

The world's first conservation-focused venture studio has launched – in the UK

Combining Oxford University research, corporate expertise and seed funding, it's set to launch up to 20 climate startups within two years. Meet the Oxford GAV Conservation Venture Studio.

Part of the solution to our manmade climate crisis will be found in the startup world. Transformative technology we'll come to rely on in 2030 and beyond is – right now – lurking at the venture stage. Gaining funding as a climate-focused startup used to be a real trial – but nowadays ESG and lucrative investments are becoming one and the same.

Between 2013 and 2019, investment in climate tech grew at five times the venture capital market rate. The seven-year period saw around £45B early-stage capital invested into green startups. Nevertheless, this is still only around 6% of overall VC funding – and the tech, policy and innovation solutions of the future will need many more billions yet.

Climate-specific VC funds are on the rise, with some of the most notable being Generation Investment Management (founded by Al Gore and David Blood) and Breakthrough Energy Ventures (an investor coalition featuring Bill Gates). Likewise Silicon Valley stalwarts including Sequoia Capital and Y Combinator have started actively seeking climate tech initiatives.

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Back here in the UK, we certainly aren't shying away from this climate capital boost. Last week saw the launch of the world's first conservation-focused venture studio in Oxford. Designed to rapidly commercialise novel technologies, and operating out of Oxford University, the Oxford GAV Conservation Venture Studio (OXGAV) will tackle biodiversity loss, food security and landscape change amongst other issues.

We can expect to see research from around a dozen of Oxford's departments put into action via the studio, which will also serve as a think tank. Reporting from *Sifted* suggests the partnership between Oxford University and Global Accelerated Ventures (GAV) will culminate in the launch of up to 20 conservation startups. According to Managing Partner Thomas Buchar, GAV has so far amassed "close to seven figures", soon to be "mid-eight figures", of seed financing to be split amongst participating startups.

Buchar continues,

"This collaborative partnership will redefine 'impact investing' and bring accountability to conservation initiatives globally."

Professor David Macdonald (behind the university's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit) will serve as Chairman of OXGAV's Joint Steering Committee, and Dr Robert Montgomery, (Professor of Conservation Science, Michigan State University) will be managing director.

Macdonald commented:

"The biodiversity crisis threatens the moving parts of Nature that sustain ecosystems and support humanity. Novel technologies expand human capacity

beyond previous imagining. What more potent, then, than to combine the greatest problem on earth with the greatest source of solutions, for the shared well-being of nature and people?”

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