

## **Q&As**

### **Can a company submit more than one project idea?**

Yes, you can submit more than one project idea. Each idea should align to a single challenge and clearly articulate how it supports the desired outcomes and benefits

### **Where can I access the list of key challenges and desired outcomes?**

The list of challenges will be shared in our next webinar on the 21st Oct. After the webinar they will be published on our National Highways Open Call webpage as a PDF and in accessible HTML page. Please feel free to register or if you cannot join follow updates to get to the recording and ask any questions.

### **Are you engaging with the NH sponsored Cambridge Uni Future Roads R&D programme?**

We have not directly engaged with Cambridge Uni Future Roads R&D programme.

### **Is this an appropriate channel for submitting projects that are in the very early stages of development?**

We will consider all project ideas at any stage of the innovation pathway, from identify opportunities to deploy solution (our pathway can be found on our [guidance page](#) and it is based on the pathway of the ISO 56000 standard). The aim of the challenge-led approach is to solve prioritised business challenges and build a programme that supports it. We assess ideas based on alignment and building a balanced programme that includes big bet (high effort, high impact) and short/medium/long time to value horizons (i.e. benefits realised in 5 years, 10 year, 10+ years).

### **How is the procurement approach structured for the Open Call?**

This information can be found on our [guidance page](#)

Our open call is a multi-phase process designed to support both opportunity identification and opportunity delivery. In the initial phase, we invite ideas to solve prioritised business challenges and help shape our future programme. These ideas will be assessed against our assessment criteria and may inform future delivery opportunities.

Following assessment, a Pre-Market Engagement (PME) Notice will be published via the Find a Tender service. All interested parties should register via our [Jaegger portal](#) for immediate notifications of those notices, to test market interest and capability. The procurement route will then be determined based on the responses received:

If only one viable response is identified, the opportunity may proceed via direct award.

If multiple viable responses are received, the opportunity will be taken forward through a competitive tender process.

**Please note:** Submission of an idea does not imply or guarantee that the submitter will be contracted to deliver it. This approach enables early identification of high-potential ideas while ensuring a fair, transparent, and compliant route to delivery, in line with public procurement regulations.

### **How is intellectual property managed throughout the process?**

We do not ask you to share any intellectual property information for the Open Call initial submission. The project description is limited to 300 words, and we ask to give a high-level explanation of how your idea would support solving the problem. For example, in the case of *Reducing whole life carbon cost of a material or asset*, we want to know how your solution support solving the challenge for instance by using a low carbon material or a construction method and an estimation of the potential carbon reduction. This without disclosing commercially sensitive information.

If an idea is prioritised and a procurement exercise is initiated, Intellectual Property will be managed according to a combination of contractual terms, legal frameworks, and our Information Management System. In addition, there will be the opportunity to engage with suppliers in pre-procurement engagement discussion concerning intellectual property. In contracts Intellectual Property can be managed with specific IP-related clauses. Please note that National Highways follows government-wide guidance on IP, which emphasises licensing over ownership.

### **Can individuals seconded to National Highways be project sponsors?**

Yes, it is possible for individuals seconded into National Highways to be project sponsors. These individuals' experience and expertise will need to meet expectations for successful management of the project from National Highways perspective and they will need to have access to relevant IT systems.

### **To support proposals of solutions are you able to provide any data on the chemical emissions associated with the laying of asphalt? (Ones that would affect respiratory health/illness)**

National Highways does not hold specific data on chemical emissions associated with asphalt laying. While research exists on potential health impacts, this is not an area where National Highways maintains its own dataset. This highlights the importance of research and innovation projects that build the evidence base to inform effective risk management across the sector.

### **What is the frequency of the calls - if these challenges do not cover the innovation proposed?**

The challenge led approach sets a clear direction for programme development and investment of our Innovation and Research Designated Fund. The

challenges are identified and prioritised with the business to support business priorities and long-term ambitions.

Open calls will be at minimum annually but may be more frequent as we move to a rolling programme. These five challenges will shape our next programme but do not reflect all priorities across National Highways. The challenge pipeline will remain agile, evolving to support different priorities and long-term ambitions through future open calls.

Projects will only be funded through our Innovation and Research Designated Fund that meet the acceptance criteria, which considers alignment and creating a balanced portfolio. Please see our guidance for further details.

**If our innovation spans multiple business challenges, would we need to repeat it for each or just submit once?**

Please do not send the same project idea submission multiple times. If a project idea can address multiple challenges, please prioritise the one that has stronger alignment. Each idea should align to a single challenge and clearly articulate how it supports the desired outcomes and benefits.

**Does the project sponsor have to be currently in a project sponsor role, or can they be someone from National Highways who is in a team related to the challenge e.g. someone who works in the Customer, Health Safety & Wellbeing or Innovation & Research teams?**

A project sponsor is not a formal job title within National Highways. Instead, it refers to a member of staff with the appropriate seniority and expertise to champion a project. This person provides strategic direction, ensures alignment with organisational goals, and is accountable for the business case, day-to-day oversight, and internal governance (including business case approval, forecasting, and receipting through NH systems).

Therefore, the sponsor does not need to hold a specific "project sponsor" role. They can be from any relevant National Highways team, provided they meet the criteria above.

**Is there a maximum funding expectation for an individual project?**

No, there is not a maximum funding expectation for individual projects. Project idea prioritisation and funding recommendations will be determined based on the assessment criteria set out in the guidance (see our challenge led approach page).

**I wanted to ask whether there is any guidance on the duration of projects that will be accepted at the second stage. If there are any constraints or recommendations, they would likely influence the ideas being proposed. For example, if a project proposal addresses one of the challenges but the**

**initial duration of the research is five years, would that be considered for evaluation, and if so, how? In other words, how is the duration of innovation and research activities assessed during the process?**

We use an incremental funding model to manage the uncertainty and risk associated with innovation and research projects. Those prioritised for inclusion will receive funding for the 2026/27 financial year.

There is no fixed limit on project duration. Longer-term proposals, including those spanning five years, are considered through a phased approach. Applicants should outline future funding needs during the submission process. Projects are managed through our Innovation Pathway, with milestones scheduled at least annually to monitor progress and guide investment decisions.

Continued funding is not guaranteed. It depends on successful delivery against the scope of the funded phase, including achievement of expected outcomes and outputs. It also depends on progress against the innovation scorecard, which considers the project holistically and assesses whether uncertainty is reducing across desirability, feasibility and viability, along with an evaluation of projected benefits.

Please see our recorded [webinar and guidance](#) for more information (including assessing criteria, expectations of projects and our innovation pathway).

**Would National Highways be open to organisations providing a level of match funding (i.e., reducing the amount of funding requested)? We want to confirm that this would not conflict with the open procurement approach.**

National Highways is always open to consider organisations providing a level of match funding to solve common industry challenges. We suggest this to be included in the initial submission, please note this is not part of the criteria to prioritise ideas.

As indicated in our guidance in the procurement section prioritisation is part of the Pre-Market Engagement (PME) phase and any match funding will be considered as an option.

Once the procurement route has been identified and agreed, any potential match funding will be confirmed, as acceptable approach.

**If a project idea is selected, would it proceed directly to the open procurement process, or would a full business case need to be developed beforehand?**

The open call submission is used to assess and prioritise ideas. A business case would be required after pre-market engagement, once a procurement route is identified. The Project Sponsor, a National Highways member of staff, is accountable for business case writing. Please note that if multiple viable responses are received from the Pre-Market Engagement Notice, after business

case approval, the opportunity will be taken forward through a competitive tender process.