

# Clean Futures Accelerator Workshop sets out industry challenges for SMEs

June 21, 2023



A workshop setting out the challenges for the pioneering Clean Futures Accelerator initiative took place last week, with a host of influential organisations spanning the industry in attendance.

The Clean Futures Accelerator is a transformation programme led by Connected Places Catapult alongside the Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation (BCIMO), Coventry University and CU Services Limited.

Over the course of the two-year programme, 40 SMEs will be selected to join a 6-month, challenge-led accelerator where they will receive funding to trial their solutions. The challenges in the accelerator will be built around very light rail and automotive manufacturing, along with related supply chains.

The accelerator will also provide bespoke technical and commercial support as well as networking and showcasing events to connect the SMEs with industry and financial partners.

The Clean Futures Accelerator Challenge Setters workshop was held on Thursday 15 June at The Institute for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering (AME) in Coventry.

The goal of the workshop was to create a shortlist of challenges to be addressed by SMEs participating in the Clean Futures Accelerator programme.

To achieve this, participants were briefed on the current situation in the West Midlands, including economic and environmental factors, plans for growth and current initiatives in progress.

Criteria were then created to use for the participants selecting the challenges. Challenges were then rated against the selection criteria with rationale added by participants to justify their selections.



*The workshop was structured around groupwork consisting of groups of five*

In total the participants identified a list of over 75 candidate challenges to be considered and evaluated them based on the criteria to select the most important ones.

By the end of the session, the challenges were reduced to five, which will be addressed by applying SMEs participating in the programme.

The challenges agreed upon were based on themes including alternative fuel sources, design and manufacture of lightweight components for vehicles, recycling of components and more.

The workshop was structured around groupwork consisting of groups of five, mixing stakeholders from the programme's organisers Coventry University, the Catapult and BCIMO as well as participating challenge

setters.

Organisations in attendance on the day included:

- Arcadis Gen
- Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation (BCIMO),
- Connected Places Catapult
- Coventry Very Light Rail Scheme/Coventry City Council
- Global Nano Network
- IPG
- M-Group Transport
- Network Rail
- RBD Advisory
- TABA Associates
- TAE Power Solutions
- TVS Supply Chain Solutions
- Ultra Light Rail Partners
- Unipart
- UK Tram
- University of Coventry





SMEs that qualify for the Clean Futures Accelerator programme will receive funding and commercial support to develop their innovative products and solutions for the rail and automotive industry's transition to Net Zero.

Pierre Bouche, hosting the workshop on behalf of Connected Places Catapult, said: "The workshop was a remarkable convergence of talent, where industry, academia and government all-stars joined forces to make difficult choices on which challenges would be the most impactful for the Clean Futures accelerator."

Naomi Arblaster, Head of SME Development at the Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation (BCIMO), said: "Today was a hugely important session as we took our first steps in setting the challenges that will need to be addressed by local innovators and our region's most ambitious SMEs."

"It was fantastic to see so many organisations come together to collaborate on the challenges that will drive economic growth and support a better future for the West Midlands region."

Naomi added: "The Clean Futures Accelerator programme will play a pivotal role in addressing the future

needs of industry and society by bringing together local businesses, industry partners, service providers, and local government bodies to help make the West Midlands a leader in clean technologies.”

To register your interest for the Clean Futures Accelerator [click here](#).

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