

Founder of Net World Sports in Wrexham receives MBE

A young entrepreneur who built a sports equipment empire in North Wales has received an MBE in the New Year's Honours List. Alex Lovén, the 35-year-old founder and chief executive of Net World Sports, has been recognised for his services to the economy and to the community in Wrexham.

Mr Lovén set up Net World at aged 22 from his parents' family home in 2009, having only his dad for assistance in packing and shipping customer orders. The company has since become a global e-commerce business focused on becoming the largest online sports equipment retailer in the world.

The multi-million pound international sports equipment provider employs well over 200 staff and services a wide range of clients, from professional sports teams' equipment to equipment for home use. In 2013, Mr Lovén launched Net World Sports' range of football goals under his own brand Forza, which is now the UK's number one football goal and equipment supplier.

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The 2022 Fast Growth 50 firm is one of the fastest growing indigenous firms in Wales, seeing a 142% growth between 2019 and 2021, and achieving an annual turnover of £44m in 2020. Its current turnover is £70m with a significant number of sales exported across the globe.

Speaking about receiving the award Mr Lovén told *BusinessLive* that he was both surprised and humbled to receive the honour.

"I was very surprised. When your name goes on a list with a genuine pantheon of greats, it's only right and natural to be

a little bit introspective about whether you're worthy of such an accolade, so it's quite humbling in that respect," he said.

"I've been fortunate to win many awards over the years but there has never been one which comes close to this. It's a huge honour and I'm incredibly proud and pleased. It shows what some plucky people from Wrexham can do and achieve."

He added: "It's a personal award but it's also a celebration of the achievement of Net World and is another thing that puts Wrexham on the map because 70% of who we employ live in Wrexham."



Founder of Net World Sports Alex Lovén (centre) with his parents Per and Caroline Lovén

Net World is now set to open a £25m, 411,000 sq ft new headquarters and warehouse in Wrexham in the new year that will accommodate its rapid growth.

With support from Lloyds Bank, the development will allow the business to operate from one facility – housing a range of more than 10,000 products including sports, fitness, leisure, home, and garden equipment.

The facility, currently under construction, offers a significant number of new job opportunities for local people. The company also supports Wrexham through providing local schools with equipment and it is involved in the Wrexham Civic Leadership Group which strives to accelerate the regeneration of Wrexham.

“Success is so much more enjoyable if you take people along with you on the journey,” said Mr Lovén. “And that means making sure as many people as possible benefit from what we achieve and feel part of it.

“We’ve just built a really big new warehouse, and it towers over the villages that surround it but local people don’t see us as a threat, they view us as a business which gives them a place of employment and opportunities for them and their children,” he said. “We’ve been in Wrexham for seven years and we’re a business built by the people of Wrexham, for the people of Wrexham and the sky’s the limit.”

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Helen Joanne Humphrey also received an MBE for her services to women in sport leadership. Ms Humphrey, from Gwent, became McDonalds' first female vice president for operations and set up McDonalds' UK Women's leadership network and the women's leadership development programme.

She was chair and board member of the Welsh Sports Association from 2016 to 2021 and led a campaign to get other business leaders to volunteer their time in sport.

She was also a business advisor to social enterprise Viability and developed the volunteer 'Give to Gain' concept and the 'Acting Today for an Active Tomorrow' report – ensuring the research was funded by commercial partners.

Secretary of State for Wales David TC Davies said: "I am inspired by the invaluable work of the many people from across Wales who have deservedly been recognised on the New Year Honours List.

"It is fantastic to see Welsh recipients from a wide range of backgrounds being recognised. I am thrilled that their commitment to their communities, sport and health services has been commended.

I would like to congratulate all recipients being honoured and thank them for their incredible work."

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