

Local Leaders Across UK Nations Granted £30m to Boost Regional Innovation

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Local leaders in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are set to receive at least £30 million each to support innovation and economic growth in their regions. The funding, part of a wider £500 million Local Innovation Partnerships Fund, aims to empower local areas to invest in science, technology, and research that reflects their unique strengths.

The initiative focuses on ten high-potential regions, including Glasgow City Region, Cardiff Capital Region, the Belfast–Derry/Londonderry corridor, and seven locations in England. These areas will work closely with local councils, universities, and business leaders to prioritise investments in key sectors such as artificial intelligence, life sciences, clean energy, and engineering. The intention is to embed research and development at the heart of local economic strategies, creating skilled jobs and boosting private sector investment.

This funding builds on the success of earlier pilot programmes, such as the Innovation Accelerators scheme, which helped Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and Glasgow attract significant private investment and develop new technologies. From faster diagnostics for heart and lung conditions to AI-powered transport systems, the projects have shown the value of place-based innovation led by local expertise.

Unlike previous national strategies that were largely directed from Westminster, this approach puts more control in the hands of regional leaders. The government has said this shift is part of a broader move to ensure public investment aligns more closely with the needs and opportunities of individual communities. Each region will decide how to use its funding based on its existing research strengths, infrastructure and workforce.

The scheme also opens the door for other areas to benefit through a competitive process, with further guidance expected in the coming months. Regions not included in the initial ten will be able to submit bids for funding, ensuring the opportunity for innovation-led growth is spread more widely across the UK.

Sector leaders have welcomed the announcement. Vivienne Stern, Chief Executive of Universities UK, described the fund as a “game-changing opportunity” that could better link university research with local economic priorities and generate long-term benefits for communities.

This move forms part of the government’s wider industrial strategy, which includes reforms to procurement, regional investment, and the integration of research and development into local economic plans. By backing local leadership with long-term funding, the initiative is seen as a step toward unlocking untapped regional potential and driving more balanced economic growth across the UK.