

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.