

Call for Papers

i-PLACE 26 Conference
“Liveable (and lovable) places”
Southampton, 20–22 October 2026

The Key Cities Innovation Network (KCIN) invites submissions for its annual i-PLACE conference, to be held in Southampton from 20–22 October 2026.

The theme for this year’s conference is: “**Liveable (and lovable) places**”

The concept of “liveable cities” has long been central to disciplines such as planning, architecture, infrastructure, health, education and economic development.

At i-PLACE 26, we seek to **extend and deepen this conversation**.

We are interested in the present-day challenges and opportunities for cities, and also more broadly for **places of all kinds**—including towns, peri-urban areas, coastal and rural communities and regions—and in how they can support not just economic success and sustainability, but also **human experience, attachment and belonging**.

Building on recent work within the i-PLACE programme, including contributions in the *i-PLACE Compendium on Innovation Ecosystems*, we are particularly interested in the “**felt experience**” of **place**—how people perceive, value and connect with where they live.

Scope and themes

We invite submissions presenting innovative research, policy or practice that contributes to understanding and shaping liveable—and lovable—places.

Areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Pride in place
- Arts and culture

- Child-friendly and age-friendly places
- Skills, jobs and inclusive opportunity
- Felt experience, identity and attachment
- Devolution and governance
- Healthy places and wellbeing
- Housing and the built environment
- Climate resilience and adaptation
- Investment and regeneration

Submissions should demonstrate **place-based collaboration**, ideally involving partnerships between universities, local authorities, communities, and/or other stakeholders.

Key questions

We particularly welcome contributions that engage with one or more of the following questions:

- How can emotional attachment, identity and experience be understood and embedded in policy and design?
- How can innovation support more inclusive, healthy and sustainable places?
- In the age of social media and AI, what role do co-creation, co-design and co-production have in creating successful and sustainable futures for places and their communities?
- What works in practice—and what are the barriers to implementation?
- How can successful approaches be scaled, adapted or replicated in different contexts?
- What role do partnerships—especially between cities and universities—play in shaping outcomes?
- How can investment, governance and policy frameworks better support place-based innovation?

Outputs and opportunities

Selected contributors will be invited to:

- Present their work at i-PLACE 26 in Southampton
- Engage in discussion with policymakers, practitioners and researchers

- Develop their submission into a full **evidenced paper (approx. 5,000 words)**

These papers will be peer-reviewed and considered for publication in the **next edition of the i-PLACE Compendium** and presentations may be filmed and posted as talks on the i-PLACE Channel at www.youtube.com/@i-PLACE.

As with previous editions, the ambition is to generate **practical, scalable insights** that can inform policy, funding and delivery across the UK and beyond.

Conference context

i-PLACE 26 will bring together a diverse community of researchers, policymakers and practitioners to explore **innovation in action** across a wide range of place-based challenges.

The conference will include:

- Thematic sessions across key policy areas
- Keynote speakers and plenary discussions
- Opportunities for collaboration and networking
- A dedicated Key Cities Symposium on climate resilience and adaptation

Who should apply?

We welcome submissions from:

- Universities and research institutions
- Local authorities and combined authorities
- Public sector organisations
- Industry and third-sector partners
- Cross-sector partnerships

We particularly encourage **collaborative submissions** that reflect place-based partnerships.

Eligibility and participation

To reflect the central role of the Key Cities Innovation Network while opening the conversation more widely:

- **Priority will be given to submissions involving Key Cities and/or KCIN member universities**
- Submissions from non-member organisations are welcome, particularly where they:
 - involve collaboration with a KCIN member, or
 - demonstrate clear relevance to Key Cities and place-based innovation
- A limited number of places will be reserved for **open submissions of exceptional quality** from outside the network

Key dates

Call for Papers issued:	29 April
Expression of interest / initial submission deadline:	7 September
Full abstracts (1,000–1,500 words):	30 September
Conference:	20–22 October
Post-conference papers (5,000 words):	11 January 2027
Peer review and production:	January-March
Publication and Westminster launch:	April

Submission requirements

Please submit:

- Title of proposed contribution
- Names and affiliations of contributors
- Summary (1,000–1,500 words)
- Details of partners involved

Submissions should be sent to:

secretariat@keycitiesinnovation.org

Further information, registration and tickets are available at:

www.i-place.uk