

Innovators selected for Bristol railway station trials

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Connected Places Catapult, the UK's innovation accelerator for cities, transport, and place leadership, has announced the names of three companies chosen by the Catapult, Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR) to trial new technology as part of the Station Innovation Zone at Bristol Temple Meads.

The three firms – **Chrome Angel Solutions**, Co-You, and **CrossTech** – were selected from a **longlist of eight** companies announced in January, who were keen to demonstrate new ideas to help improve various aspects of the passenger experience at the station.

Each of the three shortlisted companies will receive funding of up to £75,000 to take their proposals forward for trial, testing and evaluation, after initially being awarded £2,000 to develop a trial plan and receiving business support and pitch coaching.

Passengers at Bristol Temple Meads station will witness the benefits of the trials taking place later this year. The three companies and their innovations are:

Chrome Angel Solutions applies 'serious games' technology to tackle performance, safety and customer

experience challenges for railway operators. It offers low-cost simulations on mobile devices, tablets, PC and virtual reality headsets to build staff confidence and competence for complex and critical operational processes and situations.

Co-You has created an innovative carbon dioxide absorbing panel system, to be deployed in a station to capture CO₂ from diesel train emissions. The panel system, developed by the London-based SME, is scalable to help achieve net zero targets.

CrossTech uses automated computer vision inspection software to help those involved in the operation of the station improve efficiency and safety by locating or predicting potential hazards. This could include the detection and alerting of passengers approaching stairs with unsuitable luggage.

Innovations being taken forward as part of the programme cover two industry 'challenges' – set by Network Rail and the Catapult, with the support of a cross-industry advisory board – which are 'Sustainable Station', and 'Safe Station'.

Brian Wortman, Senior Programme Manager at Network Rail said: "We are delighted to be continuing our partnership with Connected Places Catapult on the second year of the Station Innovation Zone. Working closely with GWR and the wider industry, we will provide innovators opportunities to test and develop their exciting ideas in an operational station environment. This will provide Network Rail with new, innovative ways to further improve and enhance the experience of our passengers. The three chosen SMEs each have fantastic potential to help us deliver a cutting-edge service to passengers while furthering our sustainability goals and enhancing safety for everyone who uses the station.

"We are committed to developing Bristol Temple Meads into a world class transport hub for the benefit of our passengers, the city of Bristol and wider West of England region, so it's fitting that Bristol Temple Meads continues to lead the way as the UK's first Station Innovation Zone."

Dr Alan Peters, Ecosystem Director – Rail and Stations at Connected Places Catapult said: "I'm delighted to see the SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) selected for this year of the Station Innovation Zone. These trials will align well with a wider programme of work relating to station digital twins, research into station decarbonisation, and the development of novel passenger sentiment evaluation techniques. It is exciting to see how the emerging cluster of innovation activities at Bristol Temple Meads can enrich each other."

Clare Gooden, GWR Assistant Station Manager Bristol Temple Meads said: "We're pleased to be working closely with Connected Places Catapult and Network Rail as part of the Station Innovation Zone to test and trial new ways to continuously improve passengers' experience.

"New technologies have the potential to deliver real benefits for them, whether that is from a new app dedicated to those who are neurodiverse, or a safety innovation to reduce slips on stairs – all helping those using our services to get the very best as they pass through the station."