

Thomas Ashton Institute Newsletter – June 2025

Reflecting on a Year of Growth and Impact

Over the past year, the Thomas Ashton Institute has continued to grow as a leader in workplace health, safety, and resilience. From launching a new research structure to expanding our virtual faculty and delivering high-impact projects, it's been a year of transformation and achievement.

We've strengthened our partnerships, supported early-career researchers, and led national conversations on safety culture, digital ethics, and security. With the [SALIENT Building a Secure And Resilient World: Research and Coordination Hub](#) having launched its first funding call and now hosting the [Network for Security Excellence and Collaboration \(NSEC\)](#), we're better positioned than ever to drive interdisciplinary research that makes a real-world difference.

"It's been another great year for the Institute with some notable successes across all our research themes and platforms. This reflects all the hard work put in by the TAI team, our partners and stakeholders. I am really proud to be part of this team and look forward to another successful year" – Darren Clement, TAI Operations Manager

A New Way of Working

TAI has recently reorganised its research into three main themes, supported by new cross-cutting platforms. This change will help the Institute focus more clearly on key challenges like digital safety, workplace wellbeing, and resilient infrastructure. The new structure also brings in fresh leadership and clearer goals.

Our new themes and platforms are:

[Living and Infrastructure](#)

[Workplace Health and Wellbeing](#)

[Resilient Net Zero](#)

[Digital Safety and Health](#)

[Leadership and Social Change](#)

[Security and Resilience](#)

The new teams recently came together for a pivotal all-theme and platform meeting to discuss the future direction of the Institute. This collaborative session brought together colleagues from across our diverse research areas to align strategic priorities and foster interdisciplinary collaboration.

Key outcomes included a renewed commitment to global collaboration, more efficient approval processes, and better use of university resources to support business engagement.

This session marked a significant step forward in shaping a cohesive, forward-looking research agenda that tackles real-world challenges through innovative, cross-cutting solutions.

👉 Find Out More: [Research](#)

New TAI Website

We're thrilled to announce the launch of the brand-new Thomas Ashton Institute for Risk and Regulatory Research website: www.ashtoninstitute.ac.uk

Unveiled on 4th June, the refreshed site represents a major upgrade—featuring a modern design, streamlined navigation, and new content areas that better reflect our mission and impact.

What's New?

- Dedicated pages for Impact, Business Engagement, Collaboration, and Resources
- A more intuitive layout to help you explore our research, people, and partnerships
- Enhanced accessibility and mobile responsiveness

Whether you're a researcher, policymaker, industry partner, or just curious about our work, the new site makes it easier than ever to connect with us and discover how we're driving change across sectors.

★ **Special thanks** to Helen Kreissl (Thomas Ashton Institute's Senior Administrator), and the FSE Communications and Marketing Team for making this happen. Your support and collaboration were instrumental in bringing this vision to life.

Welcome to Our New TAI Colleague – Andy Tracey...

We're delighted to welcome Andy Tracey to the Institute as our new **TAI Programme Manager**. Andy brings with him a strong background in research project management, particularly in the field of cancer, imaging and translational research.

Prior to joining us, Andy worked in a research project manager role in the University of Manchester Imaging Facilities, supporting a broad range of research projects, providing MR and PET-MR imaging to facilitate high quality research to inform the identification of effective new treatments and the targeted use of treatment for greatest patient benefit.



Prior to this he served in a similar role supporting the [RADNET](#) programme in the [Cancer Research UK Manchester Centre](#). In this role, he coordinated ground-breaking research exploring the complex interplay between hypoxia, radiosensitivity, and genetic instability—key factors in cancer progression and treatment resistance.

With his extensive experience in managing complex, cross-functional research programmes and multi-disciplinary research, Andy is a fantastic addition to our team. We look forward to the expertise and energy he brings to the TAI community.

Andy is very excited to be joining the team and explained that

“What really attracted me to the role was the clear impact that the TAI brings to real world projects, and the benefits it brings to people in the workplace.”

👉 Contact Andy if you have a project idea you wish to explore: ashton@manchester.ac.uk

...and goodbye to our outgoing UoM Deputy Director – Richard Kirkham

Richard completes his three-year term as Deputy Director in mid-July; however, he will continue to remain an active member of the institute, in his role as the academic lead for TAI's [Security and Resilience](#) theme. Richard will also continue in his role as PI of SALIENT, a £4.3m UKRI investment [aligned to national security and resilience priorities](#), whilst focusing on a new opportunity arising from a £0.25m UKRI investment to support the transition of the [Network for Security Excellence and Collaboration \(NSEC\)](#) from the Home Office into SALIENT.

On the recent funding announcement by UKRI, Richard said:

“The decision to transition NSEC into SALIENT is recognition of the excellent work undertaken by the team during the mobilisation phase and delivery of our first ‘devolved funding’ investments. It also reflects our reputation as an inclusive and diverse research community of academic and professional services colleagues working together towards a common goal of supporting the United Kingdom’s response to the threats that we face in an increasingly volatile and uncertain world. I am looking forward to the new challenge of providing academic leadership in NSEC and supporting problem owners in government, the regions and in our local communities”

Colleagues will be aware of Richard’s enthusiasm for football, and his beloved York City FC. Unfortunately, York was not able to secure the promotion that he had hoped for, but there was some good news – his junior football team won the U16’s league trophy! On their success, Richard told us

“The lads do not listen to any of my tactical advice or instructions, and this appears to be the recipe for success! Pep’s job is safe for now!”



🚩 University of Manchester Staff- Could You Be Our Next Deputy Director?

We are now looking for a new **UoM Deputy Director** to help shape the next chapter of the Thomas Ashton Institute. This is a unique opportunity to work at the intersection of academia, government, and industry, helping to lead a world-class research institute focused on risk and regulatory science.

The role is a **0.2 FTE appointment for three years**, ideal for a University of Manchester strategic thinker and academic leader with a passion for interdisciplinary collaboration and real-world impact. You’ll work closely with colleagues across the University of Manchester and the Health and Safety Executive, helping to drive forward our research agenda and influence national policy.

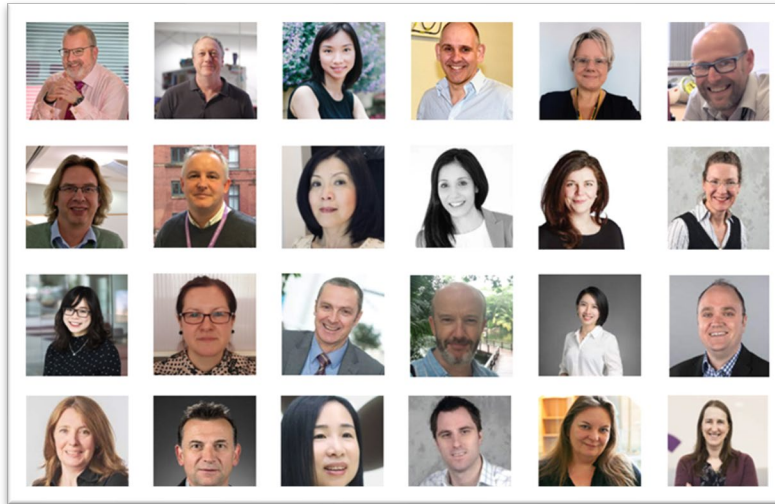
📄 **Apply here (Internal University of Manchester candidates only):** [Apply](#)

Making a Real Difference

TAI’s work is already having an impact. Their research has helped improve safety in transport during COVID-19, created tools to manage construction risks, and supported better safety practices in industries like nuclear energy. These projects are being shared widely to help others learn and benefit.

👉 Read more about our impact online: [Impact](#)

A Growing Community: TAI's Expanding Network of Collaboration



The Thomas Ashton Institute (TAI) continues to grow as a dynamic hub for interdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together a diverse and expanding network of over 600 individuals. This vibrant “virtual faculty” includes researchers, students, and professionals from across the UK and internationally, representing academia, government, and industry.

TAI's network is more than just a number—it's a reflection of the Institute's mission to advance workplace health, safety, and wellbeing through high-quality research and knowledge exchange. Among the 615 individuals engaged with TAI are:

- 201 colleagues from all three faculties at the University of Manchester
- 96 professionals from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- 318 external collaborators from organisations such as BAE Systems, the Cabinet Office, Lloyd's Register Foundation, and 53 universities (39 UK-based and 14 international)

This community is actively involved in shaping research and policy across sectors including construction, energy, healthcare, retail, and regulation. TAI's events and lectures have reached over 1,400 attendees from 205 organisations and 37 sectors, while its growing digital presence includes nearly 2,000 followers across LinkedIn, BlueSky, and X, and over 6,400 views on its YouTube channel.

TAI also supports the next generation of researchers, with 3 PhD students, 12 research associates, and 6 research fellows currently engaged in projects aligned with the Institute's mission. Many former collaborators have gone on to secure academic and research positions, demonstrating the Institute's role as a launchpad for future leaders in risk and regulatory science.

As TAI continues to evolve, its virtual faculty remains central to its success—fostering innovation, driving impact, and building a safer, healthier, and more resilient working world.

Leading on National Security








TAI is home to the [SALIENT: Building a Secure And Resilient World: Research and Coordination Hub](#), a major UKRI-funded programme focused on national security and resilience. SALIENT now incorporates [NSEC](#) – a national network of experts to improve how the UK responds to threats and emergencies.

Spotlight on Resilience: SALIENT Devolved Funding Call Results


We're delighted to announce the outcomes of the first **SALIENT Devolved Funding Call**, which supports innovative, interdisciplinary research that addresses urgent resilience and security challenges across the UK.

Following a competitive selection process, **seven projects** have been awarded funding. These projects span a wide range of themes—from digital misinformation and AI ethics to defence innovation and health system preparedness—each offering fresh insight into how we can build a more secure and resilient society.

The funded projects are:

-  **Building resilience in international research collaboration: academic awareness and behaviour change** - *University of Manchester*
Investigating how UK academics are responding to research security risks in global partnerships, and how awareness is shaping behaviour and resilience.
-  **Addressing and Countering Transnational Repression in the UK (ACT-UK)** - *University of Bristol*
Exploring how transnational repression affects UK-based communities and institutions, and developing strategies to protect civic and academic freedoms.
-  **ReSC | Mass Casualty Plans for a Resilient Health and Social Care System: What Risks and Impacts do Planners Consider** - *Durham University*
Examining how hazard perceptions influence planning for mass casualty events, with the aim of improving real-world readiness across health and social care systems.
-  **Cultural Resilience, Religious Faith and the intersection of Generative and Agentic Artificial Intelligence** - *Coventry University*
Investigating how generative AI is reshaping religious belief, practice, and pastoral care—particularly within marginalised communities.
-  **Securing UK Subsea Infrastructure: Information-sharing in times of crisis** - *Coventry University*
Developing a crisis communication framework to improve information-sharing between public and private actors safeguarding the UK's critical subsea infrastructure.
-  **Fake in the Community** - *Royal Holloway, University of London*
Co-designing community-led tools to counter 'cheap fakes' and rebuild trust in local digital spaces, supporting digital resilience and inclusion.
-  **Emerging Drone Technologies: Implications for UK Defence** - *London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)*
Investigating the impact of commercial drones on defence capabilities and implications for UK strategy.

These projects reflect the creativity, urgency, and collaboration needed to address complex risks and strengthen resilience across sectors.

 Find out more about the call and the funded projects: [Project Portfolio - SALIENT](#)

Funding Successes

Over the past year, the Thomas Ashton Institute has successfully secured funding for a range of innovative and interdisciplinary projects. These awards reflect the strength of our partnerships, the relevance of our research themes, and our commitment to addressing real-world challenges. Below is a selection of recently funded projects that demonstrate our growing impact across the risk, safety, and resilience landscape.

Thomas Ashton Institute Awarded Funding for Landmark Study on Brain Health and Professional Sport

We are delighted to announce that the Thomas Ashton Institute, in partnership with the University of Manchester, has secured funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to lead a significant new research project.

This important study comprises two scoping reviews:

- Investigating a potential link between cognitive impairment and participation in paid professional sport.
- Exploring a potential association between Parkinson's disease and professional sporting careers.

The project will be led by a multidisciplinary team from the Thomas Ashton Institute, drawing on expertise in public health, neurology, occupational medicine, and sports science.

The findings will inform future policy discussions and could have wide-ranging implications for how occupational health risks in professional sport are assessed, managed, and potentially recognised within the industrial injuries framework.

This award reflects the Institute's and the University's shared commitment to impactful, policy-relevant research that addresses complex societal challenges and supports evidence-based decision-making.

Prestigious Government Contract Awarded to Investigate Heart Health in Offshore Energy Workers

The Thomas Ashton Institute and the University of Manchester have been awarded a major research contract by the [Energy Institute \(EI\)](#) to lead a pioneering study into acute coronary syndromes (ACS) in the offshore energy sector.

This project, commissioned by the EI's Health Technical Committee, will explore the prevalence, risk factors, and emergency management of ACS—conditions such as heart attacks and unstable angina—among workers in both the oil and gas and renewable energy industries. The research will be led by a multidisciplinary team from the [Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health](#), supported by the Thomas Ashton Institute.

The study aims to fill a critical evidence gap and support the development of targeted interventions to improve cardiovascular health and emergency response in remote offshore environments.

👉 We look forward to sharing further updates as the projects progress: [Projects and programmes](#)

Events That Inspire

TAI regularly hosts events that bring people together to share ideas and learn from each other. Recent highlights include the annual Ashton Lecture on [digital ethics and innovation](#), and the annual [Lane Lecture on workplace safety](#). These events have reached over 1,400 people from a wide range of sectors.

👉 [Watch our lectures again](#)



TAI Showcases Research at HSE Street Events

The Thomas Ashton Institute (TAI) proudly participated in recent HSE Street Events, where we hosted a dedicated stall to engage with attendees and showcase the Institute's impactful work. These events provide a valuable platform for TAI to connect with key stakeholders, including representatives from government and regulatory bodies.

On the 13th March 2025, TAI participated in the HSE Science Labs 'Science Fair' event, which welcomed [Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser Rick Mumford](#) (Food Standards Agency) and the [Deputy Director for Science and Engineering at OPSS, Wendy Middleton](#) (Office for Product Safety and Standards, Department for Business and Trade). Thomas Ashton hosted a stall at the event, offering a dynamic space to present the Institute's latest research and initiatives. Following the event, TAI are now exploring potential collaborations with the Food Standards Agency.

Thomas Ashton's presence at these events underscores the Institute's commitment to increasing visibility and fostering collaboration across sectors. These conversations help to reinforce TAI's role as a bridge between academia and policy, ensuring that research insights are translated into real-world improvements in workplace safety and wellbeing.

Supporting the Next Generation of Researchers

The Thomas Ashton Institute is proud to play a key role in developing future leaders in risk, safety, and health. We currently support a vibrant community of PhD students, research fellows, and early-career academics working on critical issues such as occupational health and safety.

Our academics contribute to The University of Manchester's [Civil Engineering programmes](#) by embedding specialist knowledge in resilience, risk, and safety, helping students apply theory to practice.

They also play a leading roll the [MSc in Construction Project Management](#), offering insights into safety, risk, and sustainability—essential for shaping the next generation of professionals in the built environment.

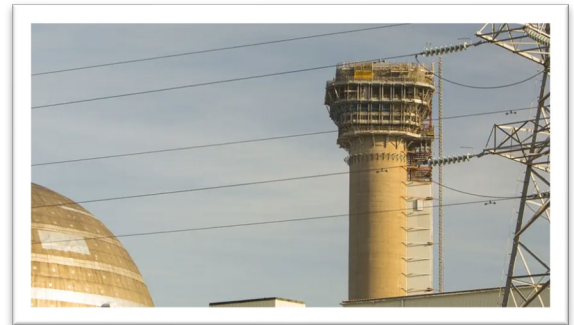
With the [Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health \(COEH\)](#), we support nurture a dynamic cohort of PhD and MPhil researchers tackling complex, interdisciplinary challenges in health and the environment.

Looking ahead, TAI colleagues are developing a new Occupational Safety and Health programme tailored for engineering disciplines. Aligned with [NEBOSH standards](#), this initiative aims to deliver globally recognised, industry-relevant training.

Trusted by Industry

TAI's work with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) has been praised for helping improve safety culture in the nuclear sector. This success has led to new partnerships, including with BAE Systems, showing how TAI's research is trusted and valued by industry leaders.

Read More: [Safety Culture in High-Risk Industries: Impact on regulatory practice and industrial safety](#)



Sharing Knowledge, Shaping Policy

TAI and the [SALIENT Hub](#) are helping to shape national research and policy. SALIENT commissioned a working paper under the URKIs strategic theme “[Building a secure and resilient world](#)”. The paper was recently presented at the BSRW advisory board, helping guide future funding and collaboration. This comprehensive study provides an in-depth analysis of the UK's national security and resilience research landscape, funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

 Read the Report: [Characterising the Landscape of UKRI Funded National Security and Resilience Research](#)

TAI also works closely with government departments and regulators to share insights and drive change.



Celebrating Excellence: Meini Su Named Among 2025 Top 50 Women in Engineering



We're thrilled to share that our colleague Dr. Meini Su, [TAI Theme Lead for Living and Infrastructure](#), has been named one of the [Top 50 Women in Engineering \(WE50\) for 2025](#). This prestigious recognition, awarded by the Women's Engineering Society (WES), celebrates the outstanding contributions of women engineers who are shaping a better world through collaboration, innovation, and impact.

This year's theme, #TogetherWeEngineer, highlights the power of teamwork in engineering—bringing together diverse minds to tackle global challenges and build a more sustainable, inclusive future. Dr. Su's work exemplifies this ethos, leading interdisciplinary efforts that transform how we design and interact with the built environment.

"It is my great honour to be awarded as one of the Top 50 women engineers in the UK this year! This award is a great recognition to me and our work on sustainability in construction in the past 10 years. I hope the stories and experiences of all the WE50 winners can inspire more females to join engineering and work together to build a better world!" – Dr Meini Su

🏆 She joins an inspiring cohort of engineers whose collective achievements are driving progress across sectors. Her recognition also follows in the footsteps of [Dr. Clara Cheung](#), a previous WE50 honouree—making our academic community truly award-winning.

What's Next?

As we reflect on a year of progress, collaboration, and innovation, we're proud of the strides the Thomas Ashton Institute has made in advancing workplace health, safety, and resilience.

From impactful research and national partnerships to the expansion of our SALIENT Hub and integration of NSEC, our work continues to shape policy and practice across the UK and beyond. Looking forward, we remain committed to supporting interdisciplinary research, nurturing future talent, and addressing the complex challenges facing society today.

Thank you to all our partners, collaborators, and supporters, your contributions are vital to our shared mission. We're excited for what lies ahead and invite you to stay connected as we continue to build a safer, healthier, and more resilient world.



Contact Us

For more information about the Thomas Ashton Institute, please contact us at:

Email: ashton@manchester.ac.uk

Website: www.ashtoninstitute.ac.uk / [SALIENT - Building a Secure And Resilient World: Research and Coordination Hub](#)

For internal colleagues: [TAI SharePoint Online](#)

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