

Generative AI, business onboarding and whisky 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

19 January 2024

Montant

£371.91M

Nombre d'opérations

14

Recraft secures £9.42M Series A funding to advance the use of AI in professional design and branding

Recraft, the professional AI graphic design generator, today announces £9.42M in Series A funding in a round led by Khosla Ventures and former GitHub CEO, Nat Friedman, with participation from RTP Global, Abstract VC, Basis Set Ventures, Elad Gil, Zhenya Loginov, Dharmesh Shah and Akshay Kothari.

Recraft is the first Generative AI design tool that enables users to generate and edit vector art, icons, 3D images and illustrations within a brand's style controls, such as the colour palette, geometry of icons, and the style of lines. This enables designers to create branded assets without solely relying on text prompts. The company already has over 300,000 users in the eight months since its launch.

The ability to create professional design quality images and illustrations has set Recraft apart from consumer-targeted tools. The new Series A funding is enabling Recraft to advance its use of machine learning with the development of a new Foundation Model to generate style consistent design elements, sophisticated imagery and graphic designs, as well as launch industry-first capabilities, including the ability to create sets of icons and images.

“Recraft was created to meet the requirements of professional design, generating consistent style images and high-quality vector illustrations suitable for everything from advertising and digital marketing assets to iconography. And the development of our Foundation Model will enable us to improve the quality and consistency of the AI-generated graphic design.” comments Anna Veronika Dorogush, founder and CEO of Recraft.

Detected secures £1.98M from Thomson

Reuters Ventures and Love Ventures to pioneer category-defining business onboarding technology

UK and US based fintech Detected has secured £1.98M in its latest fundraise, including investment from existing investors Thomson Reuters Ventures, Love Ventures and powerful industry angels.

Detected is reinventing the traditional approach to business onboarding, reducing costs, while improving compliance and reducing regulatory risk for its customers. Focused on meeting the needs of Payment companies and Marketplace operators where onboarding new merchants or customers is a time-sensitive, commercial imperative.

Reinventing the traditional approach to business, customer and merchant onboarding, Detected has built a reputation as a leader in the high-growth business onboarding industry and is trusted by the biggest names in payments. From being crowned number one in the RegTech 50 last year to winning the Fintech Innovator Award, Detected's product and team has been recognised by the industry, most recently being named in the prestigious Startups 100 Index for 2024.

“Since day one, we have known that tackling the monolith that is business onboarding was going to be a huge challenge and we remain convinced that Liam and the Detected team have what it takes to change this industry for the better.” adds Marcus Love, Co-founder and General Partner at Love Ventures.

Bevy closes a £1.17M seed funding round

Bevy, the whisky app founded in 2021 and based on Islay, has today closed a £1.17M seed funding round. The new investment comes, principally, from Scotland-based angel investors, existing shareholders and a Denver (US) based family office.

Founded in 2021 by leading whisky expert Laurie Black, mathematician Atanas Tonchev and medtech entrepreneur Lucas Heron; Bevy is a technology-led whisky discovery platform that operates via consumer-facing Android and Apple (iOS) phone mobile applications. Users can use the app and the camera on their mobile phone to scan the label of any whisky bottle and uncover tasting notes alongside indicative valuations for their collection.

At its heart, is a leading, proprietary image capturing software, supported by the world's largest database of whiskies, numbering over 200,000 catalogued from the past 120 years of releases. The database includes 150,000 images and tracks retail and auction pricing whilst also monitoring market sentiment in order to arrive at a dynamic, live valuation which it shares with its 120,000, regular active users. Once a bottle is scanned, the whisky is profiled with content populated by distillery and bottler overviews, dynamic pricing data and expert tasting notes. Whiskies are routinely rated by consumers within the app, which allows the tech to become familiar with each user's taste preferences, which in turn allows Bevy to recommend other bottles that a user might enjoy.

Finbridge Global attracts £500K investment,

facilitating faster, more effective partnerships between fintechs and financial institutions

Industrial Thought Ltd. – a group of companies focused on accelerating the future of wealth management – has announced a £500K investment in the collaboration platform *Finbridge Global* with £150K cash, plus £350K worth of strategic support.

Finbridge Global is the only global platform with a smart assessment engine that can define a fintech's suitability for FIs, aiding the creation of powerful partnerships. The platform offers a straightforward way of accessing an extensive array of fintech solutions in one space and includes an in-depth evaluation, expediting the Request for Information (RFI) process. It also identifies strengths and weaknesses; where weaknesses emerge, fintechs are provided with a clear path to improvement.

Finbridge Global hosts a monthly Innovation Board in collaboration with *The Investing and Saving Alliance (TISA)* to ensure its platform is fully-equipped to meet the sector's needs. The Innovation Board brings together diverse financial institutions to discuss the changing nature of fintech engagement.

CellVoyant secures £7.6M seed funding to accelerate the development of stem cell therapies with AI

CellVoyant, an AI-first biotechnology spin-out from the *University of Bristol* accelerating the development of novel cell therapies, has announced a £7.6M seed round. Led by *Octopus Ventures*, with participation from

Horizons Ventures, Verve Ventures, and Air Street Capital, this funding marks the first stage in commercialising CellVoyant's first of its kind AI and imaging platforms.

CellVoyant is an AI-first biotechnology company dedicated to creating novel stem cell-based therapies for chronic diseases. Their technology employs AI-first live cell imaging to predict and optimise stem cell differentiation, enabling the controllable manufacturing of any cell and tissue in the body at scale. Founded on foundational work from the Carazo Salas lab at the University of Bristol, CellVoyant is on a mission to bring cutting-edge science from research into the real world.

CellVoyant's platform - powered by patent-pending technology FateView and FateCast - combines advanced AI with live cell imaging to address these pain points. Its technology can extract spatial and temporal information in real-time from hundreds of millions of cells within complex cell mixtures, helping scientists understand their composition and forecast how they will evolve. This allows them to forecast stem cell behaviour with unprecedented precision and find optimal pathways for differentiating cells into specific cell types, such as nerve, cardiac or blood, facilitating more effective development of cell therapies.

"By combining the latest advances in AI and live cell imaging, we can help bring these transformative treatments to the market quickly, reliably, and cost-effectively. Today's milestone validates the potential of our approach and will help us to accelerate our R&D capabilities." says Rafael E. Carazo Salas, CEO and founder of CellVoyant.

Offsite construction software company KOPE raises £5.5M in seed funding to accelerate the shift away from traditional construction.

KOPE, the only-purpose built software platform for offsite construction, is pleased to announce a £5.5M Seed round led by Socii Capital with participation from Autodesk, Saint-Gobain, Barton Malow Ventures, Halkin Private Capital and Luck Investment.

KOPE offers unrivalled integration with the offsite construction supply chain, allowing you to quickly evaluate and apply prefabricated products into new or existing projects, improving efficiency, reducing costs and waste, and helping deliver sustainability goals.

Companies can use KOPE to leverage offsite construction by bringing Products into Projects™. With the ability to instantly see the impacts of differing solutions, the construction industry can finally embrace offsite construction through the whole design process.

“This latest fundraising gives us further confidence that KOPE will support those in our industry looking to adopt prefabrication and offsite manufacturing. With these key industry partners and their broad experience, we are excited about this next phase of our journey.” says Mark Thorley, Co-founder and CEO of KOPE

Trojan Energy secures a £26M investment

Trojan Energy, the on-street electric vehicle charging specialist, has secured a significant £26M investment to facilitate its ambitious growth plans. The funding round comprises of £8M from BGF alongside an £18M follow-on investment by the Scottish National Investment Bank (the Bank).

Launched in 2016, Trojan Energy's patented charging technology provides convenient on-street electric vehicle (EV) charging, supporting the EV transition for nine million households in the UK without access to a driveway.

Trojan Energy chargers are unique as they sit flat and flush with the pavement leaving streetscapes 'clutter free' and offering charging speeds of up to 22kW. The business has also developed the 'DEICER' system to alert drivers when a charger and charging bay becomes available to ensure a seamless user experience. The chargers are manufactured at Trojan Energy's headquarters in Aberdeen with headcount now standing at 68. The business is committed to creating further high-quality green jobs and supporting the UK's transition to net zero.

"We look forward to working closely with Ian and the wider team to reach their ambitious goals and are excited to add another innovative company to BGF's growing 'climate tech' portfolio." Keith Barclay, Investor at BGF

AI-powered battery management software pioneer Eatron Technologies secures millions in new funding to further accelerate its global growth

Eatron Technologies, a pioneering developer of AI-powered battery management software for the automotive industry, has completed its A2 Series Funding, with lead investment from *LG Technology Ventures* and further investment from *MMC Ventures*, which led Eatron's Series A. The funding, which joins additional investment from *100th Year Venture Capital* and the *Türkiye Development Fund (TDF)*, comes at a time when the industry is undergoing a rapid transition to increasingly software-defined vehicles and batteries.

The company's technology enables smarter battery management by implementing an intelligent software layer on top of existing battery controls platforms. Rapid deployment with significantly reduced cost, risk and time-to-market is possible through the easy to integrate edge-to-cloud offer making use of abstraction and a clearly articulated software architecture that considers intricacies of connected vehicle systems.

This investment will enable Eatron to accelerate the development and deployment of new embedded and cloud-based features for its unique software platform. Eatron's portfolio encompasses AI-powered battery management systems spanning from the edge to the cloud, which enable global electric vehicle and battery manufacturers to deliver ever-greater innovation in the continuous optimisation of performance, efficiency and safety.

Pivot
£35M

#DEEPTECH

Recraft
£9.42M

#CYBERSECURITY

Trudenty
£392K

#FINTECH

Detected
£1.96M

#PLATFORM

Bevvy
£1.17M

#PLATFORM

Finbridge Global
£500K

#BIOTECH

CellVoyant

£7.6M

#PROPTECH

Kope
£5.5M

#FINTECH

Carmoola
£12.25M

#MOBILITY

Trojan Energy
£26M

#IOT

Eseye
£10.10M

#QUANTUM

Quantinum
£236.8M

#DEEPTECH

Sky Engine AI
£5.52

#PLATFORM

Vertice
£19.7M

#MOBILITY

Eatron
N/A

In other investment news

Thema launches pioneering venture fund platform to invest in and support emerging managers

Thema, the London-based, Pan European focused VC fund investor, has today publicly launched its venture fund platform, to support and provide capital to first time fund managers to start their own venture capital business.

Set up to be a catalyst for the next wave of emerging managers, Thema will support and enable emerging managers to launch venture capital strategies, providing them with an all-in-one package. Thema will act as a strategic cornerstone limited partner, writing first tickets of up to £5M, operational and regulatory support, office space and curated LP insights. Thema plans to make commitments to four funds annually for the next three years.

A team of four, Thema understands the complexities involved when launching a venture capital fund (significant time commitment and upfront costs, including legal and operational expenses) and offer assistance to emerging fund managers in navigating the regulatory landscape, fund administration and capital. Thema acknowledges that GP commitment and the cost associated with raising a fund are a substantial financial barrier to entry, particularly with family office investors looking for a significant % of capital to be stumped up by GPs as to show alignment ('skin in the game'). Additionally, Thema has seen first-hand the lack of willingness from investors to be the first anchor investor.

In other international investment news

International Battery Company Raises £27.65M to revolutionise EV adoption in India

International Battery Company (IBC), a product and technology company that specialises in the creation of eco-friendly, large-sized rechargeable Prismatic Li-ion NMC batteries, is announcing it has raised £27.65M. This includes a Pre-Series A round led by *RTP Global*, and contributions from a broader investment base which includes *Beenext*, *Veda VC*, and other strategic Korean and US Investors. The investment marks an important moment in IBC's journey to revolutionise the global EV landscape.

Founded in 2022, International Battery Company is a product-tech company that stands at the forefront of the sustainable energy revolution. Based in Sunnyvale, California, IBC specialises in the development of large-sized, eco-friendly Prismatic Li-ion NMC batteries, pivotal to advancing a cleaner, more sustainable future. With its roots in R&D in the US and manufacturing in South Korea, IBC is poised to extend its Giga manufacturing facility to India.

IBC has channelled this investment into a 50 MWh capacity manufacturing plant, and has developed United Nations 38.3 and BIS certified, ready-for-delivery battery cells for the Indian market, reflecting the growing needs of India's EV and energy storage sectors. These batteries will meet the region's distinctive requirements, such as the need to operate safely in high temperatures, support fast charging capacities in democratised charging environments, and offer an extended lifecycle, with a 7-10 year warranty. Furthermore, its highly eco-friendly products use components that are fully recyclable and reusable, supporting India's push towards a greener future and closed-loop manufacturing, where materials are repurposed and reused, minimising waste and reducing environmental impact and the carbon footprint.

Delfos Energy raises £5.41M seed round for its real-time virtual engineer software platform for renewable energy assets

Delfos, the virtual engineer software for renewable energy assets, today announces its £5.41M seed round, led by *Contrarian Ventures* and *Headline*. Existing investors including *DOMO.VC* and *EDP Ventures* participated.

Delfos has developed real-time virtual engineer software, which harnesses both artificial intelligence and big data to provide owners and managers of renewable energy estates with automated performance and reliability workflow management. Providing all the information an engineer or C-level executive would require to manage and optimise an asset's ROI, performance, and reliability.

The funding round will be used to drive expansion in Europe - targeting partnerships with renewable energy asset owners,

operations/maintenance providers, and utility companies across the continent. This includes asset management firms, corporations, and public bodies. Delfos will seek to expand to the US in 2025, once sufficient traction has been gained in Europe and LATAM.

Obelisk Studio raises £1.58M from The Games Fund for development of 'Displacement'

Obelisk Studio, an established AAA co-development company with a decade of experience working on household name franchises and independent games, today announces it has secured £1.58M from *The Games Fund*, a specialist early-stage VC fund that invests in innovative video game developers and GameTech companies.

Over the past decade, the 20-strong Cyprus-based Obelisk Studio has been a major co-development partner for *Sons of the Forest*, which sold over 2 million copies in the first 24 hours, and other iconic IPs, including *Call of Duty*, *Dota 2*, *Fallout 76*, *New World* and David Fincher's episode for *Love, Death & Robots*. Following the new investment, Obelisk is reinforcing the handpicked *Displacement* team with top-tier developers and designers who previously played key roles in the development of critically acclaimed games like *Pioneer*.

The raise will fund Obelisk's pivot into the development of independent first-party titles. *Displacement*, the studio's first IP, is a psychological action-horror game that explores the dark side of human nature in an atmosphere of isolation and madness and spiced with intense violent melee combat.
