



Annual Report

2025-26



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ai@cam is the University of Cambridge's mission for AI that serves science, citizens, and society.

What began three years ago as a vision for how Cambridge University could approach AI differently has become working infrastructure. ai@cam identifies real-world challenges, brings researchers together across disciplinary boundaries to develop innovative solutions, and connects their work to science, public services, venture creation, and policymaking. It is delivering AI innovation that is civically engaged, technically ambitious, and nationally and internationally connected. AI tools developed with ai@cam's support are entering clinical practice, helping farmers manage agricultural production, and shaping how local government deploys AI. Innovations from the mission are already spinning into new ventures, being deployed in local authorities, and connecting to a public conversation about our future with AI.

In 2025–26, ai@cam directly supported 29 collaborative R&D projects within the University. Our AI-deas incubator supported projects from prototype to operation, generating research with international impact and innovations with real-world benefits. One AI-dea team has produced a spin-out company working to deploy new AI diagnostics in the NHS. Another has created an AI evidence synthesis tool that is tested with government chief scientists and used by conservationists. A third has created a nationally recognised hub for cultural heritage practitioners. This outward-facing impact is matched by a growing institutional transformation closer to home. Our AI for University Operations programme has kick-started a community of practice of professional services staff. In under a year, this has reached across 90 departments, producing practical evidence about how AI changes administrative work. Our Local Government AI Accelerator launched six collaborative projects with partners across local government in Cambridgeshire, informed by public dialogues with over 100 Cambridgeshire residents, in one of the first programmes in the UK where public deliberation, University research, and local government are coming together to shape AI deployment.

These projects emerge from ai@cam's dynamic, and growing, community of researchers engaging with AI across the University. Our AI for Science training has reached over 750 researchers, and sciencepreneurship bootcamps supported participants from over 40 departments. Alumni from these programmes have progressed to secure research fellowships, business case prizes, and venture funding. Alongside this, we have connected with over 2500 people across more than a dozen major events, from hosting public discussions at the Cambridge Festival to convening international research workshops with partners in France, Germany, and the United States. We have contributed directly to major funding proposals with a combined value of over £150m, and continue to work to advance the University's ambitions to grow capabilities in AI over the long term.

Across this work, the researchers involved consistently report that progress to date would not have happened without the infrastructure to work across boundaries ai@cam provides. ai@cam has built a new model for AI innovation: rooted in the breadth and research excellence of the University, connected to the institutions and communities that need AI to work, and capable of producing outcomes that neither traditional academic structures nor industry delivers alone. The next phase is scale and sustainability, turning that model into lasting impact.





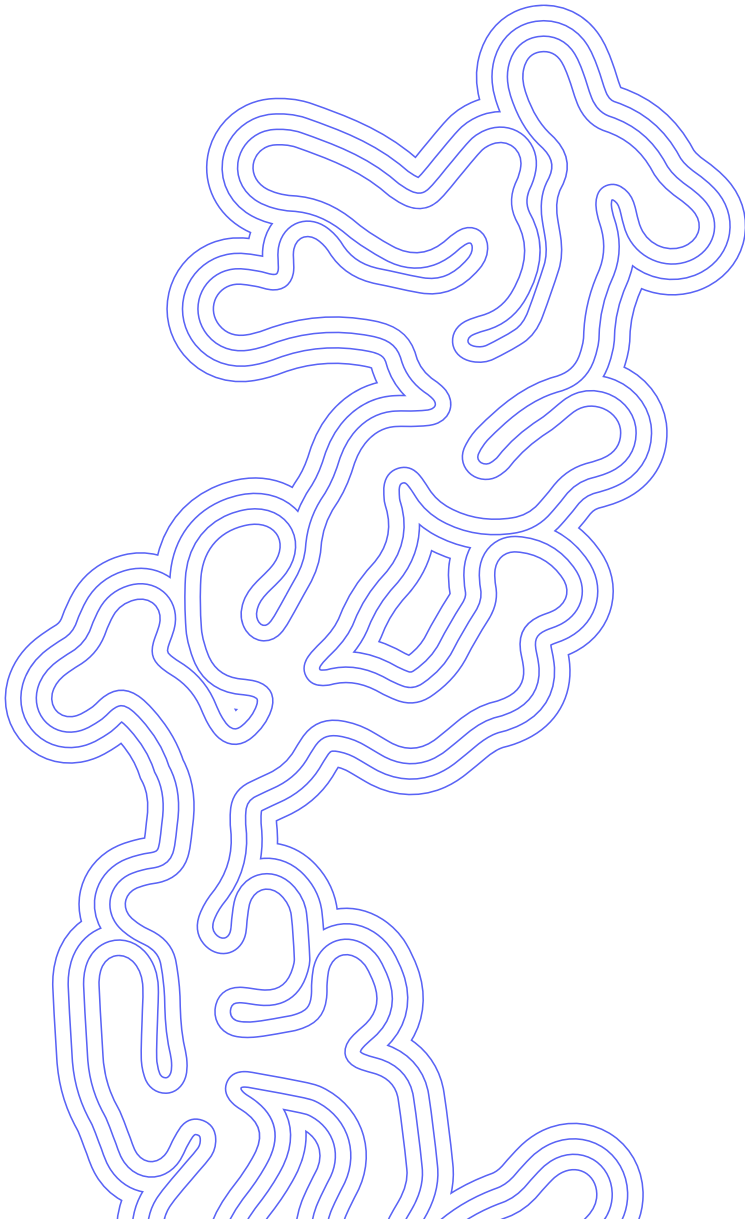
Section — 01

Cambridge's vision for AI innovation

Across healthcare, environmental management, public services, and scientific research, AI's potential is widely recognised but unevenly realised.

The challenges are both technical and institutional. The barriers to overcome are disciplinary; people who understand the problem and the people who build the tools often work in different institutions, different fields, different languages. They are institutional; institutions engaged in innovation lack the connective infrastructure to move from research to deployment. And they are civic; the people most affected by AI, and often most knowledgeable about its real-world effects, are rarely involved in decisions about how it is developed.

Universities are among the few institutions with the breadth to work across these barriers. They combine technical research with deep domain expertise, independence with convening power, and a long-term perspective with a civic purpose. Cambridge has these strengths in concentration: world-leading AI research alongside excellence across the sciences, humanities, social sciences, and clinical medicine; major computing infrastructure; and established partnerships spanning government, industry, and international research networks. What has been missing is the infrastructure to connect these strengths; infrastructure that ai@cam now provides.



→ Participants in a public dialogue on AI in local government (May 2026)

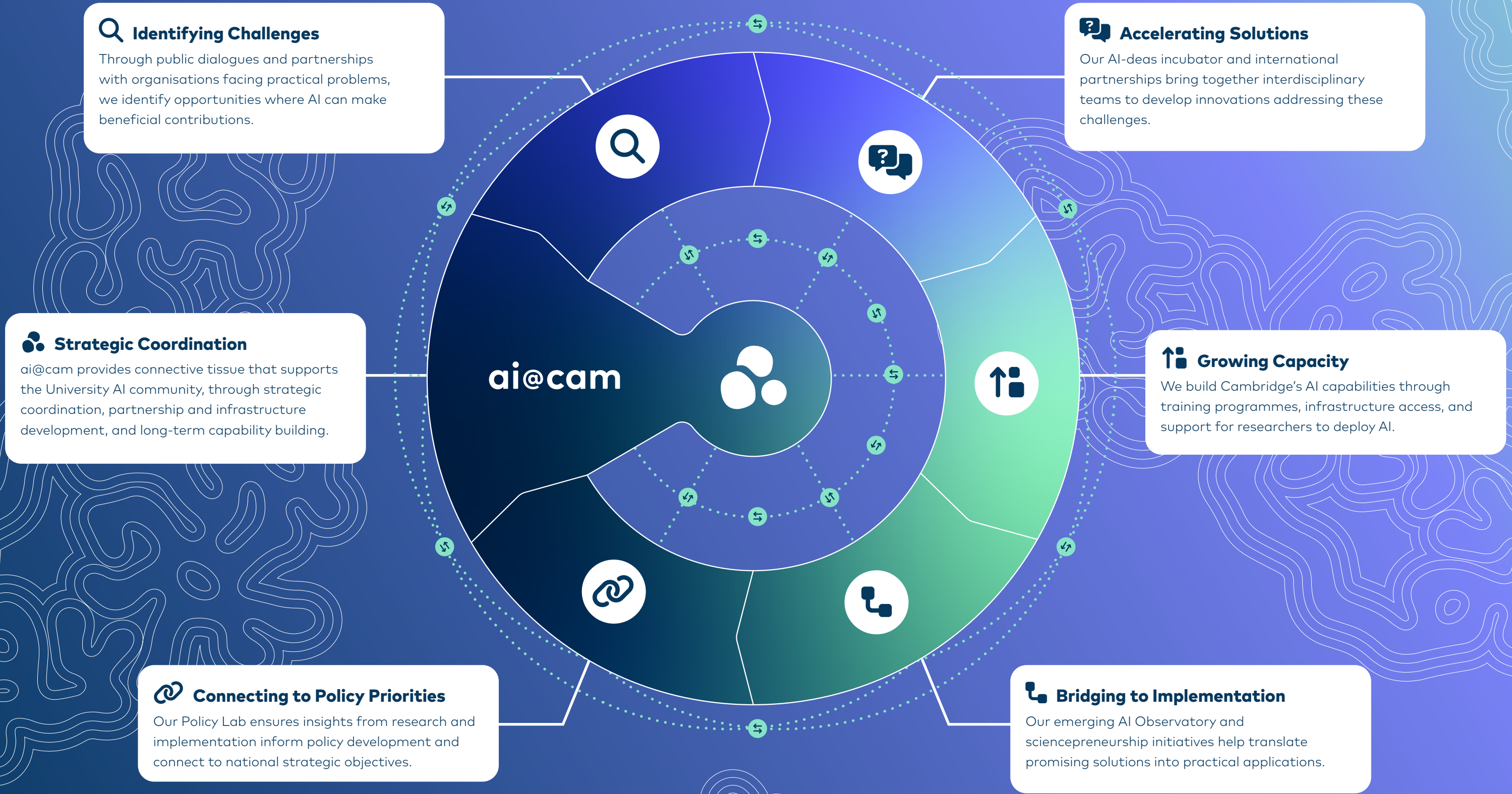
The University of Cambridge's vision for AI is that it should serve science, citizens, and society: AI that is technologically ambitious, grounded in real-world need, developed in dialogue with the people and institutions it affects, and translated into widespread public value. ai@cam was established to build the infrastructure that makes this possible. We identify R&D challenges through engagement with practitioners and public deliberation. We assemble interdisciplinary teams and give them seed funding, technical support, and institutional backing. We connect what they produce to the organisations that need it. And we feed what we learn back into policy and practice, so that each cycle of work informs the next.

This is our third year of operation. In the first year, we built the mission and began to convene the community. In the second, we launched our programmes and showed the approach could generate momentum. This year, we can show that the model produces results; spin-out companies in science and health domains, clinical tools entering NHS pathways, AI tools for sustainable farming deployed across nine countries, policy frameworks adopted by government, and a new programme of University-local authority

collaboration shaped by the voices of local residents. These advances have been driven by talented researchers from across the University. Across our programmes, the researchers involved tell us that these outcomes would not have happened without the support to work across boundaries that ai@cam provides. The projects that follow are Year 3's visible output. Their cumulative effect is less visible but still consequential: a new operating capacity for the University that shapes its position in the AI landscape.

An end to end vision for AI innovation

Our innovation model creates a continuous cycle translating research excellence into societal benefit:



Section 02

ai@cam

AI for science,
citizens and
society.

From vision to outcomes

ai@cam creates the conditions in which innovative research happens across disciplinary boundaries. Last year's report introduced the ai@cam model: an innovation flywheel that identifies challenges, assembles interdisciplinary teams, develops solutions, and feeds lessons back into policy and practice. This year, we can show the flywheel spinning. These outcomes have been achieved through a model that is not only effective but efficient: around 70% of ai@cam's expenditure goes directly to research and innovation, with a lean central operation that maximises the impact of every pound invested. For a modest central investment, the returns — in spin-outs, clinical tools, policy influence, and community built — are disproportionate.

Research breakthroughs

Our AI-deas incubator convenes interdisciplinary teams, providing seed funding, technical support, and institutional permission to take risks on ideas that sit outside conventional funding structures. The incubator currently supports two types of project: two-year challenges that support long-term capability building in areas where the University has the potential for leadership, and six-month sprints to translate promising research directions to impact.

Brain and mental health.

The AI for Brain and Mental Health AI-dea challenge has developed predictive tools for early dementia detection that are three times more sensitive than the current standard of care, demonstrating a 90% reduction in the sample sizes needed for Alzheimer's clinical trials. The work has led to Prodromic, a University spin-out backed by National Institute for Health and Care Research funding; catalysed new pilot programmes within NHS Secure Data Environments; and informed two World Health Organisation working groups on AI and neurotechnology. [Project lead: Zoe Kourtzi, Department of Psychology]

Our Brain Health Hub would not be possible without the support and funding from ai@cam. The AI tools being developed are supporting earlier diagnosis, improving patient outcomes, and making a tangible difference to people's lives." - Zoe Kourtzi



→ Brain and Mental Health AI-dea project lead

Women's health and fertility.

The Womb to World AI-dea challenge has developed an AI tool that predicts IVF outcomes with 87% accuracy and is piloting it at Cambridge IVF, an NHS clinic, to support clinical decision-making. Patient focus groups convened by the team have shaped both clinician-facing and patient-facing tools. In parallel, the Dr. Adeno sprint project is developing AI-enhanced ultrasound diagnosis for adenomyosis, assembling a dataset of over 1,100 patients and 5,500 images to develop a tool with the potential to significantly reduce the cost of diagnosis. [Project leads: Mo Vali, Staci Weiss, and May Levin, Department of Computer Science and Technology]



→ Womb to World AI-dea project team

Climate and land use.

The AI for Climate and Nature AI-dea challenge coordinates multiple complementary research projects. One has used AI to analyse land use trade-offs at national scale, identifying scenarios that are up to three times more efficient than those being considered in practice. This work, developed in collaboration with the RSPB, is being prepared for publication. Another has developed AI methods to process high-resolution 3D scans of forest canopies, turning billions of laser data points into measurements of carbon storage, biodiversity, and habitat structure — analysis that previously required weeks of manual work. A collaboration with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, has produced a co-authored preprint, and the methods are now being used by other research groups. [Project leads: Robert Rouse, Faculty of Mathematics, and Emily Lines, Department of Geography]

Conservation policy.

The Conservation Co-pilot AI-dea sprint produced a prototype AI for evidence synthesis tool that has been tested with a diverse pool of policy users, including the chief scientists of all five UK statutory nature bodies and 200 DEFRA scientists and policymakers. [Project leads: Sam Reynolds, Department of Zoology, and Sadiq Jaffer, Department of Computer Science and Technology]

Crop disease and global food security.

An AI-dea sprint project has developed AI-powered crop disease advisories now operational across nine countries, providing wheat disease risk forecasts to agricultural extension services supporting smallholder farmers. Ethiopia's Agricultural Transformation Institute has opened

a new collaboration based on the results. [Project lead: Jacob Smith, Department of Plant Sciences]

Brain tumour surgery.

A clinical-focused AI-dea sprint has built an in-vivo platform for thermal imaging-guided brain tumour surgery. Through collaboration with Cancer Research UK, the team is exploring new applications of this platform in paediatric brain tumour treatment. The team is now in a position to apply for further funding to pilot clinical trials in humans. [Project lead: Gita Khalili Moghaddam, Department of Clinical Neurosciences]

Pelvic floor health.

The PelviSense sprint has developed a non-invasive AI-powered biofeedback device for pelvic floor rehabilitation — a common but underserved health need, particularly for postpartum women. The prototype has been tested with 40 users, including 20 postpartum participants, with results above the team's threshold for a viable clinical solution. The project has secured over £50,000 in follow-on funding from MRC Confidence in Concept and the Wellcome Trust. It is now pursuing regulatory approval and working with a leading UK urogynecologist to shape the path to clinical use. [Project lead: Hristo Dimitrov, MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit]

Agentic AI for science.

An AI for Science-focused sprint project has developed an agentic AI platform that automates research data analysis, allowing researchers to move from raw data to structured analysis across multi-step workflows. Tested with nearly 100 users across 13 disciplines, from Clinical Medicine to Economics, the tool has led to the incorporation of Syracuse Intelligence Ltd as a new spin-out. With these advances, the system is moving from idea to research infrastructure. [Project lead: Boris Bolliet, Department of Physics]

AI in education and assessment.

The OpRaise project is building an evidence base on how AI compares to human markers in evaluating student work, addressing a question of growing urgency across the higher education sector. The research has found that LLM-based grading is broadly comparable to human marking but exhibits a central tendency bias, assigning fewer extreme scores. The project has brought together over 60 heads of psychology departments from UK universities to consider the impact of AI in education, and is organising a conference with the British Psychological Society in May 2026 to drive further engagement. [Project lead: Deborah Talmi, Department of Psychology]

Language equity and inclusion.

The EquiLL-AI challenge, led by Cambridge Language Sciences, has distributed funding to support research on AI and language equity across a network of collaborators

spanning Linguistics, the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, Computer Science, Engineering, Psychology, Education, and Psychiatry, among others. Projects range from generative speech corpora for hearing-impaired individuals to AI-assisted language teaching tools and Bayesian network analysis of geographic disparities in cognitive development. [Project lead: Matt Davis, MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit]

Cultural heritage.

Cambridge's libraries, archives, museums, and collections hold millions of objects spanning centuries, but much of this material remains inaccessible, locked in handwritten catalogues, fragmented artefacts, and formats that resist digital search. The AI for Cultural Heritage Hub (ArCH) has built a shared workspace that allows non-technical practitioners to apply AI tools to this material: transcribing historic letters, reading illegible handwriting, and suggesting matches for papyrus fragments that researchers had previously been unable to piece together. Since September 2025, over 40 academics and heritage practitioners have used the hub, and partnerships span the Fitzwilliam Museum, the Museum of Zoology, the Botanic Garden, the Polar Museum, and collaborators at Liverpool and Birkbeck. The ArCH conference in March 2026 drew 120 in-person attendees and 500 online registrants. As one practitioner put it: "Before the session I couldn't really envisage using AI tools, but I came out inspired and full of ideas." [Project lead: Amelie Roper, Cambridge University Library]



→ AI for cultural heritage AI-dea project team

ai@cam's funding has been instrumental in building cross-disciplinary collaboration and demonstrating how AI can reshape access to cultural heritage - saving time, uncovering previously inaccessible material, and bringing collections to life for new audiences, from research through to public engagement." - Amelie Roper

Across these programmes, a pattern is visible: ai@cam's seed funding and convening infrastructure are helping researchers to develop spin-out companies, clinical translation pathways, regulatory engagements, and operational deployments. These outcomes demonstrate a working pipeline from university research to public benefit.

Policy engagement and public service transformation

This year, ai@cam's work has reached local authorities, central government departments, regulatory bodies, and environmental agencies, producing policy frameworks, governance tools, and collaborative programmes that are shaping how the public sector adopts AI.

AI for local government

A major milestone this year was the launch of ai@cam's Local Government AI Accelerator — a collaboration between the University, local authorities, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, backed by £180,000 of funding. The Accelerator supports collaborative research projects that pair University of Cambridge researchers with council partners to develop and test AI solutions for real operational challenges in public services.

The first cohort of Accelerator projects, each funded at £25,000, addresses problems that councils themselves identified as priorities.



→ AI for local government challenge fair (November 2025)

- Developing a human-in-the-loop workflow to automate the housing trajectory surveys that every English local authority is required to produce — a process that currently involves manually distributing, chasing, and analysing questionnaires sent to developers.
- Building a multimodal AI platform that combines environmental, structural, and socioeconomic data to identify social housing properties most at risk of deterioration, so that councils can intervene before problems escalate.
- Using deep learning and cameras already fitted to refuse collection vehicles to detect fly-tipped waste during routine rounds, converting an existing but underused data source into a proactive detection tool.
- Automating the georeferencing and vectorisation of planning maps — a process that currently takes GIS officers between five minutes and over an hour per submission, across tens of thousands of submissions

each year — with the aim of reducing processing time by at least 75%.

- Leveraging nearly a decade of de-identified administrative data from the London Borough of Camden to build interpretable models that predict outcomes in the social housing bidding system, helping both officers and residents understand how the allocation process works in practice.
- Creating a socio-technical governance framework for AI-powered early warning systems that support vulnerable tenants — ensuring that the ethical and public value questions are built into the design from the start, not bolted on afterwards. Each project embeds human oversight by design.

The programme builds on two years of sustained engagement with local authorities across the region. In November 2025, a challenge fair engaged over 90 participants, including council staff from 10 local authorities across Cambridgeshire, with 21 local authority teams presenting posters on their operational challenges.

The programme's approach was shaped by members of the public locally. In November 2025 and May 2026, ai@cam held structured public dialogues with Cambridgeshire residents to explore what residents think about AI in public services; where they see potential, what concerns them, and what conditions they would attach to its use. The findings from these dialogues were published as two public reports, and were used in setting the criteria against which project proposals were assessed. It is a model we intend to continue: embedding public deliberation not as a post-hoc consultation exercise but as a structural input into how AI R&D is designed.

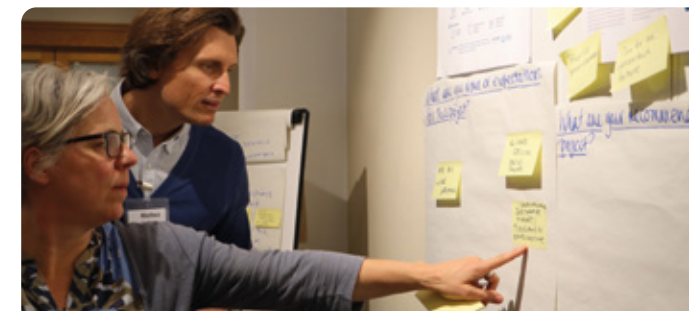


→ AI for local government challenge fair (November 2025)

The Accelerator has also begun to extend beyond Cambridgeshire. This year's cohort engage local government partners in the South East. Collaborative workshops with the University of Manchester and Greater Manchester Combined Authority have brought together over 50 participants to share insights from AI projects across the Cambridge-Manchester Innovation Bridge.

There is significant opportunity for AI innovation across local government, and ai@cam has taken the lead in convening lively, interactive discussions and creating spaces for practitioners to share both the opportunities and challenges for AI in local services." - Liz Scott, Programme Director, Turing Innovation Catalyst, Manchester

Aligned with this work, the Connected Cities AI-deas challenge [Project lead: Jennifer Schooling, Department of Engineering] has secured over £200,000 through the UK AI Security Institute to develop guidance on the use of AI in local authorities. Their conference on AI governance in the public sector brought together over 35 practitioners from across UK local authorities, and will feed insights into future developments in this programme. An AI-dea sprint, PLATO [Project lead: Jerry Chen, Department of Land Economy], is building an AI platform that retrieves and analyses planning documents from Cambridgeshire councils, generating plain-language summaries and an interactive map showing proposed developments and local amenity gaps. The goal is to help residents understand what is being built in their communities.



→ AI for local government public dialogue (May 2026)

National policy engagement

ai@cam's Policy Lab connects Cambridge expertise to national policy debates at a moment when the UK government is making consequential decisions about AI — in healthcare regulation, industrial strategy, and public service delivery.

A focus in policy work this year was sovereign AI. In July 2025, we convened over 50 people from more than 30 organisations to support DSIT in developing its thinking on sovereign AI strategy. The resulting policy brief, developed in collaboration with the Bennett School of Public Policy and Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy, argued that the UK's AI investments and world-class research base provide a strong foundation, but that the gap between

existing policy levers — innovation policy, industrial strategy, competition policy, procurement — creates vulnerabilities and strategic dependencies in the UK's AI infrastructure. The brief led to a series of further engagements: in February 2026, over 20 senior industry leaders came to Cambridge for the Government's Sovereign AI Forum, and in January we briefed members of DSIT's AI team on the report's findings.



→ Sovereign AI Policy Lab (July 2025; report October 2025)

More broadly, ai@cam is responding to demand from government for independent, research-informed perspectives on AI. We convened a roundtable on AI for science with DSIT, bringing together diverse participants from a dozen organisations to explore how AI is changing research practice and what infrastructure the UK needs to support it. Neil Lawrence chairs a working group for the MHRA's National Commission on AI in Healthcare — an expert advisory body established to review current regulations and provide recommendations for a new regulatory framework — and spoke at the India AI Action Summit in February 2026, contributing to international discussions on AI and development. And across the year, we have supported ministerial visits to Cambridge and contributed to cross-government discussions on AI strategy, positioning the university as a trusted source of expertise.



→ Sovereign AI Policy Lab (July 2025; report October 2025)

Building the University's AI capabilities

The projects described above depend on an ecosystem that supports them; researchers with the skills to use AI in their own fields, professional services staff familiar with AI, entrepreneurial pathways that connect research to deployment, and international partnerships that extend Cambridge's reach. Over the last year, ai@cam has grown its activities to build that ecosystem, which has started producing visible results of its own.

AI for operations

Most discussions about AI in universities focus on research, but universities are also complex organisations with administrative processes where thoughtful AI adoption could free staff capacity for higher-value work. ai@cam's AI for University Operations programme is one of the first structured programmes at any UK university to support professional services staff to experiment with AI in their own functions, with seed funding, technical support, and a peer learning community.

There has been a real buzz around the ai@cam community meet-ups, and it's been valuable to hear how colleagues across the University are adopting AI within their work. There's an energy and enthusiasm for exchanging ideas and sharing learning that means ai@cam is fast becoming a valuable space for discussion and collaboration for professional services teams." - Ian Everett, AI Lead at Cambridge Enterprise

The response has been enthusiastic. Over 40 professional services teams applied to join the programme. Eight projects were funded, and a growing community of practice has brought together over 200 people from more than 90 departments through a series of four meet-ups.

The projects are producing practical evidence about how AI can support professional services:

- A team in Education Services set out to automate the process of checking that students' exam paper choices comply with regulations — a task that currently takes weeks of staff time across the University each year. They discovered that Python scripting, not AI, was the primary tool needed, but that AI was valuable for refining and checking code. The manual process of checking student exam selections is now automatable in seconds, offering a significant saving in staff time.
- A grants administration team ran a systematic comparison of ChatGPT, Copilot, and Gemini against 20 real-world questions from their daily work, and found that each tool is useful at different types of task, producing practical guidance that other administrative teams can use.
- A team in Clinical Medicine is building a co-pilot for regulatory compliance documentation for medical software, with early estimates suggesting a 20 to 40

percent reduction in effort per project, directly relevant to the speed at which Cambridge can bring clinical AI tools through to regulatory approval.

- Another Clinical Medicine team is using AI to draft committee minutes (staff report an average time saving of 50%), finding that it saves hours per set of minutes and that staff who were initially cautious have started adopting the tools themselves.
- The University Library's Working Smarter initiative is exploring multiple applications of AI across library services, including converting handwritten card catalogue records into machine-readable formats — potentially unlocking collections that have been inaccessible for decades — and scoping an AI chatbot to guide users through the archives.
- The Bennett School of Public Policy is developing an AI-powered replybot to handle high volumes of routine recruitment and admissions enquiries, freeing staff for higher-value work.
- A team in Materials Science is building an energy analytics dashboard that unifies fragmented monitoring data across the department, with the potential for significant energy cost savings.



→ AI for Ops projects launch (October 2025)

As well as producing operational efficiencies, these projects are building a body of evidence about what AI adoption requires in a complex institutional setting, showing how important structured experimentation is to discovering where AI works in practice.

The use cases presented at the ai@cam community events provided valuable insights for my team. The approaches we heard are directly applicable within our School office setting and following the recent community event we invited one of the speakers to our monthly team meeting for further knowledge sharing." - Joy Haughton, Business and Operations Manager at the Office of School of Technology

AI skills and entrepreneurship

AI's impact depends on a growing community of researchers who can deploy AI in their own fields, and on pathways that help them move from skills to impact beyond the University.

Through the Accelerate Programme for Scientific Discovery, we have trained over 750 researchers in AI for science this year, bringing the cumulative total to over 2000. Courses now span foundational Python skills through to frontier methods in large language models and diffusion models, with waiting lists for the most in-demand workshops. The programme's first undergraduate winter school brought 30 students from ten universities across the UK to Cambridge for the first UK AI for science winter school.



→ AI sciencepreneurship bootcamp (February 2026)

Two AI Sciencepreneurship Bootcamps have now been held, the most recent in February 2026 with 38 participants from 33 departments. The programme is designed to help researchers explore how entrepreneurship delivers real-world impact, and a growing number of participants are taking the next steps towards successful ventures. After winning the best project prize at the June 2025 bootcamp, Omer Nivron (Department of Computer Science and Technology) registered his spin-out OTZI and went on to win first place in the Postdoc Venture Creation Challenge. Syed Haider (Isaac Newton Institute), who won the 2026 Project Prize for VocaLoc, has since gained a Maxwell Centre Impulse Fellowship.

More broadly, research supported by ai@cam has contributed to the development of at least four ventures — Prodromic, OTZI, Syracuse Intelligence, and Episteme — and TumourVue has used sprint funding to advance its clinical evidence base. These trajectories illustrate what the pipeline is designed to produce: researchers who arrive with domain expertise, build AI and entrepreneurial skills through ai@cam programmes, and leave with ventures or fellowships that take their work toward deployment.

ai@cam's bootcamp offers researchers both the practical tools and the structured framework to take the next step towards building a venture. We're seeing our participants demonstrate not only technical depth but a clear understanding of real-world impact and commercial potential." - Ian Lane, Cambridge Innovation Capital

Participating in the bootcamp encouraged us to view our research through a different lens. As researchers, we often know there is a problem, but we do not always need to articulate why it

matters beyond academic contexts. The bootcamp pushed us to think more explicitly about impact, demand, and how our research might translate into something that people would actively use." - Dr Staci Weiss and Ekaterina Moiseeva, participants in the sciencepreneurship bootcamp.

Convening and international reach

Within Cambridge, ai@cam hosted or supported over a dozen major events that brought together researchers, practitioners, and policymakers who would not otherwise be in the same room. These ranged from a Cambridge Festival event on AI and Public Health (over 100 attendees) to support for Cambridge University Press and Assessment's AI and education conference (over 200 at a keynote talk by Neil Lawrence), to NeurIPS@Cambridge, which brought 100 early career researchers together in collaboration with the Centre for Data Driven Discovery, and the Accelerate Science annual summit (over 180 participants). A workshop with the Ellison Institute on agentic AI convened 20 leading AI researchers to explore future directions in this field. An ai@cam-supported panel at the Cambridge Tech Week launch drew over 150 people, and an Isaac Newton Institute workshop session on agentic AI in science brought over 50 researchers from across Europe to Cambridge. These events help build our cross-disciplinary community.



→ Cambridge Festival event on AI in public health (March 2026)

Internationally, ai@cam is developing a network of strategic partnerships that extend Cambridge's reach.

- The Entente Cordiale workshop in November 2025 brought together over 70 researchers from Cambridge, Oxford, and Paris to explore how AI is changing scientific practice, producing a shared research agenda that is now being developed into collaborative proposals.
- A workshop with the Munich Centre for Machine Learning (MCML) convened over 70 participants from Cambridge and Munich in support of the Cambridge-Munich strategic partnership, focusing on AI in science and education.
- Through the ELIAS Alliance, Cambridge is connected to innovation hubs across eight European cities, creating a network for AI sciencepreneurship and skills building that gives our researchers access to collaborators, training, and entrepreneurial infrastructure across the continent.

The sections above describe what ai@cam has produced in its third year. The section that follows sets out what it will take to sustain and scale it.



Section — 03

Looking forward

Alongside the projects described in this report, though less visible in any single case study, is a new capability that ai@cam is creating for the University: the ability to act as a coordinated institution on AI.

We can move at the speed of opportunity. When UKRI opened a major funding call this year, ai@cam convened a proposal drawing on AI research from five departments within four weeks. That was possible because the underlying vision, the cross-departmental relationships, and the habit of working together were already in place. The infrastructure was there to draw on.

Our voice is grounded in delivery. When Neil Lawrence gives evidence to the House of Commons Business and Trade Committee, or chairs the MHRA working group on AI in healthcare, what he can say is rooted in what ai@cam is doing with local authorities, the NHS, and international partners. Examples of AI in local government picked up by MPs and media are projects we have run; policy briefs are informed by the realities of deployment our projects have surfaced. That integration of research, policy, and practice is the basis for Cambridge to be treated as a trusted source by government.

Public deliberation is becoming structural. Having the Local Government Accelerator shaped by dialogues with Cambridgeshire residents — and having those dialogues feed directly into how proposals were assessed — is an example of practice that informs strategic discussions about civic engagement, inclusive innovation, and growth.

These are the second-order returns on the infrastructure ai@cam has built that provide a different operating capacity for the University. Sustaining it is what the next phase has to fund.

Our approach is effective at generating results — the spin-outs, clinical tools, and policy frameworks described in this report demonstrate emerging impacts.

However, the programme has reached a stage where the next level of capability-building for AI in the University requires a different kind of investment: endowed chairs

that anchor long-term research leadership, large-scale postdoctoral funding that sustains interdisciplinary teams beyond individual project cycles, and core support for mechanisms like the Local Government Accelerator that have proven their value but depend on year-to-year funding. Securing investment at that scale requires institutional backing. Closing this gap — between what we have proven the model can do and the institutional infrastructure needed to fund its next phase — is the central challenge ahead.

Several programmes are already moving into their next phase:



The Local Government AI Accelerator's first cohort will deliver proof-of-concept results over the coming year, with a public showcase planned to document outcomes and lessons for the sector. We are extending the programme's geographic reach, with engagement underway with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority through the Cambridge-Manchester Innovation Bridge.



The AI for University Operations projects will present their results in May 2026, and the community of practice they have built is being established as a sustained peer-learning forum by the HR team.



A further cohort of AI-deas sprints will continue the six-month rapid-development model.



The Accelerate Programme will continue its AI for science training across the remainder of 2026, and we expect to hold a further sciencepreneurship bootcamp.



Our Policy Lab will produce briefings on AI for science and AI in local government, drawing directly on what we are learning from our own programmes.

The programmes described in this report have demonstrated that targeted investments — combined with convening power, technical support, and institutional backing — can produce outsized returns in research impact, policy influence, entrepreneurial activity, and public benefit.

It also points to demand that exceeds what we can currently supply. Waiting lists for training programmes, demand for sprint and accelerator funding that exceeds supply, and the growing expectations of government, industry, and international partners all indicate that we could scale this work significantly with wider resources. We are actively pursuing that step-change through multiple channels. We are developing industry partnerships with major technology companies.

We are actively pursuing that step-change through multiple channels. We have contributed to major research funding bids with a combined value of over £50m and

philanthropic proposals that represent over £100m in strategic investment. We are developing industry partnerships with major technology companies. And we are working with Cambridge University Development and Alumni Relations to advance the philanthropic case for transformative investment in Cambridge's AI capabilities, through the proposed Cambridge AI Lab.

ai@cam has shown how a university can lead AI innovation for public benefit — by creating the connective tissue that turns distributed expertise into coordinated impact. The next phase requires investment commensurate with that ambition.

Section 04

Annex

Annex 1: Steering Group and core team



John Aston
Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research, Harding Professor of Statistics in Public Life, Department of Pure Mathematics



Colm-cille Caulfield
Professor of Environmental and Industrial Fluid Dynamics, Head of the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics, and co-Chair, C2D3



Diane Coyle
Bennett Professor of Public Policy, Bennett School of Public Policy



Mireia Crispin
Assistant Professor, Integrated Cancer Medicine, Department of Oncology



Neil Lawrence
DeepMind Professor of Machine Learning, Department of Computer Science and Technology



Simon Godsill
Professor of Statistical Signal Processing, Department of Engineering



Tim Minshall
Dr John C Taylor Professor of Innovation, Institute for Manufacturing



Richard McMahon
Professor of Astronomy, Institute of Astronomy



Gina Neff
Executive Director, the Minderoo Centre for Technology & Democracy. (Gina stepped back from the Steering Group in autumn 2025)



Jessica Montgomery
Director, ai@cam



Richard Turner
Professor of Machine Learning, Department of Engineering



Carola-Bibiane Schönlieb
Professor of Applied Mathematics, Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics



Elinor Pegler
Communications Manager, ai@cam



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