

Innovation Station, a new agile innovation programme, launched by Network Rail and Connected Places Catapult

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Network Rail, in partnership with Connected Places Catapult (CPC), has launched a new programme to find innovative solutions to address key challenges currently faced by British railway stations.

The first phase of the Innovation Station programme looks to solve challenges around collecting real-time crowding information on platforms and identifying new measures for monitoring and checking station equipment. Using Manchester Piccadilly Station as a testbed, the programme will look to trial new design solutions addressing each of the challenges, selected through a Design Contest Competition.

Applicants looking to take part in the Design Contest will have approximately a month to submit a design which will be put to a jury of experts. Winning participants could receive funding to develop and demonstrate their design solutions over a 10-week period, after which Network Rail may choose to purchase the end service or fund further development, with potential for implementation across more stations if successful.

This is all part of Network Rail's Research, Development & Innovation (RD&I) programme, which is looking to develop agile processes for innovation. The 'agile process' is commonly used in the software industry to find new products and services quickly using cycles of rapid development, evaluation and then further development. This allows innovation to be rolled out quicker than using traditional processes.

James Metcalfe, Network Rail Shift Station Manager (Platforms 13 and 14), Manchester Piccadilly, said: "I am really looking forward to seeing the solutions that come out of the Innovation Station programme. This new approach gives us an opportunity to find and explore new design ideas to tackle the challenges we face, see results quickly and work closely with suppliers to introduce solutions that make a real difference to the station experience for our customers."

Neil Fulton, Connected Places Catapult COO, said: "New technologies and approaches are sweeping the transport industry and opening up an array of possibilities for both improved operations on the rail network and customer experience at railway stations. We are excited to launch the Innovation Station programme with Network Rail, an initiative that will allow the innovation community, supported by the Connected Places Catapult technical capabilities, to develop solutions and concepts for challenges at British railway stations."

Candidates interested in taking part in the Design Contest are invited to join members of the Network Rail and CPC team for an industry day at the Manchester Science and Industry Museum on Thursday 12 March. The industry day aims to provide further information on the design contest and the challenges, with questions and answers from the event published afterwards. Candidates who are not able to attend the industry day will still have the opportunity to participate in the Design Contest. To register your attendance, [click here](#).