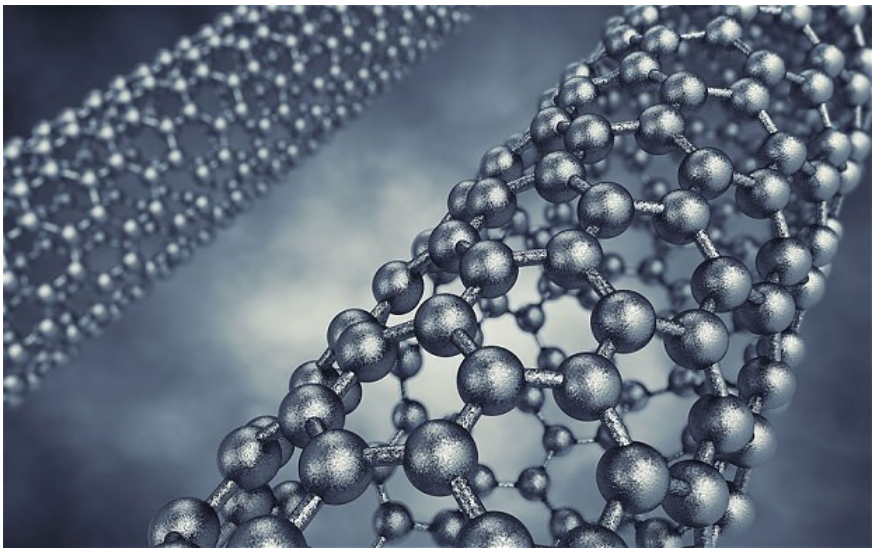
£21.5m government funding to develop 'super-material' graphene

Chancellor George Osborne has announced £21.5 million funding to some of Britain's top universities to develop commercial uses for the "super-material" graphene.



Chancellor George Osborne has announced £21.5 million funding to some of Britain's top universities to develop commercial uses for the "super-material" graphene. Photo: ALAMY

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Manchester University academics Andre Geim and Konstantin Novoselov won the 2010 Nobel Prize in Physics for demonstrating the remarkable properties of graphene - a kind of two-dimensional carbon which is one of the thinnest, lightest, strongest and most conductive materials known to man.

Now it is hoped that the material will be used in a wide array of industrial and everyday applications, delivering potentially lucrative technological breakthroughs in areas ranging from electronics to energy generation and telecommunications.

The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council has identified the most promising graphene-related research projects in British universities to benefit from state funding.

The University of Cambridge has been awarded more than £12 million for research into graphene flexible electronics and opto-electronics, which could include things like touch-screens and other display devices.

London's Imperial College will receive over £4.5 million to investigate aerospace applications of graphene, working with a number of industrial partners including Airbus.

The other successful projects are based at Durham University, the University of Manchester, the University of Exeter and Royal Holloway. The universities will be working with industrial partners including Nokia, BAE Systems, Procter & Gamble, Qinetiq, Rolls-Royce, Dyson, Sharp and Philips Research, which will together bring a further £12 million to the table.

Mr Osborne said: "The Government moved quickly and decisively to make sure this Nobel Prize-winning technology invented here in the UK was also developed here.

"It's exactly what our commitment to science and a proactive industrial strategy is all about - and we've beaten off strong global competition. Now I am glad to announce investment that will help take it from the British laboratory to the British factory floor. This shows that even in tough times we are investing in science which is vital to helping the UK get ahead in the global race."

Universities minister David Willetts said: "Scientists at the University of Manchester won the Nobel Prize for the discovery of graphene. It's now vital we harness the excellent research taking place in our world class institutions to exploit the commercial potential of this astonishing

material.

"This significant investment will support cutting-edge research projects to find everyday uses for graphene. They will foster innovation, drive growth and help the UK get ahead in the global race."