

Investigating fossil fuel industry funding in academia

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The picture in the UK

- ❑ £134m in funding from oil, gas and coal companies in the past five years
 - ❑ Promises to divest
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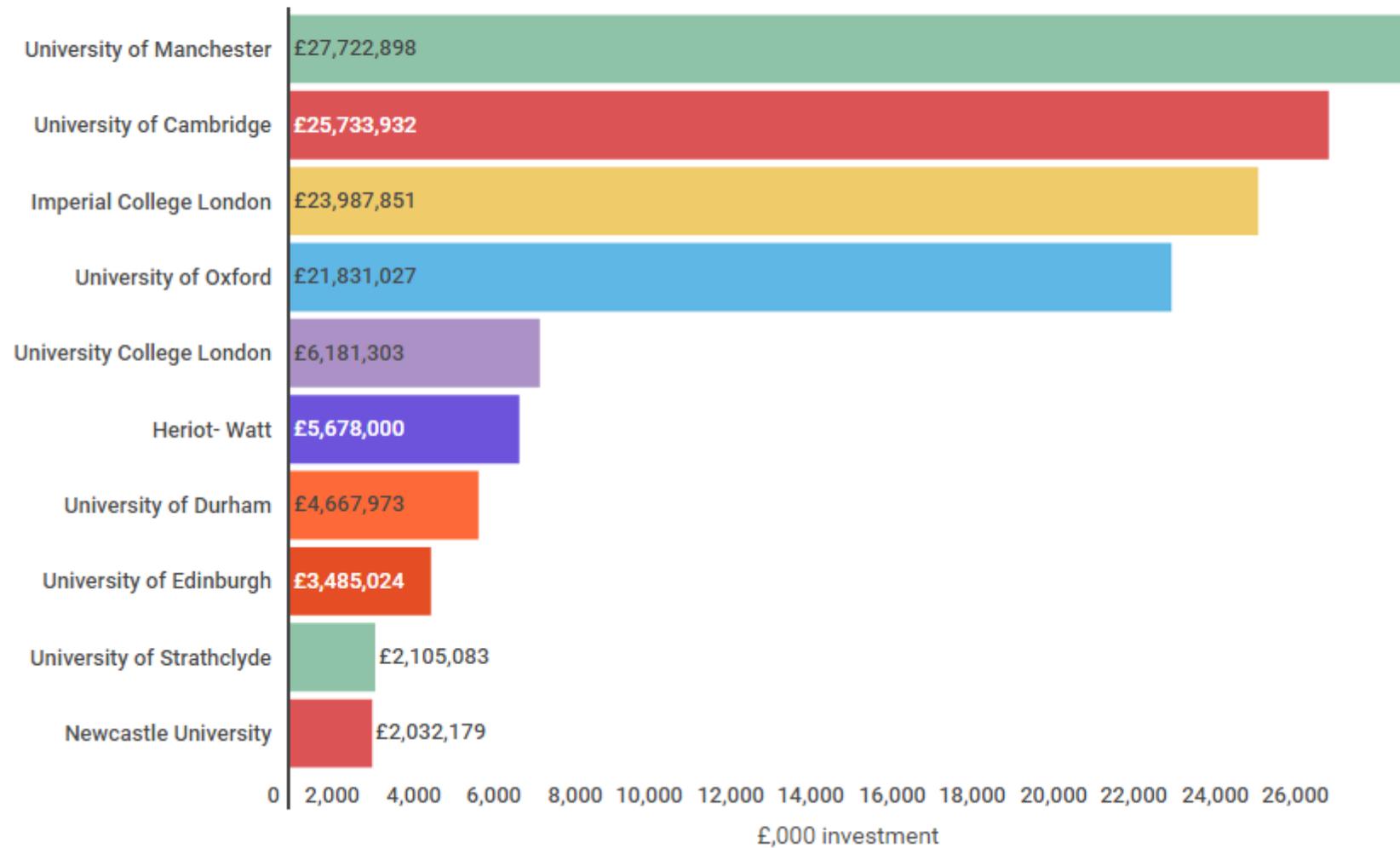
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- three quarters of all the funds: Shell and BP
 - nearly £100m – went to the University of Manchester, University of Cambridge, Imperial College and Oxford University
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How we did it

- Freedom of Information requests to 130+ universities
 - Interviews with academics
 - Trawl of research sites
 - Web search of academics
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- 39 universities admitted taking the money, including 80% of the elite Russell Group, several of which have committed to divesting.
 - Many refused
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Universities taking money from fossil fuel companies



Promises to divest

- Glasgow
 - Warwick
 - Oxford
 - Manchester
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- some top universities – including Oxford and UCL – are receiving more funding from oil and mining companies than from major scientific research councils
 - funding from just two companies, BP and Shell, was equivalent to an eighth of all the public money which went to fund energy related research.
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Where the money goes

- academic research
 - conferences
 - departmental overhead costs
 - branded professorships. At Oxford, for example, Shell funds the Professor of Earth Sciences.
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Example projects

- ❑ Imperial college- partnered with BP on a [project](#) to find new ways to extract oil from deep underground rock formations.
 - ❑ Glasgow- partnered with Shell to develop an [ultra-sensitive gas detector](#) designed to help find oil and gas reserves
 - ❑ Manchester University has [boasted how BP](#) “shares its expertise and experience with staff and students [including] sitting on advisory boards and developing the curriculum.”
 - ❑ At the University of Oxford, BP has given millions to fund the [Oxford Centre for the Analysis of Resource Rich Economies](#).
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Leveraging funds

- Nearly a quarter of the universities explored received more money from fossil fuel companies than from another major science funder, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).
 - EPSRC provided £235,521,962 research grants to universities for projects that partnered with Shell, BP and Exxon Mobil.
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Renewable research missing out?

- ❑ We contacted university groups specialising in renewables and some noted corporate funding levels significantly below that being ploughed into research of oil and gas.
 - ❑ The University of Southampton's renewable energy group, for example, told us that they haven't had any corporate funding for their work.
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Professor Jane Rendell:

- “In the case of fossil fuel funding it is clear that many companies benefit from their association with universities in ways that go beyond the research itself. Donating funds to universities gives fossil fuel companies access to the larger research cultures of universities, not just to scientists who can help with specific issues concerning production and extraction, so allowing a better understanding of the critical debate around sustainability, and so the possibility of recuperating critique in order to enhance brand value.
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Research Councils

- Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) which funds and carries out environmental science research received £6.7m from Shell and the fossil fuel industry in the last five years
 - MOU NERC and Shell 2014
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- powerpoint presentation for Shell: NERC reps appeared to suggest Shell could benefit from its high-cost polar work....
 - Under the heading “Leveraging our Large Infrastructure Assets” NERC notes the council’s “Fleet of aircraft for environmental mapping (including polar regions) and interpretation” as well as “Ocean going ships, including polar capabilities”
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Events

- May 2015 NERC workshop dedicated to exploring how to extract more oil from mature basins off Scotland.
 - At the event politicians and academics spoke alongside oil company giants and industry lobby groups, including Chevron and Oil and Gas UK. Representatives from Shell and Statoil also attended.
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The future...

- Brexit- uncertain funding landscape
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US...

- undercover investigation- how fossil fuel companies can secretly pay academics at leading American universities to write research that sows doubt about climate science and promotes the companies' commercial interests.
 - Posing as representatives of oil and coal companies, reporters from Greenpeace UK asked academics from Princeton and Penn State to write papers promoting the benefits of CO₂ and the use of coal in developing countries.
 - The professors agreed to write the reports and said they did not need to disclose the source of the funding.
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- ⑩ US coal giant Peabody Energy also paid tens of thousands of dollars to an academic who produced coal-friendly research and provided testimony at state and federal climate hearings, the amount of which was never revealed.
 - Princeton professor William Happer laid out details of an unofficial peer review process run by the Global Warming Policy Foundation, a UK climate sceptic think tank, and said he could ask to put an oil-funded report through a similar review process, after admitting that it would struggle to be published in an academic journal.
 - A recent report by the GWPF that had been through the same unofficial peer review process, was promoted as “thoroughly peer-reviewed” by influential columnist Matt Ridley
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