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UK graphene fund is a stepping stone to EU project

£50 million will give tiny leg up

04 Oct 2011 14:56 | by [Matthew Finnegan](#) in London | Filed in [Science](#) [Nokia](#) [European Union](#)

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The government announced a £50 million investment into graphene development.

Chancellor George Osborne outlined plans to create a Graphene Global Research and Technology Hub to commercialise the wonder-material, as part of a wider £200 million investment into science.

Graphene is already sparking experiments into many potential uses, with plenty labs across the world vying to create the first commercialised products from the atom-thick material, first created at the University of Manchester.

Companies such as [Nokia](#) and [Samsung](#) have been keen to stay at the forefront of its potential commercial use, with applications ranging from flexible touchscreens to transistors or superfast internet.

Speaking at the Conservative conference in Manchester, Osborne promised a national research programme to take graphene from the British laboratory to the British factory floor".

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And with the government promising to get the UK producing again, its leading stance in graphene development could provide many potential jobs and other business boosts to the economy.

A plan for support that will push the current research into commercialised production is being looked at by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) alongside the Technology Strategy Board (TSB): The Research Hub will certainly allow us to explore deeper into the vast applied potential of graphene, but also will lead to many new exciting results, continuing the scientific excellence in the UK."

The scientific community has applauded the move to invest in graphene, and is a sign of initial science and engineering funding that has the potential to reap financial benefits for the economy.

One leading graphene expert, Prof Andrea C Ferrari at the [University of Cambridge](#), tells *TechEye* that he welcomes the increase in funding, but pointed out that this is really a preliminary step.

He believes that it is a good starting point, but the main aim at the moment is to secure funding from the EU Graphene Flagship project which has 1 billion available, with individual groups able to apply for up to 100 million.

"£50 million enough to start getting additional investment from the private sector, but it is not necessarily enough for developing commercially," Ferrari told us. The aim of the funding is to bring graphene to market, not just research. It is not as much as some other countries are putting into graphene, but certainly keeps the UK at the forefront of development. It gives a clear signal that the UK is backing graphene, and shows that it is really serious about it. But this investment is a step towards getting the flagship funding."

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