

# DesignLink: Unlocking Big Ideas Through Design Thinking

Created by the Future Island-Island project work package 3 (more details about this project at end of document)

## IDEATION: Rethinking Big Challenges Through Creative Collaboration

Does your business face a design challenge that needs fresh, innovative thinking? **DesignLink** is your opportunity to work with highly skilled early-stage creatives to tackle your biggest design dilemmas—at no cost to you.

Rather than small-scale tasks like logo design, we are looking for **big, impactful problems**—challenges that, if solved, could bring significant change to your business. For example, if your company generates waste materials during production, could they be repurposed into a new product? If you have a workflow bottleneck, could a fresh spatial strategy improve efficiency?

See 'Next Steps' section if you are interested in submitting your problem to us...

## BENEFITS: Why Get Involved?

- **Expert Design Thinking for Free**  
Work with emerging design thinkers, who are skilled in problem-solving and creative strategy.
- **Minimal Time Commitment for Businesses**  
For less than a day's effort total, your business could get a strategic proposal response to your big problem. See the 'next steps' section for details.
- **Final Presentation & Next Steps**  
On **June 20th**, the teams will present their design responses, giving businesses strategic responses to their problem, with new insights and fresh approaches. There will also be discussions about potential funding opportunities to take the ideas even further. We would love it if you, the business, could attend these presentations.
- **Fully Funded Participation**  
Businesses do not need to pay to take part—Future Island-Island is funding stipends for the designers, meaning you get high-level creative input at no cost to you.

## POTENTIAL: What Could This Mean for Your Business?

DesignLink is more than just a workshop—it's a catalyst for **game-changing innovation**. Whether it's **unlocking new revenue streams, improving sustainability, or reimagining product design**, this initiative gives businesses access to **cutting-edge design expertise** without the usual barriers.

By taking part, you join a network of **forward-thinking companies** and **visionary creatives** who are rethinking the future of industry through collaboration.

Don't miss the opportunity to **turn your design challenges into creative breakthroughs**.

## NEXT STEPS: What we need from you!

We have kept time commitments minimal while ensuring you receive valuable strategic insights. Below are the key dates and what is required from you:

- **28th April (5 mins required)**  
Deadline to email us at **futureislandisland@qub.ac.uk** with a brief description of your design problem (just a sentence or two).
- **9th May (No time required)**  
We will inform you if your submission has been successful, meaning we have matched you with suitable creatives to develop a strategy for your design problem.
- **6th June (5 mins required)**  
Submit a **1-3 minute video** via email to **futureislandisland@qub.ac.uk** explaining your design problem in a casual, informal way.
- **18th & 19th June (40 mins required)**  
Creatives will be working on your design problem during their sprint. While your presence is not required, a **20-minute Teams/Zoom call on both days** would be helpful for them to ask questions.
- **20th June (Half-day required)**  
Strategic response presentations will take place on **QUB campus**. This is the **only day we require in-person attendance** to review the outcomes.

With less than a day's total effort, you gain access to **early-stage creative professionals** working on your business design challenges—**at no cost to you** (fully funded by FII).

## About project Future Island-Island

The "Future Island-Island" project is a £4.625 million initiative funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as part of the UK's Green Transition Ecosystems. Led by Ulster University in partnership with Queen's University Belfast, The Glasgow School of Art, and the University of the Arts London, the project aims to enhance public engagement in eco-friendly waste management through design-led research and digital technologies.

A significant aspect of the project involves collaborating with the Rathlin Island community to co-design innovative solutions for waste management and sustainable tourism. Insights gained will be scaled across Northern Ireland and beyond.

The consortium includes industry partners such as Big Motive, BigSmall Design, The BIG Idea, CARD Group, National Museums NI, Rathlin Development and Community Association, RSPB NI, The Odyssey W5, Todd Architects, and Yellow Design. This collaborative effort integrates local knowledge with academic expertise to develop scalable, real-world solutions.

Overall, Future Island-Island seeks to translate design-led research into practical benefits, promoting a greener and more sustainable economy in Northern Ireland and beyond.

## About Our Work Package

### Mapping Design Ecosystems: A Framework for The Green Transition

The **Design Ecosystems** work package within the *Future Island-Island* project is an interdisciplinary inquiry into the complex interdependencies of materials, waste streams, and human behaviours. This research aims to develop a comprehensive and interactive mapping system that visualises the flows of people, process, and artefact, providing a foundation for design ecosystem interrogations.

The project is led by an interdisciplinary team from **Queen's University Belfast (QUB)** and **Ulster University (UU)**, bringing together expertise in urban sustainability, digital mapping, participatory design, and material innovation.

#### *The team*

##### **Queen's University Belfast (QUB)**

Professor Greg Keeffe | Dr. Sean Cullen | Dr. Rebecca Jane McConnell | Dr. Emma Campbell

##### **Ulster University (UU)**

Alison Gault | Anna Duffy