

Ones to Watch: five North East firms tipped for great things in 2022

onHand

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



The onHand volunteering app

(Image: handout from Northstar Ventures)

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 which can be arranged around the working day.

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

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.



The Ogel building system is unveiled to the TV Dragons
(Image: BBC)

Founder Gary Giles also wants to use 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 the 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 in exchange for a 10% stake – and it has since raised more than £200,000 in crowdfunding to help grow the company.

Iksuda Therapeutics

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



Dave Simpson, CEO of Iksuda Therapeutics
(Image: Iksuda Therapeutics)

This year it completed a \$47m 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.

Elmtronics

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



Dan Martin, Elmtronics CEO

(Image: Elmtronics/ANDREW HEPTINSTALL PHOTOGRAPHY LTD)

The firm specialises in electric car-charging points for homes, businesses and the public sector and counts 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.

The increasing contract wins are asserting Elmtronics' position at the forefront of the UK charging market.

Engenera Renewables

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



Engenera Renewables Group is expanding into Glasgow
(Image: Engenera Renewables Group)

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 Washington-based automotive giant Nissan 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.