

News story: Innovative ideas to transform UK rail in line to bid for millions in government grants

Second year of funding for innovative projects:

- focus this year is on decarbonisation and customer experience
- ten projects have already secured funding from first round of grants.

Innovative ideas to transform rail travel for passengers could be in line for a slice of up to £3.5 million funding, Rail Minister Jo Johnson announced today (19 September 2018).

The First of a Kind (FOAK) competition, now in its second year, seeks ideas that can be adapted to improve the UK rail network.

This year the competition, which is run by [Innovate UK](#) and is part of the Department of Transport's wider Accelerating Innovation in Rail (AIR) scheme, focuses on 2 themes – decarbonising of the railway and improving the passenger experience in stations.

Mr Johnson said:

There are many brilliant ideas already out there that, with just minor modifications, could help to transform rail journeys for passengers across the network.

We want to hear from those companies whose projects fit this template, because we can offer them the grant funding to make that a reality.

We are investing in the biggest rail modernisation programme since Victorian times and we want to put passengers at the heart of everything we do.

Earlier this year, 10 projects succeeded in securing funding for improving the passengers experience on rail in the first round of funding. They included a smartphone app that highlights landmarks on a journey in real-time and beacons that guide visually-impaired passengers through stations to their seats.

Simon Edmonds, Innovate UK's Director, Manufacturing, Materials and Mobility, said:

We are delighted to be working with DfT on this competition. We want to unlock the talent of UK companies to demonstrate tomorrow's

stations today and to contribute to de-carbonising the railway. This first of a kind competition will result in tangible, realistic prototypes that have the potential to meet these challenges, to deliver a greener railway and an enhanced customer experience.

Round 2 of the FOAK competition runs from 8 October to 28 November 2018 and is open to projects looking for individual funding of between £250,000 and £350,000.

Competition bosses are particularly keen to hear about projects that can improve air quality in stations, reduce noise pollution, provide consistent and reliable information to passengers during periods of disruption and enhance accessibility for everyone, especially those with less visible impairments.

[More information on how to enter the FOAK competition.](#)