

Dounreay collaborates with university to inspire a culture of innovation

Dounreay was a former nuclear research centre for 50 years, and now wishes to trial innovative ideas as it decommissions, by challenging conventional methods and bringing in ideas from other industries. Key to this is to create a culture on the site that encourages innovation.

The pilot workshop, which was run by the university in the Weigh Inn in Thurso, mixed theory and practice together in 2 sessions, which culminated in the participants in teams solving a decommissioning problem and presenting their solutions to a panel of judges. Emma, Helena, Alan and Sergio were awarded a prize for the most enterprising and innovative solution.

DSRL Managing Director, Mark Rouse, opened the workshop with an introductory speech and said:

It is so inspiring to see our future talent being challenged to think outside the box and responding so positively. A great session and a new start for an aspect of our business that will be so important for our site and the NDA group.

Emma said:

The key learning that I took away from the workshop is that innovation can be straightforward and simple, it doesn't always need to be complex. I am excited to be able to take my new experiences and knowledge from the workshop and include it in my work.

Alan added:

I found it good that there were different types of thinkers and how we viewed things in different ways.

Allane Hay, Deputy Head of Academic Partnerships at Moray College UHI who led the development of the design-led innovation programme along with colleagues from Inverness College UHI and North Highland College UHI, said:

Working with Dounreay and the NDA on this innovative initiative was a great opportunity to help develop the creative talents of the next generation of leaders in DSRL. Design-led innovation is a practical tool to help guide these young innovators towards developing a solution-oriented mindset in their roles. It was great

to see how they embraced the process and really enjoyed it.

NDA Horizon Scanning Manager, Colin Mair, developed and presented the first part of the workshop and also supported the full day workshop. He said:

Innovation starts with 'why?' – in this workshop we focused on deeply understanding the challenge to develop insightful ideas into prototypes, then learn and iterate. Collaboration helps break bias and unlock creativity – we saw this come to life in the fantastic ideas and buzzing energy in the room.

The winning solution will now be developed further into a manufactured product for actual implementation on site; it is also the aspiration to run more workshops across the site in the future.