

STFC launches powerful new AI supercomputer for industry?

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From new medicines to clean energy, the Mary Coombs supercomputer will help UK industry make breakthroughs through AI and advanced computing

The Science and Technology Facilities Council's (STFC) Hartree Centre has launched a powerful new supercomputer designed to help UK industry accelerate innovation through artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced computing.

Located within the STFC's new £30 million Supercomputing Centre at its Daresbury Laboratory, the system is named in honour of Mary Coombs, the UK's first female commercial programmer. It will give businesses and public sector organisations of all sizes access to world-class computing power and expertise.

From new medicines to climate prediction, it will help UK businesses analyse vast datasets more quickly and turn cutting-edge research into real-world solutions faster, more efficiently and at greater scale, boosting productivity and growth across the UK economy.

Accelerating discovery

Located at STFC's Daresbury Laboratory, at Sci-Tech Daresbury in the Liverpool City Region, the Hartree Centre is the UK's only supercomputing centre dedicated to working with industry to advance digital innovation.

Home to some of the UK's leading experts in supercomputing, AI and data science, it helps businesses of all sizes tackle complex challenges and turn ideas into practical innovations that strengthen the economy and benefit society.

Real-world solutions

Professor Kate Royse, Director of the STFC Hartree Centre, said:

"Here at the Hartree Centre, our new Mary Coombs supercomputer can provide UK industry with the computing power, expertise and skills needed to turn ambitious ideas into real-world solutions.

"From drug discovery to climate research, businesses can process vast and complex datasets faster and more efficiently than ever before, without needing in-house supercomputing or AI expertise.

"By giving industry access to world-class AI and high performance computing, and to the leading skills of our Hartree Centre scientists, Mary Coombs can help businesses innovate with confidence, accelerate research, and bring solutions to market more quickly, delivering tangible benefits for our economy and society."

A leap in supercomputing processing power

Mary Coombs delivers ten times the performance of its predecessor, Scafell Pike, whilst being more energy efficient.

A 24.41 petaflop system, it can perform 24.41 quadrillion floating-point calculations per second. For context, carrying out one calculation per second would take nearly 773 million years to achieve the same number.

The GPU-based supercomputer is designed for AI workloads and advanced visualisation, marking a major step forward in the Hartree Centre's computing capabilities.

Leading the Digital Future

Steve Rotheram, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, said:

“When I speak to investors from the UK and beyond, they always sit up and pay attention when I tell them that the Liverpool City Region is at the heart of the UK’s advanced computing sector.

“From cutting edge AI research to breakthroughs in health innovation and climate science, the impact of the pioneering work happening at Daresbury can be felt far beyond our region, and this new supercomputer will turbocharge those capabilities even further.”

A major national asset

Paul Vernon, Head of STFC’s Daresbury Laboratory, said:

“The launch of the STFC Supercomputing Centre and Mary Coombs marks an important milestone for UK innovation, giving businesses access to world-class tools and expertise to turn ideas into reality.

“This new facility is an important national asset for research and innovation, strengthening the North West’s position as a hub for advanced technology, digital skills and high-value jobs.

“By giving businesses the infrastructure to explore and apply advanced digital technologies, we’re helping to build a stronger, more innovative digital economy and ensuring the UK remains at the forefront of global research and development, driving growth and opportunity across the nation.”

A key part of the UK’s digital innovation strategy

The new supercomputer forms part of the £210 million Hartree National Centre for Digital Innovation (HNCDI) programme, a collaboration between STFC and IBM.

The programme helps UK businesses and public sector organisations explore and adopt advanced digital technologies such as AI, quantum computing and data analytics to boost productivity and growth.

The launch of the new STFC Supercomputing Centre also supports the Government’s [AI Opportunities Action Plan](#) .

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