



Research Fellowship in the Built Environment

Collaborative Leadership in the Built Environment: Building Capability in the Next Generation

£50k per year for 2 years | Closing Date for applications 9 September 2025

The 2025 Built Environment Fellowship invites applications from individuals who can demonstrate practical leadership for the emerging generation: those capable of designing and/or delivering socially, environmentally, and economically integrated developments.

The UK government has recently placed greater emphasis on infrastructure and planning, introducing policy changes aimed at delivering better outcomes for both society and the environment.

The goal is to support planners, developers, and designers with the vision, knowledge, and leadership to drive innovation at regional and local levels.

This focus is exemplified by the formation of the National Infrastructure, Strategy and Transformation Authority (NISTA) which marks a structural commitment to collaborative leadership, particularly with local communities. Other recent policy changes include adapting planning rules while setting ambitious housing targets that significantly exceed recent achievements.

These reforms are driven by the ambition to complete projects more quickly and deliver greater value – goals that hinge on improved collaboration and more effective cross-disciplinary working.

In this context we suggest there is a critical shortage of individuals equipped to lead the development and organisations needed to deliver the new wave of developments and infrastructure.

A deeper problem lies in the mismatch between the systemic, integrative thinking required today and the outmoded assumption that siloed professional institutions will naturally collaborate. As holistic projects become more challenging, we need systemic change and expanded capabilities in project management and design leadership.

We welcome proposals that address these ambitions through:

- Cultural, educational or procurement transformation, through changes that prioritise long-term value over short-term costs.
- Collaborative team models that integrate the right specialists into specific contexts, rather than assembling generic, abstract teams.
- Client structures that engage emerging talent, bringing younger voices into the heart of decision-making bodies.
- Project systems that actively support innovation, rather than stifling it through risk aversion.
- Design briefs based on contemporary understandings of real value – social, environmental, and economic.
- New approaches to leadership that embrace diversity of thought and foster true collaboration, while maintaining the authority and credibility required to lead.
- Strategies for embedding innovation and expertise into domains and environments that have traditionally resisted it.
- Tools and techniques for enabling SMEs, local authorities, and community groups to access and apply knowledge navigating planning systems, securing approvals, and attracting talent.
- Collaborative innovation platforms that unite clients, communities, and local governments to face future challenges together.

We are looking for Fellows who bring both deep knowledge and applied experience – highlighting the development path for future leaders who can shape not only projects, but also the systems, cultures, and collaborations that will define the future of the built environment.

Entries will be accepted not only from individuals but also from formal or informal partnerships. Candidates should be UK based aiming to carry out research over a 2 year period culminating in a milestone output of significance. In all cases candidates should identify a mentor who can contribute objectively to the project and widen the reach of outputs to help make a difference. Please see the following **Terms and Conditions** for full details.

Visit www.royalcommission1851.org for full details of how to apply

Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851

Research Fellowship in the Built Environment

2025 Terms and Conditions

Background

1. The 1851 Research Fellowship in the Built Environment is intended to enable those at a more advanced stage in their career to explore important current issues, selected by the Commission.
2. The Commission will provide a broad and general brief, which should be interpreted with verve and imagination by applicants. The Commission is looking for proposals that culminate in a tangible output of practical significance as well as a detailed report with serious, well-researched and practical proposals that address the question and challenge built environment professionals to take the outcomes into account. The Commission will look carefully at how results will be disseminated and how they might feed into policy. The Commission is looking to be surprised, persuaded and enthused by applications of genuine import.
3. One award is made in alternate years. The award is normally for two years, but there are opportunities to extend this on a pro rata basis to facilitate part time working where appropriate, subject to prior approval.
4. Fellowships must start by 31 December in the year of award.

Eligibility

5. Applications are welcomed from post-graduates, researchers, practitioners or professionals on a career break. Applicants need not be architects or surveyors – anyone with relevant expertise is eligible to apply.
6. Entries will be accepted not only from individuals but also from formal or informal partnerships. Please note, however, that in all such cases one individual must be identified as the lead applicant who will, if successful, be awarded the Fellowship and will be the point of contact for the Commission. Only the Fellow will be entitled to attend Commission events although other members of a formal or informal partnership may be invited at the Commission's discretion.
7. Candidates should be UK based with a right to live and work in the UK which covers the period of the Fellowship and is not dependent on award of the Fellowship. The Commission cannot act as a sponsor for visa purposes.
8. In all cases candidates should identify a UK based mentor who can contribute objectively to the project and widen the reach of outputs to help make a difference. The mentor will be expected to submit brief interim reports at six-monthly intervals commenting on progress made, difficulties encountered and any recommendations for modification of the approach. Projects may have more than one mentor, but in all cases a single individual must be nominated as the mentor who will provide reports to the Commission. The mentor does not need to be an academic or based at a university but must be a recognised expert in the project area.

Benefits and requirements

9. Fellows will receive a grant of £100,000. Fellows will not, under any circumstances, be entitled to more than this. There are no separate allowances for expenses and the like.
10. The grant will usually be paid in five instalments: £22,500 on commencement of the Fellowship, further tranches of £22,500 after six months, twelve months and eighteen months, and a final £10,000 on completion. Although there is some room for flexibility, not more than £50,000 will be paid in the first year and £10,000 will always be retained to be paid only on successful completion of the Fellowship.

11. Payment of the first instalment is subject to receipt of a satisfactory schedule of milestones and deliverables covering the period of the Fellowship. Payment of subsequent tranches is subject to receipt of satisfactory reports evidencing attainment of the relevant milestones and deliverables or providing satisfactory explanations of any changes made. Fellows should allow a minimum of one month from submission of an interim report to receipt of the next tranche of funding to allow the Committee time to consider the report. Payment of the final instalment is subject to receipt of a satisfactory final report and successful delivery of the tangible outcome specified in the project proposal (such as a book, exhibition, toolkit or similar).
12. The grant can be paid to an individual, an employing organisation, or another institution nominated by the Fellow. In appropriate cases it may be possible to split the grant between more than one recipient. Please note however that Fellows will not, under any circumstances, be considered employees, workers, partners, contractors or agents of the Commission and the Commission accepts no liability for tax, national insurance or other payments that may be chargeable in respect of the Fellowship. The Fellow is entirely responsible for their own tax affairs and for ensuring that they pay any amounts due. The Commission is not able to provide tax advice.
13. The grant can be used to cover any expenses related to the project, including but not limited to payroll costs, overheads, equipment, consumables, travel.
14. Fellows are expected to attend Commission events during the Fellowship, at some of which they may be asked to give a poster presentation on their project.
15. The Commission lays no claim to intellectual property arising from the research conducted during the holding of a Fellowship.

Application

16. Application is through website online submission <https://1851awards.flexigrant.com>. First submissions, including a two-page outline of the proposed project, must be received by 12pm on 9 September 2025.
17. Shortlisted applicants will be asked to make a second submission amplifying their project proposal by 12pm on 21 October 2025.
18. Final interviews will be held on 26 November 2025.
19. No budgetary information is requested as part of the application process.

Data Protection

20. The 1851 Royal Commission is a data controller under the General Data Protection Regulation. The Commission is registered with the UK Information Commissioner's Office with registration number Z8305954. The Commission may collect and process personal data about you, your mentor(s), your proposed collaborators and members of any organisations with which you are affiliated as part of your Fellowship application. Full details of the types of data collected, the ways in which the data are processed and the legal basis for the processing are included in the Privacy Notice available on the application portal.

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