

Edinburgh to get a National Robotarium

Work has begun on the new National Robotarium at Heriot-Watt University.

This £22.4 million facility will be the largest and most advanced research facility for robotics and AI in the UK. It will work with industry to build solutions for business needs, for example in the energy sector.

The centre will specialise in developing robotics for hazardous environments, offshore energy, manufacturing, healthcare, human-robot interaction, assisted living and agritech.

It will be a centre of excellence for pioneering research and is expected to open in Spring 2022.



Professor Helen Hastie and Professor Yvan Petillot are joint academic leads of the National Robotarium. Describing the vision for the new facility, Professor Hastie said: “As a world-leading facility that will promote entrepreneurship and drive forward early-stage product development, the National Robotarium will play a significant role in supporting the UK’s economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“By drawing upon the world-class talent of the staff at Heriot-Watt and our collaborative partner, the University of Edinburgh, alongside students at the Centre for Doctoral Training in Robotics and Autonomous Systems, the National Robotarium will form a centre of excellence for

fundamental research and knowledge exchange to address real-world challenges and industry needs.

“The new building will facilitate a collaborative approach that is at the heart of the National Robotarium’s ethos, helping to accelerate research from laboratory to market and paving the way for the UK to take a leadership role in AI and robotics technology.”



Professor Yvan Petillot added: “The cutting-edge resources provided by the new facility combined with the expertise of our researchers will put us in a highly competitive position to elevate the UK onto the global stage in robotics and AI technologies. Our existing and new students will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge by working on real-world problems through internships and industry-led group projects facilitated by the Robotarium, accelerating their skills as they actively shape the future of the field.

“We hope to inspire subsequent generations about the positive impact of robotics and artificial intelligence, building trust, ethics and understanding into our research outputs and engaging the public regularly through school visits and open days.”

The funding for this project came from the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Region Deal. It is a collaboration between Heriot-Watt University and the University of Edinburgh.

Michael Matheson, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity said: “Across Scotland we have so far committed more than £1.9 billion over the next 10 to 20 years to City Region and Growth Deals and additional investments. We are investing £300 million over 15 years to the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal across transport, housing, culture, innovation and skills as we work

towards a fairer and more inclusive economy.

“It’s great to see construction now beginning on the National Robotarium. This project will ensure that innovation can play an intrinsic part in the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.”