

Planet watching, hard-to-beat cancer drugs and accessible SME financing – all 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.

Total

£290.8M

Number of deals

9

PlanetWatchers raises £10.2M funding to monitor crops from space

PlanetWatchers, a crop monitoring company that can provide detailed crop insights has raised £10.2M as part of its series A funding round. Seraphim Investment Trust, a SpaceTech investment company, and Creative Ventures, a deep tech venture firm, co-led the funding round. The Trendlines Agrifood Fund, BIG Capital and Ridgeline Partners also invested in the funding round.

PlanetWatchers is a leading technology company that uses machine learning to support crop insurers and the agricultural industry in verifying cover crops, tillage, planting dates, acreage, crop classification and weather damage at scale. The company uses Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) data to provide accurate insight at scale. The use of SAR, a powerful remote sensing technology bouncing microwave signals off the Earth's surface, helps PlanetWatchers to detect physical properties and the changes to them over time, proving valuable insight to its customers.

The latest funding round builds on the successful pre-series A round, which the Company closed in June 2021 and allows PlanetWatchers to significantly increase its commercial footprint with crop insurers and agricultural input providers. The proceeds raised will also allow the company to continue to invest in its industry-leading SAR-based data analytics alongside the expansion of its commercial teams to maximise opportunities and address the increasing market demand to help solve global food security issues.

Antibody-Drug Conjugate (ADC) Pheon Therapeutics raises £63M in Series A

Pheon, the London-based Antibody-Drug Conjugate specialist, has announced it has raised £63M in a Series A funding round following its emergence from stealth. Brandon Capital, an Australasian life science venture capital firm, played a leading role in the round. Other life sciences investors Forbion and Atlas Venture co-led the round, with participation from seed investor Research Corporation Technologies (RCT).

Pheon is an emerging UK-based Antibody-Drug Conjugate (ADC) specialist developing next generation ADCs for a wide range of hard-to-treat cancers. The Company's lead program exploits a novel target that is highly expressed in a broad range of solid tumours. The lead compound is expected to reach IND within the next 18 months. Using both novel and clinically validated

monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) and arming them either with warheads from its proprietary payload platform, or with off-the-shelf linker payload combinations, Pheon is finely attuned to balancing safety and efficacy for each target.

This investment will enable Pheon to advance its lead ADC program to clinical proof-of-concept and establish a pipeline of novel ADCs. Jonathan Tobin, Partner at Brandon Capital and Chair of Pheon, commented: '[I]n the last few years ADC drugs have started to show unprecedented clinical efficacy through a better understanding of the properties that make an effective ADC... We are excited by the potential of Pheon's first-in-class antibody target and novel payload technology to make significant contributions to the ADC field and cancer patients'

Future of Work scale-up Wazoku raises £8.5M in Series B

Innovation scale-up Wazoku has closed a series B funding round of £8.5M through investment from Octopus Ventures along with follow on from existing investors including Calculus Capital.

Wazoku works with global enterprises such as NASA, Enel, HSBC, Shell and more to help them innovate at scale. Wazoku has also announced the acquisition of the Danish collective intelligence platform, Mindpool, a research spinout that captures actionable employee insight to improve company performance. The acquisition, the company's third in three years, extends the company's collective intelligence offering driving further insights, engagement and predictions across the innovation at scale process. Mindpool powers the Global Mindpool platform that connects the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) with citizens worldwide through the Don't Choose Extinction programme. Linking insights from around the world – on the climate emergency, the crisis in nature and inequality – the Global Mindpool will support UNDP to better inform and equip policy makers in government, civil society, and the private sector.

It will use the funding to drive R&D across its product suite, as well as further internationalisation, acquisitions and the management of growth over the next two years. "In a world in which volatility and complexity are increasing and the nature of work and talent are drastically changing, it is critical that organisations develop the capability and capacity to think and act differently when it comes to change and innovation" said Rich Bolton, Octopus Ventures.

Embedded finance platform, Liberis, announces additional £140M in financing

Liberis, a global embedded finance platform, announced an additional £140M in financing from Barclays Bank PLC and BCI Finance. Barclays also led a funding £34M funding round for Liberis in December 2021, which remains one of the largest investments by a UK bank into a fintech. This brings Liberis' total funds raised to £350M, including over £80M in equity funding.

Liberis aims to provide small businesses with accessible and responsible finance, based on the belief that funding should always be a positive force for small businesses. Their global partner network includes e-Commerce platforms such as Klarna and acquirers such as Barclaycard, Worldpay from FIS, Clover, and Global Payments. Liberis' platform applies machine learning to understand a customer's risk profile and maximum funding options available to them, enabling higher volumes of origination. To date, Liberis has funded nearly \$1B to over 21,000 SMEs across the UK, Europe and the US, in over 50,000 transactions

The new funds will be used to further scale Liberis' platform, offering fair and increasingly flexible finance solutions to more small businesses through its global partners. Barclays also led a funding £34M funding round for Liberis in December 2021, which remains one of the largest investments by a UK bank into a leading fintech player.

#PLATFORM

Datamaran

£11.7M

Fortive & American Electric Power

#PROPTECH

Disperse

£14.9M

2150, Northzone & Kindred Capital

#INSURTECH

Peachy

£1.5M

Angels

#METAVERSE

Hadean

£28M

Molten Ventures, Epic Games, 2050 Capital, Alumni Ventures, Aster Capital, Entrepreneur First & InQTel

#DEEPTECH

PlanetWatchers

£10.2M

Seraphim Space & Creative Ventures

#HEALTHTECH

Optellum

£13M

Mercia, Intuitive Ventures & Black Opal Ventures

#HEALTHTECH

Pheon Therapeutics

£63M

Brandon Capital, Forbion & Atlas Venture

#PLATFORM

Wazoku

£8.5M

Octopus Ventures & Calculus Capital

#FINTECH

Liberis

£140M

Barclays Bank & BCI Finance

In other investment news

Leeds tech hiring climbs by two thirds, while sector investment soars by 88% so far in 2022

Leeds' burgeoning tech sector is on track for a record year as its tech startups and scaleups have raised £288M already in 2022, an increase of 88% on 2021's figures according to data from Dealroom.

While Leeds has acquired a reputation as home to an increasing number of tech companies in recent years – including Sky Betting & Gaming, Pharmacy2u, Communitis, GoIndustry DoveBird and Zest Eco – startups have also been growing rapidly, in part to the strong investment flow. The startups and scaleups that have seen the most growth in employee numbers are:

1. Switchmobility – all-electric zero carbon buses and vans
2. Event Genius – ticketing and event management platform
3. XR Games – games development studio
4. Taskbox – productivity software
5. The Data City – open data and AI platform

There are now over 49,000 people working in tech startups and scaleups across Leeds, rising to around 82,000 across Yorkshire and the Humber, along with thousands of others working at larger corporate tech firms. Some of the top companies for tech and digital jobs in Yorkshire include PA Consulting Group, airline Jet2, supermarket giant Asda, machine intelligence company Appen and management consultancy Accenture, according to smarter job search engine Adzuna.

In other International Investment news

Nilos raised \$5.2M to build platform to unify crypto and fiat for businesses

Nilos announced a \$5.2M financing round to offer a first of its kind platform that unifies crypto and fiat treasuries for businesses. The round was led by investors including Viola Ventures, Fabric Ventures and Mensch Capital Partners. Over 20 angels from the tech and business sector also participated in the round,

including: Yuval Tal (Founder at Payoneer) and Sebastien Borget (Co-founder at The Sandbox).

Nilos aims to reduce the complexity of managing cryptos for businesses by providing a platform where handling crypto is as simple as handling fiat. The service bridges the gap between fiat and crypto, providing a solution that unifies crypto wallets and fiat accounts offering special crypto/fiat capabilities such as: global treasury visibility, crypto to fiat payments and automatic reconciliation. Nilos therefore aims to provide a one-stop shop for businesses to connect crypto wallets, corporate bank accounts and/or payment service providers and centralize all their treasury operations, such as tracking incomes, reconcile money flows and payments across crypto and fiat seamlessly.

This fundraise aims to fuel its customer acquisition in Europe, finance the R&D and build the sales/marketing team. Eytan Messika, Co-founder of Nilos commented: '[W]e believe that crypto can disrupt businesses in many ways, starting from cross-border payments to new opportunities such as NFTs... But today, every step of the way is a painful process. We want to become the world's standard for managing its crypto finances by abstracting its complexity and making it as simple as managing fiat.'

Article by MADDYNESS UK