

HS2 opens its Innovation Accelerator programme to cutting-edge tech firms

June 3, 2021



HS2 has launched the search for small innovative firms and start-ups to become part of the third cohort to join its Innovation Accelerator programme, in partnership with Connected Places Catapult and Bruntwood SciTech.

The company delivering Britain's new high speed rail network is looking for five SMEs to develop new thinking, technology and processes in how data and digital technologies can be harnessed to help the project achieve one of its strategic aims of shrinking its carbon footprint.

Inside the Accelerator, based at Bruntwood SciTech's Innovation Birmingham campus, the firms will focus on how data utilisation and use of digital technologies could drive efficiencies in use of materials; energy and fuel; and management of construction site operations to help reduce carbon emissions.

Separately HS2 Ltd is looking for Innovation Accelerator entrants to develop ideas on how digital technology can ensure the railway is designed and built to the highest health, safety and security standards.

To help achieve this, the project is specifically looking for innovations that raise health and safety standards on delivery of major infrastructure projects; manage and drive down risk to prevent injury; and strengthen security to protect construction site plant and machinery.

Speaking as the online portal went live, HS2 Ltd innovation manager Rob Cairns said: "Innovation has a crucial role to play in cutting energy consumption and carbon emissions on HS2, so we're looking for creative and fresh thinking on how to achieve this. The safety and security of our construction sites is of paramount importance to us. Harnessing the power of digital technology has the potential to play a key role in helping HS2 to continually drive up safety and security standards.

"We're utilising HS2's scale and longevity to create an environment where innovation can flourish, the benefits of which will be felt both by this project and provide a legacy of progress for the industry."

Since HS2 Ltd launched its Innovation Accelerator a year ago, two cohorts of five tech start-ups and SMEs have used their four months inside to develop technology while receiving commercial advice and technical support. The model is working as the majority have gone on to be successful and deliver proof of concepts with HS2 supply chain companies and joint ventures.

Rob added: "To date, across the two cohorts, the SMEs have secured Venture Capital investment, government-backed grant funding and eight commercially-funded pilots, as well as creating 18 new jobs. We are proud that the accelerator is acting as a catalyst for growth from small and medium enterprise business.

"By establishing themselves as suppliers of innovative technological solutions to HS2's large supply chain, the SMEs are creating commercial links across construction industries both here and abroad, which potentially unlocks a virtuous circle of innovation and growth."

Firms and individuals interested in applying to join the HS2 Innovation Accelerator third cohort can find more information [here](#). The portal will close to applications on 28 June.

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd