

# Scale-Up Support Programme: Transport and Construction

Programme Handbook



## Background

The Scale-Up Support Programme: Transport & Construction has been designed to support high-potential UK SMEs that have moved beyond early-stage innovation and are ready to scale. Many businesses in transport, construction and infrastructure have already validated their products or services and demonstrated market traction but still need targeted support to strengthen their operating maturity, commercial strategy, investor readiness and access to finance.

Funded by Innovate UK and delivered by Connected Places Catapult, the pilot has been shaped by market research with SMEs, investors and ecosystem partners. This evidence has informed the programme design and support offer, ensuring the Programme focuses on the areas where Connected Places Catapult can add distinctive value: investment support, scale-up expertise and innovation ecosystem access.

## Methodology

The Scale-Up Support Programme has been developed through an **evidence-led methodology** designed to respond to genuine market needs and focus support where it can have the greatest impact.

- **Market horizon scan:** reviewed existing accelerators, scale-up and investment-readiness programmes to identify gaps in current support provision.
- **SME engagement:** explored the growth barriers, support needs and practical challenges faced by scaling businesses.
- **Investor insight:** captured expectations around growth, governance, commercial maturity and investment readiness.
- **Programme design:** combined research findings with Connected Places Catapult's experience of delivering innovation, commercialisation and accelerator programmes.

## Approach

The Programme focuses on businesses that have already demonstrated product-market fit and are preparing for their next phase of growth. It is designed to help SMEs move from promising innovation to **credible growth**.

The programme is being delivered as a pilot to test the model, validate assumptions and gather evidence on which interventions create the greatest value for scaling businesses. Learning from the pilot will be used to refine the approach and assess its potential for wider roll-out in future years.

Participating SMEs will receive tailored support based on their individual growth priorities, drawing on:

- **Expert coaching** to strengthen leadership, commercial strategy and growth planning.
- **Strategic guidance** to support market positioning, value proposition development and scale-up planning.
- **Investor engagement** to build understanding of growth finance and investment readiness.
- **Peer learning** to share practical insight with other ambitious scaling businesses.

By taking a tailored and evidence-led approach, the programme aims to help participating businesses build the capabilities, networks and confidence required to achieve sustainable scale.

## Support

Selected SMEs will receive a structured package of support designed to help them sharpen their growth strategy, strengthen commercial readiness and unlock new market opportunities. Support will be tailored to each business through an initial needs assessment and delivered through a mix of expert-led sessions, one-to-one guidance and targeted introductions.

- **Business needs assessment:** a focused one-to-one diagnostic session to identify each SME's growth priorities, barriers and support requirements.
- **Tailored support plan:** a clear roadmap setting out recommended activities, outputs and next steps for each participating business.
- **Scale-up support:** guidance to refine value propositions, customer segments, routes to market and partnership opportunities.
- **Investment support:** practical advice to strengthen investor messaging, funding strategy and readiness for future finance conversations.
- **Investor introductions:** Curated introductions to carefully selected investors, including venture capital, strategic and international investors aligned to each company's growth ambitions.

Please note that the Scale-Up Support Programme does not provide investment or direct financial funding to participating businesses, and while the programme is designed to strengthen investment readiness and commercial opportunities, Connected Places Catapult cannot guarantee that participation will result in securing investment, contracts, or other commercial outcomes.

## Eligibility

To be eligible, applicants must:

- Be a small to medium sized enterprise (<250 employees, annual turnover <£44M, balance sheet total <£38M)
- Be a UK-registered business
- Have a solution at technical readiness level (TRL) 7 - 9. This means that the solution has at least been demonstrated in an operational environment and is ideally proven in an operational environment.
- Have a solution applicable to the UK transport or built environment sectors
- Be available to actively participate in the programme at executive-level between October 2026 and March 2027

## How to apply

You can apply to the programme through our website [here](#).

We will be assessing applications based on the following criteria:

- Solution
- Leadership & Team
- Financials & Traction
- Programme Fit

To help prospective applicants understand the opportunity and submit a strong application, Connected Places Catapult will be hosting a live **Application Support Webinar**.

**Date:** Wednesday 26 August 2026

**Time:** 10:30am – 11:30am

**Format:** Online

# Register here

This interactive session will help prospective applicants understand the opportunity, eligibility requirements and assessment process. It will include an overview of the programme, practical guidance on completing the application form, and a live Q&A with the programme team.

## **What you'll learn**

- An overview of the Scale-Up Support Programme and the support available to participating SMEs.
- Programme objectives, timelines and key milestones.
- Eligibility requirements and what makes a strong applicant.
- Guidance on completing the application form and responding to assessment criteria.
- Tips for presenting your growth ambitions, commercial potential and support needs effectively
- Answers to your questions during a live Q&A session.

Whether you are still deciding if the programme is right for your business or are already preparing your application, we encourage you to join the webinar and engage directly with the programme team.

