

# Lab by Transport for Wales sees second cohort bring further innovation and new ideas to enhance the railway

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The second batch of Wales' leading rail-dedicated innovation programme concluded last week, as *Spatial Cortex* were declared the winners following a successful virtual demo day.

Held on Friday 13 November, the demo day looked to inspire innovation within businesses and offer an insight into some of the cutting-edge developments coming to the Wales and Borders rail network.

Each of the 11 start-ups within the cohort – some of the most creative and ambitious tech talent from across Wales and the UK – pitched their ideas to leading Transport for Wales decision-makers in a bid to secure extra funding to develop their product further and help shape the railway experience for customers in Wales.

The cohort have been working closely with TfW over the course of the last 12 weeks, receiving dedicated mentoring from business experts to advance their products, ideas and innovations during the accelerator programme.

The pioneering scheme looks to stimulate growth in Wales by offering an exciting opportunity for business innovators to produce ideas that enhance the railway customer experience.

The demo day featured video presentations from each of the start-ups, as well as an opportunity for attendees to ask questions and network with them during virtual Microsoft Teams breakout rooms.

As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, cohort 2 of the programme has unfortunately been unable to take place at TfW's new state-of-the-art lab facility in Newport with the start-ups having to work remotely.

After a day of pitches, *Spatial Cortex* were chosen as the winners and will be awarded 25,000 to develop their product even further.

The proposed product, named MOVA, is a revolutionary wearable technology for railway staff to help reduce manual handling injuries when undertaking tasks such as lifting, carrying and manipulating materials whether trackside, in depots or carrying out maintenance. They believe the technology will enable quantitative assessments and provide deeper insights to prevent manual handling injuries whilst overcoming the drawbacks of current risk-assessment practices.

Speaking after being declared winners, Kailash Manoharaselvan, Co-founder and Director of Spatial Cortex said: "Given that we are an early stage start-up currently, winning the prize is an absolute game-changer and will make a real difference to us.

"It will accelerate and boost our start-up journey by allowing us more resource and time to deliver on the next steps along with Transport for Wales."

Barry Lloyd, Head of Customer Experience and Innovation at Transport for Wales Rail spoke of his excitement at the prospect of working with Spatial Cortex, saying: "Demo day was a fantastic showcase of the talented companies we have been working with over the past 12 weeks. Judging all 11 was a tough task but we felt that Spatial Cortex have the potential to be a real innovation in rail and have a huge impact, not just for us, but for the whole industry.

"Emu Analytics and Route Konnect also fully deserve to be highly commended for all their hard work in the development of some brilliant solutions for us.

"We are also exploring the option of working with some of the cohort that were not commended, which is testament to just how good this second cohort has been."

Transport for Wales Rail Insight and Innovation Manager Michael Davies also spoke of his admiration for the cohort, revealing that the next steps for the programme are already underway: "Running a cohort against the background of COVID-19 was a huge challenge but one that the team at Alt Labs, each start-up involved and everyone from Transport for Wales put a huge amount of energy into to ensure its success. I'd like to thank everyone involved for their hard work over the past 12 weeks.

"Recruitment has now started for our next cohort which we will look to launch early next year, so please do get in touch if you have a fantastic idea that you think can have a positive impact within the rail industry."

You can watch a recording of all 11 start-ups presentations as they pitched their products on demo day [here](#).

*Photo credit: Transport for Wales*

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