

Business

Pouring money in

Simon Illingworth has a dream: a fleet of battery-powered robot submarines, each the length of a human arm, silently patrolling the ocean floor. They will withstand immense pressures and stay submerged for 80 days at a time.

They will do the seismic work that identifies promising new subsea oil discoveries for a fraction of the present cost and less risk to human life. The same technology could be used for greener projects, like

identifying suitable caverns for carbon capture and storage.

BP and other backers have sunk £10 million into the business, which has relocated from Australia to Britain and is hiring. We hear a lot about drones, but let's hear it for their underwater cousins — an industry few of us knew existed, but one where the UK, already a leader in offshore energy technology, might one day lead the world.

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