Press release: Young space entrepreneurs win backing from industry experts

Young entrepreneurs have been offered help to turn their ideas on how satellites can improve life on Earth into reality thanks to a Dragons' Den style event organised by the UK Space Agency.

The youngsters, aged 13 to 21, were offered the chance to pitch their proposals to a panel of leading space industry experts after winning the Agency's SatelLife Challenge.

The experts offered a range of support to develop the ideas including funding, patent advice and invitations to discuss job opportunities as well as introductions to the other relevant experts for further help.

The winning ideas included a GPS wristband that uses satellite location data and communications services to identify the locations of swimmers and surfers in the sea and an app to map changes in urban areas using satellites and algorithms, identifying where building is taking place and potential sites for development.

Emily Gravestock, Head of Applications Strategy UK Space Agency, said:

> The standard of presentations provided by the students was exceptional, even better than some companies who pitch to us. We've seen the future of satellite applications from these young people, and I'm excited to see what they could achieve over the coming years.

The Dragons' Den style event was held at the Satellite Applications Catapult at Harwell Space Cluster in Oxfordshire.

Adam Brocklehurst, Patent Attorney at K2 IP Limited who was one of the judges, said:

> I'm really impressed with the innovative ideas coming out of people so young. The presentations and the ideas were all fantastic and you could see they had worked really hard on them. It was great to see so many girls involved and that reflects well on work the UK Space Agency and other bodies are doing to encourage girls to study STEM subjects.

Another judge, Adina Gillespie, Institutional Strategist at Earth i, added:

> The young talent that we have in the UK is second to none. I'm so pleased to see these young adults engaging with the space sector as it will be a major economy of the future.

Now in its second year, SatelLife Challenge supports the development of science, data handling and technological skills, complementing the Government's Year of Engineering campaign which is championing careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics to the next generation.

Dr Nick Appleyard, Head of Downstream Business Applications at ESA, said:

> With the capabilities of satellites developing so rapidly, new ideas for services that use their data and connections are coming thick and fast. We've seen that the ideas of UK's young, tech-literate generation are just as achievable as those being developed by mature companies, addressing challenges for vulnerable people and in our own daily lives that could never have been solved before.

The other judges on the panel were Stuart Martin, Chief Executive of Satellite Applications Catapult and Karen Roche, Business Development Director at Kx Technology.

A group of school children from Cornwall and a student from Wiltshire were the overall winners of the SatelLife Challenge.

Ellie Jones, Jessica Knight, both 15, Summer Jeffery and Emily Haddrell, both 14, from Truro, scooped £7,500 for the best group entry in the UK Space Agency competition with their Surf Safe concept. Ieuan Higgs, from Chippenham, received £7,500 for the best individual entry for his Infrastructure Planning and Development Analysis Tool.

The competition is split into three age groups: 11 – 16; 16 – 18; 18 – 22, and a further seven entries from across the age categories were awarded £5,000.

With one in four of all telecoms satellites already built substantially in Britain, the government's Industrial Strategy includes plans to work with the industry to grow the space sector and establish commercial space launch services from the UK for the first time.

Earlier this week the UK Space Agency announced a new fund of up to £4 million which is available for innovative ideas on high-tech solutions for some of the major problems facing NHS England. In the joint initiative with NHS England, innovators will bid for money to turn technology originally designed for space, from exploration to satellite communications, into medical applications that improve NHS treatment and care.