

EMBARGOED UNTIL 07:00 BST, TUESDAY 6 OCTOBER 2026

Nearhuman raises £350,000 pre-seed to bring physical AI to e-scooters

Bristol start-up's retrofit AI camera system detects pavement riding and road hazards on the vehicle itself, and is now being tested in a live pilot in Bristol

BRISTOL, 6 October 2026 – Nearhuman, a physical AI start-up based at Bristol Robotics Laboratory, has raised £350,000 in pre-seed funding led by SFC Capital. The funding will support the development of on-device safety technology for shared e-scooter and e-bike fleets.

Shared e-scooters have become part of everyday travel in many cities, and the number of people hurt has grown with them. E-scooter casualties in Great Britain have more than tripled since official records began, from 454 in 2020 to 1,477 in 2025, according to Department for Transport figures. Europe is seeing a similar trend: in Germany, police recorded 16,496 e-scooter accidents with injuries in 2025, up 38% in a year, while e-scooter deaths in France almost doubled, from 45 to 80.

Operators, councils and road safety groups are working on the problem through better infrastructure, rider education, enforcement and vehicle design. One gap that remains is data: there is often limited direct evidence of how and where vehicles are actually ridden.

Nearhuman is developing a camera module that fits onto vehicles already on the street. AI running on the vehicle is designed to detect pavement riding, close calls with pedestrians and road hazards as they happen. Footage is processed and redacted on board, so sensitive video does not need to leave the vehicle.

The aim is to give operators safety insights without replacing their fleets, and in time to give councils street-level information on the condition of roads, cycle lanes and pavements, gathered by vehicles already travelling across the city.

Founder Faizan Mir grew up in Kashmir and was building things from an early age. At 14, he built a drone and a working flamethrower, earning national recognition. His father's response stayed with him: "How does a flamethrower help people? Build something that makes the world a better place."

Mir took the advice. At 16, he represented North India in Mobile Robotics at IndiaSkills, the national skills competition, and won a Medallion for Excellence. He went on to study robotics at UWE Bristol before founding Nearhuman.

"My father's question has shaped everything I've built since," said Mir, 24, Nearhuman's chief executive. "Shared scooters and bikes are one of the best things to happen to cities, but the people responsible for them often lack good data on what happens on the street. Technology on its own won't fix that. Better streets, education and enforcement all matter. What we can do is help give operators and councils clearer evidence, with privacy built into the hardware. I think my father would approve of this one."

"AI has changed how we work on screens. The next shift is AI that runs inside physical machines, and Nearhuman is building for exactly that," said Ed Stevenson, Principal at SFC Capital. "E-scooters are a smart place to start, a real safety problem in UK cities today. But what Nearhuman is really building is the intelligence layer for the physical world."

Nearhuman's live pilot in Bristol will test the system in real-world conditions, and the company plans to release further AI products in the coming months. The funding will support product development, on-street testing and commercial deployment.

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Notes to editors

About Nearhuman

Nearhuman is a Bristol-based AI company building intelligence for the physical world. Combining computer vision, on-device AI and integrated hardware, it develops technology that helps vehicles and machines understand their surroundings. Its first commercial application brings real-time safety detection to shared e-scooter and e-bike fleets, through retrofit systems designed to identify unsafe riding and road hazards. Nearhuman's approach is built around key challenges in deploying physical AI: protecting privacy, working with limited computing power and reducing reliance on continuous cloud connectivity. Founded by Faizan Mir, backed by SFC Capital and based at Bristol Robotics Laboratory, the company is developing a broader portfolio of physical AI technologies. nearhuman.co

About SFC Capital

SFC Capital is the UK's most active seed-stage investor, providing seed capital and support to promising British startups. By combining our leading investment funds with our angel syndicate, we have created a unique model that provides investors with diversified exposure to high-potential SEIS and EIS-qualifying businesses. Since 2012, SFC has invested in over 650 startups and partnered with the likes of British Business Investments to support innovation across all UK regions. To learn more about what we do and see our portfolio, visit sfccapital.com.

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