

£1.2 million Awarded to Fashion SMEs to Support Sustainable Growth and Innovation

Ten of the UK fashion industry's most innovative and sustainable brands, including [Ananas Anam](#) the company behind Piñatex®, an innovative natural textile made from pineapple leaf fibre, and multi award-winning [Elvis & Kresse](#), who craft reclaimed materials into luxury bags and accessories, have been awarded over £1.2 million by [the Business of Fashion, Textiles and Technology](#) (BFTT).

This programme, led by University of the Arts London in partnership with some of the UK's leading Universities is part of the [AHRC Creative Industries Clusters Programme \(CICP\)](#), funded by the [UK Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund](#). The CICP aims to boost productivity via creative R&D, backing businesses to create good jobs and increase the earning power of people throughout the UK with investment in skills, industries and infrastructure. In today's challenging climate, a comprehensive support package of this type that enables SMEs to drive forward sustainability-driven innovation is more crucial than ever.

From over 80 applications, 13 were shortlisted and provided with one-to-one mentoring, business workshops and training to help develop their initial concepts into fully fledged business plans. The shortlisted businesses then had to pitch their idea to a panel of industry and academic experts – with just ten making the final cut.

Awards totaling over £1.2m will be made to: [Ananas Anam](#), [Anna Glover](#), [AWAYTOMARS](#), [Blackhorse Lane Ateliers](#), [Chip\[S\] Board](#), [Doppelhaus](#), [Elvis & Kresse](#), [Segura](#), [Tengri](#), [Tibor](#). In addition each recipient will receive a comprehensive package of support, including mentoring from leading academics across the partnership, hands-on specialist creative and technical support as well as ongoing project management and strategic business support from across the BFTT team.

The awarded projects cover a range of subsectors and R&D areas, including: bio-material development to non-woven textiles; a global design crowdsourcing platform; sustainable surface finishing processes; on-shoring of state-of-the-art sustainable manufacturing; novel digital solutions to increase transparency and improve sustainability in the sector. The projects, which all focus on a specific R&D challenge, will launch from Feb / May 2020, each running for 12 - 18 months depending on the complexity of the proposition.

Professor Jane Harris, BFTT Programme Director said: *“Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are critical to the economy and critical to the creative sector in particular, making up over 95% of creative businesses in the UK. The Business of Fashion, Textiles and Technology (BFTT) SME Research and Development Programme seeks to highlight the value and impact SMEs can have in our sector and on the economy, when provided with the right type of financial support and research expertise.”*

“This initiative is intended to creatively and technically address the challenge of maintaining growth in the crucial early years of business, whilst also providing support for much needed innovation, and sustainable growth, especially in these challenging and rapidly changing times. The diversity of projects selected are indicative of the breadth of innovation potential in the fashion sector. The dynamism they naturally bring as SMEs, and the bespoke academic expertise provided by BFTT is a perfect mix to deliver industry-changing innovation which cements a vision for a more sustainable fashion system which supports growth here in the UK and around the world.”

The BFTT SME Creative R&D Programme is hosted by **University of the Arts London (UAL)**, in partnership with: Loughborough University; University College London (UCL); Queen Mary University London (QMUL); University of Leeds and University of Cambridge. The programme consists of a bespoke support package designed to enable small and medium enterprises from across the fashion, textiles and technology sector, access to expertise and resources to develop the next generation of sustainability-driven products, services and experiences. Over 2020 / 21 BFTT will be launching further funding support to the value of £1.2 million.

Notes to Editors:

About BFTT's SME R&D Support Programme

The Programme, developed by Research, Business and Innovation teams at UAL, and in partnership with Loughborough University, provides targeted funding, support and expertise designed to help SMEs turn bright ideas into viable and sustainable commercial propositions. Its key aims are to:

- Foster a creative business development culture which will enable fashion, textile and technology SMEs to thrive using bespoke R&D as a mechanism for innovation and growth
- Advance development of sustainable and technologically engaged FTT products, services and experiences

About BFTT

The Business of Fashion, Textiles and Technology (BFTT) is a five-year industry-led project, which focusses on delivering innovation and within the entire fashion and textile supply chain.

BFTT aims to foster a new, creative business culture in which fashion, textiles and technology businesses – from small and medium enterprises to multinational companies – can use R&D as a mechanism for growth, positioning industry as agents of new technology and materials development. BFTT is engaging with businesses and the Government to develop a pipeline of talent to support the fashion, textile and technology businesses of the future, tapping into the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) agenda which aims to provide the creative skills and transdisciplinary innovation needed to support the sector.

During its first year, the Business of Fashion, Textiles and Technology reported considerable progress, including 2,500+ organisations reached via partner network, 80 expressions of interest for the first call of the SME Support Programme and 800+ responses to a major national survey of the fashion, textiles and technology industry.

BFTT is one of nine Creative Research & Development Clusters funded by the Industrial Strategy Fund (£80m) and delivered by the Arts and Humanities Research Council on behalf of UKRI as part of the Creative Industries Cluster Programme. The Creative Industries Clusters Programme comprises nine Research and Development (R&D) partnerships, among which is the Business of Fashion, Textiles and Technology (BFTT) Partnership, and an independent Policy and Evidence Centre led by Nesta with partners. The UK wide programme convenes world-class research talent in a first-of-its kind R&D investment to accelerate growth in a range of creative sectors, and aims to create jobs and drive the creation of companies, products and experiences that can be marketed around the world, significantly contributing to UK economic growth both regionally and nationally.

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