

# £655M raised this week and a new unicorn from the energy sector

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

Temps de lecture : minute

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8 May 2020

Total

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## £655.05M

Number of deals

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## 14

## Fintech startup for over 55s free2 secures a milestone £305M investment

Created by finance expert Paul Lindsay, [free2](#) is a new financial services brand for the over 55s market and has completed a milestone round with NatWest Markets and a major European special situations fund. NatWest Markets has provided up to a £200M securitisation facility to assist free2 in funding new customer loans. Junior debt funding of £105M is being provided by the European special situations fund which will finance both working capital and new customer loans.

The investments will be used to support the launch of free2's first product at the beginning of June. The business is focused on developing new and innovative products aimed specifically at the 55 and over market, a group of people that the team believe have been historically underserved by financial services providers.

## Energy challenger Octopus raises £300M to become a unicorn

Energy firm Octopus has reached a valuation of over £1B after receiving a £300M investment from Australian energy company Origin, in return for 20% of the company. By partnering with the Australian firm for three years, Octopus intends to hire people around the world to develop its software and license its UK firm's Kraken technology platform to transform the retail business.

Origin, which is majority-owned by the Octopus group, completed a deal with E.On last month to bring the supplier's 6M customers onto the platform. With other partners including Good Energy, Co-op Energy, London Power and Tesla, 17M accounts are now connected to the Kraken software. The new £1B valuation is another impressive milestone for the shifting UK energy sector.



Read also

An Octopus becomes the UK's newest unicorn

## Investor communications platform Proximity raises £16.5M

Developed within Citi's Institutional Clients Group, digital investor communications platform Proximity has received £16.5M in a round of investment led by BNY Mellon, Citi, Clearstream, Computershare, Deutsche Bank, HSBC, J.P. Morgan, and State Street. These global institutions are committed to delivering Proximity's vision of enhancing the investor communications ecosystem and providing significant benefits to the global market. The platform provides post-meeting vote confirmation and gives investors up to nine more days per meeting to research and vote.

With this investment and commitment from the consortium, Proximity

will significantly scale its platform offerings so that it can deliver its services to a wider client base and across a broad range of geographic markets.

## London-based fintech Flagstone raises £12.1M

Founded in 2013 by Simon Merchant and Andrew Thatcher, Flagstone, a London-based fintech firm raised £12M from Omers Ventures with participation from existing investors Kindred Capital and Moneysupermarket Group plc. Flagstone have developed a cash deposit marketplace which provides individuals, wealth managers, businesses and charities with access to hundreds of cash deposit accounts from 44 banks including high street names such as HSBC and Nationwide as well as a host of challenger banks.

With this investment, Flagstone will accelerate its plans to extend the penetration of the UK market to new customer segments.

## Social network app for women Peanut raises £9.6M

The London-based social network for women Peanut has received a £9.6M Series A investment from EQT Ventures, with support from Index Ventures and Female Founders Fund. Launched in 2017 by co-founder and CEO Michelle Kennedy, Peanut aims to end the problem of motherhood loneliness by bringing mums together on the app, just as dating apps have done for single people across the globe.

With 1.6M users, the social network provides a community where women can seek support and advice from those in similar life stages, such as

trying to conceive children or trying to parent them.



Read also

Educational social network Natterhub launches during COVID-19

## Real-time fintech startup Banked receives £2.35M in seed funding

Founded in 2018 by Brad Goodall in London, Banked a payments startup, secured £2.35M in seed funding from Force Over Mass, Backed, Acrew Capital and Paul Forster, the serial investor and co-founder of indeed.com. Banked is an account-to-account payment software platform that enables consumers, businesses and banks to process payments in real-time, more securely.

Businesses need to embed the company's API and this can be done across mobile apps, customer portals, emailed invoices or even text messages. Individuals can use the free app to create payment links, and start requesting money from anyone, for anything, without sharing any personal banking details. Banked intends to use the funds to build more

commercial relationships and support its rollout across Europe.

## Automation software Enate raises £2.2M

Headquartered in Cheltenham, automation software company Enate raised £2.2M in funding from the Northern Venture Capital Trust (VCT) Funds and Mercia. Founded in 2017 by Kit Cox, the company's platform manages a workforce of humans and robots for simplified end-to-end processes. Thanks to Enate, users can plug and play any technology (RPA, AI, cognitive, NLP, machine learning), from any vendor, to get digital fast.

The company now has customers worldwide ranging from smaller services firms to major insurers, banks and professional services firms like EY and Capgemini. With these funds, Enate intends to use the funds to further develop its platform and expand its customer base and distributor network across Europe and Asia.

## Automated digital branding provider Scoota raises £2M

Automated digital branding tech startup Scoota has received a £2M investment from Notion Capital, the Angel CoFund (ACF) and VentureFounders. The company, which is based in London and New York, is rapidly increasing its direct-client base alongside its swift expansion into the US market. In the current climate, this raise speaks to the strength of Scoota's business model and technology, offering its clients a completely new approach to fraud-free, automated omnichannel digital branding, all through one single platform.

Scoota's technology has already delivered campaigns for over 500 tier-1 brands, including Ford, Coca Cola, Microsoft, Unilever, and P&G. The

company plans to use the funding for rapid US expansion later this year 2020 and into 2021.

## Deep Render raises £1.6M to disrupt image compression

Headquartered in London, Deep Render received £1.6M from investors Pentech and Speedinvest to revolutionise how we use, share and create data through its unique image compression tech. The company has designed a revolutionary image compression algorithm that mimics how the human eye analyses images and video. Instead of building on decades-old software that is no longer fit for purpose, Deep Render has reinvented the process, from scratch, to make it faster, more efficient and more accurate.

Content platforms (Netflix, Facebook), VR/AR technology, medical research, environmental scientists, law enforcement and more are all set to benefit. If such platforms, particularly Netflix, YouTube and Zoom, were currently using Deep Render algorithms, they wouldn't need to be scaling back services to keep up with the surge in demand created by people working from home due to COVID-19.

## Cleantech startup Oxwash raises £1.4M

Oxwash, founded by former NASA engineer Kyle Grant, uses ozone generation technology and delivery to provide coronavirus (COVID-19) disinfection for customers. Oxwash combines ozone disinfection with thermal and chemical processes to wash to pharmaceutical-grade and ensure the full eradication of bacterial, fungal, and viral agents in customers' items.

The startup also uses no-contact pickups, electric-cargo bikes adapted with portable ozone generators to sterilise items and dissolvable laundry bags to eliminate coronavirus transmission through fabric and clothing.



Read also

[Oxwash's space-age laundry service gets £1.4M investment](#)

## VR virtuoso VRtuoso.io raises £805.7K in seed funding

[VRtuoso.io](#), London based innovative virtual reality (VR) presentations software platform for business, received a £805.7K seed funding investment from Symvan Capital and Compagnia Bresciana Investimenti S.p.A. Led by Frank Furnari, CEO and Founder, VRtuoso provides a VR live content creation and real-time guided content consumption platform for the enterprise market.



The system, which has applied for 16 worldwide patents on its approach to VR live content creation and real-time guided content consumption, has surpassed 1M users and has delivered over 500,000 hours of virtual training.

## Edtech device management provider Mobile Guardian raises £750K

Mobile device management provider for the global education sector Mobile Guardian has raised £750K in funding from new and existing shareholders. Mobile Guardian helps protect children online, whether at school or at home. Mobile Guardian's platform means schools can manage and secure thousands of devices such as iPads and Chromebooks distributed to their pupils to support remote learning.

The investment will be used to speed up the completion of "Mobile Guardian for Home". Designed to secure personal mobile devices, parents can access safeguarding tools to protect children from harmful content and inappropriate apps. The product was scheduled for release later this year, but its development will be accelerated to satisfy increased demand from parents, resulting from the COVID-19 lockdown.

## B2B automation solutions provider Allegrow raises £400K

Formerly known as *Direct Software*, Newcastle-based sales automation provider Allegrow, closed a £400K a funding round led by the North East Venture Fund (NEVF), the European Regional Development Fund, Mercia, Mercia's EIS funds and private investors.

Founded in 2019 by Ruari and Kieran Baker, the company provides B2B

companies with a software platform for sales staff to find and close new leads. With the fund, the company plans to further develop its product and expand its team.

## Text-giving platform Donr raises £350K

Created in Newcastle and led by Chris Nowell and Paul Peterson, text donation platform Donr secured £350K from the North East Innovation Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, Northstar Ventures and angel investor Andrew Robson. Donr provides a platform which allows charities to receive donations via SMS text. The system is directly integrated with the UK's five main mobile networks.

The company recently hit the milestone of helping its community of 2,500 charities including The Trussell Trust, the National Theatre, Tyneside Cinema, CHUF and St Oswald's to raise over £1M in aid of their causes, less than 18 months after launching their text-to-give service. With the funds, the company plans to focus on product development.

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#GREENTECH

Octopus Energy  
£300M

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#FINTECH

free2  
£305M

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#PLATFORM

Proximity  
£16.5M

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#FINTECH

Flagstone  
£12.1M

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#APP

Peanut App  
£9.6M

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#FINTECH

Banked  
£2.35M

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#IT

Estate  
£2.2M

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#DIGITAL

Scoota  
£2M

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#AI

Deep Render

£1.6M

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#TECH

Oxwash

£1.4M

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#VR

VRtuoso.io

£805.7K

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#EDTECH

Mobile Guardian

£750K

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#BTOB

Allegrow

£400K

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