

Vaccine-carrying drones and self-driving cars: government fund backs cutting-edge innovation

- Multi-million government fund backs local authorities and regulators that are helping businesses to unleash innovation across the UK
- 21 initiatives backed by latest round of Regulators' Pioneer Fund includes the development of standards for drones to carry medical supplies
- Business Minister Lord Callanan: These projects will help bring benefits to British businesses and consumers alike

Regulators are clearing the runway for drones to transport vaccines and other live-saving drugs, in a ground-breaking venture funded by government.

The project, to be run by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), is one of [21 bold new initiatives](#) backed by the government's Regulators' Pioneer Fund to propel cutting-edge innovation across the UK.

The Fund supports projects led by regulators and local authorities that help support the country's regulatory environment to keep pace with technological advances of the future – benefiting both entrepreneurs and consumers.

Using its grant, the CAA will develop world-first standards for special containers that will allow drones to safely carry sensitive goods like medical products, so that remote communities can access critical supplies without delay. At present, there is no regime anywhere in the world for testing and approving these containers to make sure that they do not leak even in the event of a crash.

The aviation regulator has also received money to create a service for the public to report safety concerns about drones, while Oxfordshire County Council has won funding to help innovators understand their legal requirements when setting up new trials in the drone industry.

Business Minister Lord Callanan said:

Good regulation should spur entrepreneurship, not stand in its way, and this Fund will keep the UK at the cutting-edge of innovation.

The projects we are supporting could pave the way for exciting developments across a range of sectors, from drone technology to healthcare, all of which will bring benefits to British businesses and consumers alike.

In total, 21 projects received a share of £3.7 million of funding, and

winning projects include:

- Oxfordshire County Council – in collaboration with the Met Office, Ordnance Survey, and others – received £198,000 to develop a tool to help self-driving car developers know when they can conduct trials
- The Health and Safety Executive received £198,000 for a project to support construction companies to share information about dangerous incidents to help prevent injuries
- Cornwall Council received £200,000 to improve the monitoring of harmful algal blooms that can enter the food chain through shellfish, leading to sickness and product recalls
- The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency received £200,000 for a hub bringing together businesses and regulators in the Grangemouth Industrial cluster to move towards a net zero economy

This investment comes on top of the £10 million awarded by the Fund from 2018 to 2020, which saw approximately £700,000 provided to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency to develop synthetic datasets, supporting the development of cutting-edge medical technologies to fight coronavirus (COVID-19) and cardiovascular disease.

The Fund is part of wider government work on regulation. This includes the recent [Reforming the Framework for Better Regulation consultation](#) and the Better Regulation Committee, chaired by the Chancellor, which is driving an ambitious reform agenda to ensure the UK's regulatory framework is fit for purpose and delivers the government's strategic objectives.

The funding was awarded following an assessment process conducted earlier this year. The full list of winning applicants in this round of funding, subject to agreement of contracts, are:

- The Care Quality Commission received £169,000 to support innovation by GPs to reduce health inequalities in areas of deprivation, through better regulatory recognition and sharing of best practice
- The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) received £55,000 to trial the use of special containers to allow drones to carry sensitive goods such as medical samples
- The CAA also received £198,000 to look at options for creating a service that would allow drone owners and the general public to report safety concerns for investigation
- Cornwall Council received £198,000 to improve monitoring of harmful algal blooms that can enter the food supply chain through shellfish causing illness and necessitating product recalls
- The Costs Lawyer Standards Board received £58,000 to conduct a research project aimed at exploring potential ways to reduce the cost of legal services
- The Drinking Water Inspectorate received £170,000 to create a one-stop-shop with Ofwat and the Environment Agency to make it easier for innovators to obtain advice on navigating regulatory barriers in the water and sewerage industry
- The Environment Agency received £175,000 to help design systems to support sustainable economic growth within the Tees valley Freeport

- The Environment Agency has received £195,000 to standardise environmental metrics for food businesses that go beyond legal baselines
- The Greater London Authority received £200,000 to research potential regulatory changes to support collaborative streetworks across the UK's utility companies
- The Health and Safety Executive received £198,000 to develop proposals to increase data-sharing in the construction sector, to help prevent injuries
- The Information Commissioner's office received £182,000 to develop new regulatory guidance and host a series of 'techsprints' to improve businesses' confidence around the use of privacy-enhancing technologies.
- The Information Commissioner's office also received £187,000 to build a case for a direct advice service to innovators on the data protection implications of their new ideas
- The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency received £194,000 to research how adaptive AI algorithms in medical devices change and how to regulate their decisions
- The Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult and National Institute for Biological Standards and Control received £200,000 for a collaboration aimed at harmonising the measurements used for Adeno-associated virus (AAV) Gene Therapy
- Oxfordshire County Council – in collaboration with the Met Office, Ordnance Survey, Warwick Manufacturing Group and National Physical Laboratory – received £198,000 to develop a tool to help self-driving car developers know when they can conduct trials
- Oxfordshire County Council also received £169,000 to enable trials of drones by establishing a framework for understanding legal compliance requirements
- The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency received £200,000 for a hub bringing together businesses and regulators in the Grangemouth Industrial cluster to move towards a net zero economy
- The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency also received £200,000 to develop a one-stop-shop Knowledge Hub to address regeneration challenges
- The Security Industry Authority received £192,000 to improve interactions between the regulator and businesses that need to vet private security contractors
- The Solicitors Regulation Authority received £167,000 to address regional inequalities in access to justice, by demonstrating the feasibility of new legal technology tools
- West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service received £195,000 to build a web-based 'Fire Safety Awareness Tool' for businesses