Great British Chemicals (GBC) FlexFund

Great British Chemicals (GBC) is a National Research & Innovation Centre for Sustainable Industrial Futures. Funded by EPSRC and NERC, the centre will unite the UK chemical industry, academic researchers and policy makers to advance innovative, scalable and sustainable technology solutions for defossilising chemicals manufacturing. We aim to create people-focussed opportunities to truly shape sustainable carbon management.

FlexFund Call – 2nd Round

GBC invites applications for FlexFund awards to accelerate the translation and validation of high-potential innovations that support the defossilisation and circular transformation of UK chemical supply chains which can ultimately be operated at scale. Collaborative research across multiple sectors will be the key to our success. Thus, GBC invites collaborative research and innovation projects focussing on accelerating the scale-up and deployment of novel and existing technologies. These aim to promote partnerships between academia, industry, the public sector and non-profit organisations.

For this second-round call, a total of budget of £500,000 is available to support multiple collaborative projects. Individual awards are expected to range between £30,000 and £100,000 (this is the GBC award at 80% FEC), depending on the scope, ambition and maturity of the proposed work. Full details of funding limits and conditions are provided in the accompanying funding guidance document.

This open call supports projects that are clearly positioned along recognised Technology and Societal Readiness pathways and demonstrate a credible route to commercial, policy or societal impact. The particular focus in this call are the environmental co-benefits. The fund is designed to accelerate translation and implementation and does not support the continuation of fundamental research.

Theme

This funding call will focus on technologies that provide a **demonstrable socio-economic impact under the "Planet" theme**.

Our "Planet" theme aims to integrate quantitative supply chain data with qualitative inputs to identify efficiency opportunities and environmental challenges that may hinder sustainability, including using tools such as Lifecycle Assessment (LCA), Materials Flow Analysis (MFA) and Techno-economic Analysis (TEA). The research aims to shape emerging technologies during early developmental stages to ensure they are environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable. Activities will accelerate the translation of research innovation ideas into economic, environmental, regulatory and societally relevant actions at different points on the Technological Readiness Level (TRL), Societal Readiness Level (SRL) and Adoption Readiness Level (ARL) pathways.

One of our primary goals is to lead the UK transformation to a planet positive chemicals industry. Enabling UK industrial sectors to move toward **net-zero or negative greenhouse gas emissions** will be measured across the following areas:

- **Decarbonisation** - demonstrated pathways to **net-zero industrial processes**
- **Resource and circular economy performance** – demonstrated increase in **circular material flows / industrial symbiosis**
- **Environmental co-benefits** – demonstrated **environmental** net gain or **biodiversity** benefits

Remaining competitive, resilient, profitable and better for the planet is a complex challenge.

For the UK to become a genuine and sustainable net zero society, we need to reimagine our relationship with carbon. To truly protect our people and planet, we can't afford to keep harvesting carbon from beneath the ground.

We must begin to see and manage the carbon we use as a precious resource. One that can be re-harvested, recycled and reused from the waste we create. The path to a new level of carbon management, and true net zero can be shaped by the UK. It can usher in revolutionary practices powered by innovations developed right here, while delivering equal opportunity, economic prosperity, and benefits to our urban and natural environments.

We've already begun the work to make it a reality, but continued partnership is the key to future success. Together, we can strengthen our competitive commercial edge, protect and expand exports, and defossilise our industry on the journey to net zero. We can commercialise and deploy revolutionary capabilities and ensure that our businesses, people and planet, all profit.

This high-impact challenge aims to foster a culture of innovation that will encourage transformative research, and breakthroughs that can target and address emerging needs and challenges within the sector and industry.

To foster collaboration across disciplines that can produce pilot projects, explorational studies, and ideation workshops. This fund is designed to bridge gaps in vital research, as well as develop, refine and demonstrate technologies, and engage the people and organisations that can help to revolutionise chemicals production in the UK.

If your ambitions match ours, join us on the journey to net zero by applying to our latest FlexFund round.

Funding Available

- Funding awarded at 80% FEC
- Project duration: 6 to 12 months
- Project value and duration must be fully justified in relation to scope, readiness and impact
- Significant industry cash and/or in-kind contributions are expected.
    - MAXI awards: a 50:50 industry cash match is expected.
    - MINI & MIDI awards: cash and/or in-kind contributions are permitted. The value of the industry "cash" match may be taken into account during the evaluation process.

Proposals must demonstrate clear alignment with the **"Planet"** theme. The scale of awards will reflect the ambition, readiness and impact potential of the proposal.

Scope and Focus

Our ambition is to create opportunities for economic growth from the challenge of reducing emissions and securing critical minerals and carbon, vital to the UK manufacturing sector, and the citizens who rely on their jobs and products. This call supports the translation and validation of high-potential research towards **socio-economic impact.** Projects must:

- Be clearly positioned along recognised Technology and/or Societal Readiness (TRL/SRL) pathways
- Be co-created with at least one non-academic partner
- Demonstrate validated feasibility appropriate to their stage of development
- Include industry collaboration and, where appropriate, real-world testing
- Focus on translation, validation and impact acceleration rather than continuation of fundamental research
- Articulate credible potential for **socio-economic impact**

Supported activities may include (but are not limited to):

- Feasibility studies
- Proof-of-concept development
- Early prototyping
- Initial stakeholder validation
- Early techno-economic or life-cycle scoping
- Technical and commercial validation
- Industry trials or real-world testing
- Standardisation of tools, services or processes
- Market development and commercial pathway refinement
- Policy development and delivery
- Skill, capacity and capability development

Projects must demonstrate technical feasibility, stakeholder relevance and measurable impact, and generate tangible outputs. Outputs may include solutions that demonstrable socio-economic benefit including pathways to reducing scope 1 and 2 emissions, reduction in energy and material use and improvements in air, water or land quality.

Projects are expected to include cash and/or in-kind Partner contributions proportionate to the innovation stage, anticipated IP stake and expected benefit. For projects involving more advanced validation or real-world testing, combined Partner contributions in the range of 10–50% may be appropriate. Letters of support must clearly state the nature and value of the contribution.

Engagement with a Technology Transfer Officer (TTO) or Business Development Manager (BDM) is required prior to submission to confirm IP position and route to market.

For further information on eligibility, application requirements and costings please refer to the Guidance document on our website.

Timeline

- **Call Opens:** 5 May 2026
- **Deadline:** 18 June 2026
- **Funding Decision:** w/c 20 July 2026
- **Project Start:** Shortly after award confirmation

For guidance and application submission details, please visit the GBC website or contact: contact@greatbritishchemicals.ac.uk