

22 for 2022: BusinessLive's companies to watch in the New Year

Ogel

South Shields based Ogel is disrupting the construction sector with its revolutionary conversion of plastic waste into building materials.

The firm has teamed up with a manufacturer which takes plastic waste and turns it into 'profile' which can then be used to build anything from a garden office or shelter to a flood defence system.

Founder Gary Giles also wants to use some profits to fund charitable work for humanitarian shelters, which can be erected quickly and also taken down quickly.

Mr Giles' business caught the eye of producers at BBC's Dragons' Den before it was even officially launched. On the show itself, Ogel secured £50,000 in investment from Sara Davies and Tej Lalvani – and it has since raised more than £200,000 in crowdfunding.





Tzuka

Tom Jeliffe is the founder and managing director of Loughborough University spin-out Tzuka, a company with a vision to create the world's ultimate sports, near indestructible earbuds.

After raising funding and grants, it is currently in advanced testing and is expected to reach the market in 2022.

Its prototype not only has never-before-seen durability, but is also the first earbuds in the world with an impact resistance rating.

In addition, Tom and his engineers have developed an onboard audio storage system which is only the second of its type in the world.

Kairos

While many retired sports people may be happy with a spot of armchair punditry, former Ireland and Ulster rugby player Andrew Trimble has co-founded Belfast software platform Kairos with partner Gareth Quinn.

It is planning a communication platform designed for use in elite teams which allows managers, medical staff and others to have oversight of player schedules while giving players a clear timetable of activity up to matchdays and insight into performance data.

Founded in 2018, the startup has just received £1.5m investment and is planning to expand into the US, as well as growing its business in the UK and Ireland.

Elmtronics

The last few months of the year has seen activity ramp up at Consett based Elmtronics, in tandem with greater adoption of EV technology across the UK.

The firm specialises in electric car-charging points for homes, businesses and the public sector, and counts the likes of the UK's largest councils, NHS trusts and private companies as clients, designing, installing and maintaining electric vehicle-charging stations.

The firm – winner of the high growth and ambition award at the Durham, Sunderland and South Tyneside Business Awards – is securing a steady stream of contracts with the likes of smart infrastructure solutions company Costain, shopping and leisure complex Metrocentre and Keltruck Limited, Europe's largest independent Scania distributor.



Tungsten West is the owner and operator of Hemerdon tungsten and tin mine on the edge of Plymouth

Tungsten West

Plymouth's Tungsten West is aiming to start full production at the world's third largest tungsten mine in 2022, after raising £75m in funding.

The company, which bought the Hemerdon tungsten and tin mine out of receivership for £2.8m in 2019, stressed it had raised enough cash to rebuild the processing plant and restart mining.

In October 2021 the company was admitted to AIM, raising £39m from a share issue and securing a £36m loan from Orion Resource Partners.

The firm has also begun the design and build phase at

Hemerdon, on the edge of Plymouth, and entered into agreements with tungsten and tin buyers. An aggregates division will sell waste material to the construction industry.

Unknown Marketing

Young entrepreneur Joe Yates turned down an apprenticeship with British Airways to follow his dream of launching his own business.

Today, the 20-year-old runs Unknown Marketing, a “deliberately different” digital marketing agency which specialises in social media management, paid social advertising and influencer marketing.

In just three years, Joe has grown the Stafford-based business from a team of three into an 18-strong operation.

And 2022 looks set to be a big year for the company as it prepares to open two new offices – in London and Leeds – and hit a milestone £1m turnover.

LiberEat

Aberdeen-based LiberEat aims to make life easier and safer for those with dietary requirements such as food allergies, intolerances and medical conditions.

Founded by Barry Leaper and Louise Cahill, the business is hoping to build on a successful 2021, which saw the biotech business win competitions including Tech Nation’s Rising Stars 3.0 and the the inaugural Impact Summit Competition, claiming a place on the FutureX Silicon Valley Scale programme.

LiberEat is in the process of raising upwards of around £1m investment to grow its volume of users and further enhance its offering.

Net World Sports

Net World Sports was named the fastest growing firm in the region on the Wales Fast Growth 50 list.

The sports equipment business had a turnover of £44m in 2020, having grown by 121% since 2018.

It plans further expansion with work to start on a new headquarters in Wrexham. The £25m warehouse and office which will be located just a mile or so away from the current base on Wrexham Industrial Estate would help accelerate its growth further.

Peequal

University of Bristol graduates Amber Probyn and Hazel McShane have created a women's urinal – and it's already finding success.

Their spin-out company was awarded a £15,000 grant in November after the duo scooped the top prize in the university's flagship enterprise contest for start-ups.

Their urinal is designed with outdoor events in mind such as festivals, and they say it makes the process of going to the toilet six times quicker compared to a conventional portable lockable toilet.

The pair's creation has already been trialled by more than 5,000 women at UK festivals including Shambala, Valley Fest and the Bristol Comedy Garden.



Amber Probyn and Hazel McShane are the founders of Peequal
(Image: Peequal)



IParcelBox creator Paul Needler, left, received his Hull Live Business Awards Innovation and Technology gong from David Gibson, managing director of Hull Trains.
(Image: Grimsby News And Pictures Agency)

IParcelBox

Accidental East Yorkshire entrepreneur Paul Needler has swapped surveying for solving the misery of missed parcels from online shopping.

The creator of the IParcelBox has secured orders with housebuilders for his innovative invention, a smart-tech linked residential parcel delivery locker.

Tinkering in his London garage to eliminate a growing issue, he has now returned to his roots near Hull to fulfil the product's potential – with the acceleration of online retail through the pandemic championing his cause.

Patented in the UK and Europe, with others pending, when winning the Hull Live Innovation and Technology in Business Award, he told how he feels he has a three-year charge on the market as major companies 'wake up to the idea'.

Bella & Duke

Mark Scott and Tony Ottley set up raw pet food brand Bella and Duke after they became convinced that processed foods had led to their four dogs developing cancer.

Based in Blairgowrie, Perthshire, the company was chosen as the Scottish scale-up to progress to the final stage of EY Entrepreneur Of The Year UK.

In May, Bella & Duke secured £7m from a consortium of investors, including BGF and Mobeus, to accelerate marketing activity, increase factory capacity, and create further job

opportunities.

Inspecs

Designer eyewear group Inspecs made a run of acquisitions in 2021, with the latest just before Christmas.

The AIM-listed company, which is headquartered in Bath, agreed a deal for global design and licensing company Ego Eyewear and its operating subsidiaries in Sweden and Hong Kong.

The transaction comes weeks after Inspecs agreed a deal to buy BoDE Design, a German distributor of optical and sunglasses frames. Last year, Inspecs agreed to acquire all the equity interests in Nuremberg-based eyewear supplier Eschenbach Holding. It also bought up the manufacturing arm of a Gloucester-based glasses company that went into administration.

Chocolate Smiths

The Tyneside firm was launched when Steffi Smith and a former business partner were made redundant from a chocolate shop just days before Christmas in 2013.

The company had garnered a local following from the quirky flavours of its Bizarre bars, but its growth went into overdrive this year when it received the endorsement of fitness guru Joe Wicks.

Chocolate Smiths' team of nine employees grew to become 27 and it has twice moved to larger premises to keep up with demand.





Foodhub has more than 22,000 restaurants on its books



Foodhub

Food delivery app Foodhub has made a huge impact on the takeaway market since its launch just four years ago.

The company – which rivals big-name brands including Just Eat and Uber Eats – was started by two Stoke-on-Trent school friends in 2017.

Since its launch it has grown its turnover to in excess of £30 million and has more than 22,000 restaurant and takeaway partners in the UK. It has also expanded internationally and trades in countries including the USA, Mexico, Guatemala, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland.

The company is expecting its growth to continue in 2022 as covid-19 restrictions look set to be re-introduced in England. It also has plans to open a brand new headquarters in Stoke-on-Trent to accommodate its expanding workforce.

Plantsea

The venture is very much in its formative stages but could be set for bigger things as it taps into the sustainable agenda.

PlantSea, based at MJ-SParc on Anglesey, aims to replace environmentally damaging petroleum-based plastics with sustainable and biodegradable alternatives. They work with seaweed and transform it into a material suitable for replacing single use plastics. Its vision is turning the tide on plastic pollution.

The firm won an inventor prize at Aberystwyth University, and are part of the BioAccelerate programme.

Iksuda Therapeutics

Founded in Bath and now based in Newcastle city centre, Iksuda Therapeutics is aiming to create treatments for illnesses that currently have limited treatment options and high-relapse rates.

This year it completed a \$47m (around £34m) financing round, which it will use to fund human clinical trials of its lead cancer drug, as well as expand its platform technologies.

The company – which takes its name from the Sumerian word for ‘all-conquering’ – described the investment as “transformational” and is working with leading research institutions in the US and Europe to develop new therapies for the future.

Nina D

Nina D, in Altrincham, Cheshire is a tableware business based on the owners Nordic heritage.

The company has been NatWest’s business accelerator programme in Manchester, and has been praised for “meticulously hand-illustrated her collection, which include placemats, coaster and table runners, feature a range of bespoke patterns and all designs are inspired by Nina’s treasured Scandinavian upbringing. “

Nina is also an artist and will be displaying at Holdsworth Mill Arts & Business Centre, Stockport from February 22 to March 3 as part of its Flow exhibition

CarCloud

CarCloud solves the problem of how you manage your car on your phone, just like you do with nearly every other aspect of your life.

Founded in 2018 by Paul Jewell and Geoff Turrall, the Birmingham-based firm is aiming to transform the car ownership experience in a sector synonymous with the West Midlands.

November saw the completion of a highly successful funding round on crowdfunding platform Seedrs and 2022 will see the launch of CarCloud's compliance solution for the 90 per cent of business journeys that are undertaken in the employee's personal car.

It will also carry out digital marketing aimed at growing its user base to 100,000.

onHand

Tech firm onHand aims to make volunteering easier for company employees.

The Gateshead firm secured a £1m investment in 2021 and was also selected as a Rising Star by Tech Nation.

Its app – launched in collaboration with six of the UK's leading charities – offers businesses a way to engage and support employee wellbeing in the new world of work, primarily through arranging short volunteering sessions that can be arranged around the working day.

Founder Sanjay Lobo said onHand is aiming to work with companies that are “focused on responsible business and the shift to profit with purpose.”

Versarien

Founded in an engineer's garage in Cheltenham, advanced engineering materials company Versarien uses graphene, a material made from a single layer of carbon atoms, to create products for the automotive, clothing, biomedical and aerospace sectors.

In 2021 the company scaled its production capacity with a move to a new dedicated graphene facility in Longhope in the Forest of Dean, and the acquisition of manufacturing assets sourced via its Spanish subsidiary.

The business has continued to commercialise its environmentally-focused technology, and in November announced a three-year partnership with fellow Gloucestershire firm Superdry to make graphene enhanced clothing for the fashion brand. Both firms have said the garments will have a lower environmental impact on creation and will be “unlike any others on the market.”

Engenera Renewables

Newcastle firm Engenera helps companies implement renewable energy schemes to both reduce costs and meet environmental goals.

With the backing of a £100m green bond, the company is able to offer renewable energy installations at no capital outlay to customers able to sign power purchase agreements. Through that work it has helped companies install solar schemes, heat pumps and electric vehicle charging points.

Engenera's most high profile work to date will see it work with automotive giant Nissan in Sunderland to create a 20MW extension to its solar farm, generating enough renewable electricity to power 20% of the plant's needs. It is also working on a project to providing energy-saving solutions to 12 schools in Newcastle.

Lush

The Dorset-headquartered cosmetics retailer Lush announced in November it was shutting down its Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat accounts following concerns around the safety of the platforms for users.



A Lush store

(Image: South Wales Echo)

The company, which has its main UK factory in Poole, is no longer using those networks in any of the 48 countries it operates in. The move is expected to create a potential loss of £10m in sales, according to Jack Constantine, the firm's chief digital officer.

He said the company had given itself a year to recoup its losses from the move, but was "very positive" about the decision.

The announcement in November divided social media experts – and whether you agree or not, it's one to watch in 2022.