

Wales's most promising scientists awarded £3.5m in UK Government Funding to bring pioneering ideas to market

- Wales's most promising future science leaders are being backed through £3.5 million UK Government investment to turn novel science innovations into a reality
- Successful projects in Wales include tackling conditions such as Parkinson's Disease and climate change-resistant crops.
- Investment is part of the government's bold ambition to build back better through innovative science and research, establishing the UK as global science superpower

Pioneering researchers in Wales will benefit from a £3.5 million cash boost to convert their innovative ideas to transformational products and services, the UK Government announced today (Thursday 15 October).

Tackling some of the world's greatest challenges, including climate change and terminal disease, one hundred of the UK's up and coming scientists and researchers will receive a share of over £109 million to develop their "blue sky" solutions to global issues such as food supply, cancer diagnosis and dementia treatment.

The investment will enable the most promising scientists and researchers in Wales and across the UK, from Edinburgh to Exeter, to fund vital equipment and researcher wages, to help drive forward their studies at speed.

Among the next generation of UK science leaders in Wales being backed today include Dr Dayne Beccano-Kelly, at Cardiff University. He will explore new ways to identify and treat Parkinson's Disease, the second-most common neurodegenerative disorder, by spotting early changes in how neurons in the brain are functioning and then developing new drug treatments to prevent or slow the progress of the disease.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

It is our ambition to establish the UK as global science superpower by backing our best and brightest researchers.

Wales has a rich history in scientific discovery, and has given the world the first mail order shopping, fuel cells and even the mathematical symbol for Pi – created by Anglesey's own William Jones. By backing these inspirational Future Leaders Fellows, we are ensuring that Wales remains an innovation hub, helping our next generation of science leaders turn their brilliant ideas into vital products and services that will change all our lives for the better.

Another project receiving funding is being led by Dr Andrew Lloyd, at the University of Aberystwyth, who aims to develop the high nutrition, climate ready and disease resistant crops needed to meet future food needs by drawing on the disease resistance and stress tolerance of living wild crop relatives.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

I'm thrilled to see the UK Government backing scientists in Wales as we look to build back better through research and innovation.

This support means that pioneering research and ideas can be developed into products and services that will potentially benefit millions. Work like Dr Beccano-Kelly's research at Cardiff University into treatment for Parkinson's Disease show how much scientific talent Wales possesses and this funding will help ensure it remains an innovation hub.

UK Research and Innovation Chief Executive, Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser, said:

Future Leaders Fellowships provide researchers and innovators with freedom and support to drive forward transformative new ideas and the opportunity to learn from peers right across the country.

The fellows announced today illustrate how the UK continues to support and attract talented researchers and innovators across every discipline to our universities and businesses, with the potential to deliver change that can be felt across society and the economy.

The UK Government has committed over £900 million to its Future Leader Fellowship initiative over three years, which is being delivered through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

The work of the fellows will be central to the UK Government's ambition for the UK to become a world leading science superpower, set out in its ambitious R&D Roadmap in July this year.

The funding committed to the fellows forms part of the UK Government's 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.

Sellafield Ltd investment in education and skills

News story

A national event featuring key business, government and political figures provided the company with the opportunity to share how we are creating positive legacy's in our communities.



In January 2019, new state of the art facilities were opened as part of the 'Campus Whitehaven' project.

The 2020 Great Northern Conference covered topics that have an impact on the economic prosperity of the economy such as health, digitisation and transport.

Education and skills were another key theme with a panel discussion including our Head of Community and Development, Jamie Reed who took to the main stage (virtually) to discuss how 'we ensure communities are set up to thrive in the future.

Jamie emphasised the leadership shown by Sellafield Ltd in this area over several years and illustrated the importance for our business and mission in being able to access people with the right skills and education, for us to succeed in our mission of unique national importance that is set to continue for decades to come.

Meanwhile, over several number of years, we have been working with local partners to drive local economic growth through education, skills and innovation.

Jamie said:

Our work in this area is a joint approach the NDA, our supply chain, employers and schools to raise attainment and aspiration so that opportunities are accessible to all in the community

regardless of any disadvantages they face.

We have a whole range of skills development and opportunities in West Cumbria including buildings and education resources that train students from early teenage years to PHD level.

We also have a University Technical College in Cumbria and Warrington focused on engineering, an apprentice training centre, a National College for Nuclear and we've played a crucial role in the development of 2 new schools.

Jamie highlighted our recent £1.7million investment in the Western Excellence in Learning and Leadership (WELL) Project designed to raise education attainment in every West Cumbrian school.

He said:

Our partnership approach is key to supporting skills and education requirements for children and adults of all ages, and I would be delighted to see other businesses across the country following our example and developing similar innovative solutions to benefit communities right across the north.

To deliver our company's mission while helping the community build a sustainable and diverse economy, we need strong education attainment, and we are playing our part to raise standards, close the attainment gap and promote healthy lifestyles.

This benefits the business and our local communities – at Sellafeld Ltd, doing good is good business.

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Defence Secretary reaffirms UK commitment to leadership on Euro-Atlantic security at NATO Defence Ministerial

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and his counterparts held discussions on fairer burden-sharing across the alliance, strengthening NATO's deterrence and defence posture and the NATO missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The two-day meeting also provided the Defence Secretary with the opportunity to update Allies on various aspects of the UK's continued commitment and offering to NATO.

Recent weeks have seen the UK's Carrier Strike Group, featuring vessels from the USA and the Netherlands, assemble for the first time and contribute to the UK-led NATO exercise Joint Warrior in the North Sea.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

The UK's leading role in NATO and our reputation as a trusted ally of choice is one of the foundations upon which our status as a global military power is built.

I was pleased to update my counterparts on one of the latest examples of our leadership; the success of the new UK Carrier Strike Group, which sailed for the first time as part of a 6,000-person, 28-ship-strong major NATO exercise in the UK earlier this month.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace underlined to Allies that the UK remained committed to playing a leading role in the Alliance, to staying above the 2% GDP commitment and increasing UK defence spending in real terms each year, and to supporting its ongoing adaptation to better face the threats of tomorrow.

Mr Wallace welcomed NATO's ongoing adaptation across new domains, including the announcement of the establishment of a NATO Space Centre at Allied Air Command in Rammstein, Germany. This follows the agreement made at last year's London Leaders' Meeting in which space was declared a new domain of operations.

Despite the financial pressures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, NATO is expected in 2020 to benefit from a sixth consecutive year of increased defence spending by European Allies and Canada. The Defence Secretary joined NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in calling for Allies to maintain this positive momentum.

The Defence Ministerial also provided the Defence Secretary with the opportunity to consult with his counterparts on the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, to which the UK contributes 750 people, and to agree on next steps for the non-combat NATO Mission Iraq. The Defence Secretary encouraged further engagement between Allies to recognise security concerns in Iraq while ensuring NATO's training mission has a sustainable and long-term future.

Along with other ministers, Mr. Wallace marked the twentieth anniversary of the historic United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), taking stock of progress made so far and

what more needs to be done to ensure the success of the WPS agenda. UNSCR 1325 affirmed that security efforts are better placed when womens' perspectives and contributions are included.

Big broadband boost for Scotland

- New agreement to join up the UK and Scottish Government's broadband voucher schemes to help rural areas get gigabit-capable broadband connections
- £6m to connect hundreds of public sector buildings across Angus, Dundee, and Perth & Kinross

A new collaboration between the Scottish and UK Governments will see voucher funding joined up to make more money available to subsidise the costs of building gigabit-capable broadband networks to hard-to-reach areas of Scotland.

Gigabit-capable broadband enables internet download speeds of up to 1,000 megabits per second (mbps) which is enough to download a HD movie in less than 30 seconds. It has the potential to make rural communities even more attractive places to live by giving people the freedom to work more flexibly and develop thriving digital economies.

The UK Government's Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme targets areas where the cost of building new gigabit broadband infrastructure, which often requires digging trenches to lay full fibre cables to people's doorsteps, is likely to be too high for commercial operators to cover alone.

Since May 2019, vouchers worth up to £3,500 for small and medium sized businesses and up to £1,500 for residential premises have been available to cover these costs across the UK.

The Scottish Government's supplier-led Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme (SBVS) provides people with a voucher worth up to £5,000 to help deliver a permanent broadband connection to properties where there is no roll-out of superfast broadband planned.

To ensure even those in the hardest-to-reach areas of Scotland don't miss out on gigabit-capable broadband, the Scottish Government has teamed up with the UK Government to combine their funding and expand that pot to up to £8,500 for SMEs and up to £6,500 for homes.

The offer means eligible people experiencing the slowest speeds in some of the most remote areas of Scotland will be able to access a voucher that

provides the maximum funding from both schemes.

Ministers from the UK and Scottish governments are now urging businesses and communities to apply to future-proof their internet connections and be ready to reap the economic and social benefits brought by advances in technology.

Matt Warman, UK Government Minister for Digital Infrastructure, said:

This government is determined to connect every home and business to the fastest broadband available. Our new deal with the Scottish Government unlocks extra funding to help rural communities benefit from gigabit-capable connections.

A quarter of all properties across the UK can now access these faster speeds and with more collaboration like this at a local and national level, we will see even more rural towns and villages staking their claim to these next-generation speeds.

Scotland's Connectivity Minister Paul Wheelhouse said:

We have been working closely with the UK Government to join up our respective funds and processes to maximise the impact of our respective voucher schemes across Scotland to add to progress achieved under the Digital Scotland Superfast Programme and augment our investment through our £600 million R100 programme. This collaboration will ensure that more people, communities and businesses in the hardest-to-reach areas in Scotland are able to access maximum funding available for better broadband."

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart, said:

The UK Government has been working closely with the Scottish Government and local authorities to ensure thousands of rural homes and businesses across Scotland have top-of-the-range broadband speeds.

Better connectivity is more important than ever, with many people relying on technology to stay in touch with loved ones and work from home as we navigate the coronavirus pandemic.

I encourage rural homes and businesses across Scotland to use the postcode checker on gov.uk to find out more information.

The move comes as almost £6 million for broadband across the Tay Cities Region is being released through the UK Government's Local Full Fibre Networks programme.

The first part of the project has seen £2.9 million of UK government funding

awarded to BT to connect more than 150 schools, libraries and other public buildings in Angus and Perth & Kinross to gigabit-speed broadband.

This will be followed by further procurements to be completed shortly which will release £2 million to connect around forty public buildings in Dundee and £1 million for thirty more premises in Perth & Kinross.

The Tay Cities project is part of a strategy to bring gigabit-capable connections to publicly owned and community buildings so they act as full fibre 'hubs' off which industry can build their networks to connect surrounding homes and businesses.

Alan Lees, Director of BT's Enterprise unit in Scotland, said:

Our world-class full fibre network will enhance Tayside's connectivity by bringing ultrafast broadband speeds to people and businesses across the region as well as underpinning the roll out of 5G mobile services. Digital technology is transforming every element of the way we live. In a world where everyday life and work increasingly depend on technology, digital skills can be the difference between getting ahead or being left behind.

ENDS

Notes to editors

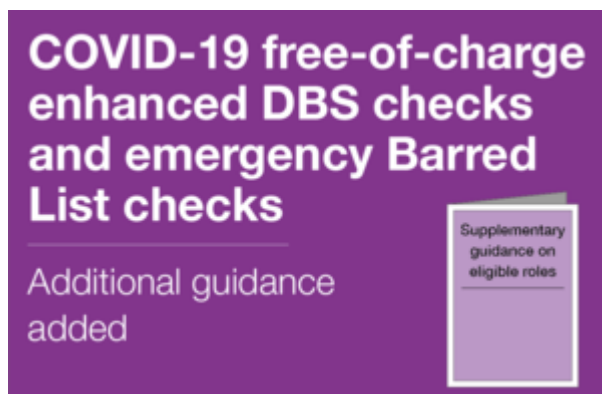
- The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme is a UK-wide, supplier-led scheme offering vouchers used as part of a group project, to pay towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable broadband to rural premises, i.e. homes and businesses, providing speeds of over 1,000 Mbps or 1 Gbps. Beneficiaries do not have to take those speeds and pay only for what they want to use, knowing they can increase them over time. Anyone who is interested uses a postcode checker to find registered suppliers in their area. Their chosen supplier will guide them through the application. For more information and to check eligibility visit: <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>.
- Information on the Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme can be found here: <https://www.scotlandsuperfast.com/how-can-i-get-it/voucher-scheme/>. There is an online checker that will allow any property owner and/or tenant to enter their details and confirm whether or not they are eligible for a voucher through the SBVS.
- Almost 500,000 premises across the UK have been given access to gigabit-capable broadband since summer 2018 through a £1 billion UK Government funding commitment until the end of 2021. Combined with industry investment it means more than 8 million premises can now access gigabit capable broadband compared to around 1.4 million premises two years ago.

On top of this, the government has promised £5 billion to ensure hard-to-reach areas get access to gigabit connections over the next few years. Details on how this will be spent will be announced this autumn.

COVID-19: Additional guidance added

News story

The COVID-19 guidance provides extra information around roles eligible for the free-of-charge enhanced DBS checks and emergency Barred List checks.



The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has published an additional guidance document in relation to the free-of-charge enhanced DBS checks and emergency checks of the Barred Lists, which were introduced as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

The [guidance, which can be found here](#), looks at the circumstances that must be met in order for an individual to be eligible for one of these checks, and provides a number of example scenarios.

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