New Landscapes India: Fashion, Textiles & Technology R&D Grant Scheme

ual: fashion, textiles and technology institute

In partnership with

BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council in partnership with UAL Fashion, Textiles and Technology Institute. Shaping the future of global fashion, textiles and technology.

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Published:
30th June 2026

How to cite:
Harris, J., et al (2025), New Landscapes India: Fashion, Textiles, Technology Research & Development Grant Scheme

Ganni bio-derived flower embellishments
Credit: Courtesy of Isidore Montage via gorunway.com

Contents

1 Executive summary

Bequin biosheet gold coloured composite
Image credit: Botto Labs

The global fashion, textiles and technology (FTT) sector is undergoing significant transformation in response to climate pressures, resource constraints and evolving regulatory frameworks. Delivering a more circular, socially responsible and economically resilient industry requires coordinated international collaboration that connects research expertise, enterprise capability and cultural exchange.

Research and development (R&D) is central to enabling this transition. SMEs are often highly innovative and agile, yet many face barriers in accessing the specialist expertise, facilities and structured support needed to scale sustainable solutions and translate innovation into market-ready applications.

To respond to this opportunity, the British Council Architecture, Design and Fashion (ADF) team partnered with the University of the Arts London Fashion, Textiles and Technology Institute (UAL FTTI) to deliver the New Landscapes India: Fashion, Textiles & Technology R&D Grant Scheme (2023–2026).

The programme focused specifically on strengthening UK–India collaboration in sustainable FTT innovation, recognising India's global importance in textile production, manufacturing capability and craft heritage, alongside the UK's strengths in design innovation, advanced research, and established fashion and technology markets, whilst building on longstanding educational and cultural relationships between the two countries.

Delivered against a backdrop of strengthening bilateral engagement between the UK and India, the programme provided a platform for professional exchange, collaborative research and shared learning across creative and technology communities in both countries. An academic partnership with the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) and UAL FTTI was established in the final year of the programme, supporting knowledge exchange across research, design and technical disciplines.

Building on methodologies established through earlier New Landscapes and SME R&D initiatives, the programme adopted a proven 'KTP-type+' approach, integrating grant funding with embedded academic expertise and dedicated business

support. This structured model enabled SMEs to undertake focused, design-led R&D while strengthening technical capability, improving Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) and Manufacturing Readiness Levels (MRL), and preparing innovations for market application.

Through a competitive open call, UK and Indian SMEs were offered two levels of grant support – Catalyst and Accelerator – enabling successful projects to undertake targeted R&D in sustainable materials, circular systems, responsible production, and emerging technologies. Participants also benefited from specialist academic mentoring, business development workshops, and opportunities to showcase their work and expand professional networks.

The New Landscapes India programme generated significant impact across innovation, skills development, and sector engagement. It also fostered sector-wide engagement through exhibitions, knowledge exchange, and policy dialogue, reinforcing UK-India collaboration, cultural exchange, and providing greater visibility of joint innovation across the sector.

Rt Hon Lisa Nandy MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport meeting Alison Barrett MBE, Country Director of the British Council in India, New Landscapes participants, NIFT, and British Council India Arts team at 11.11 Studio, Delhi, India
Image credit: British Council India

This report provides an overview of the programme's context, delivery model, and principal achievements. Alongside detailed SME project case studies illustrating the breadth of research and innovation undertaken, whilst collated data highlights the wider economic, social and cultural impact through the scheme.

"The success of the New Landscapes India programme demonstrates the power of a collaborative approach to innovation. By bringing together bilateral and cross-sector expertise from the UK and India, a research and development (R&D) partnership, we are helping to advance R&D and knowledge exchange that will drive meaningful, sustainable change in the fashion, wider apparel, textiles and technology sector."

- Jane Harris, Director,
UAL Fashion, Textiles and Technology Institute

"We're proud to build upon the strong partnership between the British Council and UAL FTTI to deliver this three-year New Landscapes programme with our counterparts in India. The programme demonstrates the impact of sustained, equitable collaboration—fostering creativity while building strategic partnerships to address shared environmental and social challenges."

- Sevra Davis, Director of Architecture
Design and Fashion, British Council

"It has been inspiring to witness New Landscapes India champion SME-led sustainable growth and innovation across the UK and India's fashion and textiles sector. By empowering entrepreneurs to showcase their ideas on a global stage, the programme is fostering cross-border collaboration while nurturing a culture of creativity, resilience and responsibility. Rooted in the shared India–UK vision of building a more sustainable and inclusive future, this initiative is laying the foundation for a lasting legacy that strengthens both nations, uplifts communities, and enriches the wider creative ecosystem for generations to come."

- Alison Barrett, MBE,
Country Director, British Council India

New Landscapes India: Fashion, Textiles & Technology R&D Grant Scheme

Funding and in-kind support provided by the British Council and UAL FTTI

£400k
Total project value over 3 years

New Landscapes India consisted of two SME R&D grant funding rounds:

SME R&D Catalyst Grant

6
Awarded projects

13
SMEs supported

£33k project value
Grant and in-kind support

6
Months project duration

SME R&D Accelerator Grant

3
Awarded projects[1]

7
SMEs supported

£67k project value
Grant and in-kind support

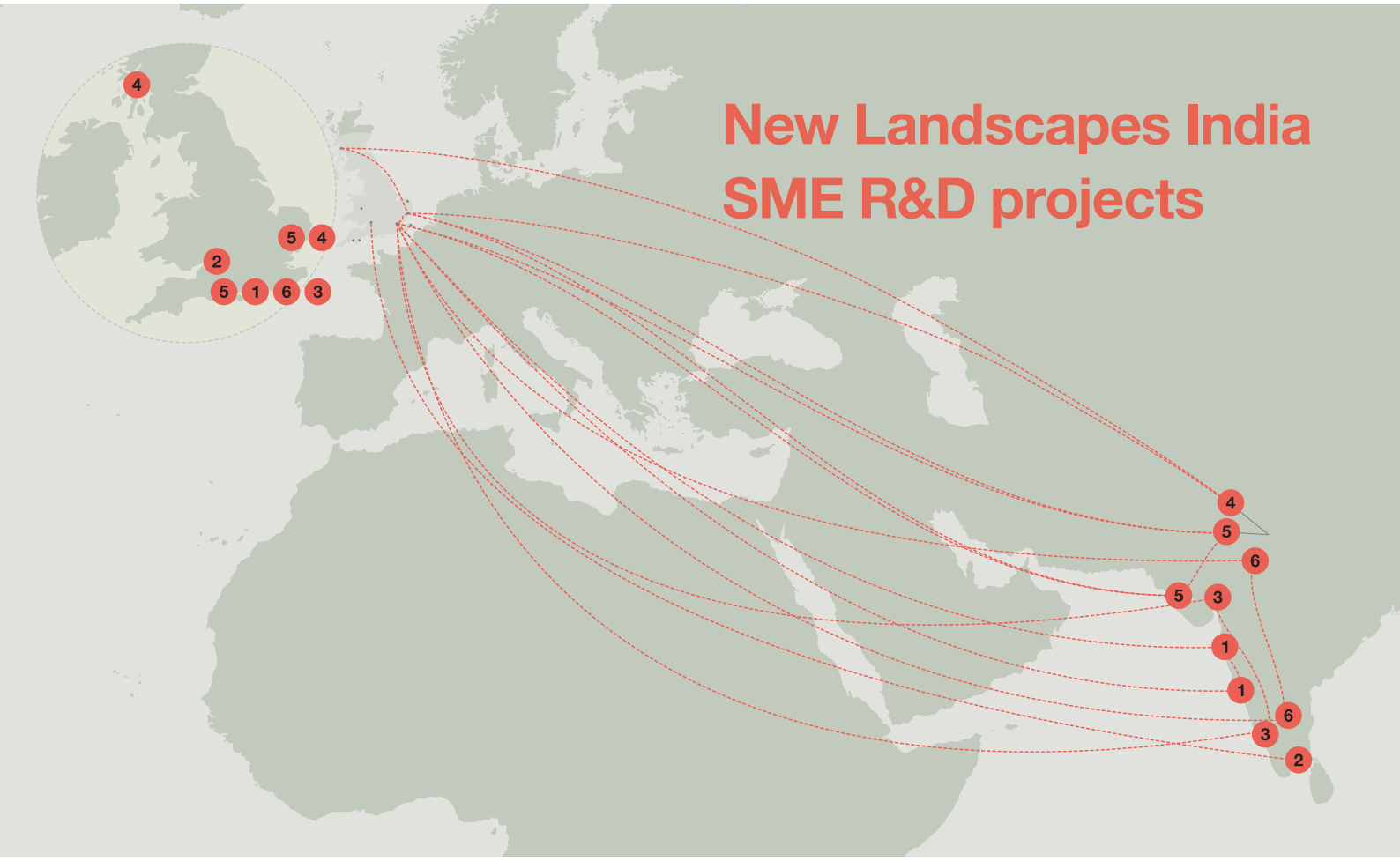
8
Months project duration

The scheme provided

- **14** Networking events and industry workshops (including 6 Business Development Workshops)
- **2** Study Trips open to all grant awardees (London, UK, Sept 25 and New Delhi, India, Nov 24)
- **7** Exhibition and showcasing opportunities
- **75** Hours of specialist academic mentoring[2]
- **1** Academic partnership (UAL FTTI, NIFT)
- **120** Hours of R&D Fellow support

1 The British Council independently awarded additional follow-on grants to two of the SME R&D projects, supporting a further six UK and India SMEs.

2 Academic mentoring provided across Catalyst and Accelerator grant schemes, including NIFT.



1 Bequin

Botto Labs, Goa, India
The Stitch Archive, London, UK
Vashishtha Luxury Fashion Limited, Mumbai, India

Circularity & Sustainability, Materials, Production, Business & Consumption

Technology Readiness Level (TRL)

Catalyst Grant Scheme	1 ▸ 3
Accelerator Grant Scheme	5 ▸ 6
Market Readiness Level (MRL)	3 ▸ 4

2 Reimagining Desi Cotton

Pico Store, Bristol, UK
KASKOM Regen Clothing, Tamil Nadu, India
Mila Fair Clothings, Tamil Nadu, India

Circularity & Sustainability, Materials, Production

Technology Readiness Level (TRL)

Catalyst Grant Scheme	1 ▸ 2
Accelerator Grant Scheme	2 ▸ 7
Market Readiness Level (MRL)	0 ▸ 4

3 Climate Positive Microbial Colours

Truetone Ink, Ahmedabad, India
ColorAshram Foundation, Mysore, India
Post Carbon Lab, London, UK

Circularity & Sustainability, Materials, Production

Technology Readiness Level (TRL)

Catalyst Grant Scheme	5 ▸ 6
Accelerator Grant Scheme	5 ▸ 6
Market Readiness Level (MRL)	4 ▸ 6

4 Desi Oon Wool Traceability Framework

Centre for Pastoralism, Delhi, India
Here We Are, Argyll, UK
Where VDoes It Come From? Ipswich, UK

Circularity & Sustainability, Digital, Materials

Technology Readiness Level (TRL)

Catalyst Grant Scheme	1 ▸ 3

5 Circular Handspun

Conserve India, Delhi, India
Khadi London, London, UK
Khamir, Kachchh, India
Where Does it Come From? Ipswich, UK

Circularity & Sustainability, Materials, Production

Technology Readiness Level (TRL)

Catalyst Grant Scheme	1 ▸ 4

6 Darn It!

Circular Design, Bengaluru, India
Estethica, London, UK,
Iro Iro, Jaipur, India
The Right Project, London, UK

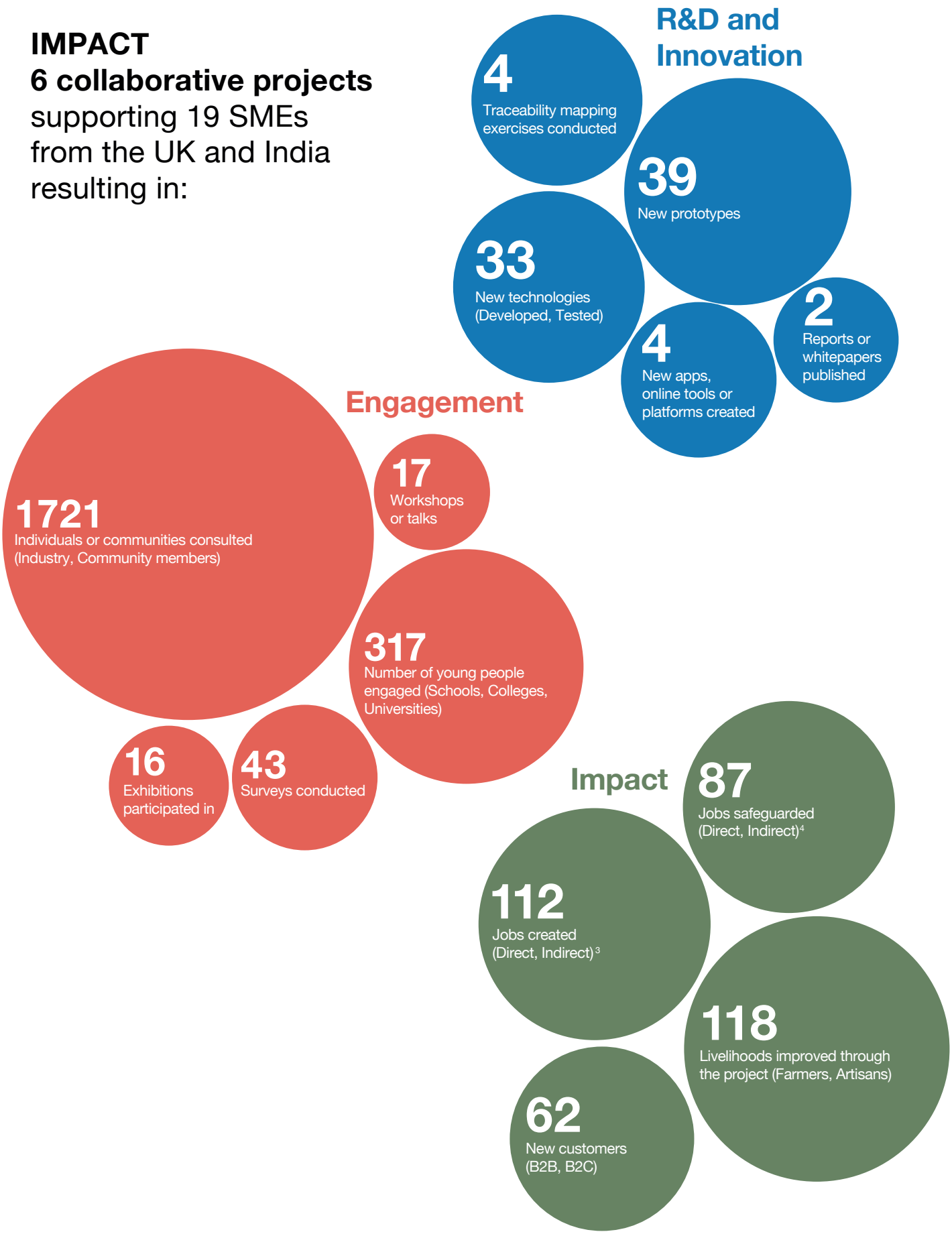
Circularity & Sustainability, Business & Consumption, Digital

Technology Readiness Level (TRL)

Catalyst Grant Scheme	0 ▸ 0

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals targeted across all SME R&D projects

IMPACT
6 collaborative projects
supporting 19 SMEs
from the UK and India
resulting in:



3 The number of jobs created includes full and part-time positions within the participating SMEs plus artisans, herders and farmers involved in the project.

4 The number of jobs safeguarded includes full and part-time positions within the participating SMEs plus artisans, herders and farmers involved in the project.

2 Introduction

Test tubes holding microbial dye
Image credit: Post Carbon Lab

The New Landscapes India: Fashion, Textiles and Technology Research and Development (R&D) Grant Scheme 2023–2026 was designed to nurture bilateral co-operation between the UK and India in the development of responsible and sustainable approaches to fashion, textiles, and technology.

Building upon the two previous global iterations (2022, 2023)[5], New Landscapes India was a three-year programme that supported innovative and scalable R&D collaborations between SME partners in the UK and India. The initiative aimed to nurture international cooperation, shared practice, and support positive cultural, social, and environmental impact for the fashion, textiles and related technology sectors in both countries.

This programme focused on UK and India partnerships co-designing and co-developing projects that would:

- **Grow bilateral networks** to enable development of practice, experimentation and testing of sustainable design, materials and production solutions that would inspire positive environmental change in the UK and India.
- **Support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)** to exchange methods of designing and producing in a more sustainable and socially engaged way.
- **Support emerging designers & entrepreneurs in the UK and India** to become advocates for sustainable, ethical and socially engaged fashion, textiles and technologies.
- **Fast track access to R&D, focusing on five key areas:**
  - **Circularity and sustainability**
  - **Materials**
  - **Production**
  - **Business and consumption**
  - **Digital**

2.1 Building on established methodology

The methodology underpinning the New Landscapes India programme draws upon the UK Government's longstanding Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) model, while adapting it to meet the specific needs and working practices of fashion, textiles, and technology businesses.

5 https://arts.britishcouncil.org/projects/new-landscapes

This sector-facing, 'KTP type+' delivery model was initially honed through the Business of Fashion, Textiles and Technology (BFTT)[6] project Creative R&D Partnership, that successfully supported sustainable R&D innovation across the entire fashion and textile supply chain in the UK between (2018-2024). Funded by the AHRC, the £6.2 million BFTT project paved the way for a similar dynamic approach to be utilised repurposed for the New Landscapes India programme, with further adaptations made to take into account the objectives of the programme and its international collaborative delivery.

As a result, the latest New Landscapes India programme was designed building upon the insights and outcomes of the BFTT and two previous global iterations of the New Landscapes: R&D Grant Schemes (2022, 2023), with a focus on shaping the future of sustainable fashion and textiles in both the UK and India.

Building on this established approach, the New Landscapes India: Fashion, Textiles and Technology R&D Grant Scheme 2023-2026 brought together a defined group of partners, each with a clear and complementary role in programme delivery:

- **British Council:** provided project funding for the New Landscapes: Fashion, Textiles and Technology R&D Grant Scheme.
- **UAL Fashion, Textiles and Technology Institute (UAL FTTI):** led programme management and delivery, providing access to transdisciplinary academic R&D expertise, knowledge exchange, communications, and business support.
- **National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT):** provided additional in-country academic expertise during the second Accelerator phase of the programme.
- **UK Company Lead(s):** acted as the principal contact within the UK SME responsible for undertaking the project work.
- **India Company Lead(s):** acted as the principal contact within the India-based SME responsible for undertaking the project work.

New Landscapes India programme formed part of an established and trusted partnership between the British Council and UAL FTTI, enabling the programme to boost and scale impact beyond the funding expectations.

6 BFTT was one of nine UK-wide Creative R&D Partnerships funded through the £80m UK Creative Industries Clusters Programme, hosted by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. www.bftt.org.uk

2.2 New Landscapes India

The rationale for developing the programme within the UK and India was informed by earlier British Council activity in the craft, textiles, and fashion sectors, most notably their UK-India collaboration scheme Crafting Futures[7], which ran until 2022. That programme brought together UK and India partners to co-develop projects exploring new futures for craft in India, examining emerging ecosystems for craft practice, its role in addressing global environmental challenges, opportunities for female empowerment and leadership, and the growing influence of digital technologies.

Insights from Crafting Futures highlighted the importance of advancing design-led, socially and environmentally sustainable approaches to craft and textile production in India. This was particularly pertinent given the scale and significance of India's textiles and apparel sector, one of the country's largest employers, a major global supplier of natural fibres, and a critical contributor to both traditional hand-woven production and rapidly growing technical textile markets.

Building on this foundation, the British Council sharpened its focus from craft more broadly to textiles and fashion, with a specific emphasis on sustainable fashion as part of their Culture Responds to Global Challenges strand[8]. This shift reflected the recognised potential of indigenous practices and creative entrepreneurship to support systemic change towards a more sustainable and climate-positive industry.

This is particularly pertinent given that, according to Invest India[9], textiles and apparel is India's second largest employer providing direct employment to 45 million people and 100 million people in allied industries. India is a leading supplier of natural fibres like cotton, jute, and silk; accounts for 95% of all hand-woven cloth globally and is the largest producer of cotton in the world. Cotton production supports 5.8 million farmers and 40-50 million people in allied sectors. India also produces 6% of the global market's technical textiles, a market that has grown at a compound 39 annual rate of 10%.

7 Crafting Futures, British Council https://arts.britishcouncil.org/resources/crafting-futures-resources

8 Culture Responds to Global Challenges strand, British Council https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts

9 Invest India https://www.investindia.gov.in/

Whilst the UK fashion and textile industry contributes £62bn to the UK economy or the equivalent of £1 in every £34 of the UK's total gross value added (GVA) contribution, according to a 2023 report from UKFT and Oxford Economics[10]. The sector supports 1.3 million jobs, which equates to 1 in every 25 jobs in the UK and raises more than £23bn in tax revenues or £1 in every £30 of HMRC's tax receipts. The UK fashion and textile industry is one of the largest sectors in the country and its influence extends around the world.

The development of New Landscapes India programme also took place against the backdrop of a strengthening UK-India relationship, marked by the signing of a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement in 2025[11]. This broader policy and trade context further underscored the strategic relevance of deeper collaboration between the two countries' fashion and textiles sectors at a pivotal moment for sustainability-led innovation.

2.2.1 New Landscapes India programme Overview

The New Landscapes India: Fashion, Textiles and Technology Grant Scheme awarded an initial six awards of £33,000 total project value (grant and in-kind support) for collaborative R&D led by designers, entrepreneurs, and SMEs based in the UK and India. In the second stage of the programme, grantees were able to apply for additional funding and R&D support of £67,000 total project value (grant and in-kind support), subject to the successful completion of their stage one R&D activity.

Throughout the programme, grantees were supported by UAL FTTI through a structured academic mentoring and business development support package, including guidance from expert academics and FTTI staff, bespoke workshops, and curated showcasing opportunities designed to extend the reach and visibility of project outcomes.

10 The Fashion and Textile Industry's Footprint in the UK, UKFT and Oxford Economics (2023) https://ukft.org/industry-reports-and-stats/

11 The UK-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed in July 2025, with negotiations launched in 2022. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-india-trade-deal

Each project placed a strong emphasis on sustainable innovation across circularity and sustainability, materials, production, business and consumption models, and digital practices. R&D activity took place in both the UK and India under the academic guidance of UAL FTTI, with the potential to generate longer-term opportunities for international collaboration.

Awarded Research & Development project focus areas included:

- **Bio-derived alternatives to plastic sequins and embellishments.**
- **Fully biodegradable, organic, and regenerative underwear made using indigenous Desi cotton.**
- **Scalable, sustainable microbial colouration as an alternative to synthetic dyes.**
- **A digital traceability toolkit mapping the indigenous Desi Oon wool supply chain while supporting the development of new international markets.**
- **A virtual platform championing traditional repair and aftercare practices.**
- **Localised processing of textile waste into recycled yarns and fabrics using traditional spinning and weaving techniques.**

2.2.2 Catalyst and Accelerator SME R&D Grant Schemes

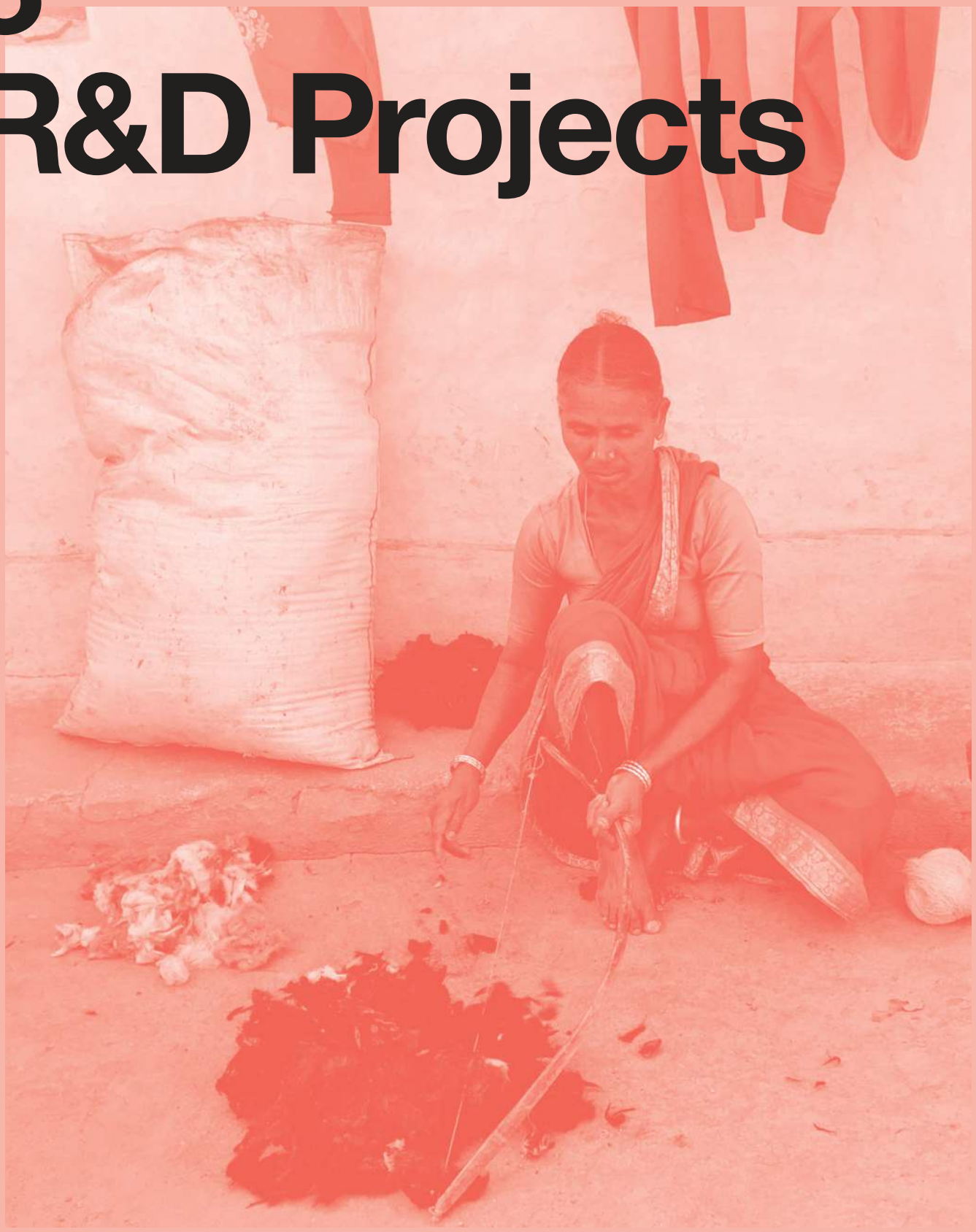
A distinctive feature of the New Landscapes India programme was the integration of both a Catalyst SME R&D Grant Scheme and a subsequent Accelerator SME R&D Grant Scheme within a single programme framework. This two-stage approach was designed to support SMEs at different points in their innovation journey, enabling early-stage research and experimentation to be developed, tested, and, where appropriate, progressed towards application and market readiness.

Projects selected for the Catalyst Grant round were supported to explore ideas, materials, processes, and business models through collaborative R&D activity. SMEs that successfully completed this first stage were then invited to apply for the Accelerator round,

which provided enhanced funding and academic support. The Accelerator phase provided deeper support, enabling SMEs to refine their projects and move closer to market readiness. This staged approach created a clear pathway from experimentation to implementation, setting the New Landscapes India programme apart from previous iterations.

Climate Positive Microbial Colours project
Credit: Botto Labs

3
R&D Projects



Processing cotton as part of the Circular Handspun project
Credit: Where Does It Come From

3.1 BEQUIN

Bequin raw material fish scales
Credit: Botto Labs

Botto Labs Nitya Amarnath, Founder
The Stitch Archive Annalisa Dunn, Lisa Salama, Co-Founders
Vashishtha Luxury Fashion Limited Ravindra Dhareshivkar, Co-Founder and Managing Director
UAL FTTI Academic Mentor Professor Mohammad Mahbubul Hassan
NIFT Academic Mentor Dr Ruby Sood
UAL FTTI R&D Fellow Laura Solomon

“Sequins may be small, but their carbon footprint is anything but. We believe there is a better way.”

- BEQUIN

Project overview

Conventional sequins and embellishments are often used to bring sparkle and sophistication to luxury fashion - yet most embellishments such as sequins and beads are plastic-based.

Embroidery is a key element of luxury fashion design, but the impact of the resources used in traditional sequin production, combined with the difficulty in recycling them due to their tiny size and method of application, have detrimental impacts on the environment.

Luxury fashion brands are therefore seeking sustainable alternative materials and manufacturing processes that can be integrated into their designs, without compromising aesthetics or performance.

Petri dish cellulose sheet
Credit: Botto Labs

The BEQUIN project addresses this challenge through the development of a bio-derived material that can be used to create embellishments for artisanal luxury garments and accessories.

By bringing together bio-derived material innovation and design-led craftsmanship, this collaboration aimed to provide a sustainable alternative to petroleum-based sequins for the luxury fashion market.

Catalyst Grant: Material development and proof of concept

For the Catalyst phase of the New Landscapes India R&D Grant Scheme, Botto Labs explored bio-derived raw materials, including algae and waste cellulose to develop a lustrous, sequin-like bio-derived material. These materials were sourced from local communities and developed using low-tech production methods, with the aim of supporting sustainability whilst creating new livelihood opportunities.

The Stitch Archive provided design consultancy to ensure the material met key criteria for this type of embellishment such as gloss, flexibility and visual appeal, as well meeting the requirements of the international luxury fashion sector.

As part of the first phase, Vashishtha Exports tested the bio-derived material within intricate embroideries to assess whether it could be handled, cut, pierced and manipulated using existing couture techniques.

This phase resulted in BEQUIN: a lightweight, pliable sheet material with lustre and gloss that could be machine cut and applied by hand. Its pliability allowed for manipulation into undulating and organic forms, creating soft 3D relief and nuanced light reflection.

Ganni bio-derived flower embellishments
Credit: Courtesy of Isidore Montage via gorunway.com

Accelerator Grant: optimisation, testing and market readiness

Following completion of the Catalyst stage of New Landscapes India R&D Grant Scheme, BEQUIN was one of 3 projects awarded a further R&D Accelerator grant.

For this second stage, Botto Labs and The Stitch Archive focused on optimising the bio-derived material developed in phase 1 to support future scalability and commercial viability. Activities included laboratory testing to analyse physical properties and wearability, alongside user testing through focus groups and workshops with embroidery, fashion and textile students to assess material handling and stitch behaviour.

Colour, finish and shape swatch books were developed to support industry collaborations and future sales. The funding award also supported the development of a website and media channels to communicate the project.

Application of the R&D was fully realised through a collaboration with luxury fashion brand Ganni, who trialled BEQUIN within their Autumn/Winter 2025 collection at Paris Fashion Week, showcasing the new bio-derived materials on a global stage.

"The New Landscapes India grant scheme has been key to the development of BEQUIN as a promising next generation material."

- Nitya Amarnath, Founder of Botto Labs

Key outcomes

Material development

- Launch of BEQUIN – a versatile, pliable bio-derived sequin.
- Cellulose and agar (algae) sequin prototypes
- Colour, shape and finish experimentation and optimisation.
- Physical property analysis via material testing.

Embroidery and application

- Embroidered samples and swatch books demonstrating material properties and handling.
- Focus group-style workshops and industry collaboration to assess stitch performance.

Industry engagement

- Creation of brand assets including website and client swatch books.
- R&D applied through collaboration with the fashion brand Ganni[12] at Paris Fashion Week[13].
- Exhibited at The Biofab Fair by Biofabricate.
- Material testing undertaken with the Bombay Textile Research Association India.
- Engagement with scientific advisors and consultants from the National Institute of Oceanography, India.
- Collaborations with Bombay Textile Research Association India, National Institute of Oceanography India, and natural dye specialists True Tone Ink India.

Community, education and outreach

- Community-engaged sourcing of bio-waste and low-tech production trials.
- Industry and education outreach initiatives supporting the R&D process.

12 https://www.ganni.com/

13 https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2025-ready-to-wear/ganni

Embroidery process
Credit Aakash Tiwari

Targeted UN Sustainable Development Goals

Technology Readiness Level (TRL):

Catalyst Grant Scheme		Accelerator Grant Scheme	
Start	End	Start	End
1	3	5	6

Market Readiness Level (MRL):

Start	End
3	4

Future plans

- Scale production and commercialise bio-derived sequin.
- Build a scalable business through strategic brand partnerships and collaborations.
- Advance material aesthetics through colouration, finishing, and design innovation.
- Optimise performance while ensuring sustainable R&D processes.

3.2 Reimagining Desi Cotton

Pico underwear using desi cotton featured at the New Landscapes exhibition, London, UK as part of the Reimaging Desi Cotton project
Credit: Alys Tomlinson

KASKOM Regen Clothing Swaminathan Vaidhyalingam, Founder
Pico Store Isobel Williams-Ellis, Phoebe Goldblatt, Co-Directors
Mila Fair Clothings Girish Krishnan, Factory Manager/Owner
UAL FTTI Academic Mentors Jessica Saunders, and Professor Mohammad Mahbubul Hassan
NIFT Academic Mentor Professor Varsha Gupta
UAL FTTI R&D Fellow Laura Solomon

"This collective effort not only validated years of grassroots engagement …but demonstrated how meaningful collaborations can connect local fibres and global fashion in a truly sustainable way."

- Reimagining Desi Cotton

Project overview

According to a World Economic Forum article around 5 million kilogrammes of underwear a day ends up in landfill sites across the US alone (2021)[14]. The Reimagining Desi Cotton R&D set out to develop a 100% organic and regenerative cotton underwear prototype that is fully biodegradable at end-of-life. The project sought to eliminate synthetic components, rethink garment construction for circularity and use locally sourced, regenerative cotton to reduce environmental impact.

Ms.Vaiyammal in the ginning factory carrying a bundle of desi cotton after the ginning process
Credit: Aishwarya Arumbakkam

The Reimagining Desi Cotton project also explored ways to optimise desi cotton to produce a fabric that balances comfort, durability, and wearability. Traditionally, this has been a challenge in underwear production due to the short staple length of desi cotton fibres.

The project also further sought to highlight the environmental and market potential of desi cotton and showcase KASKOM's long-term work in Tamil Nadu, pioneering the revival of indigenous Karunganni desi cotton.

Catalyst Grant: Material development and prototype

For the Catalyst phase of the New Landscapes India: R&D Grant Scheme, Pico Store worked with technical pattern cutter to redesign their underwear for circularity, producing prototypes that balanced performance with end-of-life compostability.

14 World Economic Forum https://www.weforum.org/stories/2021/02/recycle-your-underwear/

Karunganni desi cotton flower and cotton lint on the plant in the field
Credit: KASKOM

KASKOM, a social enterprise that works to revive the value chain of cotton native to India, developed a first-of-its-kind knitted desi cotton fabric specifically suited for underwear using Karunganni cotton grown in Tamil Nadu.

Mila, a solarpowered Fair Trade garment factory, explored and implemented biodegradable thread and elastic alternatives to make prototypes in desi cotton fabrics developed by KASKOM.

The team also explored historical garment designs and alternative fastening methods. The insights gained from this research were also used to improve Pico Store's existing range of underwear, incorporating practices like local fibre sourcing, natural dyeing, and full biodegradability

Accelerator Grant: Optimisation and scale-up

The Reimagining Desi Cotton project was awarded further Accelerator funding as part of the New Landscapes India: R&D Grant Scheme. For this second phase, the project team focused on optimising the desi cotton yarn, fabric prototypes and manufacturing processes developed within the first stage.

KASKOM produced 160gsm fabric lengths from a range of three different desi cotton yarn blend compositions, including incorporating natural waste fibres and silk, continuing the emphasis on underwear as an end use. The fibre blending was undertaken to counter the shorter staple length of the desi cotton and potentially improve fabric integrity and performance without impacting biodegradability.

Saroja, a Desi cotton farmer in the field with karunganni desi cotton which characteristically hangs from the plant in this loose form
Credit: Swaminathan Vaidhyalingam

Industrial and domestic knitting trials highlighted the possibilities for desi cotton yarns, using hand, domestic, and industrial knitting techniques. The team also developed a prototype for an on-farm ginning machine and a costing and analysis proposal for an on-farm spinning machine to enhance farmer self-sufficiency.

A storytelling strategy was also created using photography and first-hand accounts of farmers, producers, and garments to communicate the environmental and social value of desi cotton.

"The partnership between KASKOM and Pico Stores made this collaboration possible: while the support from the British Council, UAL FTTI & NIFT further enriched it by bringing international recognition and design dialogue to our work."

- Swaminathan Vaidhyalingam, Founder, KASKOM

Key outcomes

Material and fabric development

- Jersey-weight knitted desi cotton suitable for underwear.
- Sampled fabrics in domestic and industrially knitted desi/long staple regenerative cotton and desi/comber noil, optimising yarn strength and reducing GSM to 160.
- Range of knit constructions showcasing desi cotton yarn capabilities.

Pattern, garment and prototype development

- Redesigned garment waistband using organic cotton and natural rubber and replacing polyester thread with biodegradable lyocell.
- Rethinking approaches towards pattern designs for circular undergarments.
- Prototyped, optimised, manufactured, and quality-tested desi cotton undergarments designed with end-of-life in mind.

Processing and production innovation

- Prototype for on-farm ginning machine.
- Costing and analysis proposal for on-farm spinning machine.
- Full production within an 85 km radius in Tamil Nadu.

Documentation, storytelling and outreach

- Analysis report documenting research, development, and findings.
- Photography and first-hand accounts for seed-to-garment storytelling.

Targeted UN Sustainable Development Goals

Technology Readiness Level (TRL):

Catalyst Grant Scheme		Accelerator Grant Scheme	
Start	End	Start	End
1	2	2	7

Market Readiness Level (MRL):

Start	End
0	4

Future plans

- Optimise desi cotton yarn for larger scale knit production.
- Explore design innovations and circular processes for a wider range of products.
- Prototype on-farm ginning machine and develop on-farm spinning machine proposal.
- Expand fully biodegradable undergarments incorporating regenerative cotton and circular design principles.

Pico Design and pattern work
Credit: Pico

3.3 Climate Positive Microbial Colours

Post Carbon Lab materials and processes
Credit: Post Carbon Lab

Truetone Ink Arun Baid, Founder
Color Ashram Foundation Namrata Bhutoria, Co-Founder
Post Carbon Lab Dian-Jen Lin, Co-Founder and CEO
Hannes Hulstaert, Co-Founder and CTO
UAL FTTI Academic Mentor Professor Mohammad Mahbubul Hassan
NIFT Academic Mentor Professor Sudha Dhingra
UAL FTTI R&D Fellow Laura Solomon

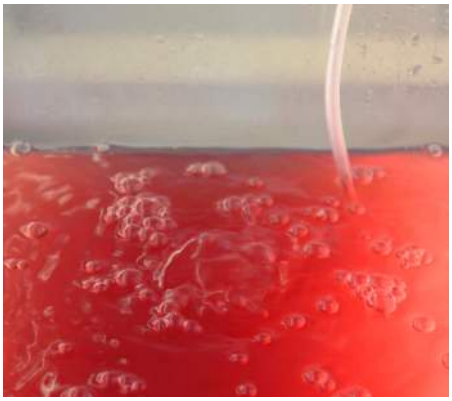
"The future of colours can go beyond fossil fuels; our dynamic cross-border partnership has fostered co-learning from nature to develop sustainable, regenerative, and environmentally beneficial colours that fuses innovation and natural dyes."

- Climate Positive Microbial Colours

Project overview

Colour dictates 93% of buying decisions (Adley, 2023)[15], yet more than 90% of the colours used in the fashion and textile industry are derived from fossil fuels (Willis, 2023)[16]. The Climate Positive Microbial Colours project aimed to research, develop and scale sustainable, regenerative, and climate-positive microbial colouration methods as alternatives to carbon-intensive, non-biodegradable synthetic dyes.

By combining microbial colouration technology with plant-based additives and industrial wet-processing systems, the project sought to reduce the textile industry's environmental footprint, particularly in relation to CO_2 emissions and water pollution.



Microbial colour R&D
Credit: Post Carbon Lab

Catalyst Grant: Research, development and proof of concept

This collaboration between Post Carbon Lab, a London-based biotech and textile technology company, and True Tone Ink Pvt Ltd, an industrial herbal dye expert based in Ahmedabad, fostered cross-border co-learning from nature to develop environmentally friendly colour systems. Colour Ashram Foundation supported the project through education-focused engagement and industry workshops.

15 https://www.thelogocreative.co.uk/how-to-create-the-perfect-colour-palette-for-your-brand/
16 https://www.plugandplaytechcenter.com/insights/how-sustainable-dyeing-changing-textile-industry

Microbial colour R&D
Credit: Post Carbon Lab

By blending plant-based phytochemicals, microbial colours, and green chemistry approaches, the collaboration developed a palette of 14 cost-competitive hues. These formulations use zero petrochemicals and no non-biodegradable ingredients, making them suitable for apparel use while being friendly to both human skin and the environment. All colours achieved industrial performance standards.

Post Carbon Lab and True Tone Ink researched, collated, and calculated environmental impact data for the botanical and microbial colour systems, benchmarking these against synthetic dyes. Initial findings showed that nearly 40 kg of CO_2 was captured in the developed microbial pigments, alongside a 95.5% reduction in water use compared to synthetic colour systems.

The project was exhibited at Future Fabrics Expo 2024[17] and the London Design Festival 2024[18], reaching approximately 3,500 people.

Accelerator Grant: Scaling, standardisation and industry adoption

Following their first Catalyst Grant funding, the project was awarded a further Accelerator Grant. For the accelerator stage the project focused on building on their initial research outcomes to support business acceleration and industry adoption across the UK and India.

Test tubes holding microbial dye
Image credit: Post Carbon Lab

The project team used the Accelerator award to scale microbial dyeing technology, expand product offerings, and develop a scalable, modular batch dyeing process in the UK. Standard operating procedures were developed to support quality control, reduce production errors, and enable consistent and scalable production. Industrial capacity was expanded at Post Carbon Lab in the UK, whilst True Tone Ink integrated the microbial dyeing approach within its industrial facilities in India.

17 https://thesustainableangle.org/future-fabrics-expo/
18 https://londondesignfestival.com/

Alongside technical development, the team collaborated with Colour Ashram Foundation to deliver workshops and educational programmes in the UK and India, supporting awareness and understanding of sustainable dyeing practices.

"We are very grateful for the opportunity to take part in the New Landscape programme. The in-person study visit and exhibition at the British Council was one of the best parts, allowing us to meet the other innovators and further discuss similar challenges and support each other, which has been truly precious for us."

- Dian-Jen Lin, Co-Founder and CEO and Hannes Hulstaert, Co-Founder and CTO, Post Carbon Lab

Key outcomes

Material and colour development

- 14 petrochemical-free microbial colour formulations.
- Development of microbial colours combined with botanical dyes for expanded performance and colour range.
- Five microbial colour formulations selected for further scale-up.

Environmental impact and benchmarking

- Environmental impact data collected and benchmarked against synthetic dye systems.
- 95.5% reduction in water use compared to synthetic dyes.
- Nearly 40 kg of CO_2 captured within microbial pigment development.

Process development and infrastructure

- Established in-house sample dyeing and testing facilities at Post Carbon Lab.
- Developed standard operating procedures for the first five colourways.
- Strategic roadmap for microbial colour standardisation and cost reduction.
- Operational financial analysis for batch dyeing production and pricing models.

Climate Positive Microbial Colours

Industry engagement and knowledge exchange

- Debut collaboration showcased at Future Fabrics Expo 2024.
- Introduced UK and EU industry clients to True Tone Ink for large-scale natural dye production.
- Produced microbial-dyed textiles in meterage and garment formats.
- Masterclasses, lectures, and workshops delivered for industry and community engagement in the UK and India.

Targeted UN Sustainable Development Goals

Technology Readiness Level (TRL):

Catalyst Grant Scheme		Accelerator Grant Scheme	
Start	End	Start	End
5	6	5	6

Market Readiness Level (MRL):

Start	End
4	6

Future plans

- Scale microbial colouration facilities in the UK.
- Optimise microbial and herbal dye production processes in the UK and India.
- Advance environmental impact metrics and publish comparative impact reporting.
- Continue industry engagement to support adoption of climate-positive colour systems.

3.4 Desi Oon Wool Traceability Framework

Autumn wool shearing
Credit: Emmanuel Theophilus

Centre for Pastoralism Riya Shetty, Certification and Stakeholder Coordinator, Sonam Tashi Gyaltsen, Digital Lead, Santosh Kocherlakota, Prototype and Digital Technology Development
Here We Are Rahul Noble Singh, Project Lead
Where Does It Come From? Jo Salter, Founder
UAL FTTI Academic Mentors Steph Rolph and Dr. Sheila Clark
UAL FTTI R&D Fellow Alice Timmis

"The New Landscapes project has helped us position Desi Oon as a sustainable material resource with real potential across global design, architecture, built environment, and material innovation sectors".

- Desi Oon Wool Traceability Framework

Project overview

Carded wool for distribution to cluster members
Credit: Richa Keshri

India has the world's second-largest sheep population but discards more than 50 percent of its indigenous wool (Desi Oon Hub)[19], while importing significant quantities. Desi oon (wool) once was a source of income for herders and artisans, sustaining community economies for generations, however these practices have sharply declined in a globalised market resulting in a reduction in the wool's value.

The Desi Oon Wool Traceability Framework project aimed to develop a digital toolkit that enables traceability and transparency across the Indian wool supply chain, supporting indigenous wool economies and sustainable practices. By leveraging technology, the toolkit aimed to allow stakeholders to track wool from source to product, ensuring quality and sustainability. The project also sought to eliminate inefficiencies in the supply chain, raise awareness of the value and potential of desi oon, and provide transparent, trustworthy information on its sustainability and ethics.

Catalyst Grant: Proof of concept and supply chain mapping

For the Catalyst Grant stage of the New Landscapes India: R&D Grant Scheme, The Centre for Pastoralism, based in Delhi, led engagement across the Indian wool value chain, working with shepherds, artisans, processing mills, and B2C and B2B buyers

19 Desi Oon Hub https://www.desioonhub.org/

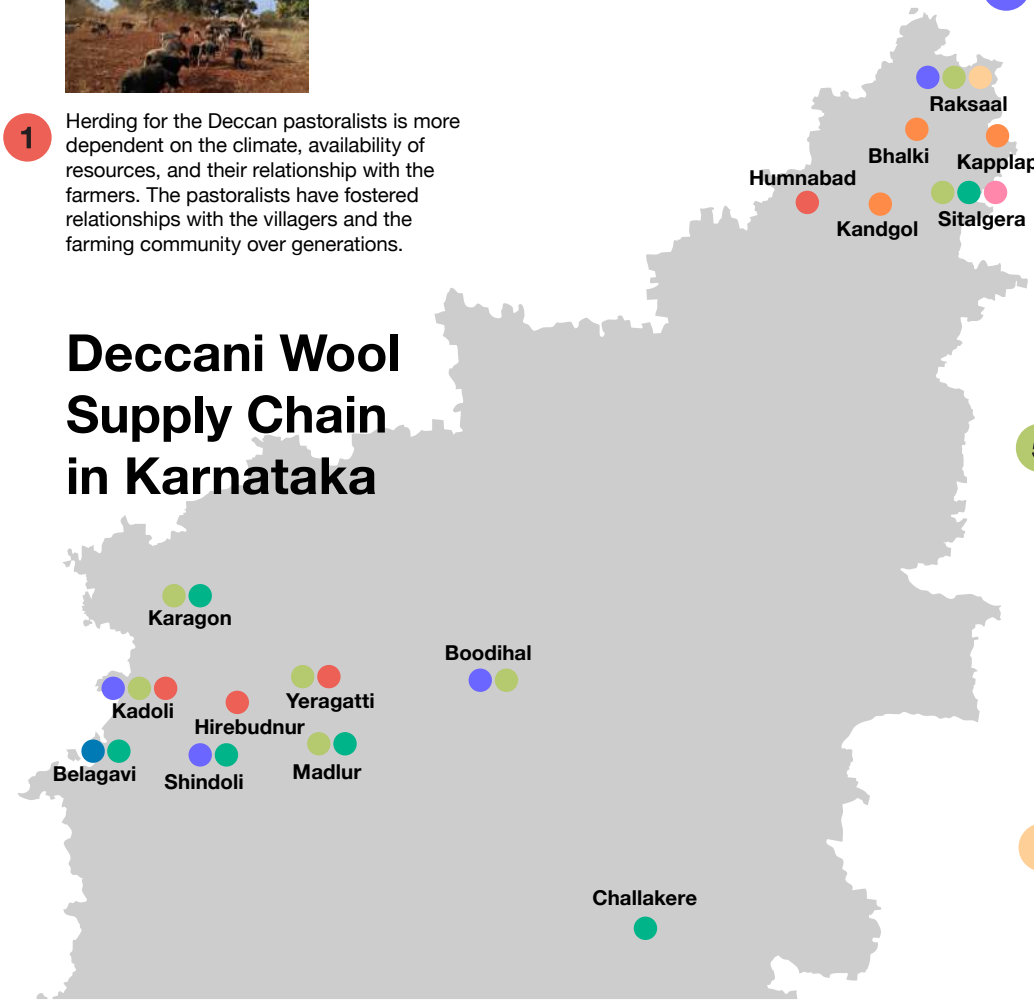
2 Shearing is done using traditional shears by the Kuruma community. In the past, the shearer was paid in woven fabric but is now compensated monetarily. To cut costs shepherds may shear the wool themselves, and sell the wool directly whilst others have the shearer sell it to traders.

3 Sorting is done carefully by hand, removing dirt, and according to the various colours of the wool. The women in the family take responsibility for cleaning and grading the fibre for quality.

1 Herding for the Deccan pastoralists is more dependent on the climate, availability of resources, and their relationship with the farmers. The pastoralists have fostered relationships with the villagers and the farming community over generations.

4 Carding is done by opening the fibres to fluff and remove impurities, and carried out manually by women to make the fibre ready for the next stage. Traditional tools, called beshi kabhi are used at home. It is at this stage final checks on the fibre's grade, colour and external impurities are done.

Deccani Wool Supply Chain in Karnataka



5 Spinning is done by women in their homes. The process is rather simple, but it is time consuming and requires high levels of skill. The woollen fibres are sorted, graded, and carded with the yarn being rendered without any chemical treatment or processing.

6 Tamarind kernel paste, used for sizing yarn, is manually ground at home from tamarind seeds to produce starch in a labour-intensive process. The method is crucial for enhancing the strength of the yarn.

8 Felting is done in Belagavi and its neighbouring clusters. Traditional wool felting practices (needle/wet felting) have been within the Kuruba pastoralist community in Deccan Karnataka for generations.

7 Weaving a Gongadi can take a day or even about five to six days. The process is simple, and a traditional model of a pit loom, Maag, is required to weave the fabric.

to understand needs and expectations. Two regions, the Deccan and Himachal Pradesh, were selected for detailed study, with region-specific parameters developed to reflect distinct pastoral systems. Wool flows, supply chains, and key stakeholders were mapped across both geographies.

UK-based organisations “Here We Are” and “Where Does It Come From” conducted interviews with stakeholders from the UK wool and fashion industries. These insights informed the structure and requirements of the toolkit, ensuring it could respond to both consumer-facing and industry-facing contexts. The resulting proof of concept demonstrated that a digital tool could effectively track the desi oon value chain across India and provide actionable insights for both domestic and international markets.

British Council Follow-on Grant: Toolkit development and application

Building on the proof of concept, the Desi Oon Wool Traceability Framework project was awarded a standalone follow-on grant by the British Council, however the UAL FTTI team continued to provide additional academic and business support for the project through New Landscapes India programme.

Through the follow-on grant, the project highlighted how traceability could strengthen appreciation of indigenous wool, support ethical sourcing, and contribute to revitalising wool economies in both India and the UK.

The project focused on three key areas: mapping the wool flows across two regions in India and engagement with herders and artisans across the value chain; developing new markets and prototypes to open new markets and illustrate the potential of desi oon; and the exploration of different mapping and traceability tools to support the implementation of the project.

UAL academic mentors supported the digital supply chain mapping and development of the traceability technology, and provided sector insights into the international wool industry and also automotive markets.

The project has since been awarded an additional follow-on grant by the British Council that has enabled the project to continue their work, with a focus on dissemination in the UK and India.

“Through taking part in a series of talks, workshops and exhibition opportunities in the UK and India these became a critical platform for knowledge exchange, shared challenges, and cross-industry dialogue.”

- Desi Oon Wool Traceability Framework

Key outcomes

- Functional proof of concept for a digital traceability tool
- Comprehensive mapping of wool flows and supply chain actors in two regions
- Documentation of stakeholder needs and expectations
- Toolkit refined with insights from consulation with UK industry
- Increased understanding of Desi Oon’s potential in domestic and global markets
- The Interwoven Symposium, UK; bringing together UK wool industry, Indian supply chain stakeholders, and academia.

Targeted UN Sustainable Development Goals

Technology Readiness Level (TRL):

Start		End
1	▸	3

Future plans

- Develop new markets for Desi Oon wool within automotive, architecture, and interior sectors
- Create digital traceability platform to inform B2B customers on the story and origins of wool
- Adopt and adapt existing digital platforms to create fully accessible and accurate data capture
- Support sustainable income for shepherds through greater visibility, improved consistency of wool processing, and full traceability.

3.5 Circular Handspun

Jamba Chamanji Sodha hand spinning on Peti Charkha, Location: Kaccha
Credit: Where Does It Come From

Conserve India Shubham Prakash, Executive Director, Anita Patel, Founder/President
Khadi London Ashna Ahuja, Director, Jo Salter, Director
Khamir Kavya Saxena, Executive Director, Ghatit Laheru, Director
Where Does it Come From? Jo Salter, Founder
UAL FTTI Academic Mentor Professor Kate Goldsworthy
UAL FTTI R&D Fellow Alice Timmis

“New Landscapes gave us the chance to show that circularity and heritage can go hand in hand.”

- Circular Handspun

Project overview

According to UNESCO[20], in many indigenous cultures, handweaving is not just a practical skill, but a way of passing down stories, traditions, and cultural values from one generation to the next. Circular Handspun explored textile circularity through decentralised craft clusters, generating independent rural livelihoods, reducing carbon emissions via hand-powered processes, and preserving the heritage skills of yarn and fabric production within a contemporary circular economy model.

Catalyst Grant: Recovering fibres for handwoven fabrics

Circular Handspun were awarded a Catalyst Grant to explore the potential of recycling post-production textile waste into premium yarns and fabrics through heritage craft techniques.

Textile waste recycling in Amroha, Uttar Pradesh
Credit: Conserve India,
Photographer: Sonal Chaudhary

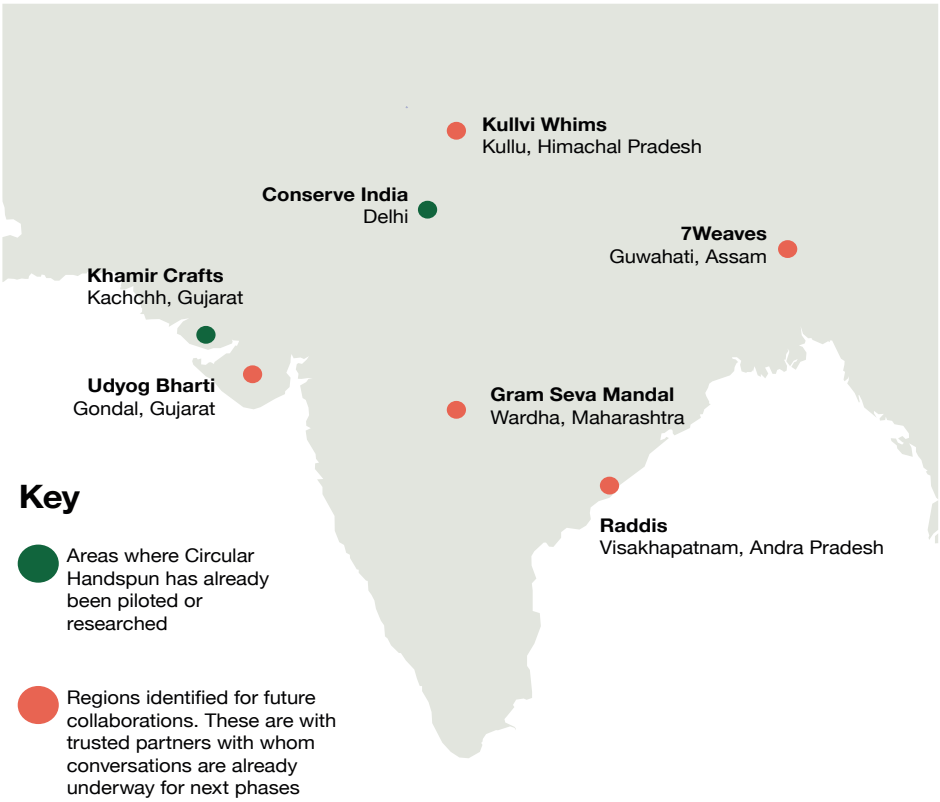
20 https://www.unesco.org/en/intangible-cultural-heritage

Circular Handspun fabric using Kala warp and recycled yarn weft
Credit: Khamir

The team conducted trials on fibre recovery and shredding to produce spinnable fibre compatible with traditional hand-spinning tools (peti charkhas), while examining how artisans adapt to these new materials. The initiative also enabled cross-cultural knowledge exchange between India and the UK, refining processes and showcasing the potential of circular, craft-driven textile innovation.

British Council Follow-on Grant: Scaling social and environmental impact

The Circular Handspun team was awarded a follow-on grant by the British Council to support the project's social and environmental impact.



"Through this project, we turned textile waste into handwoven fabrics ready for the market. It proved that we could create both environmental impact and livelihoods for artisans. Now, the next step is to scale this local, low-impact model to meet the growing demand for zero-mile textiles."

- Circular Handspun

Key outcomes

- 50kg of textile waste processed into 100% recycled yarn.
- Development of textile waste processing guidelines for workers.
- Training of 20 waste sorters and shredders in Circular Handspun process.
- Training of Local women artisans trained and engaged in spinning recycled fibre.
- Increased income and inclusion into sustainable jobs for waste sorters and artisans.
- Strengthened collaboration between UK and Indian partners.
- Showcasing at major event and exhibitions; at the British Council India and Bharat Tex tradeshow in India.

Targeted UN Sustainable Development Goals

Technology Readiness Level (TRL):

Start	End
1	3

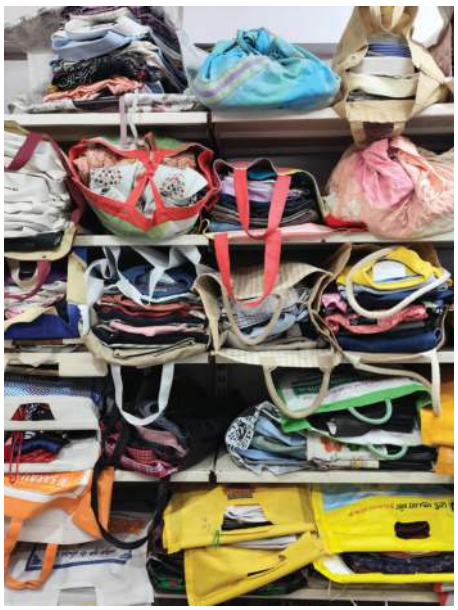
Future plans

- Scale-up decentralised recycling hubs in one new craft cluster in 2026 and a further two in 2027.
- Improve yarn quality by developing new fibre-blending techniques.
- Capture impact data across the production lifecycle, compliant with Digital Product Passport requirements.
- Capture product financial costs in order to build a product pricing plan.
- Upskill rural artisans in spinning and weaving with recycled fibres.
- Develop prototype concept collections for exhibitions and marketing.

3.6
Darn It!

Menders working on repairs captured as part of the Darn It! project
Credit: Iro Iro

Circular Design India Aparna Rajagopal, Project Strategy and Researcher Lakshmipriya V R, User Researcher
Estethica Filippo Ricci, Strategy Advisor Orsola De Castro, Communications & Creative Advisor
Iro Iro Bhaavya Goenka, Research Lead and Domain Expert Aastha Jain, Researcher, Communications Design
The Right Project Roxanne Houshmand Howell, Sustainability & Strategy Advisor
UAL FTTI Academic Mentor Professor Jane Harris
UAL FTTI R&D Fellow Laura Solomon



Garments waiting to be repaired, laundered and altered at SMS Laundry, Location: Bangalore
Credit: Darn It

Project overview

The environmental NGO WRAP (2024)[21] identified India and the UK as two of the four highest clothing-consuming countries globally, highlighting for every 5 items repaired, 4 displace a new purchase – resulting in a displacement rate of 82.2%. The Darn It! R&D project addressed the climate crisis by reconnecting consumers with India's rich mending traditions through a digital platform, making repair services accessible and culturally relevant.

Catalyst Grant: Mapping repair ecosystems

Within the New Landscapes India: R&D Grant Scheme, Circular Design India mapped and documented regional mending practices such as Kantha, Katab, and Rafoogari through on the ground interviews.

Iro Iro's role within the project was to develop a strategic method for data collection with menders across India whilst Circular Design India also tested in-person and digital tools in Bangalore, as a pilot city.

The Right Project and Esthetica provided advice and performed market research for the project such as a study of existing app based mending services in the UK. The team explored ethical documentation and representation of informal and formal repair networks. The result was an digital directory highlighting recognised menders and techniques, alongside a pilot study in Bangalore to test the process prior to wider roll out across the region

Key outcomes

- Creation of a digital directory of trusted menders.
- Development of an educational platform and repair service guide.
- Implementation of scalable methodology in Bangalore.
- Increased visibility of traditional mending as a sustainable craft.

21 https://www.wrap.ngo/media-centre/press-releases/fast-fashion-could-be-left-peg-preloved-and-repair-displace-new-sales

Targeted UN Sustainable Development Goals

Technology Readiness Level (TRL):

Start	End
0	0

Future plans

- Transition from Darn It!, a research project, to My Mend, a platform for the global mending community, facilitating connections between menders and the public.
- Build a not-for-profit cultural repository and educational platform integrated within My Mend called Menders without Borders.
- Unlock investment for My Mend and grants for Menders without Borders.
- Further research on mending cultures and mapping consumer behaviour globally and advancing technological capacity.

Mender working on garment at Kashmir Darners
Credit: Darn It!

Professor Mohammad Mahbubul Hassan using equipment at UAL FTTI Design + STEM Materials and Textiles Lab
Credit: Alys Tomlinson

4 R&D Programme

The New Landscapes India: Fashion, Textiles & Technology R&D Grant Scheme offered several dynamic interventions to support the UK-India SME grantees' project concept development and ensure they were both technology and market ready on completion of the programme.

These consisted of:

- Two rounds of grant funding: Catalyst Grant + Accelerator Grant.
- 'KTP-type+' academic mentorship and research fellow support.
- A business workshop programme covering a wide range of topics from communications design and implementation to investment readiness.
- Events and showcasing opportunities.

The programme was developed to maximise R&D potential, collaborative problem-solving, and sustainable business growth, with the aim of tackling some of the most pressing environmental challenges facing the fashion, textiles, and related technology sectors.

4.1 NIFT Academic partnership

As part of the New Landscapes India: Fashion, Textiles & Technology R&D Grant Scheme, a formal academic partnership was developed between UAL FTTI and the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT).

The National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) is a prominent university in India offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in fashion and design across 19 campuses nationwide.

The partnership included:

- A formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) supporting long-term collaboration, signed at the Bharat Tex international trade fair and exhibition in New Delhi, India.
- Sharing of research and knowledge exchange approaches and methodologies across institutions.
- UK and India campus visits, including a talk to NIFT students across its 19 campuses by UAL FTTI.
- Introductions to Indian Government officials and organisations responsible for fashion and textiles.

- Co-mentoring of New Landscapes India SME-led R&D projects by UAL and NIFT academic staff.

This bilateral collaboration strengthened cross-cultural research and knowledge exchange between the UK and India, resulting in a long-term partnership between the two institutions and additional support for the participating SMEs.

The MoU signed between UAL FTTI and NIFT focused on the delivery of New Landscapes India programme and wider research and knowledge exchange opportunities across UAL and NIFT existing academic partnership.

4.2 Academic mentorship and support

The main delivery mechanism for this three-year UK-India focused New Landscapes India: Fashion, Textiles & Technology R&D Grant Scheme, was a 'KTP type+' model where each SME R&D project was provided with an academic mentor and research fellow to support the development of their R&D projects.

UAL FTTI provided specialist Design + STEM academic expertise spanning advanced materials, green chemistry, circular systems, woven textile design, fibre traceability and behaviour change in producers and consumers. Grant awardees also received wrap around support from a Research Fellow, and the UAL FTTI wider team on a bi-weekly basis throughout their time on the grant scheme.

UAL FTTI Design + STEM Materials and Textiles Lab
Credit: Alys Tomlinson

At the Accelerator R&D grant phases of the three-year programme, UAL FTTI and NIFT worked together to support collaborative R&D projects between UK and Indian fashion, textiles and technology SMEs, with joint mentoring provision. At this stage, NIFT provided essential local and national knowledge, cultural context, and additional business and industry insights and resources.

4.3 Business workshop programme

During the Accelerator phase of New Landscapes India programme, alongside the primary academic mentoring and research fellow support, the programme provided a series of workshops to ensure technology and market readiness. To ensure maximum impact, all UK and India Catalyst and Accelerator R&D grantees were invited to participate, increasing peer to peer learnings.

This programme of support delivered the following online workshops:

Workshop	Led by	Date & location
The Circularity Radar workshop	UAL FTTI	April 2025 Location: Online
Crafting a Strong Research Narrative Communications workshop	UAL FTTI	May 2025 Location: Online
Intellectual Property workshop	UAL FTTI	June 2025 Location: Online
Research and R&D Funding workshop	UAL FTTI Innovate UK Business Connect[22]	July 2025: Location: Online
Sustainable Growth and Pitch Readiness workshop	UAL FTTI Invest India[23]	September 2025 Location: Online
Peer to Peer R&D Learning workshop	UAL FTTI British Council	October 2025 Location: In-person, British Council, UK

In addition to the workshops, New Landscapes India: R&D grant awardees had several opportunities to discuss project outcomes, outline the impact arising from SME R&D projects and share any learnings from taking part in the wider grant scheme.

22 Innovate UK: https://iuk-business-connecwt.org.uk/

23 Invest India: https://www.investindia.gov.in/

4.5 Events and showcases

Events and showcase activities were a central component of the New Landscapes India: Grant Scheme strengthening the visibility of the programme and its participating SMEs. Whilst promoting greater awareness of sustainable research practices, materials innovation and responsible design approaches across the fashion and textiles sector in the UK and India.

These activities enabled SME awardees to engage directly with industry peers, opening pathways to new collaborations, market opportunities and knowledge exchange. At the same time, they supported the dissemination of these innovative practices and showcased the programme's wider impact to a diverse audience. Boosting SME visibility among investors and industry partners, whilst deepening the programme's engagement with policymakers and institutional stakeholders.

Across the New Landscapes India programme, a total of 11 exhibitions and showcase opportunities were delivered, including:

Event type	Event Details	Date & location
Showcase Networking	**Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) Materials Futures Symposium** New Landscapes India Programme awardees were invited to participate in talks, networking, and knowledge exchange with international contributors.	April 2024 Location: UK
Showcase Networking	**British Council Sustainable Fashion Delegation Networking Session and Panel Talk with Christopher Raeburn** High-profile showcase and networking opportunities with representatives from the United Nations, Reliance Brands, and Clothing Manufacturers Association of India (CMAI).	May 2024 Location: UK
Workshop	**Circular Wardrobe Systems Workshop with UK SME Save Your Wardrobe** Session focusing on digital wardrobe technologies, sustainable service models, and consumer-facing circular design strategies.	June 2024 Location: UK/ India (online)
Showcase Networking	**UAL FTTI Industry R&D Event at Plexal, Here East, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP)** In-person event at Plexal featuring innovation showcases from New Landscapes India Programme and BFTT projects, attended by stakeholders, industry, and innovators.	July 2025 Location: Online

Event type	Event Details	Date & location
Workshop	**Materials and Innovation Workshop with UK SME Petit Pli** New Landscape awardees explored material innovation, sustainable manufacturing strategies, and design for longevity with Petit Pli.	August 2024 Location: UK/India (online)
Study Visit Launch Event	**UAL FTTI–British Council UK Delegation Visit to India** A week-long programme including networking events, conference presentations, and exhibition activities, as well as site visits to India-based awardees. Attended by British Council India and UK teams, industry partners and UAL FTTI.	November 2024 Location: India
Exhibition	**New Landscapes India programme at Making Matters[24] – British Council New Delhi** Launch event and exhibition of R&D outputs from all six 2024 New Landscapes India Programme awardees, hosted at the British Council India headquarters.	November 2024 Location: India
Exhibition Trade Show	**Bharat Tex Trade Show[25]** International trade event showcasing work from 3 of the New Landscapes India programme awardees to the global textiles industry, stakeholders and policy makers, alongside signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UAL FTTI and NIFT.	February 2025 Location: India
Study Visit Launch Event	**New Landscapes India programme Curated Visit and Exhibition Launch** A one-week study group, organised by the British Council, brought together India and UK SMEs from the programme to attend the exhibition launch, participate in the World Design Congress, and engage in peer-to-peer sessions with each other and industry professionals.	September 2025 Location: UK
Symposium	**Business of Fashion, Textiles and Technology R&D Insights** Panel discussion featuring New Landscapes India grant awardee SMEs from Bequin, Desi Oon Traceability Framework, and the British Council attended by UAL academics and senior management.	September 2025 Location: UK
Exhibition	**New Landscapes India programme Exhibition – British Council UK, London, part of London Design Festival** The exhibition brought together all New Landscapes India programme projects to date, placing the six India SME awardees at the centre to highlight their innovation, R&D outcomes, and programme impact.	September 2025 – March 2026 Location: UK

In addition, grant awardees also independently delivered 17 workshops and talks and took part in 16 exhibitions, resulting in 1,721 individuals from industry and community members consulted and a further 317 young people engaged with their project from schools, colleges and universities.

24 **Making Matters, British Council** https://www.britishcouncil.in/events/making-matters

25 **Bharat Tex Trade Show** https://bharat-tex.com/https://nift.ac.in/sites/default/files/2025-06/NIFT%20Bharat%20Tex%202025%20Final.pdf

New Landscapes exhibition at the British Council, London, UK
Credit: Alys Tomlinson

4.5.1 New Landscapes Exhibition

The New Landscapes Exhibition, hosted at the British Council HQ in Stratford, East London, represented the culmination of this flagship programme and a showcase of its achievements. Positioned within the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP) cultural and innovation district, the exhibition celebrated the five-year delivery of the New Landscapes programme, with a particular focus on New Landscapes India and its six UK - India awardee R&D projects.

New Landscapes exhibition at the British Council, London, UK
Credit: Alys Tomlinson

The research, innovation, and knowledge exchange generated through the programme, was represented via this tangible platform showcasing physical design outcomes, reporting, and the multiple partnerships across SME, industry and HEIs.

New Landscapes exhibition at the British Council, London, UK
Credit: Alys Tomlinson

The exhibition combined physical prototypes with digital and interactive displays, highlighting the breadth of R&D undertaken, real-world impact, and the collaborative relationships fostered through the programme. Providing insights into the sustainable and circular research and innovation practices that were deployed.

The SMEs showcased their work to professional audiences, including buyers, industry peers, and investors, strengthening visibility and sector connections. The British Council and UAL FTTI leveraged the exhibition to highlight the overarching collaboration, as the space became an environment to host numerous industry, cultural, and business as usual events for a

wide range of stakeholders.

The launch event alone attracted over 100 attendees from industry, cultural organisations, and creative networks, with keynote speeches from Ruth McKenzie, CBE, Director of Arts, British Council; Professor Jane Harris, Director of UAL FTTI; and SME representative Nitya Amarnath, Botto Labs and co-founder of the Bequin project.

New Landscapes exhibition at the British Council, London, UK
Credit: Alys Tomlinson

The exhibition welcomed 500+ visitors and hosted national and international delegations from the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Indian Government, the Department of Business & Trade and representatives from various High Commissions. Complementary events included conference and workshop-style sessions with partners such as Global Women Inventors and Innovation (Global WIIN) network, the SME Segura, the Back to Baselines research programme funded by UK Research Innovation (NERC, AHRC and Innovate UK), and the QEOP Innovation District providing further opportunities for knowledge exchange and sector engagement.

Visit by Haggerston School to the New Landscapes exhibition at the British Council, London, UK
Credit: Aleksandr Faustov

Group image from Global WIIN international conference, New Landscapes exhibition, British Council, London, UK
Credit: Linda Gould

The exhibition featured as part of the London Design Festival and across the QEOP. It received coverage in local, national, sectoral, and international press, including Selvedge Magazine[26], Fibre2Fashion[27], Country & Townhouse[28], and Made in Shoreditch[29].

Throughout the 7-month exhibition New Landscapes showcase was open to the public boosting local community engagement, alongside open access activities such as:

- UAL FTTI workshop on sustainable textiles for Haggerston School GCSE Textiles pupils;
- Hosting Urban MBA, an organisation for marginalised young adults;
- Hosting Global Women Inventors and Innovators (Global WIIN) with 100+ attendees
- The exhibition was initially due to run until the end of January 2026 but was extended by 2 months due to its success.

26 https://www.selvedge.org/products/exhibition-new-landscapes-india?
27 https://www.fibre2fashion.com/interviews/industry-speak/the-stitch-archive/annalisa-dunn-and-lisa-salama/14244/
https://www.fibre2fashion.com/interviews/industry-speak/desi-oon-hub/rahul-noble-singh/14242/
https://www.fibre2fashion.com/interviews/industry-speak/post-carbon-lab/dian-jen-lin/14318/
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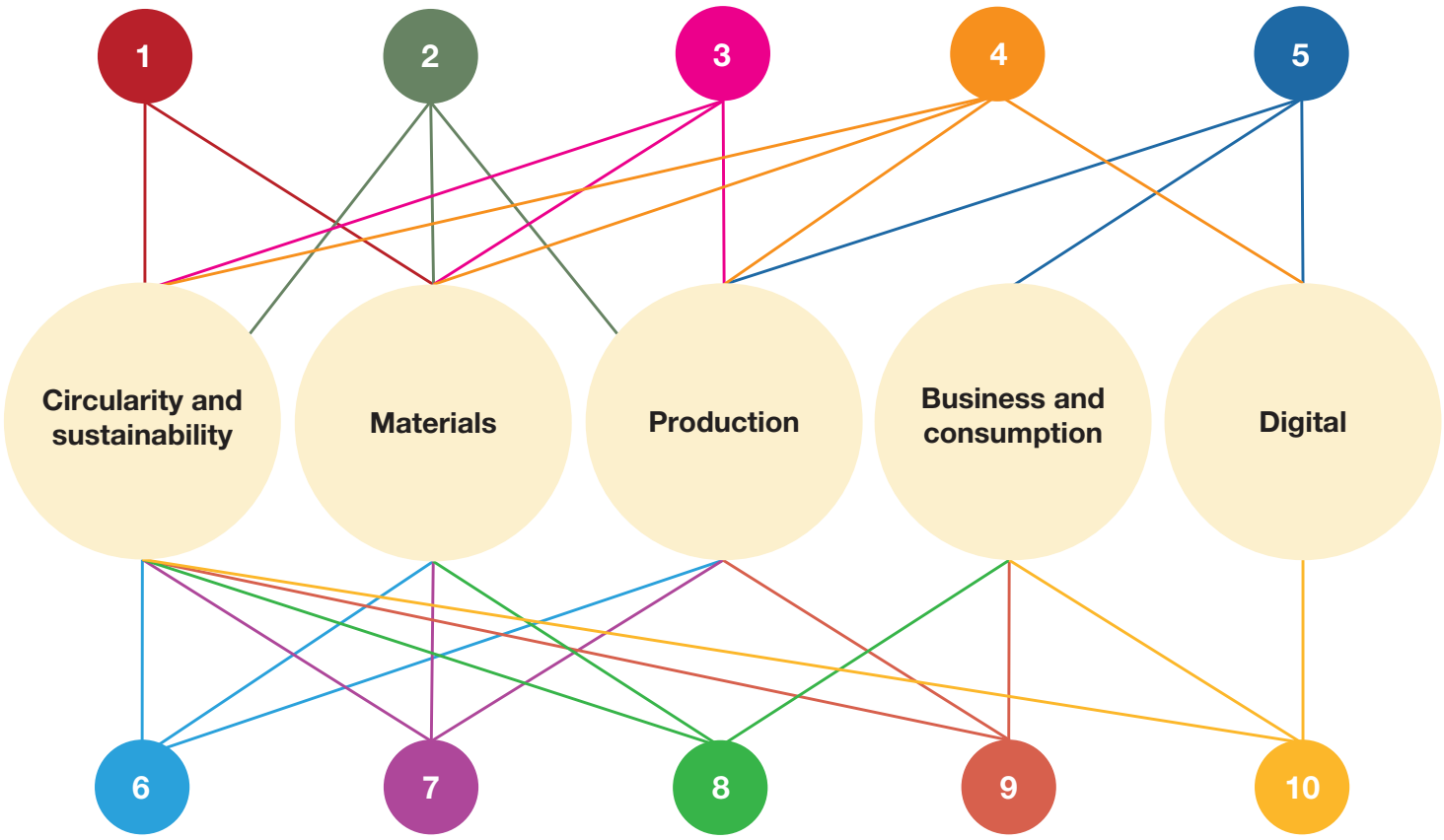
Farmer with Karunganni desi cotton plants
Credit: Swaminathan Vaidhyalingam

5 Programme Analysis

The New Landscapes India: Fashion, Textiles & Technology R&D Grant Scheme enabled SMEs to deliver design-led R&D projects across sustainable materials, circular systems, responsible production and emerging technologies. To support dissemination and sector learning, UAL FTTI undertook a structured thematic analysis of the research and knowledge exchange generated through the programme.

This analysis is visually represented through a thematic heat map aligned to the UAL FTTI Five Pillars framework[30], illustrating the range and concentration of emergent R&D themes explored across the portfolio of projects. The diagram demonstrates how individual SME activities intersected across pillars, evidencing both depth and interdisciplinarity.

Emergent themes



1 Bio-derived materials
2 By-product and waste material usage
3 Carbon sequestration
4 Supply chain traceability
5 Economic empowerment throughout value chain
6 Design for circularity
7 Regenerative practices
8 New markets for heritage materials
9 Preservation of traditional processes and skills
10 Community engagement and co-creation

30 https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.arts.ac.uk/ual-fashion-textiles-and-technology-institute/about-us&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1773332521517535&usg=AOvVaw0N3lxOxgBk_SUEUWNaMipK

Alongside this thematic mapping, UAL FTTI conducted a wider SME project and programme-level evaluation to assess delivery, impact and future programme potential for strategic partners. The findings are structured across four areas — Enablers, Opportunities, Challenges and Additional Benefits — providing a consolidated view of performance, learning and forward trajectory.

R&D Enablers:	R&D Opportunities:
A strong established partnership between the British Council and UAL FTTI, built on shared belief and ambition.	Greater strategic positioning and leveraging of the programme's credibility and institutional networks.
The positioning of Design + STEM and R&D as a central pillar to address environmental and social impact whilst supporting economic growth.	Amplification of the programme's distinctive R&D focus through industry media, showcases and investor engagement, articulating economic, environmental and social value.
High-level academic mentoring and support, which proved transformative for SME projects.	Sustained in-country academic collaboration to complement UAL FTTI's Design + STEM expertise with local knowledge and contextual insight and ensuring valuable international cultural and knowledge exchange.
SMEs' vision and ambition, combining innovative solutions with wider social impact goals.	Expanded pre-programme outreach to diversify the SME pipeline, including emerging digital technologies alongside materials, production, and circularity.
Comprehensive wraparound support, combining structured workshops with interdisciplinary expertise.	Partner with additional organisations to extend specialist expertise and broaden access to networks.
Direct SME grant funding, providing essential resource to tackle complex challenges and accelerate R&D activity.	Unlock follow-on funding and continued R&D opportunities for SME projects to aid commercialisation and long-term impact.
Established in-country networks that enabled the identification and engagement of ambitious SMEs.	Drawing more explicitly on the evidence and learning from the three previous programmes to demonstrate scale and potential for future New Landscapes programmes, and SME recruitment.
Bilateral study weeks that convened SMEs in person, widely regarded as highly valuable for project dissemination and peer to peer learning.	Embedding structured peer exchange and in-person engagement as a defined component of the programme model from the offset.
Structured quantitative and qualitative reporting and robust approaches to measuring impact including Technology Readiness Level (TRL), Market Readiness Level (MRL), and UN SDGs.	Longer-term online reporting as economic, social and environmental impact can continue past initial project intervention, helping to measure and illustrate the true value of the programme.
Multi-level showcase opportunities from SMEs own engagement events to high profile exhibitions and trade shows.	Develop New Landscapes network across all 3 past and future programmes, acting as a catalyst for cross-sector, international collaboration and peer to peer support.

R&D Challenges:	R&D Additional outcomes:
Changes in personnel across each of the partner organisations required continuity management to ensure relationships and delivery remained strong and stable.	Strengthened bilateral connections and visibility of the programme with government and sector bodies, including Innovate UK, Invest India and DCMS, UKRI.
Predominantly online delivery constrained hands-on collaboration in labs and field settings, this was mitigated through intensive and high-level academic support and visual project diaries.	High-profile events and showcases that expanded visibility and opportunity beyond initial expectations, including participation in the London Design Festival.
The academic partnership with NIFT commenced during the Accelerator phase, limiting early-stage integration but establishing a valuable longer-term relationship.	
Only a finite number of SMEs could be supported, although for New Landscapes India programme it still attracted a diverse cohort of 13 UK-India SMEs working across six projects.	The scale of impact achieved through a relatively small intervention, from the high level of R&D innovation, novel environmental and circular approaches, to wider social and economic impact.
Due to working with small SMEs availability of team members and competing priorities occasionally limited participation; however advance planning reduced some of these pressures.	Re-engagement and consolidation of a strong network of 42 current and past SMEs, reinforced through exhibition activity.
Despite the Catalyst and Accelerator Grants, the SMEs had limited resources and capacity to scale, which was further compounded by the complexity of the challenges they were trying to address. The ambition of the SMEs combined with the support of the programme did offset some of these challenges.	Additional funding leveraged by the UAL FTTI and British Council teams to extend R&D engagement and SME support beyond the programme.
Sustaining meaningful engagement required a significant time commitment from SMEs, but ongoing support from research fellows and the wider team ensured consistent dialogue throughout the programme.	Beacon projects and high-profile collaborations, including Ganni, Bharat Tex and the Future Fabrics Expo, signalling a strong and credible trajectory for the programme.
Creating sufficient opportunities for cross-fertilisation of ideas and peer learning was challenging, yet study weeks and active facilitation by the delivery team helped connect participants and share knowledge.	
Reporting requirements were time-intensive, but structured guidance enabled strong measurable outcomes without compromising SME capacity.	
Delivering an ambitious programme and high-profile exhibition was demanding and resource intensive; however the commitment of the SMEs alongside the British Council and UAL FTTI teams ensured impact exceeded expectations.	

Herder holding handcrafted accessories using desi oon wool
Credit: Vivek Muthuramalingam

6 Conclusions & Recommendations

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Over the past 5 years across its 3 iterations, New Landscapes has demonstrated the vital role of design and STEM research and development (R&D) in driving sustainable innovation and addressing global challenges through cross-country collaboration. The programme has shown how the British Council's Architecture, Design and Fashion portfolio can support SME-led R&D, complemented by the UAL Fashion, Textiles and Technology Institute's proven R&D methodologies.

To date, 42 global SMEs across 10 countries have engaged in collaborative R&D projects through this programme, generating sustainable growth and improved livelihoods for farmers, artisans, and local communities worldwide.

A summary of the impact of New Landscapes globally[31] includes:

R&D and Innovation

61 New technologies (Developed, tested)
61 New prototypes
10 New apps, online tools or platforms created
4 Traceability mapping exercise conducted
4 Reports or whitepapers published

Engagement

1902 Individuals or communities consulted (Industry, community members)
355 Number of Young People Engaged (Schools, colleges, universities)
53 Surveys conducted
48 Workshops or talks
16 Exhibitions participated in

Impact

62 New customers (B2B, B2C)
425 Livelihoods improved through the project (Farmers, artisans)
117 Jobs created (Direct, indirect[32])
87 Jobs safeguarded (Direct, indirect[33])

31 Impact across all 3 New Landscapes programmes (2022, 2023, 2023-2026)
32 The number of jobs created includes full and part-time positions within the participating SMEs plus artisans, herders and farmers involved in the project.
33 The number of jobs safeguarded includes full and part-time positions within the participating SMEs plus artisans, herders and farmers involved in the project.

6 Conclusions & Recommendations

The New Landscapes India: Fashion, Textiles and Technology R&D Grant Scheme focused on strengthening UK–India collaboration in sustainable FTT innovation. The programme highlighted the complementary strengths of UK design, research and market expertise alongside India's textile production knowledge and craft capabilities. Beyond the wide variety of project outputs, the initiative demonstrated how structured collaborative R&D support can accelerate SME innovation, enhance technical and commercial capability, and foster meaningful cross-cultural exchange. Global engagement in collaborative R&D encouraged knowledge sharing, strengthened professional networks, supported new alliances, and reinforced the strategic value of UK–India partnerships in advancing sustainable and circular approaches across the sector.

The programme successfully supported 13 SMEs across six collaborative projects, delivering bio-derived materials, circular prototypes and processes, microbial dyes, traceability mapping exercises, with these new innovations and market opportunities aligned to the themes of sustainable materials, circular systems, responsible production, and emerging technologies. Beyond technical R&D outputs, it advanced business skills development, job creation, safeguarding livelihoods, and wider community engagement.

Participation in workshops, exhibitions, and policy-focused events enhanced sector visibility, strengthened networks, and reinforced the value of UK-India collaboration in sustainable FTT R&D. Set against a backdrop of the recently established UK-India trade agreement, there are potential opportunities for New Landscapes to capitalise on strengthening ties between the two countries.

Reflecting on the success of the New Landscapes India programme in particular, the following recommendations are made for potential future iterations of the R&D initiative, and follow-on activity post-delivery.

Recommendations at project level

- Support the scaling and commercialisation of the SME R&D projects by continuing to identify follow-on investment and opportunities.
- Steer further sector change through connecting SMEs with industry partners, helping extend the reach and impact of R&D innovation.
- Encourage the dissemination of best practice and project learnings within the sector, academia and future New Landscapes iterations.
- Consider mechanisms for long-term engagement including alumni networking, knowledge exchange, and impact reporting, amplifying the programme beyond the delivery period.

Recommendations at programme level

- Build on the learning from the UK-India programme delivery by exploring similar bilateral or trilateral collaborations to enhance regional, long-term impact.
- Engage with policymakers, funding agencies, and sector bodies in both countries to highlight the strategic value of New Landscapes programme as an international demonstrator and the importance of combined financial, academic, and technical support for SME-led collaborative R&D.
- Strengthen bilateral and sector ties developed through the UK-India trade agreement.
- Expand the depth and breadth of future SME R&D projects to ensure new emerging technologies and emerging market opportunities are strategically captured.
- Drive inclusive global change across the fashion, wider apparel, textiles and technology sectors by ensuring circular and sustainable approach to R&D, whilst delivering social, cultural and economic impact - the ethos of the New Landscapes Programme.

Colophon

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First published 2026

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Additional thanks

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Innovate UK

Invest India

London Design Festival

Bharat Tex

Design

Studio Koseda

Images

Credits as per individual image

Cover image: Harvester holding Karunganni desi cotton
Credit: Swaminathan Vaidhyalingam