



Innovation challenge series:

**How do we solve
a problem like...**

**Environmental monitoring
and disaster response**



Innovation in Somerset

A problem shared is a problem halved, and the power of sharing our innovation challenges. At IPEC we want to promote the sharing of local council challenges so others can benefit with the lessons learned.

Somerset brought us a real world challenge. Through IPEC, we helped shape it into a clear innovation brief, ready for the market. This is a model other local authorities can use to unlock solutions, reduce risk, and accelerate delivery.

Overview

Somerset Council piloted a new approach to environmental monitoring during Storm Chandra in January 2026, using drones to capture real-time data in flood conditions. Delivered through Project RESCUE, this demonstrated how faster, safer data collection can improve decision-making during emergencies.

Combining drone data with advanced analytics and stronger data management enables a shift from periodic inspections to continuous insight—supporting faster responses, clearer risk understanding, and better tracking of outcomes.

Through IPEC, other local authorities can adopt this model to define challenges, engage the market, and accelerate solutions that improve resilience and reduce costs of failure

Why it matters

Climate change is driving more frequent, intense and complex flooding and coastal risks. Yet traditional inspections remain slow, fragmented and resource intensive, unable to keep pace or provide the timely, high quality, auditable evidence needed to prioritise investment, verify outcomes, and ensure compliance.

This is a challenge shared by councils nationwide.

Addressing this now reduces service disruption and cost of failure (emergency call-outs, long road closures, reputational risk), improves workforce safety by reducing exposure to confined/unstable sites, and strengthens transparency through traceable evidence for Section 19 investigations and asset registers.

Somerset problem statement

How do we conduct environmental monitoring of natural (land, sea and water) and council assets to inform Council services of risk and impacts of progressive mitigation and measures to improve the Council's approach to land management / nature and flood/coastal council asset inspections and management as well as performance management through evidence data management solutions.



Why should other coastal authorities work with IPEC?

Get procurement right from the start. We've already proven this removes blockers, speeds up decisions, and ensures compliance is built in from day one.

Start with the right problem. Avoid locking into solutions too early. A clearly defined challenge opens up better, more innovative responses from the market.

Engage the market early. Test your thinking before you procure. This avoids costly rework and ensures solutions are viable before investment.

Test before you commit. Trial solutions in real conditions to generate evidence, refine your approach, and invest with confidence.

Build capability as you go. Bring your teams with you. Build confidence, create internal champions, and leave with a successful process you can repeat.

Focus on what is achievable. Start small, prioritise what matters, and avoid overloading teams or budgets.

Design for scale from the start. Understand what enables wider adoption, identify barriers, and define how the solution can be expanded efficiently across locations.

We did this with Somerset. We can do it with you.

Somerset worked with IPEC to turn a complex environmental challenge into a clear, testable solution in real world conditions.

Local authorities across the UK are facing the same pressures. IPEC helps you define the right problem, engage the market effectively, and move from challenge to tested solution faster and with less risk.

You don't need to start from scratch. This work has already reduced the uncertainty, tested the approach, and shown what works. Through IPEC, you can build on it and move straight to implementation.





Do you have an innovation challenge that you would like to share, get in touch to see how we can share or help with your challenge.

Connect with us:

 IPEC email: contact@ipec.org.uk

 IPEC website: www.ipec.org.uk

 IPEC LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/93121184