Digital healthcare, AI super-brains and AI hiring assistants 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

5 April 2024

Montant

£73.88M

Nombre d'opérations

9

Oriole Networks raises £10M in Seed funding to build AI 'super-brains' capable of training LLMs 100x faster with a fraction of energy

Oriole Networks – the startup using light to train LLMs a hundred times faster with only a fraction of power – has raised £10M in Seed funding to revolutionise AI performance and adoption, and solve AI's critical energy problem. The round, which is one of the UK's largest Seed raises in recent years, was co-led by *UCL Technology Fund*, *Clean Growth Fund*, *XTX*

Ventures and _Dorilton Ventures_. It was supported by Innovate _UK Investor Partnership_.

Founded in 2023 by UCL scientists, _Professor George Zervas_, _Alessandro Ottino_ and _Joshua Benjamin_, with seasoned _CEO James Regan_, Oriole Networks has developed a novel way of using light to connect thousands of AI chips together. Once connected, the power of each individual graphics processing units (GPUs) is combined to form a "super-brain." This super-brain can be used to train advanced Large Language Models a hundred times faster, with a thousandth of the latency, while using a tiny fraction of energy.

This not only addresses rising concerns about the "_obscene energy demands of AI_", but has the power to revolutionise time critical tasks, such as algorithmic trading, increase AI adoption, and accelerate machine learning algorithmic progress in a low carbon world. This will bring huge gains for all companies working with, and on AI, but particularly data centres. Data centres play a critical role in the evolution and proliferation of SaaS and its shift towards AI, yet are facing systemic problems and unsustainable power consumption due to increased demands.

> _"It's rare to have such depth of innovation over many years at UCL combined with an experienced entrepreneur with domain knowledge and a massive market that is looking for this solution. This is going to be an exciting journey." says David Grimm, Partner at UCL Technology Fund_

Wellola raises £1.88M to accelerate expansion and meet growing demand for digital healthcare programs across UK and Ireland

Wellola, a leading digital health company, announced the successful closure of a £1.88M funding round led by _Elkstone_ with additional funding from _Enterprise Ireland_ and _Bay Advisory_. The investment brings Wellola's total funding to date to £3.4M and will accelerate market expansion to meet demand.

Founded in 2016 by _Sonia Neary_ (Chartered Physiotherapist and CEO), Wellola builds innovative patient management solutions to deliver high-quality care in a rapidly changing environment. Built by clinicians, major healthcare organisations including Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, the North East London Foundation Trust and Birmingham Community NHS Trust have already deployed Wellola's award-winning Portasana®

platform.

Portasana® has enabled one NHS Trust department alone to reduce the need for return appointments by 30%, saving it approximately £325K a year. In a representative evaluation of over 600 patients across the UK using education courses featured on the platform;

Metaview raises £5.6M to build the AI assistant for hiring

Metaview – the AI assistant that helps teams eradicate admin and toil from their hiring process – has raised £5.6M in a funding round led by Plural. Coelius Capital and existing investors Vertex Ventures US, Seedcamp, Village Global, as well as notable angels including Kyle Parrish (Figma VP of Sales), and Barney Hussey-Yeo (Cleo co-founder) also participated.

Metaview was founded in 2018 by former Palantir and Uber product and engineering managers, CEO Siadhal Magos and CTO Shahriar Tajbakhsh, to transform hiring. The AI platform helps companies make business-critical hiring decisions better and faster by focusing on improving the most opaque part of the process: the interviews.

The platform leverages AI to capture conversations throughout the recruitment process to create a single source of truth for hiring teams. By recording and analysing to generating objective summaries, indexed by key topics, Metaview is reducing the administrative burden of interviewing through automation and already saving teams at least 20 hours per hire. This allows recruiters and hiring managers to focus on quality interactions with candidates and make informed, objective decisions based on data, not just memory.

> *"We're delighted to be partnering with Plural to drive our next phase of growth and help more companies radically enhance their hiring workflows and decisions." says Siadhal Magos, CEO at Metaview.*

Sparxell raises £2.55M to advance development of sustainable pigments

Sparxell, the UK-based developer of high-performance, sustainable, plant-based pigments, has completed a £2.55M funding round (comprising seed investments, grants, and awards) to accelerate development and commercialisation of products which will eliminate synthetic chemicals from colourants in multi-billion dollar markets including in cosmetics, fashion, paint, and packaging. The *Circular Innovation Fund*, a global venture capital fund jointly managed by Demeter and Cycle Capital with *L'Oréal* as an anchor investor, participated in the seed funding alongside others including SpaceX-backer *Future Communities Capital*, sustainability-focused investor *PDS Ventures*, impact investor *Katapult,* biotech and consumer sectors investor *Joyance Partners* and climate investor *SNØCAP VC*.

Sparxell was founded in 2022 by Cambridge scientists, led by *Dr Benjamin Droguet* and *Professor Silvia Vignolini*, who discovered ways to replicate vibrant colours in nature using fully plant-based cellulose, a renewable, biodegradable resource that can be extracted from waste streams. Sparxell's pigments use the same material that many plants and animals use to produce vivid, durable, and fade-resistant colourants. The products are toxin-free and fully biodegradable with a colour intensity that lasts longer than traditional colourants and pigments on the market.

The colourants market is worth an estimated £30.11B and is expected to grow to over £79.22B by 2030. Sparxell is targeting specific markets including but not limited to beauty (colour cosmetics, personal care, creams, sunscreens, glitter make-up), fashion (textile colouring, embellishments, sequins), packaging (bulk colouring, films, foils), and paint (automotive, building).

> *"With colourants being such an important component of cosmetics, we are especially excited to see the application of Sparxell products in this sector," says Stéphane Villecroze, Co-founder and Managing Partner at Circular Innovation Fund.*

Warwick Acoustics set to revolutionise in-car audio with £7M fundraise

Warwick Acoustics – the UK company whose patented loudspeaker technology is set to revolutionise in-car audio systems - has raised a further £7M in a funding round led by Mercia Ventures and including NFU Mutual and a range of private investors. The funding will enable the company to invest in a new state of art manufacturing facility and ramp up manufacturing capacity. It follows its success in securing its first production contract with a leading global luxury vehicle manufacturer.

Warwick Acoustics' electrostatic speakers provide superior sound quality compared to conventional speakers and, due to their slim profile, offer greater flexibility to designers in terms of cabin layout. They are also more sustainable. Being 90% lighter and 90% more power efficient than conventional speakers, they help to extend the battery life and range of

electric vehicles. They are manufactured from upcycled and easy to recycle materials, and, unlike conventional loudspeakers, use no rare earth metals.
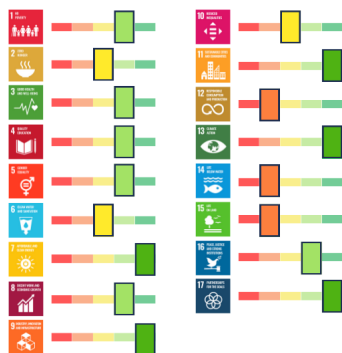
Warwick Acoustics' first automotive system production contract, which was announced in June last year, will initially be for two vehicle programs. The company has also secured development contracts with a number of other car companies, and is in talks with other leading global brands.
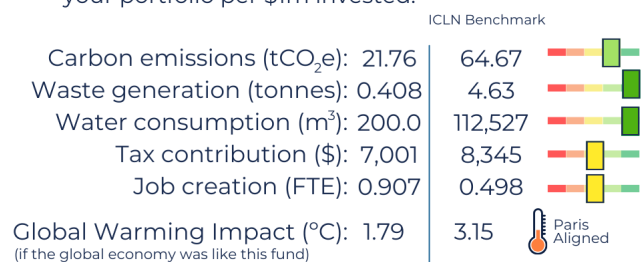
Your Portfolio

FSL

Impact Score: B
Portfolio alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

ESG Score: B
The environmental and social footprint of your portfolio per $1m invested.

ICLN Benchmark

Carbon emissions (tCO$_2$e):	21.76	64.67
Waste generation (tonnes):	0.408	4.63
Water consumption (m^3):	200.0	112,527
Tax contribution ($):	7,001	8,345
Job creation (FTE):	0.907	0.498
Global Warming Impact (°C):	1.79	3.15

(if the global economy was like this fund)

Paris Aligned

powered by: INTEGRUM ESG

Industrial Thought invests in specialist ESG platform to help wealth managers mitigate greenwashing risks

Industrial Thought Ltd. – a group of companies specialised in investment taxation, financial data, and related consultancy services – has announced a £100K investment in *Integrum ESG*, with an option for a follow-on investment, alongside a partnership agreement to serve the

wealth management industry with ESG data.

The unique SaaS platform offers a 'glass-box' approach to ESG analysis and risk assessment, giving wealth managers a simple way to gather validated and explainable ESG data.

Integrum ESG has been developed by investment professionals to solve the problems associated with opaque methodologies and provide complete clarity. The easy-to-use platform gives clear reasoning for its ESG scores with full visibility into the underlying data. As a result, wealth managers can understand and explain a company's ESG challenges and how it manages those challenges in the market. Other unique features include bespoke reporting solutions and real-time controversy alerts.

> *"We look forward to working with the team to broaden access to our one-stop, easy-to-understand, affordable ESG solution." says Shai Hill, Founder and CEO of Integrum ESG*

#DEEPTECH

Oriole Networks
£10M

#HEALTHTECH

Wellola
£1.88M

Metaview
£5.6M

Sparxell
£2.55M

Warwick Acoustics
£7M

Coadjute
£10M

FLock.io
£4.77M

Integrum ESG
£100K

Luminance
£31.8M

In other investment news

Empirical Ventures targeting £10M fund to lead early-stage deep science rounds

Empirical Ventures is targeting a £10M fund to lead pre-seed and seed investments for deep science startups in the UK. Founded by two scientists turned entrepreneurs, Empirical Ventures will invest in startups that are redefining what is possible and solving some of the most pressing challenges facing humanity.

Empirical Ventures has already invested in 18 companies across advanced materials, life sciences, robotics, and energy transition technologies, including startups like _BaseImmune_, _Anaphite_, _CheMastery_, _Wase_, _Ensilicated Technologies_, and _QV Bioelectronics_. Augmenting the team as venture partners are _Hon. Alexander Fink_ and _Dr Keith Lipman_ (PhD, Physics).

Empirical Ventures has already received a £5M commitment from _British Business Investments_, through its Regional Angels Programme, to invest alongside Empirical Ventures' new S/EIS Fund and its angel syndicate. Another £3.25M has been committed as a first close into the S/EIS fund by other investors. Empirical Ventures are active investors across the UK, with most of its investments taking place outside of London.

In other international investment news

SydeLabs Raises £1.98M to Solve Security and Risk Management for Generative AI

Security & risk management startup _SydeLabs_ announced their seed funding round of £1.98M to build solutions aimed at securing GenAI systems for enterprises. The funding round was led by _RTP Global_ and also saw participation from _Picus Capital_ and marquee angel investors.

The adoption of Generative AI has opened a new cybersecurity attack surface for those leveraging the technology. SydeLabs' comprehensive AI security and Risk Management solutions address this emerging concern. The company offers solutions to identify security and safety vulnerabilities in enterprise AI systems and prevent them in real time, helping mitigate cybersecurity attacks and abuse. Founded by Ruchir Patwa and Ankita Kumari, SydeLabs' mission is to make AI applications safe, secure and resistant to abuse.

As the company looks to be a holistic AI Security and Risk Management Platform, its solution suite helps detect and prevent vulnerabilities in AI systems thus avoiding attacks, abuse and non-compliance. By focusing on the intent of attackers, rather than using traditional pattern matching approaches that are traditionally used for cybersecurity, the company is going further in its cybersecurity offering.

Scayl emerges from stealth and raises £85.7M to grow the loan books of European

Fintech lenders

Scayl, a debt financing platform founded by ex-VC, Fintech and senior financial services executives, announced its emergence from stealth having raised £85.7M which it will immediately make available for European Fintech lenders.

Allowing Fintech lenders to seamlessly connect to its platform, Scayl maintains integrations to, and receives funding from, banks and other credit institutions, meanwhile feeding and retrieving all the necessary data required to assess borrowers and facilitate the funding of loans.

Based on the team's existing network of banks and Fintechs, the company already has interest from nearly 100 lenders across Europe with a total demand of more than £857.7M. The company has also secured a partnership with a northern European bank to start providing funding for Fintech lenders. Scayl will be making these funds available to lenders through its platform.

Pigment announces £114.56M series D led by ICONIQ Growth

Pigment announced a £114.56M Series D funding round, led by *ICONIQ Growth*, who also spearheaded Pigment's Series C investment close to a year ago. *Sandberg Bernthal Venture Partners* as well as several other existing investors including *IVP*, *Meritech*, *Greenoaks* and *Felix Capital* have also participated in the round, demonstrating continued confidence in Pigment's long-term growth trajectory.

Pigment is a business planning platform that helps organisations plan ahead and make better strategic decisions.

The funding follows a successful year for Pigment as the company tripled its annual recurring revenue and doubled its customer base globally. The number of enterprise customers using Pigment also tripled. Global brands including Unilever, Merck, Keolis, Datadog, KAYAK and 6sense have all chosen Pigment for its unique combination of usability and scalability needed to make accurate yet timely decisions. Pigment has expanded its partner network, collaborating with leading consulting firms such as Deloitte, Slalom and BearingPoint.