

Latest News from the Lord Stafford Awards

Nottingham companies take the honours at the Lord Stafford Awards

A nanoparticle specialist and a company pioneering global 'sat nav' technology put Nottingham on the innovation map last night when the Lord Stafford Awards came to a glittering finale.

Over 250 people packed into the Epic Centre in Lincolnshire to see Promethean Particles (supported by University of Nottingham) and Nottingham Scientific Ltd (backed by De Montfort University) capture the 'Innovation Achieved' and 'Innovation in Development' titles respectively.

The two local businesses drew praise from the high profile judging panel for taking complex technology and transforming it into commercial enterprises that are going to create wealth and jobs in the East Midlands.

They also highlighted the impact both products could have on the global marketplace and the recognition this will provide for the two Universities involved.

Lord Stafford, who first launched the initiative in Staffordshire in 1997, was delighted with the quality of this year's competition.

"The Awards are the only ones in the UK dedicated to celebrating innovative collaborations between businesses and Universities and Nottingham has certainly secured the plaudits this year.

"Nottingham Scientific and Promethean have shown what can be achieved when they combine their own skills and expertise with those of academia to secure commercial gains for both parties."

He continued: "The winners will receive a £5000 cheque and a trophy from Ceramic Decals, not to mention promotional videos that will help them when marketing their products and services going forward."

The third and final winner on the evening was social enterprise Hill Holt Wood from Lincolnshire, who walked off with the 'Innovation in Sustainability' Award.

In addition to the Nottingham-based winners, there were also highly commended awards for Blue Planet Buildings, Camira Fabrics, Monica Healthcare, Topping Chair and Trent Concrete.

Lord Stafford concluded: "Innovation is now more important than ever and I personally feel is one of the best ways of ensuring the region emerges from the downturn in a stronger position than ever before."

The Awards, which are backed by the East Midlands Development Agency (emda), Manufacturing Advisory Service and the East Midlands Universities Association, were

hosted by Working Lunch presenter Rob Pittam and featured a keynote address from PY Gerbeau, Chief Executive of X-Scape and former head of the Millennium Dome.

David Wallace, International and Innovation Director at *emda* said: "We recognise that East Midlands' universities have a key role to play in driving forward innovation and this is why we support the Lord Stafford Awards, which bring entrepreneurs and academics together.

"Our winners and nominees have demonstrated that this collaboration can be creative, innovative and profitable – helping companies across the East Midlands to grow and thrive in what are difficult times."

Other sponsors for the event included Ceramic Decals, CFE Ltd, Clever Cherry, Connect Midlands, Enterprise Europe Network and Swindell and Pearson.

Next year's competition will be launched in January 2010 and interested companies can find out more by visiting www.thelordstaffordawards.co.uk or keep checking the Lord Stafford Awards Facebook and Twitter pages for updates.

More on the winners...

Innovation Achieved

Promethean Particles, a spin-out founded on the innovative research work of Dr Ed Lester at the University of Nottingham, has capped a tremendous first year in business by successfully commercialising technology that will see it play a crucial role in the development of new products, such as transparent sunscreen and green power generation.

Located at BioCity in Nottingham, the company has launched a reactor that allows the highly controlled production of nanoparticles in water for the first time ever and is now expanding at pace through feasibility studies and new contracts.

Judges were particularly impressed at the firm's ability to take complex technology and transform it into a commercial opportunity capable of creating jobs and also developing new revenue streams for the University.

Commenting on the Award Ed Lester said: "This is a big plus for our business and, being a relatively new organisation in an international marketplace, it will give us the added credibility when securing new work and partnerships."

Innovation in Development

Nottingham Scientific Ltd (NSL) teamed up with De Montfort University (DMU) to research and develop innovative receivers, which will be able to pick up signals from all Global Navigation Satellites at all frequencies.

And the hard work is already paying off for the firm, which is predicting increases in turnover and the creation of new jobs.

With satellite navigation receivers traditionally reliant upon one network, researchers from both the company and the university started work on developing a new receiver that could overcome that.

The first receiver - the Primo - was launched in December 2008 and became the first device of its kind to be able to gather information from a number of sources, including the US Global Positioning System (GPS), the European Galileo system and similar satellite systems from across the world.

The judges praised the firm for the potential impact of its product that will soon be able to receive data from the Russian Glonass constellation and other constellations planned by China, India, Japan and other nations.

Mark Dumville, Managing Director of NSL, commented: "I am particularly pleased with the recognition, not just for the company's benefit, but also for the work of the individuals involved which is quite literally groundbreaking."

Innovation for Sustainability

The husband and wife team of Karen and Nigel Lowthrop put everything into their dream of restoring the derelict Hill Holt Wood into a public place of interest and a thriving social enterprise, so much so they even moved into an on-site caravan.

It was all worth it, with the venture combining a flourishing public wood with numerous business activities that employ 28 people and turnover in excess of £550,000 every year.

Hill Holt blew the judges away with its use of innovation in both people and places, the latter culminating in its work with the University of Lincoln to develop the Woodland Community Hall.

Using reinforced limecrete, rammed earth walls and super-insulated timber frames, the building is going to be one of the most advanced in the UK and will become a focal point for the community.

The ancient woodland is also being used to develop the skills of young people, who have fallen out of mainstream education. Building on an oasis of vocational training, Karen and her team have already helped more than 400 under-16s gain valuable qualifications, with 70% of its graduates moving on to further education.

Karen was delighted at winning: "We've already had personal recommendations from Conservative leader David Cameron and HRH Prince Charles and now we've got the backing of a Lord. This Award is for the people who make Hill Holt so special and will give them lots of confidence to keep our enterprise moving forward."

