

Driving innovation for connected places

Impact Report 2024-25



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Introduction

Connected Places Catapult is dedicated to supporting prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive communities across the UK. We harness innovation in transport, the built environment, and public services to improve how people live, work, and move around.

“Our mission is to bridge the gap between SMEs and the market so that innovation can change economic outcomes in communities, towns, and cities across the country. We are sharpening our focus on supporting SMEs to grow through the adoption and scaling of high-impact innovations that benefit people, the planet, and prosperity.”

Erika Lewis, CEO,
Connected Places Catapult



Impact at a glance

£59.3M

Total funding secured
by SMEs we supported

£20.7M

Grant funding

£38.6M

Private investment

673

Industry partnerships
formed, exceeding
our target by 53%

550

UK SMEs
supported through
our programmes

111

Technologies
advanced toward
commercialisation

94

Live demonstrations
and trials enabled

2,438

Delegates at
Connected Places
Summit 2025

How we create impact

Growing demand

Innovation buyers often need more confidence, knowledge, and investment capacity; therefore, we grow the demand side of the market. We do this by increasing knowledge and confidence among innovation buyers, boosting investment into SMEs, and accelerating their technology readiness levels.

Success story



By adopting MachineMax's innovative technology, HS2 is forecast to save £4.5M in fuel costs and cut 22,500 tonnes of carbon emissions in the first year alone. These savings were proven through a real-world trial in our Accelerator programme, which demonstrated how reducing machine idling could deliver both financial and environmental impact. Following the trial, by August 2024 HS2 scaled deployment across 25% of its fleet machinery, showing clear demand for solutions that drive efficiency and sustainability.



Convening markets

We bring together fragmented markets, creating the conditions for collaboration and innovation to thrive:

- **2,209 networking opportunities**
Fostering cross-sector collaboration
- **£220M new public investment**
Made in our related markets
- **5 standards and regulations**
Influenced through our evidence and advocacy
- **5 Government consultation responses**
Shaping policy direction

Success story



Our 2025 Summit convened 1,438 in-person and over 1,000 online delegates from Government, industry and academia to share insights, foster partnerships and shape the future of connected places.

With over 85 sponsors and partners and 1,358 companies participating, the event demonstrated thought-provoking discussions, insightful presentations, and impactful collaborations in action.

Strengthening supply

SMEs can have difficulty trialling and scaling their innovations, with limited commercial capacity. We strengthen supply, by evaluating and developing commercial viability and supporting innovations to scale and generate viable routes to market.

We help innovative companies scale and reach their commercial potential:

- **143 investor introductions**
Connecting SMEs with funding sources
- **333 showcasing opportunities**
To raise SME profiles
- **90 international export opportunities**
Opening global markets
- **£12.5M private investment**
Directed toward R&D activities, reinforcing the UK's innovation pipeline and long-term competitiveness.

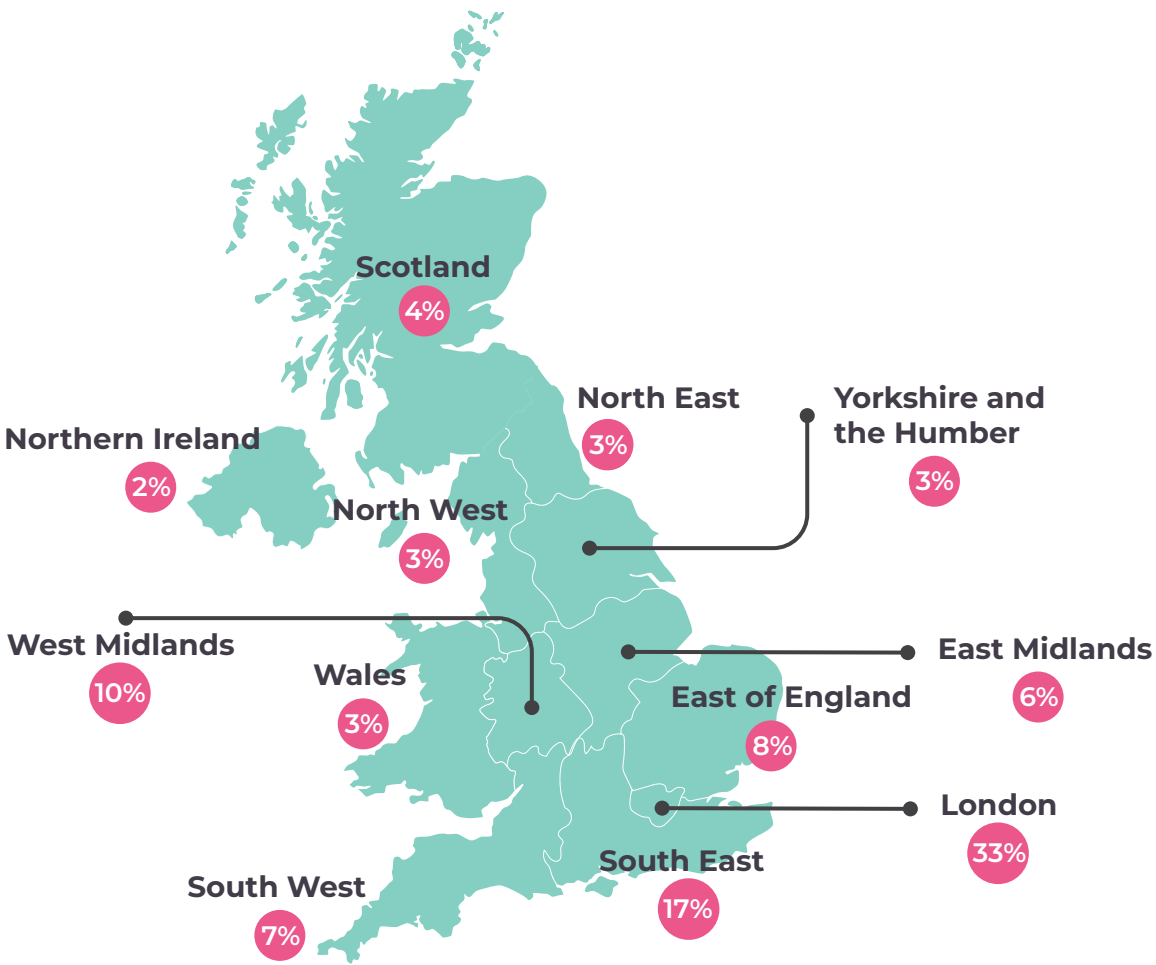


Figure 1: partnerships with SMEs across the UK

Across the 365 SMEs across the country tracked during our 2024/25 monitoring programme, the evidence available indicates that the SMEs secured £38.6 million in private sector funding and £20.7 million in public sector funding in 2024/25 alone.

Success story



wordnerds

Supported through the Transport Research and Innovation Grants (TRIG) programme three years ago, it recently secured £1.6M in private investment and now employs 25 people with £1M recurring revenue.

Private sector funding secured by SMEs intensively supported by the Catapult

£547 million

Secured since the Catapult was established

£38.6 million

Raised in 2024 - 25

Public sector funding secured by SMEs intensively supported by the Catapult

£300 million

Secured since the Catapult was established

£20.7 million

Raised in 2024 - 25

Transport

Transport is a core focus for Connected Places Catapult and the UK Government. While it is important for people to be connected by good transport links, there's a growing need for transport infrastructure to be sustainable, resilient, and inclusive.

We focus on decarbonising the sector and creating integrated transport systems, bridging the gap between groundbreaking ideas and the market, making transport more sustainable and accessible.



Case study

Transport Research and Innovation Grants (TRIG)

The [Transport Research and Innovation Grants \(TRIG\)](#) programme supports early-stage transport innovations with **£1.4M funding across 32 projects**. The results demonstrate exceptional success in bridging the gap between ideas and market readiness.

- **£1.4M funding** across **32 projects**
- **100% proof-of-concept** achievement success rate
- **28 projects advanced**
by at least one Technology Readiness Level (TRL)
- **26 projects planning real-world demonstrations**
within two years

Market readiness and growth:

£450,000+
follow-on funding
secured by four
projects together

87% of
participants
gained new technical
or business capabilities

67%
collaborated
with other SMEs, building
industry networks

“The TRIG programme offers an excellent path to test early-stage, high-risk concepts that have the potential for significant impact... The Catapult delivered the programme exceptionally well: they were extremely responsive, helpful, and provided valuable guidance through their workshops. This kind of support is particularly transformative for young and micro enterprises, where the programme itself can help propel the business to the next level.”

Participating SME, Vox Aeris



Project highlight

Convening Freight stakeholders

Through the Freight Innovation Cluster, we grew a community of 385 members and launched a national digital platform in 2024/25 giving members a place to connect, collaborate, and share knowledge.

Two collaborative **SME** competitions promoted **‘technology stacking,’** to tackle complex **market challenges.**

Ten consortia were selected across the **two competitions,** with total funding of **£200K** to develop business cases.

Two open calls launched in partnership with the **Innovation Procurement Empowerment Centre,** to select up to **eight SMEs** (TRL6+) for procurement training in the freight and logistics industry.



Making transport more sustainable

According to [Transport and environment statistics](#), transport has been the UK sector with the highest greenhouse gas emissions. Government net zero targets signal the level of ambition to address this. Our work focuses on harder-to-transition transport modes, such as maritime and aviation, where there are multiple stakeholders, less mature technology solutions and requirements for new business models.



Case study

Clean Futures Accelerator

We've been delivering the Clean Futures Accelerator, supporting the West Midlands in transitioning to clean technology. The programme connected innovative SMEs with established networks and potential investors, transforming visibility and commercial opportunities.

- **19 SMEs supported, 16 progressed** through Technology Readiness Levels (TRL)
- **19 jobs created** and **5 patents** in development

Financial outcomes:

£29M co-investment
secured by participating companies

£14.3M private investment
attracted

£48.7M pending contract values
in the pipeline



“ We've been introduced to a large network and welcomed lots of people to our facility to see what we do. Now our company's name is known, we are exposed to people who can help us, make a difference, or introduce us to potential investors.”

Dr. Sindy Chaves,
Global Nano Network

Case study

Freight Innovation Fund Accelerator (Third Cohort)

- **10 SMEs** supported with **£1.4M funding**
- **12 new jobs** and **TRL progression** across all projects
- **£2.2M additional funding** raised by three SMEs
- **£1.2M match funding** contributed by participating SMEs

“ The Accelerator programme has played a pivotal role in getting our EV-FIT solution ready for commercialisation and gaining access to the market. It is such a unique opportunity to work closely with established industry partners willing to test your product and give honest feedback, which has helped us refine it in line with real industry needs and case studies.”

Christopher de Saxe,
Head of EV Transition at GoMetro



Case study

Zero-Emission HGV programme (ZEHID)

We're supporting Innovate UK and the Department for Transport with the Zero-Emission Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) & Infrastructure Demonstrator (ZEHID) programme, which represents a public investment of up to £200 million, match-funded by industry.

This collaboration bridges the gap between cutting-edge HGV technology and market-ready commercial solutions, providing freight operators with real-world evidence for investment decisions.

- **First large-scale deployment** of 40+ tonne zero-emission HGVs
- **Supporting infrastructure** enabling freight operator technology assessment
- **Standards development** through British Standards Institution partnership

Market impact:

Standards Advisory Group
established for zero-emission road freight

Decision-making framework
created for standards development

Policy influence
demonstrating how standards enable emissions reduction



Project highlight

Trialling innovations in maritime

We have delivered the Maritime Accelerator programme addressing power, propulsion, shore-side technology, and safety challenges.

Five SMEs supported with funding and business development

Industry partnerships with Serco, the Port of Tyne, Maersk, DP World, Houlder, Portsmouth International Port, The Royal Navy and the University of Plymouth.

Real-world testing across vessel operations and infrastructure

Policy and market development:

The **Green Shipping Corridor** report was officially launched by Minister Mike Kane at the Labour Party Conference in September 2024

The **'Future Fuels Blueprint'** programme - pathway to 2050 for UK ports and vessel operators

Priority areas identified for future fuels trials and demonstrations in 2025-26

Efficient, inclusive, and safe transport systems

Efficient, inclusive, and safe transport systems are essential for people and places to thrive and for enabling the shift to low-carbon mobility. Connected Places Catapult has led projects that deepen understanding of end-to-end journeys from the perspective of both users and providers. These insights are building the evidence base for what works at transport interchanges and supporting real-world trials through testbeds such as our Station Innovation Zone at Bristol Temple Meads and Connected Airport Living Lab at Glasgow Airport.



Project highlight Station Innovation Zone

The Station Innovation Zone at Bristol Temple Meads station provides a testbed for SME innovators to trial their ideas in a live station environment and measure the impact on passengers’ experience and station operations. The innovation challenges were set by Network Rail with the aim of creating a station that is sustainable, seamless and safe.

Programme outcomes to date:

Boosted confidence for **rail technology** buyers

Technology viability demonstrated in an **operational environment**

Fostered **new collaborations** and **supply chain diversification**

Accelerated SME growth through **real-world validation**

The testbed bridges the gap between innovative concepts and commercial deployment, providing a risk-free environment for both SMEs and transport operators.

“ The funding was critical to keep the project going and allowed us to work closely with people on the ground, understand their needs and work out what we needed to do differently. The Catapult also helped us to build relationships with Network Rail and GWR. We now have a clear plan for what we need to do.”

Mike Lloyd, CEO of Jnction, participating SME



Case study

ncat (National Centre for Accessible Transport)

The [National Centre for Accessible Transport \(ncat\)](#) is the UK's first evidence centre dedicated to improving the transport experience for disabled people.

Programme scale:

- **7-year programme** with **£20M total funding**
- **Second year** of operation with **expanding impact**
- **5,000+ disabled people** directly engaged
- **3,000 disabled members** expert panel established
- **203 transport professionals and 58 public sector bodies** involved
- **362 knowledge centres and research documents** mapped

Market impact:

First Accessible Transport Summit
(September 2024) - 200 attendees (90 disabled people)

£1.1M scaling innovation
funding to 11 entrepreneurs

Accessible application
process pioneered

Case study

Rural Transport Accelerator

Through the **Rural Transport Accelerator** programme, we supported an SME-led consortia of SMEs and local authorities with £1.2 million to trial innovative transport solutions in rural UK communities improving user experience and safety.

- **Eight technologies** advanced on **TRL scale**
- **£2.98 social return** per £1 invested
- **14 jobs created** across participating organisations

Market impact:

£3.2M follow-on investment
secured

22 collaborations
and partnerships enabled

Strengthened
SME-local authority relationships

“ This trial has been a critical milestone on Motocargo’s journey to producing a sustainable rural ‘workhorse’ vehicle which will address the specific requirements of rural users.”
Participating SME, Motocargo



Case study

National Highways Accelerators

We have partnered with **National Highways** since 2019 to drive innovation in England's strategic road network through a series of accelerator programmes. These initiatives were designed to improve road safety, enhance customer experience, and achieve net-zero emissions targets in construction and maintenance.

2024/25 results:

- **26 SMEs supported** across three programmes
- **13 SMEs** conducted live network trials with real-world validation
- **£1.4M funding** provided + **£479K matched** funding from SMEs
- **Measurable improvements** in safety, customer experience, and net-zero progress



Long-term impact:

Five-year collaboration has delivered increased headcount, successful investment rounds, improved skills, and stronger market connections for participating SMEs.

Project highlight

Influencing policy for emerging technologies

We played a key role in advancing **Connected and Autonomous Vehicles** (CAVs) in the UK for over 10 years, collaborating with Government, industry, and academia.

Key highlights

Key contribution to Automated Vehicles Act 2024

Addressed liability, insurance, and responsibility frameworks

Created a supportive policy environment for CAV market growth

Make impact:

Policy work bridges the gap between advanced vehicle technology and commercial deployment, providing regulatory certainty that enables investment and innovation.



Built Environment & Public Services

Improving the built environment through innovation is core to the work of Connected Places Catapult. By advancing sustainable buildings, smart infrastructure, and inclusive urban spaces, our work aligns with the Government ambitions in this space. We focus on decarbonisation, digital construction, and collaborative innovation to enable connected, resilient communities.



Built Environment

Making buildings, infrastructure and public realm more efficient, inclusive, safe, and sustainable

The UK Government has signalled major ambitions around levels of investment and development in the built environment, with challenging targets around net zero and biodiversity. This includes building 1.5 million homes and unlocking investment for infrastructure. We support the development of thriving urban spaces through design, citizen co-creation, and effective lifecycle management of buildings and infrastructure.



Project highlight

Homes for Healthy Ageing

Connected Places Catapult has advanced innovation in retrofit, health resilience, and public realm design.

In **Homes for Healthy Ageing**, in collaboration with Oldham Council and Carbon Co-op, the Catapult brought together local stakeholders to create a **practical blueprint for community-led housing retrofits**, improving climate resilience and public health outcomes.

We supported a UK SME to trial AI for post-hospital discharge home care, enabling real-world testing with healthcare professionals and patients, refining the product and publishing findings in a **whitepaper**.

Formed **Homes and Housing Advisory Board** with 11 built environment experts to help shape strategy on housing innovation, planning reform, and digital transformation.



Project highlight

Promoting UK innovation abroad

We accelerated global adoption of digital construction through Building Information Modelling, engaging Governments in **Ukraine, Vietnam, Cape Town, Azerbaijan and Turkey**. Our capacity-building programmes addressed local challenges, including transparency, climate resilience, and efficient infrastructure investment while opening export markets for UK companies.

We continue facilitate collaboration between UK consultancies, SMEs and enabling organisations to identify export barriers and develop coordinated approaches to international markets.



Project highlight

Convening infrastructure innovators with buyers

Through its stewardship of the **Infrastructure Industry Innovation Partnership (i3P)**, we connected over 7,000 infrastructure clients, suppliers, and innovators.

i3P achievements:

Expanded membership and cross-sector **expertise access**

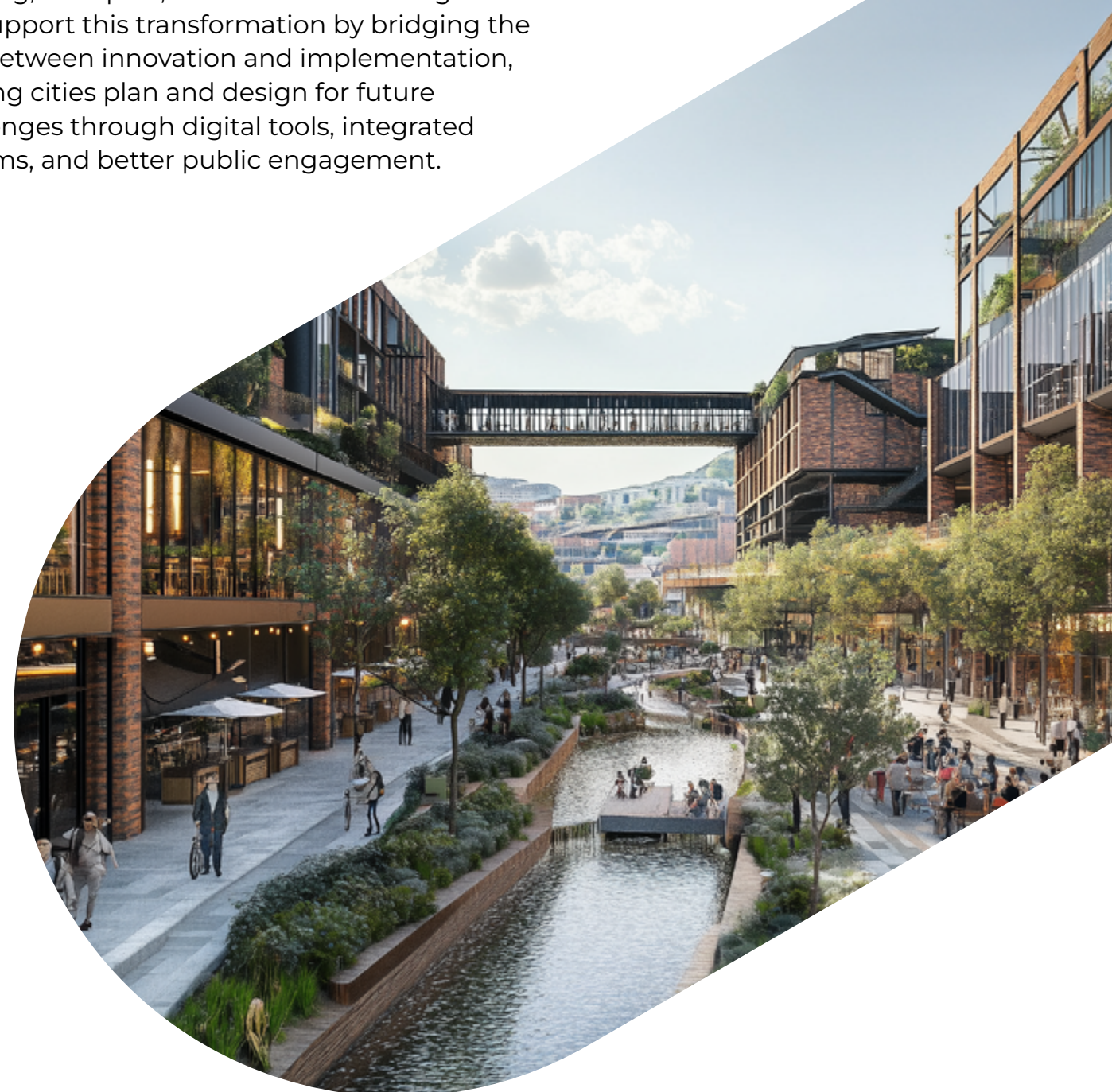
Hosted **innovation forums**, driving **open dialogue** and co-investment

Aligned industry efforts toward **scalable solutions** for **productivity** and **decarbonisation**



Built Environment – Creating connected places through design and planning

Effective place-making, planning, and urban design are essential to creating more connected, resilient, and productive places. The UK Government is reforming spatial planning to accelerate infrastructure and housing delivery, empowering Combined Authorities to align housing, transport, and economic strategies. We support this transformation by bridging the gap between innovation and implementation, helping cities plan and design for future challenges through digital tools, integrated systems, and better public engagement.



Project highlight

Design to Deliver

Design to Deliver is a cross-Catapult initiative that brings together the strengths of the UK's innovation network to accelerate the delivery of complex infrastructure and housing projects. By embedding design thinking early in the development process, the programme helps public and private sector partners navigate uncertainty, align stakeholders, and improve outcomes.

£50,000 awarded to 12 SMEs for nature regeneration solutions

Four SMEs collaborated with Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park on trial plans

“Design to Deliver is empowering businesses to champion collaboration across the Innovate UK Catapult Network and key partners from the UK's design sector. By supporting market-ready, nature-positive solutions, we're helping tackle real-world challenges and drive sustainable innovation. Together, we're turning ideas into impactful solutions, fostering regeneration, and building a better future.”

Harry Kerr, Head of Design at Innovate UK



Design to Deliver cohort



Local Growth

Strong local innovation economies can drive regional growth, improve productivity, and create more equitable economic opportunities. Aligned with the UK Government's commitment to "devolution by default" and regional growth, we address barriers such as finance, regulation, public sector procurement, and place-based leadership.



Project highlight

Innovation Procurement Empowerment Centre (IPEC)

Through the **Innovation Procurement Empowerment Centre (IPEC)**, we shape innovation-friendly procurement practices. With public sector spending exceeding £300 billion annually on third-party goods and services, innovative procurement drives economic growth and innovation.

Key highlights

Supported **Westminster and Bristol City Councils** to trial innovation-friendly procurement

Built capabilities for trialling innovative solutions, including **air purifier trials in restaurants in Westminster**

Delivered over **50 events** with significant online engagement

Advanced **academic research on procurement's role in innovation**, producing practitioner-focused outputs and fostering collaboration.

“ We want this pilot to raise awareness of air quality issues within the industry, and I hope it encourages other businesses to sign up to participate in the trial.”

Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, Westminster City Council



Project highlight

Community-based finance

We commissioned the Impact Investing Institute to investigate the potential of community-based finance. It highlights underutilised mechanisms that empower citizens, local authorities, and businesses to invest directly in their communities, with a focus on inclusive, place-based growth. Through case studies and stakeholder engagement, this work demonstrates how community finance addresses regional inequalities, supports under-served groups, and fosters resilient local economies, offering scalable models for sustainable development.



Case study

Unlocking investment for sustainable growth

At the UK Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF), we convened public bodies, investors, and innovators to accelerate procurement reform and net zero investment.

- Hosted a panel discussion on the future of innovation procurement
- Demonstrated thought leadership in urban development
- Highlighted 3Ci's (Cities Commission for Climate Investment) net zero work through panel discussions

At the **Smart City Expo World Congress** in Barcelona, we hosted the UK Pavilion showcasing urban innovation to 25,000 global attendees representing over 800 cities.

Hosted UK Pavilion with 25 UK organisations, including major metropolitan authorities

Welcomed 650+ visitors, 20 panels, 70+ speakers

Promoted UK innovation to 25,000 global delegates

Project highlight

Supporting Freeports to harness innovation

The Freeport Innovation Network (FIN), led by Connected Places Catapult, supports UK Freeports in achieving their innovation goals and creating long-term economic and social impact. Fostering public-private collaboration, FIN has enabled Freeports to launch innovation hubs, attract investment, run educational hackathons, and promote digital trade initiatives — driving job creation, sustainability, and regional growth.

“Industrial Strategy Zones will also be able to benefit from the support of the Catapult Network, which has already supported Freeports to attract international investors, design bids for funding, and develop innovative new policy solutions in areas ranging from skills development to net zero.”

From Industrial Strategy Zones Action Plan



Data and Digital

Digital innovation is reshaping how places are planned, built, and managed. From smart infrastructure and digital twins to AI and data sharing, these technologies are driving productivity, resilience, and sustainability across the UK economy.

Yet, data sharing between sectors remains limited, slowing progress on critical challenges like climate adaptation and net zero. We address these barriers by building trusted frameworks for cross-sector collaboration, championing digital twins, and creating international communities of practice.

Our work is proving the economic value of digital infrastructure and ensuring the UK is positioned as a world leader in this rapidly evolving field.

Case study

CReDO (Climate Resilience Decision Optimiser)

CReDO is a pioneering climate adaptation digital twin project, designed to improve infrastructure resilience by integrating data from the energy, water, and telecoms sectors. It enables systems-based decision optimisation, helping operators and planners assess risks from extreme weather and supporting the transition to sustainable infrastructure.

2024/25 highlights:

- Delivered Ofwat-funded **CReDO Extreme Heat** project, addressing water sector uncertainty on extreme heat asset impacts
- Leveraged cross-sector data from **Anglian Water, BT, and UK Power Networks**
- Established trusted **data-sharing partnerships** under formal agreements
- **£9.8 million Ofgem funding** secured for CReDo+ energy network risk prediction tools
- Completed Ofwat Breakthrough Catalyst project successfully delivering the **CReDO Asset Risk Tool** prototype
- Cost-benefit analysis estimated **£4.4Bn benefits by 2080**

“Incorporating data from other infrastructure networks and utilities within existing systems will significantly enrich our insights, leading to better outcomes. To unlock the full potential of CReDo, we need more asset owners to get involved and collaborate effectively.”

Richard Buckingham, Climate Change and Carbon Manager at Anglian Water



Case study

Digital Twin Hub: Global innovation network

The [Digital Twin \(DT Hub\)](#) is a global network enabling knowledge sharing and collaboration across digital twin practitioners.

2024/25 highlights:

- 25% membership yearly increase to **6,320 people across 2,323 organisations**
- 1/3 of survey respondents **secured funding opportunities** through involvement in the Hub
- Members reported **stronger growth and collaboration opportunities**

Economic potential:

Recent economic analysis commissioned by the Department for Transport found that digital twin integration in transport management could unlock at least £850 million over 10 years.

Case study

DIATOMIC: Digital Twin programme

DIATOMIC (Digital Innovation Transformative Change) drives Birmingham's ambition to lead global digital twin technology and smart city innovation, developing open, modular platforms creating real-time virtual models of infrastructure and services.

- Supported **27 local SMEs** developing digital innovations for UK and India challenges
- Advanced inclusive innovation and international partnerships
- Set standards for federated digital twin ecosystems
- Economic modelling showed **7.3:1 to 30:1** benefit-cost ratio potential

Project highlight

Overcoming barriers to data sharing

We scoped a Data Sharing Infrastructure Hub, with initial analysis showing strong return on investment:

Medium investment (**£4M/year**) could yield benefit–cost ratios of **4.2:1 to 12.5:1**

The Hub will break down silos, enable cross-sector collaboration, and accelerate responsible **AI, quantum, and Smart City 4.0 adoption**

Get a high-level snapshot of data sharing initiatives and why greater coordination is critical for the future.

Cross-Sector UK Data Sharing Infrastructure



Why partner with Connected Places Catapult?



Proven results & de-risked innovation:



We are a proven catalyst for growth. The SMEs we support have secured over £500 million in private funding, bridging the critical gap between innovation and investment. In 2024/25, we expanded our thriving ecosystem to over 780 partners across industry, academia, and Government.

Unrivalled market access:



We open doors to high-value opportunities. Gain direct access to public sector buyers representing over £300 billion in annual spending. Validate your technology in our real-world testbeds to prove its market readiness and leverage our international programmes and global event presence to unlock export markets worldwide.

Strategic positioning & foresight:



We help position our partners at the heart of national priorities, aligning their work with the UK's Industrial Strategy and net-zero commitments. Our deep relationships with regulators, policymakers, and standards bodies give you an insider's perspective on emerging frameworks, helping you anticipate and shape the future of connected places.

End-to-end growth engine:



We support our partners at every stage, from Research and Development to global scale-up. This includes funding and grants navigation, strategic investor introductions, market intelligence, regulatory guidance, and dedicated support for international expansion. We provide the resources you need to succeed.

Looking forward: 2025/2026 priorities

Transport decarbonisation

Our transport focus intensifies with the launch of our Hydrogen Innovation Initiative, addressing one of the most challenging aspects of the net-zero transition. We're expanding our Zero Emission Vessel and Infrastructure programmes to tackle maritime decarbonisation, while placing enhanced focus on freight and logistics innovation to address the sector's complex supply chain challenges.

Urban innovation

We're scaling our impact in urban environments through expanded testbeds for public realm innovation, creating more opportunities for real-world testing of solutions that improve how people live and work in cities. Our digital planning transformation work will accelerate the modernisation of planning processes, while our development of community-based financing models will unlock new capital sources for local innovation.

Data infrastructure

The future is data-driven and we're building the infrastructure to support it. Our Data Sharing Infrastructure Hub development will break down silos between sectors, enabling collaboration and insight generation. We're scaling our climate resilience decision support capabilities to help infrastructure operators prepare for extreme weather, while establishing regional offices of technology and innovation to bring cutting-edge digital capabilities directly to local communities across the UK.



Get involved

Ready to accelerate innovation in transport, the built environment, or public services?

Connect with us:

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Connected Places Catapult is part of the UK's Catapult Network, connecting businesses with the UK's research and academic communities to accelerate innovation.