

Spacetech, subscription-based phone leases and an immense round for Revolut in this week's MaddyMoney

Every week, Maddyness brings you the latest investment news from the UK startup ecosystem. Here's a recap of this week's investments.

Temps de lecture : minute

16 July 2021

Total

£1B+

Number of deals

28

Mobile phone subscription service raises a further \$11M in Series A

Subscription-based startup, *Raylo* has raised an additional \$11.5M in funding to continue collecting and recycling mobile phones for lease. The London headquartered startup allows customers to lease a smartphone for less than the list price over a 12 or 24 month period. At the end of the period, customers have the option to upgrade the handset. Devices are

then recycled, refurbished and leased to the next customer.

The round was led by *Octopus Ventures* and will be used to expand the staff count and further develop proprietary technologies.

The company currently employs about 30 people across London and Belfast.

Space tech startup raises funding for reusable satellite

Bristol space tech startup, *Space Forge*, has raised an undisclosed amount in seed funding which will be used to drive their mission of building a reusable space satellite.

The round was led by Type One Ventures and Space Fund, alongside several other investors including Newable Ventures, DBW, E2MC, Space.vc, Helios Capital, Virgin Galactic's George T Whiteside, BPEC, and Dylan Taylor of Voyager Space Holdings.

Launched in a garage in 2018, Space Forge operates high cadence operations that can be scaled quickly without the need for astronauts to monitor manufacturing process. The solution will meet the demand for novel materials that benefit from being made in weightlessness, a vacuum, or absolute zero temperatures

The now 15-strong team, based in the new satellite manufacturing facility in Cardiff, aims to deliver the next generation of products that are critical to modern clean society, through space manufacturing.

Growth Director of UK Space Agency, Harshbir Sangha said, "Like many UK space businesses, Space Forge is growing strongly, and this new

investment will drive further growth by helping improve manufacturing processes in Space.”

Diversifying tech: London-based Robin AI secures £1.75M funding to fuel AI-powered contracts

Robin AI, which uses machine learning and human intelligence to automate legal work, has gained £1.75M in funding to continue to simplify tasks in the legal sector.

The round was led by Episode 1, alongside angel investors including former CEO of NPower, Paul Massara, Former Chief Revenue Officer of *Axiom*, Al Giles, and former CEO of Barings Europe, Oliver Burgel.

On top of the funding round, Robin AI will also receive a part of £1.44M funding from Google Black Founders Fund, which supports some chosen companies that are working on changing the current state of diversity in tech.

Co-founder Richard Robinson said, “We know that the technology industry has had plenty of warm words about diversity in the last few years, but we still continue to see depressing statistics around gender and racial diversity both in VC, in founder representation and in start-ups themselves.”

“The legal industry faces similar challenges. We wanted to change that.”

The software can save time and cost by automatically reviewing legal documents and amending these with markups by comparing it against pre-arranged rules.

The funding will be used to improve the technology by hiring experienced software engineers and product designers.

Afro haircare brand, Afrocnchix raises \$1.2M in seed funding

D2C brand, Afrocnchix has raised enough seed funding to tap into the rapidly growing afro haircare market, now valued at around \$42B market.

Despite the vast and rapidly growing market, brands are proving to be out of touch with their customers. Currently, 7 in 10 Black women don't feel their needs are met on the high street.

On top of this, products designed for afro hair are more likely to contain hazardous chemicals, with 78% containing toxic ingredients linked to cancer, fibroids and respiratory issues.

Co-Founders of Afrocnchix, Rachael Twumasi-Corson and Joycelyn Mate suffered from alopecia, hair breakage, eczema and low confidence. The startup was created for people facing similar difficulties.

The latest round was led by Cornerstone Partners, alongside Google, Backed VC, Impact X and notable angels such as WeTransfer founder, Nalden.

Having sold over 65,000 bottles of safe, effective hair products, Afrocnchix will use the round to release new products, as well as expand their team and technologies.

London based fintech raises nearly £72M in Series C to drive global expansion into digital payments market

London-based fintech, *Tide*, has raised nearly £72M in series C at a valuation of around £470M. This means that the total valuation raised by the fintech has now gone up around £144M to date.

The round was led by by Apax Digital, the growth equity team of Apax Partners, alongside others including Anthemis, Augmentum, Jigsaw, SpeedInvest and existing investors.

As rivals to Monzo and Revolut in the growing digital payments market, the latest investment puts Tide in a position to continue develop its business financial platform, grow its market share, and expand globally.

Earlier this year, Tide also announced its expansion plans into India with a full launch of the platform planned for 2022.

CEO Oliver Prill said, "Partnering with Apax Digital validates Tide's potential to continue our growth trajectory and gain traction in global markets. Tide's growth story to date has been hugely exciting, creating a diverse platform that serves small business owners, as well as generating significant market share."

"As we embark on taking Tide international, we couldn't have a better set of investors to support us."

Online estate agency raises funds with the aim of becoming the largest agent in the UK by market share

Online estate agency, Strike, has raised £11M in its latest funding round as it positions itself to become the largest agent in the UK by market share. New investors include Channel 4 Ventures and Direct Line founder, Sir Peter Wood. Existing investors, Freston Ventures and Toscafund also participated in the round.

The funding will be used to drive the mission of becoming a national estate agency. Having recently expanded its “zero cost house selling” model into the midlands, Strike has also seen a dramatic jump in its market share within the north of England.

The partnership with Channel 4 will see the TV channel give the agency ads in return for equity.

Vinay Solanki, Head of *Channel 4 Ventures* said, “Strike’s disruptive ambition to redefine the way people move homes resonates with our own challenger brand values and sits well within Channel 4 Venture’s growing investment portfolio, which we’re focused on scaling as part of our Future4 strategy to diversify new revenue streams.”

York fintech founded by teens secures over £2M in funding

Fast-growing fintech, *KodyPay*, has recently raised nearly £2.35M in funding, bringing the total raised to over £4M.

The fintech was founded by York-based teens in 2018 in a bid to make

payment acceptance easy, avoiding long queues and limited payment choices. The software allows customers more control over their payment choice, making transactions quicker and more convenient through the use of e-wallets, buy-now-pay-later providers, open banking, and card payments.

The oversubscribed round involved all major shareholders as well as new high profile investors, including KodyPay's Chairman, Hank Uberoi, Co-founder of Monzo, Paul Rippon, Chairman of CoinFloor and BeZero Carbon, Adam Knight, Former President & CFO of SoftBank Group International, Alok Sama and IBM partner Cognition Foundry.

The funds will be used to bring expand services to venues and cities across the UK, release new product features and help businesses save money.

Climate X raises £1.1M to help the world tackle a multi trillion-dollar climate risk problem using state of the art data and analytics

Climate X has closed its pre-seed round, having raised £1.1M to help drive climate intelligence which will allow companies around the globe adopt new solutions to ensure they are implementing climate action.

The oversubscribed round was led by Pale Blue Dot, one of Europe's primary climate-focused VC firms. Others investing in the round included UK-based Blue Wire Capital, US-based VC's A100x and Possibilian and Hong Kong's Jennifer Cheng's NewChic Family Office.

Founded on the belief that climate uncertainty has meant we are ill-

equipped to deal with the risks of climate change, Climate X seeks to overcome this through data and analytics.

Using both physical risk models and machine learning, the London based startup are automatically able to project how extreme weather caused by climate change could impact millions of specific assets or locations anywhere in the world, up to 80 years into the future.

Currently, the focus is on building infrastructure to ensure the thousands of companies worldwide, who urgently need to assess their climate risks, can understand the data they'll be using to inform their investments and business strategies.

Kamil Kluza, co-founder and Chief Product Officer, said "Climate X is bridging a gap between regulatory requirements and latest technology. We've built a 'glass box' solution combining remote sensing, a digital twin of the Earth and machine learning. By carefully balancing these components, we help satisfy both regulators, who require transparency, and users, who need detailed and understandable climate intelligence at asset-level scales."

UK-based community-led app closes £1.8M in seed funding

Community-driven app, Bimble, has announced it has closed its £1.8M seed funding round. The social platform encourages the discovery and support of small independent businesses.

The round was led by prominent early-stage tech investor, Dimitris Panagopoulos, among others, and will be used to grow a diverse team across product development, market design and engineering. The company is also keen to invest in the UK's Kickstart programme.

Next year, Bimble will continue to build key components of the app to provide a more enhanced and intuitive user experience including exciting map features, geographic locations and added social layers.

Co-founder and CMO of Bimble, Julia Mallaby said, “as a digital portal to the real world, Bimble is a great tool for people to defend their favorite small businesses, especially when they’re out of the pandemic.”

London-based insurtech closes £13M in Series A

London-based insurtech, Hyperexponential has closed a £13M Series A round led by Highland Europe, a leading growth capital provider.

The commercial insurance software business secures growth capital by helping companies build and update their pricing models, so they can make quick and efficient data-driven decisions, with minimal time and money spent on IT administration.

The investment will allow the platform to accelerate its rapid growth within the commercial insurance sector.

CEO and co-founder of Hyperexponential, Amrit Santhirasenan said, “The insurance industry is experiencing unprecedented growth, with data and technology being critical strategic drivers. Our software provides the tools that new entrants to the sector need in order to get to market with best-in-class analytics, and the functionality that incumbent insurers require in order to transform.”

E-commerce tech startup raises £5M in seed funding to help the next generation of e-commerce companies

E-commerce technology startup, *The Moot Group (TMG)* has raised £5M in seed funding in order to simplify the process of setting up and growing an e-commerce brand.

The round was led by Fuel Ventures, who will distribute £45M in funds in the next 12 months to over 60 early-stage digital startups.

The Moot Group, which has secured a portion of this, seeks to help the next generation of e-commerce entrepreneurs in the UK to scale their products and brands online through their end-to-end solutions. Working with providers, from website to logistics and tracking, the company provides a unified platform that consolidates the entire process, calling themselves 'E-commerce as a Service.'

Founder, Nick Moutter, told UKTN that the investment means the company is now poised for the next stage of growth, "we will continue to build on our own highly successful interior brands and support our third-party customers with bespoke E-commerce technology."

"We also have our sights on growing the business overseas too, so watch this space."



Read also

Fueling the growth of early stage companies with Fuel Ventures
#QVCS

OnBuy raises £35M in impressive Series A funding round

Online marketplace, [OnBuy.com](https://www.onbuy.com) has announced the closing of £35M in Series A funding. The round was led by Bring Ventures, Norway Post venture arm and Fuel Ventures, as well as key strategic investors including founder and chairman of Terra Firma Capital Partners, Guy Hands, Deputy CEO of Klarna, Knut Frängsmyr and founder of Play.com, Richard Goulding.

Aiming to offer a fair marketplace for e-commerce, OnBuy now has over 7000 retailers using its platform and over 36 million products listed there.

The funding, a mixture of debt and equity, will be used to drive growth for the startup, which is hoping to reach unicorn status in the coming years.

Cas Paton, founder and CEO of OnBuy said, "This investment will allow us to unlock even more potential and take OnBuy to the next level with an even better, easier to use product than ever before. We've made it this far with the help of our early angels, amazing team, trusted retailers and of course all of our amazing customers, but we're not nearly done yet. We're here to make noise, challenge the status quo and change the digital marketplace landscape forever."

Railsbank raises \$70M as it pushes forward global expansion

Railsbank, the leading global Embedded Finance platform, has raised \$70M in its latest funding round. The investment was led by Anthos Capital and attracted a range of investors including the VC arm of Indonesia's largest privately held bank, Central Capital, founder of Bancorp, Cohen and Company and Chris Adelsbach's new fund, Outrun Ventures.

The company will use the funds to further expand its various Embedded Finance products across Europe, Asia and North America, with the aim of helping customers remodel and democratise access to the financial services industry.

The platform is currently popular among fintechs, telcos, supermarkets and consumer brands to radically improve the way millions of consumers and SMEs access, use and manage their money. Offering a unique, global platform, Railsbank has rails directly connected into the financial system, bypassing the industry legacy infrastructure which it argues props up many of the embedded and BaaS providers in the market today.

“Think of Railsbank as being the financial services layer of the Internet,” said Nigel Verdon, CEO and cofounder of Railsbank.

“We are transforming the finance industry in the same way that Apple did to the music industry when they created iTunes. Too much of the current global financial services system is made up of aging legacy technology and operational processes, making it unnecessarily complicated, highly expensive and nearly impossible for innovators to create the ‘Spotify’ of financial services.”

RO Capital Partners makes first investment, co-leading funding round in Bamboo Auctions

RO Capital Partners, the RO Group’s investment arm, has co-led a £1.1M funding round together with the Cass Enterprise Fund in Bamboo Auctions, a leading provider of online auction technology to estate agents and auction houses. The round was supported by follow on capital from existing investors and new angel investors.

Launched in 2015, Bamboo’s technology allows properties to be sold with immediate and legally binding contracts, making transactions quick and transparent. The business has grown rapidly since inception, now hosting over 1,000 properties and representing a total value of over £200M.

Bamboo will use investment to develop its technology, introducing new features and partnership integrations. It will also be used to expand advertising and marketing to drive further sales growth, and maintain customer service.

Edward Rowlandson, Group Managing Director of the RO Group said, “We launched RO Capital Partners in April 2021 to invest in active, early stage tech businesses and proptech was a key market for us given our wider

real estate experience.”

“We are hugely excited by Bamboo, its offering, and its use of technology to innovate the real estate market. Robin and his team have demonstrated that, even though it is still in its early stages, Bamboo has a winning business strategy and great growth potential and we are delighted to lead this round alongside Cass and existing investors.”

Insurtech, YuLife, is now valued at £250M after fresh Series B funds

Insurtech, YuLife has raised \$70M in a Series B funding round. The round was led by Target Global, alongside new investors, Eurazeo and Latitude. Existing investors including Creandum, Notion Capital, Anthemis, MMC Ventures, and OurCrowd also participated.

YuLife will use the investment to develop new products, expand its reach into the UK market and expand to new global regions with a focus on Europe and North America.

This latest investment means the company is now valued at £250M.

Ben Kaminski, Partner at Target Global, said, “With health and wellbeing increasingly thrust into the limelight in the wake of Covid-19, YuLife is fundamentally changing insurance by incentivizing people to lead healthier lifestyles.”

“YuLife is ideally positioned to build on its tenfold growth during the pandemic and lead the way in helping its clients respond to the challenges posed by an ever-changing working environment.”

Collective Benefits takes total investment to £10M

Also in insurtech news, London-based, *Collective Benefits* has announced that it closed £6M in investment led by NFX, a leading Silicon Valley venture fund. Existing investors, including Stride VC, Delin Ventures, Insurtech Gateway and executives from Uber, Deliveroo and Urban also took part in the round.

The company aims to address the growing demand for insurance within the platform economy, allowing businesses to develop products and services to protect gig workers’ physical, mental and financial wellbeing.

The funding will be used to expand reach across Europe, grow the team, and develop new products and services for businesses they work with

The funding pushes the total investment in the company to £10M.

Anthony Beilin, CEO and cofounder at Collective Benefits said: “We see NFX’s investment in Collective as a major vote of confidence in our ability to solve the protection gap problem for tens of millions of independent workers across the UK and Europe.”

Biotech firm raises £1.8M to revolutionise wound care

Nottingham-based *NuVision Biotherapies* has secured £1.8M from the

MEIF Proof of Concept & Early Stage Fund, which is managed by Mercia and part of the Midlands Engine Investment Fund, Mercia's EIS funds, Newable Ventures and private investors.

NuVision's technology harnesses the healing properties of amniotic membranes and could revolutionise the treatment of wounds, particularly of the eye.

Created using its proprietary manufacturing process, its first product, Omnigen, is already used in eye surgery to help heal wounds faster while the latest innovation, OmniLenz, is being trialled by Aston University for use in dry eyes.

The round brings the total raised by the company to almost £5M and will allow it to expand sales and carry out further clinical trials in the run-up to a Series A investment in 2022.

A biotech company with a product that helps to heal eye injuries and could revolutionise treatment of other wounds has raised a further £1.8M.

Rob Bennett of Mercia, which has backed the company since 2015 said, "Since our initial investment, NuVision has achieved significant milestones and is now well placed to take advantage of market opportunities in the treatment of both chronic and acute eye disease. In the longer term, its technology could be adapted for other applications and has the potential to revolutionise wound care."

Revolut raises £576M making it the most valuable fintech to come out of UK

Digital banking app Revolut has raised a staggering £576M in a new funding round led by Softbank's Vision Fund and Tiger Global

Managemen.

The Series E round makes Revolut the most valuable fintech to come out of the UK, as well as one of the largest privately-backed scaled-up startups in the world, taking the total valuation to \$33B.

Revolut now has over 16M customers worldwide and facilitates over 150M transactions every month. Going forward, the team behind it plan to expand to provide a wider range of services and promotions to grow the customer base and encourage users to invest more time and money in the app. This means exploring newer areas such insurance, and driving investing and trading.

Of the latest round, Founder and CEO, Nikolay Storonsky said, "Softbank and Tiger Global's investments are an endorsement of our mission to create a global financial superapp that enables customers to manage all their financial needs through a single platform."

#PLATFORM

Teamwork
£50.5M

#CLOUD

Oak Engage
£2.6M

#FINTECH

Moneyhub

£13M

#CIRCULAR

Raylo
£8.3M

#SPACE

Space Forge
N/A

#LEGALTECH

Robin AI
£1.75M

#BEAUTY

Afrocenchix
£860K

#HEALTHTECH

MiNA Therapeutics
£10.8M

#FINTECH

Tide
£72M

#ECOMMERCE

Snappy Shopper
£19.4M

#PROPTECH

Strike
£11M

#FINTECH

Weavr.io
£7M

#HEALTHTECH

Vatic
£4.6M

#FINTECH

KodyPay
£2.35M

#DATA

Climate X
£1.1M

#CYBERSECURITY

Quantexa
£110.5M

#DATA

Xtremepush
£15.4M

#PLATFORM

Bimble
£1.8M

#INSURTECH

Hyperexponential
£13M

#ECOMMERCE

The Moot Group
£5M

#ECOMMERCE

OnBuy
£35M

#FINTECH

Railsr
£50.4M

#PROPTECH

Bamboo Auctions
£1.1M

#INSURTECH

YuLife
£50.5M

#INSURTECH

Collective Benefits
£6M

#GREENTECH

Arborea
£3M

#BIOTECH

NuVision
£1.8M

#FINTECH

Revolut

£576M

In international news

Online personal shopping service, Lookiero, has raised \$30M in Series C backed by private equity and growth capital investor, Perwyn.

Founded in 2015, Lookiero combines the expertise of personal shoppers and a strong understanding of customer style profiles with in-house recommendation algorithms to provide a fully personalised style experience. Customers then decide which items to keep or return, enabling the technology to improve with every transaction.

The company now employs over 400 people and boasts 3M registered users. The funding will be used to improve the service and customer experience.

Oier Urrutia, Founder and CEO of Lookiero, said, "This funding round will allow us to continue our expansion in Europe, with the launch in Germany this year."

"We are working on exciting new projects that will enhance our current proposition of offering new ways for our clients to define their style and discover the clothes they love in a personalised and thoughtful way."
