

UK government shelves £1.3bn for Edinburgh exascale computer and AI Research Resource

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Government cuts £1.3bn of UK tech and AI funding 2 Aug 2024, 11:04 | Updated: 10 Feb 2026

State Opening of Parliament.

Picture: PA

Labour said the previous Conservative administration had not allocated the funding in spending plans.

The new Labour Government has shelved £1.3 billion of "unfunded" investment for UK tech and AI projects promised by the Conservatives.

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) said no new funding for the programmes had been allocated in the previous Tory government's spending plans, and therefore will not be taken forward.

It included £800 million for the creation of an exascale supercomputer at the University of Edinburgh and £500 million of additional funding for the AI Research Resource, a scheme which helps fund computing power for AI.

An additional £300 million committed to the AI Research Resource has been committed to, the Government said, as this funding was already in place, has been distributed and will continue as planned.

"We are absolutely committed to building technology infrastructure that delivers growth and opportunity for people across the UK," a DSIT spokesman said.

"The Government is taking difficult and necessary spending decisions across all departments in the face of billions of pounds of unfunded commitments.

"This is essential to restore economic stability and deliver our national mission for growth."

The Government said it is pulling together its own plans to invest in compute infrastructure as part of the development of its AI Opportunities Action Plan, which is being led by industry expert Matt Clifford, who played a leading role in organising the AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park last year.

The DSIT spokesman added: "We have launched the AI Opportunities Action Plan which will identify how we can bolster our compute infrastructure to better suit our needs and consider how AI and other emerging technologies can best support our new industrial strategy."

Andrew Griffith, the Conservatives' shadow science, innovation and technology secretary, accused Labour of having "lower ambitions" for the UK's tech sector.

In a post on social media site X, formerly Twitter, he said: "If Labour have lower ambitions for UK tech sector – or the new Secretary of State cannot get the same level of support for DSIT from the Chancellor – that's up to them but no one should be fooled by Labour trying to blame their predecessors.

"We increased public spending on research to a record £20 billion a year for 2024/25 and unlike Labour, we committed to increase that by a further 10% in our manifesto.

"AI and Exascale compute were both beneficiaries of this increased funding.

In a further statement he added: "As a point of fact, at the time the election was called, ministers had been advised by officials that the department was likely to underspend its budget for the current financial year."

The future of the exascale supercomputer project remains unclear, with the University of Edinburgh having already spent £31 million on a new wing of its advanced computing facility, which was purpose-built to house the

supercomputer.

It had expected to begin the first phase of installing it in 2025, according to the university's website.

A university spokesperson said: "The University of Edinburgh has led the way in supercomputing within the UK for decades and is ready to work with the Government to support the next phase of this technology in the UK, in order to unlock its benefits for industry, public services and society."

It is understood the university's principal and vice-chancellor, Professor Sir Peter Mathieson, is urgently seeking a meeting with the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology.

By Press Association