

Projects to heat homes through disused mines and faster offshore wind farm construction win government backing

- 17 research projects across the UK will receive up to £50,000 each to drive local economic growth, provide skills training and create high-value jobs
- projects include accelerating building of offshore wind farms in the South West, digitising construction sites in the North East, and creating low carbon heat from disused mines in Glasgow
- funding forms part of government plans to power up the country's economic recovery through research and development

Ambitious research and innovation projects across the UK will today (Tuesday 11 August) receive up to £50,000 each of government funding, supporting their aim to create high value jobs, upskill local workers and boost economic growth.

The 17 projects, running from Glasgow and Belfast, through to Nottingham and parts of Cornwall, will help the UK to respond to some of the world's most pressing challenges – from climate change to the production of medicines.

Projects include heating homes and businesses in Glasgow using energy from disused mines, digitising the UK construction sector so it is safer and more productive, researching quicker ways of diagnosing cancer, and accelerating building of large scale offshore wind farms in the South West of England.

Through the second round of UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) flagship [Strength in Places Fund](#), each project will be able to apply for a further longer-term investment of £10-50 million later this year if the early stages of development are successful.

It follows the announcement by the government in June this year of the first wave of the fund, which saw 7 projects across the UK benefit from over £400 million of government and industry funding to develop their research and innovation projects.

One of these projects, Artemis Technologies, led a consortium that was awarded £33 million to develop zero emissions ferries in Northern Ireland – a project which will be viewed first-hand by Business Secretary Alok Sharma during a visit to Belfast today. At the site in Belfast Harbour, the Business Secretary is expected to meet with partners of the project to hear how it plans to establish Belfast as a global leader in zero emissions maritime technology.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

We are backing our innovators and with the support they need to turn great ideas into first-class industries, products and technologies.

From virtual construction projects to extracting clean heat from disused mines, the pioneering projects we are funding today will help create jobs and boost skills across the UK as we continue to drive forward our economic recovery.

The projects

Projects each receiving up to £50,000 of early stage government funding include:

HotScot, led by the University of Strathclyde

HotScot will provide low-cost, low carbon heat to Scottish homes and businesses by extracting energy from disused, flooded mines in Glasgow. By overseeing 3 new geothermal minewater projects, the consortium aims to deliver economic growth equivalent to £303 million and around 9,800 jobs across the Central Belt of Scotland

South West Floating Offshore Wind Accelerator, led by the offshore renewable energy research company Wave Hub

This will build on Cornwall and Plymouth's world-renowned excellence in offshore renewables business and research, to fast track the building of large-scale floating offshore wind farms in the Celtic Sea from 2025 onwards. This will enable the region to make a decisive contribution to Britain's offshore wind target of 40 gigawatts by 2030, and also target a five-fold increase in Britain's offshore wind exports

The International Centre for Connected Construction, led by Northumbria University

This project will bring together experts from industry, academia and the public sector to create, test, and bring to market new technologies involving 3D modelling, smart cities and cloud computing. This will help engineers to tackle potential problems before building has even begun, ultimately speeding up construction and improving safety on building sites. The project aims to create 500 jobs across the North East, making the construction industry cleaner, safer, and more productive

Trans-Mid, led by the University of Nottingham

Trans-Mid will partner universities with transport technology businesses, as well as local suppliers to the vehicle, aerospace and rail industries to develop new green products, with the aim of establishing the Midlands as a supercluster for net zero transport. The project will form part of the UK's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050, creating thousands of new and

upskilled jobs.

The Northern Ireland Precision Biomarkers and Therapeutics Consortium, a consortium led by Queen's University Belfast

This project bring partners from industry and academia together to develop new, more cost-effective targeted drugs and antibodies, as well as researching new, quicker ways of diagnosing cancer. The long term aim is to attract and secure highly-skilled jobs to the region while making Northern Ireland's life and health science sector more productive.

Today's funding forms part of the government's ambitious commitment to increase public spending in research and development (R&D) by £22 billion by 2024/25, putting the UK on track to reach 2.4% of GDP being spent on R&D across the UK economy by 2027.

It also follows the publication of the government's [R&D roadmap](#) last month, which sets out plans to drive the country's economic recovery through research and development and level up UK regions.

Notes to editors

Applications for the second wave of the Strength in Places Fund closed in October 2019. The winning projects will be awarded between £10 million and £50 million and is expected to be announced in Spring 2021.

The Strength in Places Fund is a UKRI flagship competitive funding scheme that takes a place-based approach to research and innovation funding to support significant local economic growth. The fund supports collaborative bids from local consortia including both businesses and research organisations, with strong engagement from local leadership partners and alignment with local economic plans.

The Strength in Places Fund is delivered by UKRI in partnership with: