

ADVERTORIAL: Tech innovation wows judges at Royal Society of Chemistry competition

The judges were left impressed by the outstanding showcase of cutting-edge science at the 2021 final of the Royal Society of Chemistry's [Emerging Technologies Competition](#).

The event, now in its ninth year, sees tech innovators and start-ups pitching their potentially life-changing and ground-breaking ideas to an experienced judging panel in a bid to win support and financial backing for their projects.

From magnets that drastically boost battery charging speeds to ideas for treating incurable diseases, judges were faced with the tough task of selecting the winners from a competitive field of finalists.

From 120 applications, the best 24 were chosen to pitch at the event – held virtually this year due to the Covid-19 restrictions in a bid to win in one of four categories – Enabling Technologies, Energy and Environment, Food and Drink and Health.

The judges, many of whom have been involved since the competition's inception in 2013, hailed from a host of international companies, including AstraZeneca, Boots, Croda, Eli Lilly, Givaudan, Marks & Spencer, Pepsico, PETRONAS, Reckitt Benckiser, RSSL, Scott Bader and Unilever.

The competition provides a unique platform for innovators to engage directly with and learn from these large multinational partners and judges, building exposure and unrivalled industry validation for their projects.



Jo Reynolds, Director of Science & Communities at the Royal Society of Chemistry

Jo Reynolds, Director of Science & Communities at the Royal Society of Chemistry, said: "Huge credit to our winners and all of the competing finalists for wowing our judges with an array of innovative and very well-considered ideas for chemistry to tackle societal challenges.

"As always, our judges were faced with a very difficult task in selecting our winners from an exceptionally competitive range of finalists.

"All of the presentations have given us great confidence in the ability of the next generation of early-stage start-ups, spin outs and innovators to deliver ground-breaking solutions to major challenges through novel chemistry."

She also thanked the judges, many of whom have played a huge role in the success of previous winners.

With just one point difference between the top three, the eventual Energy & Environment category winner was [MagLib](#) (UCL) with their patent-protected technology that employs bespoke magnetic fields to enhance the performance of lithium-ion batteries – for smart-watches, mobile phones and now to electric vehicles.

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One of the category judges, Jason Harcup, Global Vice President Personal Care Research and Global Vice President Prestige Division R&D at Unilever, said: “This macroscale

opportunity is hugely compelling and the solution cuts across chemistry and physics in a really original and fresh way.



Dr Jason Harcup, a judge in the Royal Society of Chemistry's Emerging Technologies Competition

"It's a truly innovative technology to fast charge such batteries and we felt it's truly emerging, and therefore this prize could have a very high impact – and could allow the team to grow rapidly in line with the maturation of their market."

The Food & Drink category winner was [Sphera Encapsulation](#) whose cutting-edge encapsulates are water soluble and can be consumed without the addition of any flavours or aromas.

Julia Dimakou, Managing Consultant at PA Consulting and a category judge, said: "It was particularly difficult to choose the winner because all the competitors demonstrated very strong capabilities across cutting-edge technologies.

“Sphera’s technology is versatile and can potentially reach a broad range of applications which is exciting for the future of these types of encapsulated active ingredient solutions across many industries.”

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[Somnus Scientific](#) won the Health category with its state-of-the-art biosensor technology to develop innovative, safer point-of-care intermittent and continuous sedation and anaesthesia monitoring devices.

William Goundry, Principal Scientist at AstraZeneca, was a judge in this category and said: “There was some fantastic science on display, and it was a very tough decision, but the judges were unanimous in their decision for the winner.

“The underlying science was clearly communicated through the pitch and it was exciting to see how this technology could impact many patients’ lives.”

[Bio-Sep](#) Limited won the Enabling Technology category with its project converting lignocellulosic biomasses efficiently, cleanly and economically into cellulose, sugars and lignin for use as platform chemicals in a wide range of industrial and domestic applications.

Category judge Jo Slota-Newson, Principal at IQ Capital said there was a strong and diverse group of finalists from machine-learning to enzyme technologies, and the group of judges enjoyed meeting all of the finalists.

“We were impressed with the breadth and depth of capabilities in the interdisciplinary team,” she said. “And while the technology has a significant development path ahead, the (Bio-Sep) team demonstrated a thoughtful approach that focused on the critical elements of scale-up.”

The winners will receive a share of the £160,000 prize money as well as one to one support for the next year.

For more details about the Emerging Technologies competition [visit the website](#).