

News story: Geovation Programme returns for 2019

GeoTech and PropTech start-ups have the chance to advance their businesses after Geovation announced the return of its Accelerator Programme for 2019.

[Geovation](#) is an Ordnance Survey and HM Land Registry partnership dedicated to supporting open innovation and collaboration using location and property data.

The [application process has opened](#) for the Accelerator Programme, which is based at the Geovation Hub in Clerkenwell, London.

The programme, which has been running since 2015 and already created nearly 200 jobs, helps GeoTech and PropTech start-ups reach their potential. It puts the young companies in touch with a network of mentors who are established entrepreneurs, industry leaders and advisers.

A grant of £10,000 for six months, with the opportunity for another £10,000 afterwards, is available, along with 12 months' free desk space at the world-leading Geovation Hub.

Programme members are given access to technical expertise, Ordnance Survey and HM Land Registry data, and open data sources. They also receive one-to-one sessions and workshops covering finance, fundraising, business planning, legal and intellectual property, company law and coaching on presentations and pitching.

Alex Wrottesley, Head of Geovation, said:

We want to hear from any new start-ups, entrepreneurs and developers looking to solve customer problems with location data, or creating new digital solutions in the land and property sector. Geovation offers a unique combination of funding, expertise, relationships and resources and the teams on our programme find themselves at the heart of our vibrant GeoTech and PropTech community.

As well as financial assistance, mentoring and workshops, we are unique in providing access to a dedicated software development team in house, who work closely with our cohort companies to run lean experiments and build and release their first products.

All of this combines to help these emerging start-ups break through.

Backed by Ordnance Survey (OS) and HM Land Registry, the Accelerator Programme has produced a steady pipeline of success since its introduction in

2015. A total of 84 start-ups have gone through the programme, creating more than 200 jobs and raising £23.3 million in investment funding.

Names to pass through the hub's doors include property licensing data company [Get Rentr](#), sexual harassment mapping app creators [Safe In the City](#) and pay-as-you-fly commercial drone insurers [Flock](#) (which has gone on to raise nearly £3 million in investment funding).

Pae Natwilai, founder of drone software company [Trik](#), was accepted on the programme last year. Her company automatically turns drone photo feeds into interactive 3D models for the structural inspections of buildings.

She said:

Through Geovation we have grown our team significantly and managed to secure pre-seed investment from two amazing investors, Alex Chesterman the founder of Zoopla and Simon Franks, founder of LoveFilm.

Next for us is scaling up the system and marketing it globally. We are currently finalising a deal with a couple of large engineering enterprises both in the UK and internationally.

Jonny Britton, co-founder of land data platform [LandInsight](#), went through the programme in 2015. He said:

Geovation has a technical group of people who could give you real-time consultancy to how you can start moving faster with that data to put it into your products. Whenever you are with a group of people who are really pushing those boundaries, it's a fantastic place to be.

Olly Thornton-Berry is co-founder of PropTech start-up [Thirdfort](#), which works with lawyers to securely hold money during property transactions. He said:

Geovation has been immensely helpful, supporting us from incubation to a business with over £670k in funding, a testable product and two new developers working in house. We now feel we have a foundation to grow from and Geovation has been integral to that foundation.

Another PropTech company aided by the programme was [Hipla](#), which developed a Home Buyer Passport to improve transparency in the home buying process.

Co-founder Adam Phillips said:

Receiving backing, guidance and help from HM Land Registry,

Geovation, and Ordnance Survey has helped our early stage start-up gain a much steadier footing than it otherwise would have done. Their help with early stage funding, office space, data and market insights has been invaluable. Their support has meant we are now in a much better position to deliver on our objectives of improving the home buying process.

For more information on how to apply to the Geovation Accelerator Programme, visit geovation.uk/accelerator/ or email us at programme@geovation.uk.

[News story: Civil news: training sessions to help with online applications](#)

Support is available for providers who need help making civil applications. There are two main options:

- live training events
- visits to LAA offices

How do I book training?

Live training sessions are listed on Eventbrite. Topics covered include:

Sessions are currently running until late February 2019.

You can book now using this link:

[Eventbrite provider training modules](#)

If you have any questions about training then email Digital.Assist@justice.gov.uk

How do I book a visit?

You are welcome to contact us to enquire about visits to help us improve the way we work together.

Visits are organised by the Provider Engagement Working Group (PEWG). This group meets monthly and has representatives from offices across the Legal Aid Agency.

There are three main aims:

1. provide support
2. build and maintain positive relationships
3. reduce avoidable contact

Successes from provider visits to date include:

- introducing providers to the bulk upload facility for bills
- increasing the number of providers signed up to the paperless pilot for Escape Cases
- raising awareness about the role of a caseworker and the application process

If you would like to ask about a visit or have questions about the work of the Provider Engagement Working Group then email BIT@justice.gov.uk

Further information

[Eventbrite provider training modules](#)

Digital.Assist@justice.gov.uk – to email training questions

BIT@justice.gov.uk – to email PEWG questions

Statement to parliament: Departmental contingent liability notification: National Employment Savings Trust (NEST)

National Employment Savings Trust (NEST)

It is normal practice, when a government department proposes to undertake a contingent liability in excess of £300,000 for which there is no specific

statutory authority, for the Minister concerned to present a departmental minute to Parliament giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from incurring the liability until 14 parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the minute, except in case of special urgency.

Background

NEST was established by government to support the policy of all employers being obliged to automatically enrol their eligible staff into a workplace pension scheme. NEST ensures that all employers have access to a low cost, high quality pension scheme.

The Pension Schemes Act 2017 introduced the definition of a 'Master Trust' and the introduction of a robust new authorisation and supervision regime to ensure that Master Trusts being used for automatic enrolment are safe for the nearly 10 million people now saving in these schemes. To be able to operate in the pensions market as a Master Trust, schemes, of which NEST is one, are required to meet 5 authorisation criteria prescribed in the Pension Schemes Act 2017.

One of the criteria is that the scheme must be financially sustainable and that in the event of a triggering event, an event that would put the scheme at risk of needing to wind up, the scheme must hold sufficient financial reserves to cover its gradual closure without putting these additional costs onto the scheme members. Due to the nature of its financial arrangements with government, NEST is unable to build up the financial reserves needed to meet an aspect of the financial sustainability criteria.

Contingent liability

If a triggering event was to occur, then the maximum size of the contingent liability required to be made available to NEST would be £329 million. This is the amount estimated by NEST and accepted by The Pension Regulator during a pre-authorisation readiness review. The Department for Work and Pensions has estimated that the risk of full crystallisation is remote; less than 5%. The contingent liability is comprised of 24 months of operational costs and the fees required to comply with the triggering event to completion as prescribed in regulations. Member revenues and charges, interest payments due in respect of the existing loan and the Public Service Obligation Offset Payment have been modelled into the calculation. The amount of the contingent liability will be reviewed annually for the period it is required. This is currently expected to be until 2034 at which point NEST will not require this indemnity.

The contingent liability is required as a consequence of needing to provide a 'Letter of Comfort' in order that NEST can secure Master Trust status. Failure to secure Master Trust status will mean the closure of NEST. Specifically, without the letter, NEST, will be unable to meet the financial sustainability criteria.

The expected loss as calculated by the department is £16.45 million which is based on the liability multiplied by the risk of crystallisation. If the liability is called, provision for any payment will be sought through the normal supply procedure.

HM Treasury has approved the proposal in principle. If, during the period of 14 parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which this minute was laid before the House, a member signifies an objection by giving notice of a parliamentary question or motion relating to the minute, or by otherwise raising the matter in the House, final approval will be withheld pending an examination of the objection.

[Speech: Michael Ellis' speech at Theatres Trust: Theatres at Risk event](#)

I am delighted to be here with you all today.

Thank you for inviting me to speak at this important launch. Let me first take the opportunity to thank the Theatres Trust for your contribution to arts and culture. You have continuously campaigned to ensure that theatre buildings, many of them with historical and cultural significance, are protected for generations to come.

It is vital that we continue to invest in arts and culture. This investment can help develop lifelong passions and create new opportunities for work.

Creativity, arts and heritage make our communities better places to live and theatres are an incredibly important part of that.

We know that British theatre is respected for its high-quality output and the skilled professionals, both on and off the stage, who keep the industry running. Theatre in England is vibrant and thriving, with a diverse range of artists and companies producing exciting and varied work.

A theatre can be a challenging but exciting place to work and I believe there are some great opportunities in the industry.

Not just for the highly-skilled and the longstanding practitioners of their craft, but for young people just starting out who can bring a fresh perspectives and hone their expertise.

Like you, this Government and I, are fully committed to ensuring that arts and culture are accessible to everyone.

To that end, theatres as physical buildings and the institutions that support them, take a central role when it comes to accessibility.

I am sure everyone here today is in agreement that anyone should be able to experience the magic of theatre. That audience members feel part of the work.

This is why the work of the Theatres Trust and their annual Theatres at Risk register plays such a significant role in ensuring we are all aware of some of these important cultural institutions which are at threat.

It is of great credit to the hard work of the Trust and the sector that two theatres that were on last years' list have returned to live performance use – including the one where we are today – and two others are no longer at risk.

This is great news, thank you for work and your commitment to the industry.

It is also very pleasing to see that a number of other theatres, such as the Burnley Empire and the Bradford Odeon, amongst others have been making progress in securing their futures. I very much hope that this progress continues.

We know many of the Theatres on the list are experiencing financial problems.

We also know that the cultural and creative industries make a vast contribution to our economy, accounting for over 5% of UK GVA, and the Government is committed to supporting their growth.

Culture also has a significant role to play in place-shaping, as it has important social benefits in terms of health, education, community cohesion and wellbeing. Opportunities to engage in culture – be it arts, heritage, museums or film – can have a significant impact on our lives and create places where people want to live, work and do business.

This is where the theatre, as a physical building, can play a central role in making places better areas to live, and instill a sense of community. And it may be that placemaking that can help to protect some of these cultural assets.

Evidence from the UK and other countries shows a link between cultural investment in towns and cities and economic growth. Culture, sport and heritage assets create thriving, interesting areas where people want to live, work and set-up businesses.

Creative businesses particularly benefit from clustering around cultural assets.

The impact of place-based investment in arts and culture on the attractiveness of a city or town as a place to live in and invest can also be seen in the transformative effect of Hull's highly successful year as UK City of Culture 2017.

Since 2013, investment in Hull has amounted to £3.3 billion and the city's employment rate and number of businesses are at the highest ever recorded rate, including over 550 new cultural jobs.

This is why it is so encouraging to see more and more theatres working outside their own walls and using their programmes to engage the communities that surround them.

It is my hope that by continuing with such innovative, entertaining and relevant programming, public interest in our theatres can only increase.

As announced by the Chancellor in the 2018 Budget Statement, DCMS will be providing £55 million as part of the Future High Streets fund, dedicated to supporting the regeneration of high street heritage assets. Those much loved historic buildings that provide a sense of place, community identity and connectedness.

£40 million of this fund will be delivered through my Department's Arms Length Body and statutory advisor Historic England to support a high street focused version of their successful Heritage Action Zones scheme, and £15 million will be delivered through the Architectural Heritage Fund to support community groups to take ownership of heritage assets.

This programme will aim to support the economic growth and regeneration of towns and high streets across England by improving their physical and economic condition as well as increasing community and investor confidence, social cohesion and pride in our places.

The programme will help to bring about the regeneration of high streets and town centres by identifying, targeting and de-risking heritage assets as well as diversifying and optimising their uses to meet a range of community needs.

As I have set out, Government believes that place-based cultural investments should be a key part of the local growth strategy for all towns and cities in England.

This is why we have recently introduced the Cultural Development Fund, a fund for towns and cities that want to transform their urban areas through culture-led strategies. We received many strong bids from towns across England, and as some of you will know, the Secretary of State announced the winning bids on Friday last week.

Going forward, there are great opportunities for theatres to play a central role in our vision, and I am sure that with the support of Government, organisations like the Theatres Trust and Local Authorities, we can all work together to ensure that our much loved theatres can continue to thrive across the country.

I would like to thank Theatres Trust again for inviting me along today to speak to you all, and thank you all for the outstanding contributions you continue to make to our nation's theatre.

Press release: Bridgend burglar has sentence increased

A man with a history of dwelling house burglaries has today had his sentence increased after the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, referred it for being too low.

Damien Davies, 39, burgled a Bridgend home while the owners were sleeping. He stole £1,300 in cash as well as a purse containing a passport and 2 bank cards, one of which he used to make a number of contactless purchases the next day. When he was arrested, Davies was also found to be in possession of a small quantity of a class A drug.

Davies was originally sentenced in October 2018 to 2 years 4 months and 26 days in prison at Cardiff Crown Court. The Court of Appeal has today increased his sentence to 3 years and 4 months in prison.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

“Having your home burgled is not only a crime against property, but a crime against the person. I hope that Davies will spend the extra time in prison reflecting on the actions he took and the impact they had on his victims.”