

New funding available for West Midlands businesses with clean transport ideas

3 years ago



Connected Places Catapult, the UK's innovation accelerator for cities, transport, and place leadership, has today announced that applications are open for the new [Clean Futures Accelerator](#). From today, innovative small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the West Midlands can apply for support and funding to develop solutions in response to one of five challenge areas identified in the field of green transport.

A total of £1m is available to support up to 20 companies selected to take part in this first year, with each receiving up to £50K which must be matched in-kind (for example, with labour) by the SME.

Clean Futures is being led by Connected Places Catapult in collaboration with the Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation, and Coventry University. It is part of the wider West Midlands Innovation Accelerator, which is designed to bolster the region's innovation and R&D capability and capacity to spark commercial growth and investment. The West Midlands Innovation Accelerator is delivered in partnership with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, Innovate UK and the West Midlands Combined Authority.

To be selected for the Clean Futures Accelerator, companies will have to show they have a solution that can address one of five challenges, which have been developed around the rail and automotive manufacturing sectors, along with related supply chains.

1. Greener EV components: Design or produce components which reduce embodied carbon across the vehicle lifecycle
2. Circular Economy of transport: Design or manufacture solutions to reuse or recycle batteries and other vehicle components

3. Road freight alternatives: Design or produce systems or sub-systems enabling alternatives to traditional road freight, including using existing infrastructure, facilitating multi-modal freight transportation and exploring shared transport solutions
4. Greener transport infrastructure: Design or produce cost-effective solutions for clean transportation infrastructure
5. Future Fuels: Produce, transport or store alternative fuels such as hydrogen, biofuels or synthetic fuels

Alongside funding, companies selected for the Accelerator will benefit from bespoke technical and commercial support as well as networking and showcasing events to connect with industry and financial partners. There will also be the opportunity to access an extensive range of facilities to support the development of future rail technologies at BCIMO and technical support from both the Institute for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering and the Centre for Advanced Low Carbon Propulsion Systems at Coventry University. All companies selected will benefit from commercialisation support from the full team to ensure that they are ready to maximise their impact. In addition, all applicants will have the opportunity to join the Clean Futures Catalyst, a network bringing together the wider West Midlands business community to enhance the region's capacity for clean technology.

Nicola Yates OBE, Chief Executive at Connected Places Catapult, said: "The West Midlands has a powerful legacy as the UK's manufacturing heartland. This Accelerator seeks to capitalise on the knowledge and expertise this region has to offer as we turn to face the climate crisis head on.

"I encourage local businesses to think creatively about how their solutions might help address the challenges we have outlined and consider applying. We're keen to hear from companies with track records in rail, automotive and manufacturing, but we also want to cast the net wider and support businesses with green thinking that might transfer from other sectors."

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands and WMCA Chair, said: "Innovation is central to restoring our status as the fastest growing region outside of London.

"Our Plan for Growth has identified advanced manufacturing as a key growth cluster for the West Midlands and I know that we can be at the vanguard of the forthcoming Green Industrial Revolution.

"That's why I'm glad to see Clean Futures launch this Accelerator - with funding and support available to help innovative businesses in our region to develop green transport solutions in the months and years ahead."

Neil Fulton, Chief Executive of the Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation, said: "This is a unique opportunity for forward-thinking companies to be part of a network of innovators across the West Midlands, helping to solve some of the greatest challenges of our time. The funding will kick-start the concepts and the collaboration and use of BCIMO's rail related facilities will ensure these opportunities can be developed and commercialised."

Professor Paul Noon OBE, Pro-Vice Chancellor at Coventry University, said: "The Clean Futures Accelerator will enable innovative companies across the region to drive the Green Industrial Revolution forward. I look forward to seeing the creative and innovative ideas that will form the bedrock of the regional and UK economy in the years to come."