[News story: Wales and South West England's joint innovation strengths highlighted in a new index produced by Data City](#)

A new [UK Tech Innovation Index available today](#)(6 June) shows that South Wales and the South West of England have significant strengths across a range of sectors including AI and Data, Clean Growth, Advanced Manufacturing and Ageing Society.

The index, produced by Data City also illustrates for the first time a significant overlap of activity clusters between the regions, with Bristol, Cardiff and Newport showing especially strong links to each other.

The index shows the most active innovation communities in the UK by categories, captured in an [online map](#). It goes beyond standard pre-determined geographies, enabling it to reveal previously unseen vital business and academic links across cities and county boundaries, and demonstrating that innovation communities are often made up of groups of cities or conurbations.

Wales and the South West of England tend to produce significantly overlapping clusters across the whole index. The cluster around Bristol, Cardiff and Newport ranks 5th overall representing 5% of all activity in the UK, with a strong contribution from business activity.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

> This report demonstrates the value of the connectivity which is already underway between South Wales and the South West.
>
> In Bristol, Newport and Cardiff we have thriving digital and advanced manufacturing sectors, and our universities and higher education institutions have strong connections with industry and business on both sides of the Severn.
>
> By abolishing tolls on the Severn Crossings by the end of this year, not only will regular commuters generate annual savings of around £1,400 but we will witness the expansion of this already flourishing growth corridor spanning South Wales to Bristol and beyond.
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> The Severn Crossings will no longer be a barrier to cross-border economic growth, but will represent a positive symbol for economic vibrancy flowing both ways between South Wales and the South West of England.

The top 10 overall clusters across all sectors are shown below, including the percentage of activity in the UK as a whole:

Top 10 clusters and activity percentage

1. London, Luton (21.5%)
2. Birmingham, Coventry (7.3%)
3. Manchester, Stoke, Burnley (6.4%)
4. Reading, Aldershot, Slough (5.0%)
5. Bristol, Cardiff, Newport (5.0%)
6. Oxford, Northampton, Milton Keynes (4.7%)
7. Leicester, Nottingham (4.7%)
8. Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford, Barnsley, Huddersfield, Wakefield (4.7%)
9. Romford, Dartford (4.0%)
10. Edinburgh, Dundee (3.9%)

This new index has also been developed using not just business activity, but the influence, specialisms and location of universities and other academic institutions, and the concentration of events and networking opportunities in an area.

The index is published by Data City (thedatacity.com), with support from the Open Data Institute (ODI). The project is part of the ODI's innovation programme, a three-year, £6m programme to support and build upon the UK's strengths in data and data analytics, funded by Innovate UK, the UK's innovation agency.

Tom Forth, Head of Data at ODI Leeds, who led the project, explains how it is different from other pieces of innovation research. He says:

> With this index, we are providing an evidence base for better-informed decisions within the UK Government and beyond, and are sharing many of our methods and documenting the datasets we use so that others can benefit from them.
>
> Our new approach covers more of the UK, and by using many times more data points we have found and measured more clusters of innovation, and more of them away from cities. With millions of rows of data, and thousands more rows being added every week, we no longer classify businesses and events by hand, we use machine-learning techniques instead. We are also explaining what would be possible if more data were available to us in the future, in the hope that it will be.
>
> We believe this information will help private investors looking to invest in companies, existing businesses looking to expand, national government departments looking to assign investment and local and regional governments looking to assign funding locally or make a case for inward investment to their regions.

Jeni Tennison, CEO at the Open Data Institute, said:

> This new index gives a bird's eye view of innovation networks across the UK in 2018, providing not only an interactive online tool but regularly updated open datasets that others can use and explore.
>
> The index can be used to inform policy makers, investors and businesses about innovation across the UK, showing where there are active tech communities in different sectors, and where there are gaps. It also demonstrates how new sources of data can be brought together to cast a different light on innovation in the UK. By making the methodology and data open, we hope others can build on this work.

To read the index in full, [visit the Data City website.](#)