

## PRESS RELEASE

### £2.8 million Awarded to British Textile and Fashion SMEs for Sustainable Innovation

Following an initial £1.2 million investment by BFTT's R&D Programme Grants in 2020 to 10 of the UK's leading Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the fashion and textiles industry, the BFTT is proud to announce a further £1.1 million funding to thirteen pioneering businesses that place sustainability, innovation and social purpose at the heart of their business model.

This new award brings the total investment by BFTT - including this R&D Programme, and collaborative research funding of £500,000 across three additional BFTT projects - to approximately **£2.8 million across 35 SMEs, with the creation of at least 20 new jobs.**

The BFTT Creative R&D Programme awards totalling over £1.1 million are made to: [Dash and Miller](#) & [Jessica Garvey Birch](#) (partnership), [Grady and Robinson](#) & [Phoebe English](#) (partnership), [iinouiio](#), [Keracol](#) & [Bulmer and Lumb](#) (partnership), [Kirsty McDougall](#), [Nurv](#), [PlanetCare](#), [Project Plan B](#), [Virustatic](#) and [William Clark & Sons](#). The projects will focus on specific R&D challenges and will launch in Autumn 2021 for twelve to fifteen months.

The SMEs cover a range of subsectors and R&D areas including: surface finishing processes and natural dyeing, embedded use of traceable raw materials, high-value recycling of fashion and textile industry waste, sensing technologies for healthcare, bio-materials, non-woven textiles, on-shoring of state-of-the-art manufacturing, novel digital solutions and sustainable chemical treatments of fabrics.

From over 140 new applications, 15 were shortlisted and provided one-to-one mentoring, business workshops and training to help develop their initial concepts into full-fledged business plans. The shortlisted businesses then had to pitch their idea to a panel of industry and academic experts – with just 10 applications making the final cut.

**Nikki Matthews**, Creative R&D Programme Manager, said: "We are delighted to have 13 fantastic companies joining us in this R&D Programme. It will provide participants with multi-disciplinary and multi sector expertise, to accelerate the innovation of sustainable business models, processes and products. From the Programme's first cohort funded in 2020, we have seen how SMEs can be incredibly agile and creative, and the real difference that focused R&D can make to the businesses we work with."

Since the first round of awards made to ten fashion and textiles businesses last year, three new manufacturing facilities and physical services have been set up in the UK:

- Anna Glover: R&D service hub that will provide printing services for industry and an R&D service and resource for students.
- Tibor Micro-Mill: service to other small businesses providing small-scale manufacturing for both Jacquard and Dobby weaving and producing sustainable textiles on a commission basis. The Mill will be a resource for students and graduates to visit as well as employing graduates/apprentices.
- Blackhorse Lane Wash Lab: will offer the first UK based denim wash lab, allowing brands to offer a more sustainable product (due to Launch in early 2022).

One of the SMEs awarded previously, Ananas Anam is a pioneer in developing plant-based material technologies. Their recent impact report of [Piñatex](#)<sup>®</sup> material - a natural and sustainable alternative to leather, made of pineapple leaf fibre waste - highlights that their vegan leather products reached 81 countries for use in the fashion, aerospace, and automotive industries. The B-Corp certified SME has a human agenda to support local communities and aims to create an Ananas Anam forest to offset their CO2 emissions in the coming years.

**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 BFTT R&D 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."

The Business of Fashion, Textiles and Technology (BFTT) is part of the [AHRC Creative Industries Clusters Programme \(CICP\)](#), funded by the [UK Industrial Strategy](#) Challenge Fund. BFTT 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; University of Cambridge and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). The Programme consists of a bespoke support package designed to enable small and medium enterprises from across the fashion, textiles, and technology sectors to access expertise and resources to develop the next generation of sustainability-driven products, services, and experiences.

Ends

#### **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 that 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 that focuses on delivering innovation 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 the 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 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) expertise, 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 & R&D) partnerships: 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.

Connect with BFTT on Social Media:

LinkedIn: [showcase/bftt](#)

Instagram: [@bfttpartnership](#)

Twitter: [@bfttpartnership](#)

Website: [www.bftt.org.uk](#)

**For more info please contact the London College of Fashion, UAL press office: [press@fashion.arts.ac.uk](mailto:press@fashion.arts.ac.uk)**