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£21.5m boost for graphene research

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

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 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."

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