



Public Realm Innovation Lab Open Call

Application Guidance

CATAPULT
Connected Places

Executive summary

The River Roding in Barking & Dagenham has been chosen as a testbed to show how public spaces can support healthier lives. As one of London's fastest-growing boroughs, it offers a unique opportunity to demonstrate how regeneration can put health and wellbeing at the centre.

The River Roding Health Corridor Consortium has identified the River Roding as one of London's most undervalued natural corridors. Along the river lie pockets of green space and other open areas overlooking mud banks and tidal reed beds. The consortium believes there is vast potential for these spaces to support community health, yet they remain largely invisible and inaccessible to most local people.

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham has the highest proportion of under-18s in England and Wales, with almost 29% of its residents aged under 18. It also faces one of the most significant childhood obesity challenges in the UK, with more than 31% of Year 6 children classified as obese.

In the first year, three sites along the corridor have been selected for trials. We are looking for practical, innovative solutions that can be delivered quickly and show real impact for the local community. Please review the competition handbook for full details of the sites, trial expectations and the challenges.

Up to four successful applicants will receive funding of up to £25,000 each for 3-month trials, along with expert support from Connected Places Catapult and the River Roding Health Corridor consortium.

The Public Realm Innovation Lab sees Connected Places Catapult working in partnership with the River Roding Health Corridor consortium: Arup, Be First (London Borough of Barking and Dagenham's wholly-owned regeneration delivery agency), Care City, Makower Architects, and NHS North East London. The project is funded by Innovate UK and will benefit from the consortium's time and expertise. The Public Realm Innovation Lab project aims to shape healthier placemaking practices and influence planning policy within broader urban regeneration efforts.

By joining this programme, you will have the chance to help turn this hidden sanctuary into a place that improves wellbeing, brings the community together, and showcases how public realm innovation can make a real difference to the public.

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Programme Introduction

What is the Public Realm Innovation Lab?

Barking and Dagenham has the highest childhood obesity rate of any London borough, driven by wider health factors such as deprivation, food inequality, and limited access to safe, active public spaces. The borough's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023–2028 prioritises early intervention, community resilience, and place-based care to address these systemic challenges.

The River Roding Health corridor presents an opportunity to create a health-promoting environment that enhances wellbeing, fosters community pride, and supports thriving, nature-centred neighbourhoods. Sites such as Harts Lane Estate, Barking Barrage and Town Quay Wharf could become places where children and young people are active, eat well and spend more time outdoors.

We are looking for creative and sustainable ideas that encourage play and active travel while bringing the community together, ensuring improvements are meaningful and long-lasting.

You can find more detail in the Open Call Handbook, which is available on our [opportunity page](#).

Initiative Overview

Under this programme, Applicants will be awarded up to £25,000 incVAT to trial their proposed solution through pre-commercial procurement.

Please carefully read this guidance document before submitting a bid for funding.

The application form is available at the following [link](#), and the application deadline is

3rd November 2025, 10:00.

This competition will operate in 2 phases.

Phase 1: Phase 1 involves the creation, submission and assessment of your applications. Following the interview stage, up to 6 applicants will be invited to a trial design phase lasting 12 days (1st December – 12th December) where you will be given the opportunity to refine and coordinate your trial plan with our project partners. This will include a 1-day site visit and workshops to support you.

Phase 2: Phase 2 will begin on the **16th December 2025**, where up to 4 applicants will be invited to sign their contracts and begin their trials. The successful projects will begin their trials on **5th January 2026** and will end on **16th March 2026**.

A full programme of activity is included in the dates and deadlines section on **page 19**.

Full payment will be made upon completion and acceptance of all required deliverables, which will be outlined in your contract.

Application Material

To apply you will be required complete the following:

- Complete the application form on our application portal.
- Submit your finance template
- Submit your risk register
- Submit your trial plan

Accessibility

Applicants requiring assistance in completing the application should contact the Innovation Funding Team (innovation_funding@cp.catapult.org.uk) as early as possible during the open application process, to allow for appropriate support and sufficient time for the completion of the application form.

Application Webinar

CPC is hosting an online webinar on **Wednesday, 15th October 2025**, from 10-11 am. Please register on our opportunity page.

Eligibility

To apply for this open call, you must:

- Be a UK-registered public, private, or third-sector organisation considered to be of **SME size** (to see how an SME is defined, please use the [link here](#)), meaning smaller than 250 employees, less than £44m in turnover and a balance sheet of equal to or less than £38m.
 - Charities can apply for this opportunity, however the funding provided is **pre-commercial funding** which means you must be able to conduct this project on a commercial basis. You must decide for yourself whether this is suitable.
- **Consortia are welcome**, but only a single organisation may act as lead, and you must distribute the funding accordingly to your consortium partners.
 - Consortia partners can be of any size.
- Applicants must submit proposals which are considered novel - either by implementing in a new environment, targeting a new audience or incorporating new elements into their solutions
- Demonstrable alignment of the proposed solution to the programme challenge, with a solution of **TRL 6+**
- Commitment to create a full trial plan between and 1st and 12th December as part of the application process for up to 6 chosen applicants, **which will be unpaid work**. There will be an expectation to attend workshops and the site visit day

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- Commitment to undertake travel to the River Roding when required, including the initial site day on Wednesday 3rd December 2025 in Barking, London.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

Promoting equality of access to the competitions and supporting a diverse portfolio of companies is integral to Connected Places Catapult EDI values. We seek to ensure that the organisations we work with are also committed to demonstrating EDI practices in both current and future projects and in the way they operate. We recommend all applicants demonstrate their commitment to EDI as best as possible in their application.

Following your application, you will need to demonstrate your commitment to upholding equality and diversity practices within your organisation, for which there will be a number of questions asked about EDI within your business.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion defined:

- **Equality:** ensuring that everyone has the same opportunities, and no-one is treated differently or discriminated against because of their personal characteristics. These are nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
- **Diversity:** Encompasses the inclusion, engagement, and acknowledgment of the distinct needs of individuals from varied social, economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as different genders, abilities, sexual orientations, religions, and more.
- **Inclusion:** Entails the creation of an environment where individuals or members of groups feel embraced, heard, esteemed, supported, and empowered to achieve their utmost potential, irrespective of their background, identity, or disabilities

Application Guidance

Applications will close at 10am on **Monday 3rd November 2025**. Late submissions will not be considered.

1. Carefully read this guidance document before preparing your application.
2. Complete your application form: [Link](#)
3. Only the information available in your application form will be assessed. No other documentation should be attached to your submission unless this is requested, except for your project finances and risk-register
4. Keep within the maximum word counts noted in each of the sections of the application form. Any content that exceeds the word count limit will be disregarded.
5. Please note that by applying, you accept that any resulting offer shall be subject to the provisions of this guidance document, and the terms and conditions available on the open call page.
6. You can apply as the Lead organisation (i.e. the organisation responsible for coordinating the project and distributing the funding on behalf of the consortium). Please indicate if you have any consortium partners on the application form.

When answering the application questions please refer to the following:

1. **Keep it succinct:** The response should be concise and to the point. Stick to the word limit while effectively conveying your proposal's core aspects.
2. **Use clear language:** Use clear and straightforward language to convey your ideas. Avoid jargon or overly technical terms.
3. **Align with competition goals:** Illustrate how your innovation aligns with the broader goals of the River Roding Corridor Initiative, for more information on this please check the application handbook.
4. **Proofread and refine:** Review your response for clarity, accuracy, and coherence. Ensure that you effectively communicate how your innovation embraces inclusivity for all individuals.

Support on Application Questions

Can you describe your solution and its novelty? please also explain how you have chosen your TRL (350 words)

- **Your solution and novelty:** Clearly describe your solution and briefly explain why your approach is novel, and in this context 'novel' can be described as either something completely new, or product or services that you are planning to use in a new context or environment.

TRL Scale levels to be considered for this application:

- **TRL 6 - Real-world Prototype** - The solution is tested in a real-world environment, but only in a small way. Think of it as taking that gadget outside the lab to see how it works in a place where it would be used.
- **TRL 7 - Final Prototype** - the solution is nearly ready. It's being tested in the real world, but on a larger scale. All the major problems have been solved, and it's close to being the final version.
- **TRL 8 - Ready for Use** - The solution has been fully tested and works well. It's almost ready to be sold or used widely but might still need some fine-tuning.
- **TRL 9 - Fully Operational** - The solution is now complete and is being used in the real world as intended. It's fully operational and reliable.

How does your trial proposal meet the challenge of helping children and young people achieve a healthy weight through public realm activation? (250 words)

- **Define the specific challenge area you are hoping to address:** What is the specific area within the challenge that your trial aims to address? We suggest you review the handbook which provides further detail on the challenge.
- **Define the Direct Impact:** Describe the direct impact of the proposed trial on the challenge aim. How will the solution improve health outcomes in children and young people?
- **Consider the Indirect Impact:** Consider the indirect impacts of the proposed solution.

Market Understanding (200 words)

- **Demonstrate your Understanding:** Demonstrate that you understand how your trial will fit within the market, what are your potential users, beneficiaries and what other competitors are there?
- **Highlight the Innovation:** Explain how the proposed solution is novel in the context of the River Roding Health Corridor, how does it differ from existing solutions, and what makes it more effective or efficient?

Traction (200 words)

- **Explain:** Explain whether your solution has already obtained commercial traction - this could be through using your existing solution in a different context (and through use in this location can now be considered novel)
- **Highlight:** Highlight any achievements or outcomes to date that could lead to more widespread adoption in the River Roding sites.

Please give a high-level trial proposition detailing how you would conduct a trial of your solution on the programme? (600 Words)

Please include in your trial plan:

- What you hope to learn / demonstrate on the trial
- The proposed timeline for development and deployment
- Which site/s you wish to focus your trial on. We will want trials to take a micro and macro approach to the River Roding
- How you will engage with the local community throughout your trial project
- What is the input you would need from stakeholders (for example, data, infrastructure, equipment etc...)
- A list of datasets or data parameters that would be required to develop and trial your solution
- Any deployment support you may require from CPC, partners and third parties
- How are you planning to involve end-users/the local community in the trial preparation, testing and evaluation stage?

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- Upload a trial plan document no longer than 7 pages long (using the template on our application page) which explains your trial covering these points, as well as any further context

Please identify and explain what impact your solution will have on the key challenge area of helping children and young people achieve a healthy weight through public realm activation?

- Please outline the impact you are hoping to demonstrate during your trial as well as your monitoring plan for measuring and demonstrating the impacts. The response should touch on what data you plan to collect, how, and any analysis you plan to conduct in order to understand impacts. We recommend you review the impact page in the handbook for further detail.

How your application is assessed

After the deadline, only applications that meet the eligibility criteria and scope of the competition will be formally assessed. Connected Places Catapult reserves the right to declare applications unsuccessful and out of scope.

Applications will be assessed against the scoring criteria, detailed in this document.

You should write clearly in layman's terms, avoiding acronyms and technical jargon.

Notification of assessment outcome

Please note that if you are the lead applicant in a consortium, you will need to inform the other collaborators and partners about the assessment outcome and funding decisions.

Successful applications

If you are successful and join the programme, you will be asked to sign and return all the required documentation, which you must do before the start date of the programme, as detailed in the timeline on the open call, and at the end of this document.

Assessment Scoring Criteria

This section details the assessment scoring criteria that the competition accessors will use when scoring the applications.

The applications will be marked on their responses against the following four criteria:

Criteria	Weight
Solution	30%
Trial Design & Project Management	30%
Impact	30%
Team	10%

Solution

This assessment criterion will look at the uniqueness, feasibility, market potential, and overall viability of your proposed solution to public realm activation, and so your solution must be clearly outlined and evidenced.

Trial Design & Project Management

Your trial plan must demonstrate that you have thoughtfully created your plan, considering what you aim to achieve, how you aim to achieve it and how you are integrating your solution into the local sites to engage with the local community. This is a high-level plan, so we do not need extensive detail at this stage, however, enough to demonstrate that you have been thoughtful in your approach.

Team

The make-up and relevance of your consortium and the skills of the individual members will be crucial to the delivery of your solution.

Project Reporting

Progress Reporting

Throughout the programme, you will be in regular contact with CPC, and you will be providing weekly updates highlighting progress, opportunities, issues, and risks on your trial. This information will help in assessing the progress of the trial, making necessary adjustments if required. This is a mandatory requirement.

Should you require any other support in your application, you can seek support by contacting the Innovation Funding Team at Connected Places Catapult on **innovation_funding@cp.catapult.org.uk**.

Participants will also be asked to complete a pre- and post-programme survey about their experience participating in the programme.

Final Report

At the end of the programme, consortia are expected to produce a trial report detailing how your results demonstrate your activities, outcomes and impact on the local population, and how it has led to public realm activation on the River Roding health corridor. The proposal should be professionally written and presented, suitable for non-specialists, with all acronyms and technical language clearly explained. Further guidance will be provided later, and you will be closely supported by the trial manager in its creation.

Funding Guidance

Pre-Commercial and pilot Contract

The programme provides pre-commercial funding to conduct your trial of up to £25,000 including VAT, for which you will need to raise invoices to Connected Places Catapult to be paid.

An up-front payment of **60%** of the total trial budget will be made within 30 days of you raising your first invoice.

At the end of the project, the remaining **40%** of your funding will be paid once your final project report has been approved, and you have raised your second and final invoice with us.

The purchase of the following is eligible expenditure:

- **Staff and/or consultancy resource**
- **Equipment & Materials – installation costs**
- **Laboratory / Testing costs**
- **Travel & subsistence costs**

Rates for staff time should already include some overhead costs and therefore no further overheads charges should be made.

On the open call and application pages, you will be prompted to download a project finance template and upload it with your programme specific costs. Ensure you consider the following in your finance documents:

- In kind match funding can be committed through resources, labour, travel, materials or any additional costs and expenses you foresee in the trialling of your solution (this is not a necessary requirement, but we like to capture it if we can)
- All cost information provided should be clearly explained and all rates must reflect fair market value. Sub-contractor and material costs should be justified.
- Salary rates must be justified and appropriate, reflecting market values
- You can also add costs under the category of 'other'. These will be agreed if they are shown to be fully justifiable and represent value for money. For example, this could include reimbursing participants in your trial and must be accounted for in your finance template.

We kindly advise you to keep all receipts and invoices relating to your project.

CPC will be procuring the services for the programme under a pre-commercial pilot and trial contract. Once the contract has been signed, the Catapult will provide you with a purchase order number which must be clearly displayed on your invoices.

Intellectual Property

It is your responsibility to agree appropriate arrangements to protect, manage and handle the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) relating to this trial. If you have any consortium members, it is your responsibility to create your own arrangements with them. Notwithstanding the ownership of the IPR in any potential consortium arrangement, you shall grant Connected Places Catapult (CPC) a non-exclusive licence to any foreground IPR created under the project for non-commercial purposes only. We encourage successful projects to reach the market as innovative solutions.

Dates and deadlines

Please note the dates and deadlines for the competition below. These are indicative timings; we will adhere to this schedule as best as possible. The closing date for applications is fixed and will be **3rd November 2025 @ 10:00**.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered. Extensions will not be granted under any circumstances.

Milestone	Key Dates
Competition opens	9am, 1 st October
Application support webinar	10am, 15 th October <i>Link to webinar booking to be provided</i>
Competition closes (application deadline)	3 rd November, 10am.
Interviews	24 th – 26 th November
Notification of outcome	27 th November
Onboarding & trial design Phase	1 st – 12 th December
Site visit	2 nd December
Contracting	15 th – 17 th December
Trial commences	5 th January 2026
Trial ends	16 th March 2026
Final report due	17 th March 2026
Payments and project close	16 th March – 31 st March 2026

Contact Details

If you have any questions about the programme, please get in touch with the innovation funding team at Connected Places Catapult:

Innovation_funding@cp.catapult.org.uk

We wish you all the best with your application!

Visit our website

<https://cp.catapult.org.uk>

Follow us on LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/cpcatapult>

Email us

Innovation_funding@cp.catapult.org.uk