

# News story: Protecting the Scottish countryside: apply for funding

Scotland's myriad landscapes are among the most defining aspects of the country. Access to attractive and accessible countryside can make a significant contribution to peoples' quality of life and wellbeing, and [tourism in the Scottish countryside is worth £420 million per year](#).

However, landscape damage and other changes can result in the loss of local distinctiveness and wildlife diversity, and erode the quality of nearby towns and cities.

Datasets are useful in informing decisions around land management. £250,000 is available through an Innovate UK Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) competition for projects that can demonstrate how datasets can be used to support the local environment. Funding for the competition forms part of the GovTech Catalyst for Scottish National Heritage (SNH)

## **0 Caledonia! stern and wild**

The competition is looking for projects which will investigate how technology can deliver better targeted information and advice to users – including land owners, developers and local authorities – to support proposals that limit, damage or benefit conservation efforts.

Projects should:

- detail how Scottish National Heritage can use new and current datasets in proposals to limit damage or enhance their environmental impact
- explore how data can be shared in non-digital formats, such as maps
- help users identify organisations involved in the development or approval of proposals where SNH is not the authorising body
- be compatible with other public sector organisations

## **A 2-phase competition**

The competition is made up of 2 phases.

A total of £250,000 including VAT has been allocated to phase 1. Around 5 research and development contracts are expected to be awarded, with projects starting on 1 October 2019 and lasting up to 3 months.

Phase 2 will be subject to outcomes of phase 1 and is expected to award 2 R&D contracts from successful phase 1 applicants. Up to £500,000 including VAT will be allocated to each contract to develop a prototype and conduct field testing. Phase 2 projects can last up to 12 months.

## Competition information

- the competition opens on 13 May 2019 and the deadline for registration is at midday on 19 June 2019
  - organisations of any size are eligible to apply
  - up to £50,000 including VAT is available for each organisation
  - a briefing event will be [held in Edinburgh on 21 May 2019](#)
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## News story: New investment to support early-stage immersive businesses

It's estimated that the UK's immersive industry [generates £660 million in sales every year](#), and that as many as half a million people are employed by companies participating in the immersive economy. Despite this, there is currently a gap in angel and early-seed investment into immersive businesses – a critical point of a new business's growth.

To help businesses overcome this barrier and boost the UK economy, Innovate UK is working with 11 investor partners to offer simultaneous grant funding and venture capital investment in early-stage projects led by UK companies.

Up to £2 million is available in grant funding, alongside equity investment from the following investor partners:

- Creative England
- GC Angels (GC Business Finance)
- HTC Europe (Vive X)
- London Venture Partners LLP
- Mercia Technologies PLC
- Northstar Ventures Ltd
- Oxford Sciences Innovation PLC
- R/GA
- Station 12
- Techstart Ventures LLP
- Warner Music UK

## Helping innovative businesses succeed

This competition aims to support early stage immersive companies by:

- encouraging early-stage private investment in small and medium sized immersive businesses
- removing the need to find match funding
- giving companies direct access to investment partners' commercial skills, knowledge and market opportunities

Grant funding is provided through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund's audience of the future programme, delivered by UK Research and Innovation. By bringing together creative businesses, researchers and technology experts to adopt, exploit and develop immersive technologies, the challenge is growing the UK's leading market position in creative content.

## **Transforming audience experiences**

This competition is open to companies engaged in producing immersive content, delivering new immersive products, services or platforms, or developing novel immersive software, hardware or devices.

Projects can focus on one or more of the following:

- enhancing, extending or transforming the immersive audience experience
- new immersive content production tools, software and systems
- VR, AR and other digital technologies to deepen and enrich the immersive experience

Innovate UK will fund up to 70% of projects for micro or small businesses, and up to 60% for medium-sized businesses. The remaining project costs need to come from one of this competition's investor partners.

### **Competition information**

- the competition will open on 20 May 2019
- the competition will close on 3 July 2019
- up to £2 million including VAT in grant funding is available
- your project's total eligible costs must be between £150,000 and £300,000
- you must be a UK-based micro, small or medium-sized enterprise working in immersive technology, and carry out your project in the UK
- applicants must commit to co-investment from one of the investor partners

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## **[News story: Nick Hoffman Reappointed as Trustee for the V&A](#)**

Nick Hoffman most recently led McKinsey and Company's UK Insurance and Asset Management Practice. He worked as a Partner of the management consulting firm for 12 years, in the UK, Europe, Asia and the US, and focused on large transformations and growth strategy. Previously he worked at the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia to develop a new wing of the museum. Nick is a former Chairman of the Trustees of the Gilbert Collection, and still serves as a Trustee. He has an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School and graduated summa cum laude from Harvard University.

This role is not remunerated These appointments have been made in accordance with the [Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). The process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Government's Governance Code requires that any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years is declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. Nick Hoffman has made no such declarations.

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## **Press release: Consultation: Lincolnshire coastal flood risk management strategy**

Consultation starts Monday 3 June. Giving opportunity for comment on the Shoreline Management Plan Policy of 'hold the line' and keep pace with climate change

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## **Press release: Regulator launches consultation on 2020 Rent Standard**

The Regulator of Social Housing has launched a 12-week consultation today (7 May 2019) on a revised Rent Standard that will come into effect from 1 April 2020.

The consultation is as a result of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government's [Direction to RSH](#), which was published in February 2019, following the Government's consultation in autumn 2018.

The Regulator is also required to have regard to the Government's Policy Statement on rents, which was published alongside the Direction.

The key elements of the Direction are:

- For RSH to also regulate rents charged by social housing stock-owning local authorities (LA registered providers) – aligning the regulation of council rents with that of private registered providers
- To restrict rent increases on social rent and affordable rent properties

by up to CPI+1% annually from 2020 for a period of at least five years – striking a balance between the interests of landlords, tenants and taxpayers

Fiona MacGregor, Chief Executive of RSH said:

This consultation focuses on whether we have appropriately reflected the Government's Direction to us. The Direction itself has previously been consulted on by Government. Our aim is to ensure that the setting and management of rents is clear and easy to understand for all registered providers of social housing.

The long-term rent settlement should help provide a stable financial environment for the social housing sector to make the best possible use of its resources in supporting the delivery of new homes and effectively managing and maintaining properties, while protecting the interests of social housing tenants.

The [consultation](#) will remain open until 30 July 2019.

## **Further information**

1. The current Rent Standard issued in 2015, can be found on the [Regulatory Standards page](#).
2. The Government's consultation [Rents for social housing from 2020-21](#) – is on the MHCLG website.
3. The Regulator of Social Housing promotes a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or potential tenants.
4. For press office contact details, see our [Media enquiries page](#). For general queries, please email [enquiries@rsh.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@rsh.gov.uk) or call 0300 124 5225.