushing the boundaries of what's possible and addressing some of industry and societies biggest challenges.

We look forward to working closely with governments to ensure the National Robotarium makes a positive impact by accelerating growth, attracting investment and acting as a catalyst for entrepreneurship and job creation.

This comes less than a month after the UK government set out an ambitious plan to level up the whole of the United Kingdom. In addition to existing City Region and City and Growth Deals, our Levelling Up White Paper set up further plans to harness innovation, including £100 million in funding to set up three innovation accelerators across the UK, including one in Glasgow. These will create "Silicon Valley" set ups which will harness research and development in the area.

We have already seen investment as part of the UK government suite of levelling up funds. £1.7 billion was invested throughout the UK in round one of the Levelling Up Fund including £172 million on 8 projects in Scotland.

While in Edinburgh, Mr Gove, who is also the UK government Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, also visited the flagship UK Government Hub in Edinburgh, Queen Elizabeth House, and spoke at the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and Improvement Service Annual Conference 2022. He also appeared before the Finance and Public Administration Committee of the Scottish Parliament.

The National Robotarium is a world-leading research facility for robotics and artificial intelligence, the largest and most advanced of its type in the UK.

Opening on Heriot-Watt University's Edinburgh Campus in 2022, the purpose-built building will have unrivalled facilities, adding high precision manufacturing and dedicated laser labs to existing laboratories in ocean systems, human-robotic interaction and assisted living.

Home to world-leading experts in data analytics, the National Robotarium is exploring collaborative interaction between humans, robots and their environments, translating cutting-edge research into new technologies, underpinned by an ethical approach.