

Press release: Food and drink companies fuel passion for innovation with share of £50,000 prize

Tackling food waste with natural composters beneath Glasgow city centre, using grains from breweries to boost milk production and improving packaging for pickled eggs are among the latest ideas to be awarded grant funding at industry event celebrating innovation.

[The Food Innovation Network](#) (FIN), which is sponsored by Defra and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, connects food producers across the country with world-class facilities such as test-kitchens and laboratories to help them create new products and production methods.

Yesterday (Wednesday 7 March) food entrepreneurs from across the country showcased their ground breaking solutions to day-to-day problems at a special [Food Innovation Network](#) (FIN) Awards event, which was run by Innovate UK and the Knowledge Transfer Network to encourage companies to examine ways in which they can revolutionise the food and drink sector.

Micro, small and medium sized businesses pitched their projects to a panel of industry experts and ten companies secured £5,000 grants to turn their pioneering ideas into reality. The winning entries all demonstrated unique ways in which they could increase productivity, enhance the environment, improve sustainability or aid our health and wellbeing.

Congratulating the winners, Food and Farming Minister George Eustice said:

Innovation is key to ensuring Britain's successful food and drink industry continues to grow, which is why it was great to see such an exciting display of ingenuity from smaller businesses – who often do not have the same research resources available to them as larger companies.

The FIN Awards voucher fund is designed to support small businesses with bright ideas to develop their concepts in partnership with these research organisations. The ten winners of the Food Innovation Network grant are:

- Scratch Meals Ltd -Healthy Pies, Grimsby: The winning proposal from Scratch Meals Ltd will transform one of the nation's favourite meals: pies. Hoping to access new markets, the innovations will help the company redesign pies to improve their nutritional content, sustainability and reduce packaging.

- Crafty Tech Ltd, Active Transfers, Aylesbury: Crafty Tech Ltd wish to transform the effectiveness of conveyor belts to enhance the production line. They will be testing the automation with the view to patent their concept and access the global market.
- Central Stems, Urban Greens by Sustainable Means, Glasgow: Hidden underground in the heart of the city under Central Station, Central Stems will use their award to trial food production that combines hydroponics and natural composting to address the issue of food waste and agricultural emissions.
- LA Brewery, Non-Alcoholic Kombucha Brewery, Kettering: Kombucha – a fermented tea – is experiencing a surge in popularity due to its potential health benefits. This business will be developing a technique to improve the shelf-life of kombucha. Working with Huddersfield University, the LA Brewery will experiment with bacteria and yeast resulting in a product with longer shelf-life which retains healthy bacteria and remains non-alcoholic.
- PyroGenesys Ltd, Converting Energy From Waste By-Products to Animal Feed Ingredients, Birmingham: Bread waste and used grains from breweries are being incorporated into cattle feed to identify whether this can boost milk production, whilst decreasing methane emissions from cows. If the trial is successful bakers and brewers would be able to transform their waste into animal feed.
- Purely Pickled Eggs Ltd, Bringing Pickled Egg to the People, Gloucestershire: This business is identifying novel ways of packaging pickled eggs to make sure they are in plentiful supply to go with our fish and chips. They will be exploring new methods of applying current application and preservation methods for in new ways.
- Drink Baotic Ltd, Validating New Health Markets, Glasgow: Working with the Glasgow Caledonian University, Drink Baotic Ltd are proposing a pilot to identify how their drink, impacts on health. It is hoped the product will relieve the symptoms of gut issues and constipation.
- Afrique FoodPro, Powdered Mix for Bean Fritters, London: This company has produced a bean mix to create bean fritters, saving time compared to the conventional preparation method which includes soaking black eye beans. In partnership with Greenwich University, they aim to develop their mix into a commercial product and design a manufacturing process. It is estimated the value of this market will be worth £200,000 within the first year.
- Booch & Brine, Scale up Kombucha!, Manchester: The Scale Up Kombucha!

Project aims to research best practice, from Canada, with partner Manchester Metropolitan University and turn this into practical resources, processes and guidance that will enable Booch & Brine to scale up production, grow their business and potentially benefit other UK SMEs via knowledge transfer to academia.

- The Cheshire Saffron Company, Multiple Saffron Harvests via Hydroponics Cheshire: Saffron has massive health benefits including treating depression and this project will explore improving the efficiency in how saffron is grown in the UK. In collaboration with Farm Urban, hydroponics will be used in a creative and innovative way to grow saffron, increasing the yields and changing the way saffron is grown.

[News story: Teaching Regulation Agency Chief Executive appointed](#)

Alan Meyrick has today [Thursday 8 March] been appointed as the Chief Executive of the new Teaching Regulation Agency responsible for the regulation of the teaching profession.

The Teaching Regulation Agency will support employers, schools and headteachers with safeguarding responsibilities. This will include taking action on allegations of serious teacher misconduct and helping employers to complete pre-recruitment checks to ensure that they are employing teachers who are appropriately qualified for their role.

The announcement is part of the continued drive to deliver high standards across the teaching profession and provide a world-class education to all pupils, helping to build a Britain that is fit for the future.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

I am very pleased to announce the appointment of Alan Meyrick as the Chief Executive of the new Teaching Regulation Agency. Raising the status of the teaching profession is hugely important as we continue the drive for higher academic standards in all our schools.

There are now 1.9 million more pupils in schools rated good or outstanding compared to 2010 and standards of reading in our primary schools have risen significantly since we introduced the Phonics Check in 2012. Proportionate and effective regulation of the teaching profession has been and remains a factor in ensuring those standards continue to rise.'

Alan is currently a deputy director in the teacher services division at the Department for Education and has experience of regulating the profession, having worked as a registrar at the General Teaching Council for England for 11 years before spending a further year as its Chief Executive.

He also has a wealth of experience elsewhere in the civil service, joining the Home Office in 1985 before going on to be the principal adviser to the Home Secretary on policing in London, sitting on the Metropolitan Police Committee and working at the General Medical Council.

Alan Meyrick said:

I am delighted to be appointed as the Chief Executive of the Teaching Regulation Agency. The agency has an important role to play in supporting the teaching profession to maintain the highest professional standards.

Through our work we will protect pupils, maintain public confidence in the teaching profession and uphold high standards of teacher conduct.

In addition, we will support those teachers who have qualified outside of England and are able to apply to have their professional standing recognised in this country. I will lead the agency according to the seven principles of public life, and I want to ensure that all decisions are made fairly and in the public interest.

The remaining core functions of the [National College for Teaching and Leadership](#) will combine with the Department for Education in April 2018. The move will mean even closer coordination between the work already underway to improve schools and strengthen the profession, and the delivery of support to teachers in classrooms.

Press release: Written Ministerial Statement: Northern Ireland Finances

During the course of the past 13 months, in the absence of an Executive and Assembly in Northern Ireland, the UK Government has worked tirelessly to facilitate the restoration of devolved government. It had been my firm hope that a new Executive would be in place to set a budget. That will now not be possible in time for plans to be put in place for the forthcoming financial year.

Yet there are acute pressures across public services to be addressed in 2018/19. And clarity is required now to enable planning to proceed for the year ahead. It is now imperative, therefore, that the UK Government provides clarity and certainty around Northern Ireland finances for 2018/19.

2018/19 Budget allocations

I set out below the resource and capital allocations which I consider to be the most balanced and appropriate settlement for Northern Ireland departments. It would be open to a restored Executive, of course, to consider and revise the position I have set out.

In deciding on these allocations I have engaged intensively with the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) to understand the needs of departments as they continue to work to deliver the draft Programme for Government. I have reflected too on the response to the budget briefing published by the NICS before Christmas, and discussed the budget situation with the main parties in Northern Ireland.

In the absence of local Ministers, and given the proximity of the next financial year, it would not be appropriate for the UK Government to seek to take fundamental decisions about service delivery and transformation at this time. Yet we must act to secure public services and enable NI departments to meet urgent pressures in health and education. That is what this budget settlement will do, by protecting and preserving public services within challenging fiscal constraints.

On the resource side, it delivers real-terms increases for health and education from their 2017/18 opening baseline. It also delivers cash terms increases for the Departments of Justice; Infrastructure; and Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. Elsewhere departments would either be cash-flat or see small decreases, with notable reductions only for the two central departments (Finance and the Executive Office). For capital, it provides a strong basis for investment and enables key flagship projects to progress.

Confidence and Supply funding

This settlement also delivers £410m in financial support arising from the financial annex to the Confidence and Supply Agreement between the Conservative Party and the Democratic Unionist Party.

This includes £80m in support for immediate health and education pressures; £30m to support programmes to address issues of mental health and severe deprivation; £100m for ongoing work to transform the health service in line with the broad-based consensus fostered by the Bengoa report; and a £200m boost in capital spending for key infrastructure projects. Furthermore, in recognition of the lack of opportunity for more fundamental service reconfiguration over the last 12 months, this Budget position allows for £100m in flexibility to enable existing capital funding to be used to address public services resource pressures in 2018/19. This additional funding will be transferred in due course only with Parliament's full authorisation, in line with the long-established Estimates process.

Transformation

But, as the NICS budget briefing made clear, transformation is needed in a number of areas to make services sustainable in the long term. The urgent work to prepare for this must proceed. To that end, the Budget includes a £4m fund to prepare the ground for transformation, alongside the £100m set out for health transformation above. I also recognise that this budget only allocates resources for 2018/19 and the NI departments will need urgently to plan for future years. In that context, it is right that the NICS should continue to take forward preparatory work which could assist with balancing the budget in 2019/20. This will ensure that options are kept open for a restored Executive to consider as part of future budget processes.

Regional rate

As part of setting a budget, it is essential that the UK Government provides clarity on the regional rate. This budget position has been constructed on the basis of an increase in the domestic regional rate of 4.5%. I consider that this is a necessary and important step to continue to support public services, particularly in health and education. The non-domestic rates would rise only at 1.5%, in line with inflation. Conscious of the interest of many stakeholders in the scheme, I can also confirm that this budget settlement would provide the basis for the Small Business Rate Relief to continue.

Implementing decisions within the overall allocations

This statement outlines overall allocations, based on my assessment of the options currently available to the NI departments. To the extent possible, the consequent prioritisation of resources within NI departments will need to be undertaken by Permanent Secretaries, as has been the case during the past year. The position will be monitored throughout the year and, where possible, resources reallocated to the highest priority areas in the normal way.

Permanent Secretaries cannot, of course, take the full range of decisions that would be available to Ministers. In that context, the UK Government shall continue to support the Northern Ireland administration, and to do whatever is necessary to meet our responsibilities to the people of Northern Ireland.

[Press release: Pubs Code Adjudicator Releases Results of First Tied Pub Tenant Survey](#)

Most tied pub tenants are aware of the Pubs Code that gives them new rights but have less knowledge about the detail of those rights – the first [tied pub tenant survey](#) has revealed.

The Pubs Code Adjudicator Paul Newby today published the findings of an independent survey commissioned to provide more information about the views and experiences of tied pub tenants.

Carried out by experienced research company, GfK, the 2017 survey shows that 72% knew about the Pubs Code but they had lower understanding of its key elements, ranging from 63% of tied pub tenants knowing about the right to a five-yearly rent review to 36% knowing about the right to request a Market Rent Only (or MRO) agreement.

Just over half (53%) of those surveyed were aware of the PCA – with a higher proportion aware of the PCA if they had submitted or considered a MRO option. Those who experienced an event that opened up the right to request a MRO but did not do so cited costs, a belief that few tenants had been successful, that the process was shut down by their pub-owning business, or a concern about making trouble or missing deadlines.

Asked about the pros and cons of being a tied pub tenant, participants said the best aspects were the ability to make choices about how their pub was run, and the backup and support from a big company. More challenging aspects included the costs of tied products and services, unexpected costs associated with starting up, the cost of dilapidations as well as the lack of room for negotiation and lack of clarity over rent calculations.

Another key finding was that more than half the tenants who had experienced a MRO event believed they did not have a genuine choice between a tied and free of tie option. Reasons for this included a lack of transparency around the rent calculation, unaffordability of the MRO proposal or a lack of encouragement from their company's Business Development Manager.

Many tenants were critical of the general support they received from Business Development Managers although they recognised that the role of these company representatives is vital to successful tenant/landlord relationships and their ability to access their Pubs Code rights.

Paul Newby said: "This survey has provided a very detailed insight into the views and experiences of tied pub tenants. There has been a great deal of talk across the industry about what tenants think and want – but this is the first time that the tenants themselves have been asked for their views.

"The evidence collected will help me target my activity, take up issues of concern with the pub-owning businesses and allow me to track progress over time.

"It reveals a number of priority areas – specifically that more needs to be done across the industry to provide more user-friendly information and greater clarity on MRO issues, and to make progress in changing the culture around the behaviour and operation of Business Development Managers. I was concerned to see the evidence on how often Business Development Managers are changed and the low frequency of contact.

"The Deputy PCA, Fiona Dickie, and I have provided clarity on the terms of Market Rent Only tenancies following recent arbitration awards; advice on this issue was [published](#) last week. We are now working on a more detailed response to this survey which we plan to publish shortly. However, the survey provides much food for thought for the pub-owning businesses and I am calling on them to consider their responses to the challenges highlighted."

Notes to Editors:

1.GfK is an independent research agency that works with government departments and agencies, regulatory bodies, the NHS, local authorities and charities to deliver qualitative and quantitative research to support and inform policy development and evaluation.

2.The tied pub tenant survey was conducted between November 2017 and January 2018. A representative sample of 388 tenants was originally interviewed by telephone and 27 took part in a follow-up depth interview.

3.The full survey results can be found [here](#) and the key results [here](#)

[Press release: Skip-It Torbay to pay thousands for skipping on asbestos removal](#)

A South Devon waste processing company has been ordered to pay £16,404 in fines and costs for failing to remove thousands of tonnes of hazardous waste from two sites in Torbay.

The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

Armabridge Ltd, trading as Skip-It Torbay, operates from a waste transfer station at Barton Hill Way, Torquay. In June 2015 an Environment Agency officer discovered asbestos contamination in a pile of approximately 3,200 tonnes of residual waste at the site. In March 2016, following a lack of progress in dealing with the waste, the Environment Agency served an enforcement notice on the company to formalise the removal of the asbestos-affected material.

The company appealed against the enforcement notice, but the appeal was later dismissed by a planning inspector, who in January 2017 upheld the enforcement notice and gave the company 3 months to comply with its requirements.

In May 2017 an environment officer returned to the site and saw the pile of waste was still present. No significant progress had been made to remove it and as a result the company had breached its enforcement notice.

In January 2016, Armabridge Ltd was prosecuted for illegally depositing approximately 2,000 tonnes of asbestos contaminated waste at a second site, Kerswell Gardens, Torquay. In February 2017, following a lack of progress in clearing the waste, the Environment Agency served an enforcement notice requiring that the waste be removed.

In July 2017 an Environment Agency officer returned to the Kerswell Gardens site and found the hazardous waste was still present and that the enforcement notice had been breached.

Jacob Hess, for the Environment Agency, said:

This case emphasises the importance of robust waste acceptance procedures. Failure to segregate wastes appropriately can lead to complex and costly remediation at a later date.

We have recently run a campaign with local roofing businesses and waste operators to raise awareness of asbestos containing materials and how to correctly dispose of them.

Armabridge Ltd was fined a total of £13,334 and ordered to pay £3,070 costs by Plymouth magistrates after pleading guilty to 2 offences of failing to comply with enforcement notices relating to Barton Hill Way and Kerswell Gardens, Torquay contrary to Regulation 38(3) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010. The company has been given until 30 September 2018 to safely dispose of waste from both sites.