# UK commits £56.8m to geoengineering projects amid climate crisis concerns



This week, the UK's Advanced Research & Invention Agency (ARIA) announced a notable initiative to invest £56.8 million in 21 geoengineering projects globally over the next five years. This significant financial commitment is designed to explore large-scale technological interventions aimed at countering the rapidly growing impacts of climate change, which include severe weather phenomena and catastrophic heatwaves. The announcement is both striking and troubling, resonating with themes from Kim Stanley Robinson’s speculative novel, *Ministry for the Future*, where such technological ventures become vital components of a dystopian narrative rather than mere scientific milestones.

Geoengineering, a term that encompasses various large-scale interventions in the Earth’s climate system, encompasses techniques ranging from cloud seeding—initiating artificial rainfall—to radical proposals such as the injection of aerosols into the atmosphere to reflect sunlight and reduce temperatures. While this recent UK funding might be one of the most substantial government-backed geoengineering experiments to date, it finds itself within a historical context of previous attempts that remain largely without regulation. Countries like Australia and Saudi Arabia have implemented cloud seeding strategies since the mid-20th century, with China currently managing expansive projects targeting drought reduction across an area surpassing the size of India.

With the increasingly dire consequences of drought, there is a growing likelihood that weather manipulation efforts will proliferate globally. This could pose significant risks, particularly as the wealthiest individuals attempt to pursue their own geoengineering agendas. A notable example is Russ George, a California businessman who, in 2012, irresponsibly dumped over 100 tons of iron sulfate into the Pacific Ocean to stimulate carbon dioxide absorption. His actions, which violated several global agreements and resulted in environmental degradation, reflect the potential chaos that unchecked experimentation can unleash.

Internationally, many nations, including Kenya, Colombia, Mexico, and Fiji, have expressed concerns about the unforeseen consequences of geoengineering. These nations advocated for a moratorium on solar radiation management at the UN Environment Assembly, worried that such interventions could inadvertently alter monsoon patterns or exacerbate drought conditions. Critics also argue that reliance on geoengineering could become a moral hazard, providing an excuse to sidestep the fundamental causes of climate change, notably the ongoing dependence on fossil fuels. Current projections indicate that governments are planning to produce more than double the fossil fuel capacity necessary to remain under the critical threshold of 1.5°C of global warming.

The comparison between geoengineering and artificial intelligence (AI) is particularly striking; both fields occupy the contentious ground between the potential for substantial global benefit and the risks of dystopian scenarios. In 2023, leading AI researchers, including figures like Elon Musk, called for a moratorium on AI expansion due to fears of an existential threat posed by unchecked technological growth. Since then, AI tools have proliferated at an alarming pace—ChatGPT alone reports over 400 million active users—raising pressing concerns about ethical oversight and societal impact.

Despite the fragmented nature of geoengineering efforts, the UK's commitment to expanding research in this area, combined with proposed safeguards and calls for built-in regulatory frameworks, may offer a more cautious path forward. The current Labour government has expressed a reluctance to implement geoengineering solutions hastily; instead, it views this research as foundational for establishing international regulations by 2030.

As the climate crisis intensifies and weather-related disruptions become more frequent, the temptation for quick technological fixes will grow stronger, despite the necessity of addressing the root causes of these challenges. The urgent need to curtail fossil fuel emissions has never been more critical, yet as the landscape of geoengineering evolves within a backdrop of unprecedented climate shifts, one can only hope that the coming years will witness a more prudent and reflective approach towards this existential risk than has been observed in the realm of AI.

### Reference Map

* Sources informing the article: [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/geoengineering-british-government-climate-change-weather-b2748754.html), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/22/uk-scientists-to-launch-outdoor-geoengineering-experiments), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/22/uk-scientists-to-launch-outdoor-geoengineering-experiments), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/22/uk-scientists-to-launch-outdoor-geoengineering-experiments).

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## Bibliography

* <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/geoengineering-british-government-climate-change-weather-b2748754.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
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