

# News story: Funding awarded to help UK science centres increase visitor numbers and engagement with science

Science Minister Jo Johnson and Wellcome have announced £13 million of funding for science centres, through a new fund to encourage more of the public to engage with STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) learning.

The funding has been awarded through the Inspiring Science Fund, a partnership between the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and Wellcome. The awards will enable the centres from England, Scotland and Northern Ireland to reinvigorate their visitor experience, develop new STEM learning activities and develop business models that will provide long-term financial sustainability for the centres.

The fund is part of the government's [Industrial Strategy](#) to encourage more young people to consider STEM careers, and create a strong skills system to ensure the UK has the necessary experts to continue being a global leader in science.

Universities and Science Minister Jo Johnson said:

Exhibitions are often our first experience of science and have a vital role in bringing the subject to life to encourage more young people to embrace science and engineering careers.

This fund will provide vital support to help centres across the UK attract a new audience, supporting our Industrial Strategy to increase the diversity in the science sector and ensure we have the technical skills for the future.

Simon Chaplin, Director of Culture and Society at Wellcome, said:

Wellcome believes that everyone should have the opportunity to explore, debate and shape research. Science centres across the UK provide welcoming spaces that ignite curiosity and enable visitors to explore the role of science in culture.

We are delighted to be supporting the creation of exciting and inclusive new science experiences as well as helping to sustain these science centres for the future.

The successful centres in this first round of funding are:

- At-Bristol
- Aberdeen Science Centre
- International Centre for Life (Newcastle)
- Thinktank (Birmingham)
- W5 (Belfast)

The fund aims to support centres to better understand the needs of under-served and under-represented audiences, and deliver STEM learning that is accessible and enticing for all. All 5 successful applicants presented innovative plans to connect with audiences who don't currently visit science centres or engage with STEM learning:

- Working with community partners across the city, At Bristol's Curious City is an exhibition where the design and experiences are based on science questions gathered from the diverse communities of Bristol
- International Centre for Life's Creative Explorations will combine new interactive exhibitions, a regional outreach programme and 3 pilot engagement projects to work closely with underserved communities, supported by an over-arching organisational review
- Thinktank will develop a new, 1000m<sup>2</sup> interactive gallery for under 8s to explore, play and learn in a STEM-based dynamic learning environment, reaching new audiences and promoting emotional, intellectual and physical wellbeing; this will be supported by a programme of community co-production and early years research
- Aberdeen Science Centre will transform the UK's most northerly science centre into a future-looking hub; it will be accessible for all, for learning and discovery inspired by life-long journeys with science through play, education, daily life and engagement with topical issues
- In Belfast, W5 will create new immersive exhibition areas and experiences where visitors can become fully absorbed and engaged; new approaches to technology will enable dynamic new content and create more flexibility in how the space can be used