

Scottish women entrepreneurs win national award for innovation

Three women innovators from Scotland have been backed by the UK Government, as part of a group of 40 of the UK's most visionary female entrepreneurs, to drive forward their novel innovations and business ideas to help the UK build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic and meet its climate change ambitions.

Announced today (Monday 8 March 2021) by UK Government Science Minister Amanda Solloway to mark International Women's Day, the Women in Innovation Award winners will receive a cash injection of £50,000 each to scale up and bring to market their disruptive business ideas, many of which have been born out in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

UK Government Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

As we build back better, it's a priority of mine that we continue equipping our brightest female innovators with the tools they need to succeed, while encouraging a new generation of women to come forward and pursue their ambitions.

I'm delighted we are supporting 40 of our most trailblazing female entrepreneurs, helping them to turn their innovative ideas and aspirations into a reality, creating the products and services that will help improve all our lives, while powering up the UK's economic recovery.

Among the winners is Alison Wood, founder of Edinburgh-based sustainable sanitary pad company Lilypads. The company's reusable pads have a carbon footprint 90% lower than disposable equivalents and are among the cheapest reusable pads on the market. Their charitable arm, supported by pad sales, works to reduce gender inequality and period exploitation around the world.

Alison said:

This programme is providing development funding to further reduce the environmental impact of our period pad. We're delighted to be a part of it and can't wait to meet and learn from other women running sustainable businesses.

Joan D'Arcy, co-founder of Plastic@Bay in Durness, Highland, has also received funding to develop Local Ocean Plastic Recycling Facilities (LOPRF) to convert ocean plastic waste into construction materials at a low cost. This initiative will also provide local employment and training opportunities for young people, with each facility employing at least 3 people to use and maintain the recycling machines.

Joan said:

The aim is to develop a low-tech facility to recycle end-of-life fishing gear and ocean plastic that can be replicated in harbours and communities adversely affected by ocean plastic pollution. Our research and development team will build a low-tech machine capable of making fence posts, planks, and decking, while I develop the plant layout, business model, and marketing strategy.

Jacqueline Morrison, co-founder of Glasgow-based company Cedeco Contractors Ltd, has also received backing for the development of a mechanical alternative to grout that will save time and cut costs for the installation of wind turbines, whilst also reducing carbon emissions.

Jacqueline said:

We know that growing the team and collaborating with industry partners will be our way forward and this funding will help with that. I'm delighted to have won the award and to be able to shine a spotlight on our technology and am looking forward to what promises to be an exciting year.

Today's funding is part of the government's flagship Women in Innovation Awards, delivered by Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), which seeks to boost the number of UK female entrepreneurs, which could deliver £180 billion to the economy.

It forms a key part of the government's ambitious R&D Roadmap, published in July 2020, which committed to supporting the UK's innovators and risk-takers by backing entrepreneurs and start-ups with the funding needed to scale up their innovations.

Emily Nott, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Innovate UK said:

With 2020 proving to be an incredibly difficult year for everyone, and particularly women, continuing to support female entrepreneurs in 2021 has been a real priority for Innovate UK. We have had an enormous response and we can see some positives from the pandemic, with some of our shortlist inspired to start up a business in response to some of the challenges it has brought.

Working alongside the winners, Innovate UK will help them grow further. We can't wait to see what else these inspiring women achieve and how they can be an example to inspire the next generation and to encourage more women-led businesses in this country as we rebuild and recover.